

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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JUSTIN THOMAS

HALEY PETERSON: Good morning, everyone. We would like to welcome Justin Thomas here to the media center at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-am.

Justin, making your second start here and first since 2014. Saw, thanks to a picture from Doug Ferguson, that you got out to a practice round. Just want to start off with some comments on what it's like to be back.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Glad to know Doug knows how to work his camera.

Yeah, it's hard to believe when you see this place like it was yesterday and today that the weather can get as bad as it looks like it's going to get. Yeah, there's arguably no place better in the world when it's like this out at Pebble Beach.

Yeah, enjoy being here. It's just been unfortunate kind of timing or slot in the schedule for past years why I haven't come back. I just have always been someone who, after learning my first two years that four in a row is not my cup of tea, it's not good for me to do. With that and Torrey Pines, it was an event I haven't been able to come to in the past.

I'm very happy to be here in terms of playing well enough to, you know, make it my first elevated event of the year and feel like I'm playing well, so I'm excited to get going.

HALEY PETERSON: You're playing well, T-3 at the American Express playing in the final group. How are you feeling entering the week?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I feel great. I'm excited to get going, I'm excited for this year. I've been working really, really hard and I feel like I'm in a great space mentally and physically. Yeah, it just -- it's fun being in competition and being in the heat of the moment. I didn't play as well as I would have liked on Sunday in Palm Springs, but it was still a huge step in the right direction and I do feel like some wins are coming here soon. Just got to keep my head down and just keep pushing.

Q. Justin, I know last year you talked about how hard you were working as well and obviously sometimes just didn't get the results out of it. What is the difference? What is it that you feel like has changed that you are now actually getting the results from your hard work?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'd say working on the correct things. I think -- well, I know that I got into some bad habits swing-wise last year. To be perfectly honest, I think it just took a little bit of time to get out of some of those.



Just for me personally, I felt like I compare a lot and look a lot at old swing videos and current and try to -- I understand that things change and body changes, so on and so forth, but I still know there's certain characteristics that kind of make my swing what it is, at least when I'm swinging well.

I got pretty far away from those last year, so it honestly just took some time to kind of get that muscle memory out. It just took a lot of reps. Then once I feel like it got into a better place, it can get more consistent and then with that comes more positivity, more confidence in myself, more belief in myself. Then I'm able to work on the things I kind of that have made me succeed over my career in terms of distance control and my iron game and stuff like that.

So yeah, it's just, like always, it's just a part of that ongoing process that we play in golf.

Q. Just to follow up, a lot of times guys are searching or chasing something. They get to a level and they want to try to get better and they start doing different things. Is that your case when you were talking about doing some different things?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Definitely. You know, of course I'd love to look back, or I do look back and I would love to go back in time and wish I didn't maybe push for some of those changes, but at the same time I look at it as it was a great learning experience and it was just I felt like my hands and my arms were starting to get higher and higher and higher and I didn't necessarily love that. I felt like it just was -- it wasn't great, but at the end of the day I think I unfortunately just didn't like the way that it looked.

Again, that's something that kind of makes my swing what it is. I've always had very high hands and I'm steeper and whatnot, so that was an example of me chasing something that I probably didn't need to. My dad and I both kind of, when we got together and talked whether it was last year end of the year, we both realized it was something that we both should have noticed or not pursued. But yeah, like anything, we learn from it and planning to not make that mistake again.

Q. I think you played here last probably 2019 U.S. Open. What do you remember about Pebble Beach? What did you like about it and what were, I guess, the challenges that you found?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I really like Pebble. It's obviously very situational on how it plays in terms of if it's firm or if it's like it is now. It plays incredibly different during the U.S. Open in June than it does for this tournament this time of year. So it plays quite a bit easier, shorter, it's not as much of a necessity to, you know, hit it to the fat part of the green. You can get away with more when it's this soft.

But it's still, the greens are very, very small, they're very undulated. With it being softer, the poa annua's going to be a little bumpier, going to be harder to make putts, but I think all of us understand that.



But I like the layout. It's a place that I know you can make a lot of birdies. I think it plays to a strength in my game in terms of distance control and being able to take spin off of the ball with short irons into these very spinny, severe greens. That's something I enjoy doing.

Yeah, pretty sure there's no cut this week. I'm excited to make my first cut at this tournament because I missed in 2014 and 2019, so I think I can knock that one off.

Q. Obviously you only played here the one time in the AT&T, but do you like this idea now of smaller fields, signature event here, the changes to it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, I do. I think it's -- I know the practice rounds are a lot better. I remember a practice round in 2014 taking -- nine holes taking about three and a half hours. Rick and I went and played 18 yesterday in about four and a half and we chipped and putted every hole and hit some extra shots. It's more enjoyable for everybody that's here.

