

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
February 23, 2021



JUSTIN THOMAS

RACHEL NOBLE: I would like to welcome Justin Thomas to the interview room here at the World Golf Championships Workday Championship at The Concession.

Justin, a different venue for the event this year. I'm sure you've seen the course today. Just some opening comments about the course and how it might fit your game.

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's a good track. It's all right in front of you. I think the opportunity to challenge some holes off the tee that you can play a little bit more aggressively. A lot of water, very typical Florida course in that aspect. It definitely seems like an amateur golfer's nightmare. It's very difficult and grainy around the greens and a lot of elevated greens. It's a lot of holes that we've had a hard time finding four pin placements because the greens are so severe. If the greens were firm, it would be challenging I think is an understatement, but I think it's going to still be a good test considering how the course will evolve over the course of the week.

Q. Justin, since we're at The Concession this week, everybody's thinking about the moment that inspired it, the actual Concession. It's interesting in that today it's seen as one of the great acts of sportsmanship in golf, but at the time some of Jack Nicklaus' teammates were furious that he conceded the putt. I want to get your take on that, what you think of that moment and whether, if you were in that same situation today, would you concede that putt or how would you kind of approach that?

JUSTIN THOMAS: No disrespect for you or to Jack, but I truly have no clue what the story is.

Q. Oh, I'm sorry. Jack Nicklaus conceded a putt to Tony Jacklin in the Ryder Cup. If Jacklin had missed it, it would have been a loss for Europe where it ended up being a tie but the U.S. retained it. The Concession Golf Club is named after that concession.

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, I would not have conceded the putt.

Q. Justin, condolences on your grandfather. I'm just wondering if in the course of the funeral and all the family being around if you heard any new story that you never heard about your grandfather, something that really meant something to you?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Well, due to everything, unfortunately we weren't able to have any kind of service or anything like that, so that was a bummer.

No, probably the best story heard was my -- I really didn't know this, but I gave my grandma

a couple days, I texted with her, but when I called her and talked to her for the first time, she told me about how they actually moved to Columbus.

My grandpa used to coach up in New York at a place called Peek'n Peak. He would go there six months of the year and then come back to Zanesville Country Club six months of the year. I guess my grandma didn't want to live in Zanesville, she wanted to move to Columbus or somewhere else. So one time when my grandpa was gone up in New York for six months, she had my dad's brothers come help her and they moved all their stuff from Zanesville to Columbus and when he got back, she said, "This is where we live now." That was a story I never heard before. Because she wasn't going to be able to convince him, that that was going to be the only way to do it is just to do it. I thought that was pretty funny.

Q. Another one for you if you don't mind, they put out the video today of you and Rory trying to make the hole-in-one, 50 shots each. What are your overall feelings about how difficult was that and what was your takeaway from it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it was in good fun. The 50 shots I think was good. I know those guys that have done 500, I don't know how they did it, I barely had the attention span for 50 and it's easy to get frustrated when you're hitting the same shot over and over again. I mean, it was cool, it was fun. The European Tour does a great job with their social media and reaching out to an audience and making it funny and also good to watch. Rory and I had a good time doing it.

Q. What has made you such a good match play player in Ryder Cups, Presidents Cup, do you think?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know. I've been fortunate to be -- I had been playing well going into it. I think that's the biggest part of it. Obviously you've got to have the mindset you've got to make the putts when you need to, but at the end of the day, just like in France, as a team we weren't playing well and the Europeans were. That's ultimately why we lost.

So that definitely helps, but I enjoy the team aspects. I've had some great partners in Jordan, Rickie and Tiger. I like my chances with those three as my partner against most people.

Q. How concerned are you that -- if you were playing well when you had that success, how concerned are you with how you're playing at the moment?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know if "concerned" is the right word. I obviously always want and wish to be playing better, but yeah, not exactly where I want to be with my game right now. But just like this game, you always work to try to get out of it when you're not doing your best. So just got to keep working on it and hope good things start happening.

