

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
July 25, 2023

JUSTIN THOMAS



DOUG MILNE: We will go ahead and get started, like to welcome 2017 FedExCup champion Justin Thomas.

Justin, thanks for joining us for a few minutes, making your first start here at the 3M Open. That said, if we can just get a few comments on how you're feeling coming into the week.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I'm excited to be here. It's always fun coming to a new place. Played nine today, the course is great, it's in unbelievable condition. The greens are about as good as you could possibly imagine. Yeah, everybody here has been very, very welcoming, which is always great and a nice feeling.

Unfortunately, with how some tournaments work in the schedule, I haven't been able to come here in the past, but I'm glad that worked out for me to be able to come this year. Yeah, I'm excited for the week.

DOUG MILNE: You've got positives about the season and things that you may want to continue building on. Just kind of how you're feeling about your game, your week coming in.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I feel like -- I really feel like great things are coming. Obviously I've had not very many results or not much positives to show. You know, I've played a lot better golf than I feel like the scores and finishes have shown. I mean, it was just a couple events ago in the Travelers I finished in the top-10 when it was kind of somewhat -- I mean, obviously Keegan was running away with it, but very easily could have been a top 2, 3, 4, 5 finish.

Yeah, I'm doing a lot of things pretty well. I've got to kind of just get over that hurdle. Feel like I'm very, very close, I am. Just got to -- hopefully this is the week that it all clicks and comes together.

DOUG MILNE: And one somewhat unrelated question, a little while ago while you were practicing, a number of people mentioned that you had talked to a little kid, Tommy or Thomas.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah.

DOUG MILNE: How did that come about? What was that about?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, he just was following us. There obviously wasn't too many people out there on a Tuesday practice round. I mean, he was very into it and I just asked if he



wanted to come walk inside the ropes with us.

His real name is Thomas, but he goes by Tommy. I made that mistake when I introduced him as Thomas, and he said, "I go by Tommy" to everybody. So sorry to him for that.

Yeah, he's a cute kid. He actually hit a shot on 17 with my 7-iron to about 25 feet, it was pretty impressive. Yeah, he's just big into golf and I was glad he could come hang with us a little bit.

DOUG MILNE: Good mojo for you. With that, we'll open it up.

Q. I know you were in the running for the Ryder Cup team at Hazeltine in 2016. Have you ever played here in Minnesota or spent any time here?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, actually, I thought this was my first time in Minnesota. I forgot that I came and played Hazeltine for that practice session. I haven't been here since then or played any other golf around here, was just basically that day, I think just played 18 holes. Yeah, I haven't been here since then.

Q. Did you have any second thoughts or take a second thought to play here or Wyndham the next two weeks?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, I'm playing both weeks, I'm playing this week and next week. They weren't originally on the schedule, but things change and you have to adjust sometimes.

The way that the Playoffs, the format is now with it being 70, 50, 30, you know, in the past I may just be able to rely on a good first event or two in the Playoffs, but the way it is now, you have to play some good golf to be in the Playoffs and I haven't exactly done that so far. So I have two weeks to get myself in a good spot.

Q. What's it like kind of embracing the weekly grind right now and playing knowing that you have to get points and everything, because not everybody who's outside the top 70 is playing all these events? Why is it so important for you to get yourself in that position and go for it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Well, a lot of reasons. Like I said, I'm very, very close. I feel like I'm just right there to kind of like break it through a little inner confidence or mojo, if you will. I mean, I'm not going to get that at home sitting on the couch, so I need to -- personally feel like I just kind of need to play my way through it a little bit.

Yeah, I mean, this just goes to show I think this is to me -- first off, this is an unbelievable opportunity for me, kind of behind the eight-ball and my end goal is to make the TOUR Championship like it is every year. It's not like I'm just playing to try to get into the first Playoffs event. I want to be in Atlanta and I'm going to have to get there somehow.



This is a good chance for me to learn a little bit about myself and push myself and become better. I mean, this game, nothing's given to you. I've had great chances to win the FedExCup the last five or six years and now I'm trying to make the Playoffs. That's just the way that this sport is. And it can happen to anybody, so you've just got to go out and get it and that's what I'm going to do these last two weeks.