I understand that it's unfortunate for a lot of people that have either been supportive of the event, whether it be financially or showing up or, you know, sponsoring whatever it may be that may not have been able to play this year. That's obviously unfortunate and I don't wish that could happen.

But I think for the sake of the tournament and also especially you get a week like this week where the weather doesn't look very good, it just -- it's asking for some very, very long days and a very likely Monday finish, just a total scramble.

It's going to help with the flow of everything, I would say, and also gets all the best golfers in the world together at a beautiful place.

Q. Did -- you answered or asked most of the questions I had about Pebble, but I'm just curious because as much golf you played as a kid, your dad had a working-class job, did you guys ever take any golf vacations, you and your dad?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, we took -- we took some. He would always go to -- like funny enough where we live now, he would go to south Florida and play in the section events in like December, January. I would play quite a bit of hooky from school at the beginning of January and have a lot of homework with me. I don't know if you consider that a golf trip because we were kind of there for him to play in a tournament and I just got to play golf.

Not really, no. He was pretty -- he was busy. Anything that we did was probably not necessarily a golf vacation, it was more of a work trip that we were able to play golf together.

Q. Did you ever have a bucket list course that you wanted to play when you were --

JUSTIN THOMAS: Augusta, for sure. I think I was very fortunate to play Augusta with my dad a couple years ago and that was a very, very special day for us together because I think



very fortunate with the people we've met over the years and whatnot that I know that that's something that a lot of members would say it's very easy, we can do any time. It's still very, very special to do that, spend those moments like that with your dad.

Q. Just in your opinion, what do you look for in what makes a great tournament? Is it the historic courses? Is it the best fields? Is it in relation to par and score? Like what in your mind as a fan even makes for the best tournament?

JUSTIN THOMAS: That's a good question and I think everybody's answer is different.

I think some people that watch golf just love -- they want to see the best players in the world, they want to see the No. 1 and No. 2 battle it out, or maybe they want to just see -- some people just love to see carnage, especially like at a U.S. Open, they want to see bogeys and doubles and no birdies kind of thing.

Me personally, I'm not necessarily -- I'm not like super adamant that it needs to be set up a certain way. I think what makes a great tournament is I think a well set up golf course is one. You want to have whoever plays the best and the best players over four days generally will kind of make their way up to the top. I think it's great when you have -- you have a Sunday and you have 20, 25 people within three or four of the lead. I think especially at a place like this where you can go out and shoot 63 or 4 on a Sunday, but you can also shoot even par just as easily.

To me, I like being rewarded for good golf and penalized for bad golf. I would say it has a little to do with the golf course, but just the opportunity for a little bit of movement.

And you always want someone to have to earn a victory, right? You don't want it to be kind of like a fluke where they maybe get away with a lot of things here and there, but you obviously can't draw that up all the time.

Q. Back to you, now that you have stacked kind of four or five really good starts in, how close are you to where you want to be with your muscle memory, your swing?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm very close. I think at this point it's just starting to win tournaments again. I feel like I'm very, very close to doing that and starting to do it, you know, often again.

But I fully understand that just because you think that doesn't mean you deserve it or it's going to happen. I just need to keep putting myself in that position and getting in contention. I think that's what I did so often there for a handful of years. It's pretty hard to win tournaments when you're either not playing the weekend or you're teeing off three or four hours before the leaders tee off.

Last Sunday was -- Palm Springs was the first final group I've played in on Sunday in a while and it was fun. That's what I'm excited to get back to doing more because, you know. That's why all of us play is to try to win golf tournaments and win them often, so that's what I'm



hoping to do.

Q. Justin, with this being your 10th year on Tour, I'm curious, when you look at year one, what was the greatest advice you were given when you were first starting out? And then, for a guy like Nick Dunlap, what do you think after 10 years under your belt, what's the greatest advice you could give him?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Well, Nick is very fortunate where his first year on Tour is monumentally different than I think everybody's first year on Tour out right now.

We happened to be at dinner at the same place last night, Sam Reeves had some people over and Nick was there and he looked tired. He was like, man, I'm so tired. I was like, dude, I don't really care, you should be sleeping right now getting ready to go to class tomorrow morning and I'm pretty sure all of your teammates would happily switch with you, so be careful who you say that to. I was needling him, giving him a hard time.

