

U.S. Open Championship 2020

Thursday, September 17, 2020

Mamaroneck, New York, USA

Winged Foot Golf Club

Justin Thomas

Flash Interview

Q. Justin Thomas, 5-under 65. Justin, can you walk us through your round a little bit.

JUSTIN THOMAS: It was a good day for me from the start. I've just played really, really solidly. Hit a lot of really quality tee shots. Only had a few squirrelly ones, it felt like. The few greens I missed, I hit great bunker shots to give myself good par chances.

Yeah, it was a really, really solid round of golf. It's one of the best rounds I've played in a while tee to green. There are a couple things here and there that definitely could have been better, but I made sure all of my misses were in the right spot, and that's what you have to do at a U.S. Open.

Q. Birdies on 9, 10, and 11. Could you talk us through those.

JUSTIN THOMAS: I had a good drive on 9. Had a 5 iron in, looking to make birdie there. It was a difficult pin. After where I went, it was an easy up and down, like a little bump and run 8 iron to about five feet.

10 was one of my better irons of the day. Not necessarily between clubs, but it definitely was a little bit off of a 5 iron and felt like trying to get it up there because I had a little bit of backstop, and just kind of hit this little carve 5 iron in there and landed right next to it about ten feet or so and made a nice curl-in putt there.

Played the next hole ideally how I'd like, just a 4 iron off the tee and gap wedge into the hole, and a putt that's almost so easy it's hard, just off the right edge, and buried that one as well. So it was good to kind of get a little bit of momentum going on that back.

Q. Was that round kind of that different kind of fun you talked about on Tuesday, where it is difficult but you can go out if you're playing well?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, 65 is fun no matter where you play, especially at Winged Foot. It was. It just was -- I was



in a really good frame of mind, and I was focused. I just was sticking to my routine and playing every shot, as opposed to getting ahead of myself. It's one of those rounds where it's just kind of like, next thing you know, you make the putt on 18, you're done for the day.

Q. Two things. With how dire the projections were for this week, does the scoring at all today surprise you?

JUSTIN THOMAS: No. The greens are very soft. I thought they'd be a little firmer, but I also understood that they need to err on this side so they can get them how they want this weekend. We had soft conditions this morning, a little overcast. Wind wasn't really blowing very much. So it was good scoring conditions. In the morning, it's usually softer anyway.

It's still Winged Foot. You've still got to hit the shots. That kind of was my game plan going into the week is that, yeah, I need to respect the course, but if I'm driving it well and playing well, I do need to try to make some birdies, and that's exactly what we did today.

Q. Secondly, are you doing anything different with your putting this week? They seemed to allude to something on the telecast.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Not that I know of. If it's something new or something different, that's news to me.

Q. Just getting out to an early lead like this, do you kind of feel like you've got a leg up on the field, so to speak, when you get off to this hot of a start on a course like this in the Open?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Not really. It's helpful with three days left, but it's not even remotely close to being over. As great of a round and fun as it was, it's over with now, and I need to get over it because I got 54 more holes to try to play well and shoot some good scores.

Q. Just one more thing. You talked about not being tentative out here. Was that part of your mindset today when you went out there?

JUSTIN THOMAS: As well as I drove it, and where I got

... when all is said, we're done.®



the ball and the couple lies I had in the rough when I missed the fairway, it was -- yeah, you have some scoring clubs. I made a couple birdies with some longer clubs or some harder holes. No, I mean, for the most part, it was all just right in front of me. At that point, it was just about executing and hitting the shots and making the putts.

Q. When did you start working with your new putting coach, and what did it change?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It didn't change much. It was more of a process thing for me. It was more -- I mean, Matt and I had developed such a -- I felt like a really good setup and a really good stroke. You know he did a great job of getting me in that. I just was having a hard time, we were both having a hard time figuring out why I was missing putts when I got done with the round. That's an issue because then you don't know what to address.

So, yeah, I had seen him in the middle of the summer and continue to work with Matt and continue to work with some good stuff to where I just felt like, for me, a lot of my issues and problems were the green reading and the visualization. That's what we've been working on more than anything, to be honest -- and the speed more than anything. It's not like I'm going out and doing mechanical stuff. It's just trying to kind of get the muscle memory of hitting the putt as far as I want to and feeling comfortable playing different breaks and almost kind of creating shots, if you will, but on the putting green.

That's just something that, as a field player, as much of a field player as I am, it's been really helpful.

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