Q. Justin, not the greatest question, but have you heard about Tiger and do you have any reaction to it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I'm sick to my stomach. You know, it hurts to see one of your -- now one of my closest friends get in an accident. Man, I just hope he's all right. Just worry for his kids, you know. I'm sure they're struggling.

Q. On a lighter note, you played the golf course today. One of the reasons that they call this course The Concussion was the greens. How are the greens and especially how are they as you chip up to them?

JUSTIN THOMAS: They're very tough. I mean, like I said, I think this is an amateur golfer's nightmare. The greens are very elevated, it's very grainy, the grass is tight. You can hit it in a lot of spots around the greens where you're just kind of chipping it back and forth and having a hard time.

Getting in the right spots is very important, but being able to execute the shots and sometimes just limit the damage is just as important.

Q. Justin, I can see the emotion on your face. Has it been hard to be on the golf course these last two to three weeks?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's been a tough year. I mean, self-inflicted, but yeah, it's been tough. It's a part of life, stuff happens. I've been working on myself and I've made great strides I feel like in becoming a better, stronger man with the mistakes that I made.

It's unfortunate what happened with my grandpa and yeah, just like I said, I hope Tiger's all right. I've just got to get back to worry about playing golf and try to do as good as I can because that's the only thing that I can control.

Q. Justin, a big thing a lot of people have been talking about this year, mostly in regards to Tony Finau, is what it takes to win a golf tournament. You've been on both sides of that, you've won a ton and you've also come close and not won at different times. Other than the very practical part of making the big shots at the big time, can you pinpoint a psychological difference, something you did right or wrong in the times you've won versus when you didn't?

JUSTIN THOMAS: There's definitely things I can think of. I mean, selfishly, I don't necessarily want to share them, I feel like it's an advantage.

But the thing that Tony has that's going to help him so much is he's been there, he's put himself there. It's one thing if he -- it's not like he's going out and not closing off mini-tour events. He's out here on the PGA TOUR and majors in the best fields it seems like once every few weeks, once a month has a chance to win. There's only one winner every week, so it is very difficult to be that one that everything happens right. You make those couple putts when you need to, get those bounces when you need to.

But he's put himself there and I know he wants it. Maybe he just wants it a little bit too bad. But at the end of the day just law of averages, he's going to keep putting himself there. He's such a great player, it's going to happen. I know he's a big favorite out here on Tour. He's such a good dude with such a great wife, great family. All of them are so happy and supportive. He's been a great teammate in team events. I know I'm pulling for him. Especially last week after missing the cut, I didn't really have much to pull for for myself and him and Max were both deserving champions.

He's going to be fine. I'm happy to see him playing so well and hope he just keeps getting the credit he deserves for even putting himself there if that makes sense.

Q. I was going to follow up on something. Hypothetical player A came up to you and said, "Justin, I can't get over the mental hump on Sundays. Can you give me one piece of advice?" It sounds like that might be protected information?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Patience is always key, I tell everyone that. There's just certain little things that I've learned. I'm continuing to learn. I've had I don't want to say plenty, but I've had a handful of chances my last handful of times with a chance to win that I haven't gotten it done, so clearly I can continue to learn and continue to get better.

But the most important thing is if you don't put yourself there and unfortunately if you don't fail, then you don't have that opportunity to have that learning experience. That's something -- maybe that's my advice, to pay attention to little things that happen when you're in that moment because you have an opportunity to learn from it.

Q. Just following up on what Steve just asked about Tiger, is there a scenario given how close you are with Tiger that you might see yourself withdrawing from the tournament to be with the family?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, to be perfectly honest, I don't think that's a very fair question. I don't know. I just found out about it. I mean, I need to get a lot more information. I just found out about this 10 minutes, 15 minutes before coming in here. I don't know, I haven't thought about that. I just want to make sure he's okay before I worry about anything about me.

RACHEL NOBLE: Looks like that's it for questions, Justin. Thanks so much for your time today and good luck this week.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Thanks.