I think for him, and I've told him this, I talked to him a little bit last week, just remember who he is and stay true to that. I think it's very easy for any rookie, doesn't matter if they're 20, 30 or 40, when you have access to the equipment trucks, when you have access to all these coaches, trainers, caddies, like whatever it is, it's easy to want to tinker and want to change.

Everybody's different in that regard, but I just think it's important that whatever he's always done, to continue to do that because I think it's easy to get a little bit taken over by the opportunity. Like you have all this access and why wouldn't I kind of change and try some stuff, when in reality that's probably not for the best.

For me, the best advice I heard is -- I'll never forget it and I've told this to a lot of rookies on Tour. It was actually from Hudson Swafford, it was in Sea Island, it was 2014, it was like my third or fourth tournament in whatever, my rookie season and I had gone missed cut, missed cut, MDF and I had one whole FedExCup point through three events.

It was Saturday night and like we were just at a bar there. I wasn't playing on Sunday and I think he had missed the cut. We were kind of having some drinks, a group of us, and he was like, I don't really know what you're celebrating for, I don't know like what your -- a lot of you rookies are having fun for. You think you have your Tour card. He's like, you don't. Rookies do not have a Tour card. He's like, you do, but you don't have the ability to choose where you're playing, you're not in all the tournaments. He's like, everybody comes out here their first year and I think they are so excited to finally have a PGA TOUR card and they feel like they're on top of the world when in reality you haven't earned that until you have it after that first year.

I don't know why that just resonated with me that I pretty much needed to start working harder and go out and earn it. I can always thank Hud for that.

Q. J.T., I think I saw you and Jordan headed out to Ladera. Just wanted to get your



thoughts on the experience and how frequently do you have a chance to do that, play a course that's not on the roto but get out to on the road?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Not very often at all, to be honest. People often will ask if I've played courses and my response to them is if there's not a PGA TOUR event there, I probably haven't played it. Not necessarily looking for a lot of golf trips. We do it enough.

Ladera was incredible. I thought it was very, very unique. It was very cool. It was an unbelievable piece of property and I like -- Gil Hanse I think does some really cool just design and subtleties and unique things for kind of his, I guess, vision, if you will.

I know we had a lot of fun. Jordan had particularly more fun than me because he whooped up on me that day. Yeah, it was a cool day.

Q. Two things kind of on that note, because I remember Tiger, this was probably around '07 at that time, had never played Seminole and had never played Pine Valley, a guy who could probably get on wherever he wants. What would be, for a guy who doesn't take golf trips, the one course that you have not played that you would like to play?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's funny you ask that because I'm actually doing it in April. I haven't played Pine Valley and I got asked by a buddy. We have a little trip that I think like seven or eight of us and we're going to just be a quick kind of day and a half and go in and play.

I'm excited because I've heard so many great things about it. There's been two times in the past where I had the opportunity to play and things fell through and didn't. I'm making sure that it happens this year. I'm excited.

Q. Secondly, and I don't know a better way to ask this question, but what's your reaction to Tyrrell Hatton going to LIV?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I don't -- I feel like at this point I'm just -- I'm not over it, it's just kind of is what it is.

I think people -- at the end of the day, I've definitely found that out over this whole process, that people obviously are going to think about it differently than others, but there's also -- there's just people that they're going to make decisions for what they think is best. I don't -- I might disagree with maybe some of them, but I think at the end of the day if that's what Tyrrell thinks is best for him, then that's what he's got to do.

Obviously I'm bummed and I wish he wasn't, but it's not -- it's not like I'm going to call him and give him some spiel about how he shouldn't. I'm sure he's -- I hope he's done his homework and research and feels it's the best decision, but it is what it is I guess.

Q. Just as a guy who's as involved in the game of golf as you are, now that the roster



I think is set for the year, what kind of topics or stories do you expect to hear about LIV golf this year? Obviously I don't get a sense anyone else is going to sign for the rest of the year like we've gone through previous years, you know, who's going next type thing.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, at least from what, you know, what Greg said, they haven't gotten anything close to what he's kind of said. It sounded like they were going to sign 10 or 15 people this however many months and haven't.

I don't know. I'm not just saying this. I don't really know enough about what's going on to even kind of give a storyline. I think at the end of the day the guys that are out there that are still if you want to call it kind of in their prime or can still play their best golf, I would say that their priorities are still set on the majors versus their season out there.

I think that the storylines in my opinion will continue to be if those guys play well in major championships and win major championships. I think that's more of a storyline I would think than they could create on that tour.

HALEY PETERSON: Unless there are any other questions --

JUSTIN THOMAS: Who's calling me?

HALEY PETERSON: -- we'll go ahead and wrap things up. Justin, thanks for the time and best of luck this week.