Q. Justin, how have you been spending your time since you left Hoylake? What have you been doing?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Not much. I got here Saturday afternoon. Just basically taped my eyes open to stay awake as long as I possibly could. Had a nice dinner with Bones, my agent and my wife and all of us were just, we just were trying to stay there as late as we could.

Yeah, had kind of the same thing on Sunday, just relaxed, didn't do much. I just wanted to take two days or I guess a day and a half, whatever off of golf. I watched -- I'm a golf nerd, I watched every shot of The Open, I watched the finish of the Barracuda, I had to do some laundry, just kind of hung out, did a little workout.

Yeah, it's pretty much been just kind of resting and trying to get back on this time zone. I told Bones the other day I was trying so hard to stay awake as late as I could on Sunday night and I woke up at 2:30 yesterday morning with all the lights on in my room. I didn't even make it to the bedside table to just turn the light off, I was so tired.

The biggest thing is just getting back acclimated and making sure that I'm mentally and physically energized and good to go.

Q. You mentioned watching The Open Championship and we've seen you Tweet and follow some of the other majors that you didn't make it to the weekend. Why do you like to do that? It seems like it would be hard for you not being there, but you still wanted to watch. Why did you want to do that?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm a golf fan, I am. Obviously it sucks this year, I've literally watched basically the four, all four majors, the winners play their entire final round. So that's not what you want to be, you want to be the one that's being watched.

I am. There's a lot of people that just, if they miss the cut or if they're not playing, they don't want to watch, but I'm a golf fan. I felt like I learned from watching Brooks at the PGA. I felt like his demeanor and how he went about everything, for me personally, I was like that's how I want to be, how I want to act when I'm out there playing in majors.

I mean, Harm yesterday or two days ago, it was just how he just picked his way around that golf course, just seeing how focused he was, and him and Big Country, his caddie, were kind of in their own little world under that umbrella. You know, as a fan I like to watch, but also if I can learn a thing or two, that's great.



Q. Like you said, a little behind the eight-ball and some of the off the tee stuff biting you a little. What is the plan with a lot of water here? You've had a lot of success on the Florida swing, you've done well at the Valspar a couple years in a row. Does that come into play mentally at all?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Oh, yeah, sure. It's tough, but at the end of the day it's still golf, right? It doesn't matter if I'm playing last week at Hoylake or if I'm playing here, it's better to play from the fairway than it is from not the fairway.

I was obviously, when you shoot 11 over you have a lot of things that go wrong, but when I was looking at it, I was -- just the majority of my holes that were over par had to do with some sort of bunker that I hit a tee shot a couple yards off the fairway that would be fine here in the States, instead resulted in a spot where I couldn't even get out of the bunker, so on and so forth.

So yeah, the course is very right in front of you. It definitely seems like there's just going to be holes or tee shots -- I haven't played the other nine -- where if you're uncomfortable, you may just have to play a little bit more conservative. But the greens are soft. They're so good, like I said, that you can make from what I've seen a lot of birdies out here. So just kind of be patient and wait for that run to come. Maybe go shoot a 61 or 2 or 3 one day and next thing you know you're holding the trophy on 18 on Sunday.

Q. J.T., you mentioned Bones. Just wondering, he's seen you at the highest of highs, he obviously knows what you're capable of. Just wondering as you navigate some new waters what his role is in kind of helping you get through that?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's tough. I mean, caddies are, they just have such a hard job, right, because they're damned if they do, damned if they don't. I think the thing that I respect and love so much about Bones is just how much he cares. He would do absolutely anything in the world if it meant that we were going to shoot one stroke better this week or if I was going to feel that much better. That's really all I could ask for in a caddie.

It's great. I mean, he's there, like you said, he's there with me through all of this and we're both -- I mean, not only am I going to come out better from it, but he is, too. He's just very supportive and very -- constantly reminded me of I'm pretty hard on myself at times and get down on myself; just kind of reminded me of who I am, what I've done and what I'm capable of. And every once in a while I need that. It's definitely good to have him beside me in the fairways, it's a good person to have on your team.

Q. I'm kind of interested in exploring the connection between having fun on the golf course and having success on the golf course. Do you think it's one of those things where you play well because you're having fun or it becomes more fun because you're having success?



JUSTIN THOMAS: You betcha. It's -- I get in this -- I shouldn't say, I've gotten into this argument with people before that everybody's different. I think their demeanors, you see it every week of some guys that are maybe a little more emotional, they're a little bit more here and you have -- look at D.J. when he plays, he's like this, or Cantlay doesn't maybe get overexcited but he doesn't -- you know, he's right here. Xander is so even keel. But the important thing is you have to kind of make the most out of what you have.

I try to more so let my mood impact my golf instead of my golf impact my mood. I mean, it's not -- my thing is it's not that easy to just wake up and be in a good mood and all of a sudden I'm going to shoot 65. If it was that good, we'd all be sitting up here getting interviewed, you know what I mean.

Golf means so much to me that I'm just not the kind of person that can go shoot 82-71 and be fine and be smiling and be happy about it. That pisses me off.

But everybody's different in that regard. I'm a personal -- I'm on the side of the golf helps make the mood what it is, but that doesn't mean that I can't look at poor play or whatever, a bad shot, whatever it be, and turn it into a positive, if that makes sense.

Q. J.T., you've had quite a few friends that have gone through call it a slow period in their career; Tiger, Rickie, Jordan. Have there been any words from that group as you've hit a little bit of a slower point now, any words of wisdom from people that have seen themselves go through it and go out of it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I've asked them questions, I've talked to them about it.

But I -- look, you never want to compare, and I don't want to say anything that makes what they went through better or worse than it was.

I'm not in that position yet. I shouldn't say "yet." I don't plan to be. I'm top-20 whatever player in the world and I won a major championship just a little over a year ago. I feel fine. I mean, I'm still doing a lot of things well.

Obviously, like I said at the beginning, the results aren't there. And I'm also very fortunate, you know, that this run of golf for six months, whatever it is, you know, I feel like the reason it's being viewed as it is is because of the player that I am and I take a lot of pride in that.

But I also know that at the same time I'm the kind of player that I can get out of it just fine. I have a lot of faith and belief in myself to know that this is just a challenge and an opportunity for me to grow and get better and really come out of this even better than I have been in the past.

They've been very helpful and very great friends during this, as I wouldn't expect it any other way. But yeah, you know, every situation is different, I guess.



Q. Seventy-one at Hoylake on Friday was a very good score given the conditions there. You talked about how well you feel like you're hitting it at points. Does that feel more indicative of where your game is at versus the 82 on Thursday?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah. The 82, I mean, it was very similar to my golf at the U.S. Open. I mean, I just kind of chalked it up as a fluke. I made two doubles and a quad, right? That's literally middle school golf-type stuff. I'm way too good of a player to be doing stuff like that. I don't know if it's a lack of focus or discipline or whatever.

Yeah, I played really good golf on Friday. It's a little different when you're just shipping driver around there everywhere and you're just kind of hoping for the best. I knew I needed to go shoot 7, 8, 9 under, but I have full belief that I can do that.

I told Bones I think it was coming up like 12 or 13, I was like we've got two par 5s downwind, we could eagle both to these pins. I was like if we could just get three of the other four holes, like we shoot 8 under, we're probably going to make this cut. That's the thought process I had. Then I bogeyed the next hole and that kind of all went to crap.

Yeah, it's just more, it's more up here for me right now, just kind of relaxing and not being so hard on myself and just enjoying the game of golf again, because I haven't been as often as I should have.

Q. You grew up playing in the heat. There are scorches forecast between now and at least Thursday, and bad air quality to boot. How do those conditions affect the players and the course?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know. I mean, the heat is definitely tough. It feels great after some of the cold mornings and evenings last week, two weeks in the U.K. But this is why I train and I spend as much time in the gym as I do or eat the way that I do to where I'm able to use heat and conditions like this to my advantage if I can.

Being in Florida before we left for London to go to the Scottish, it was the hottest I've ever felt in Florida. It was tough. And I was in shorts and a T-shirt. Being in pants won't be quite as hot. But yeah, it's going to be a lot of hydrating, a lot of resting and just trying to take breaks as often as we can.

