

TOUR Championship

Tuesday, August 31, 2021

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Justin Thomas

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Some opening comments on thoughts coming into this week. And obviously a little bit of iffy weather today at East Lake, so your plans rest of today and going into tomorrow.

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm done for the day. Jordan and I came out and played nine this morning. We teed off at 7:30 and I was able to zip around and see the front nine. I played the back yesterday, just with the unknown of the weather, but, and was even able to get some practice in. I mean, my game's in a good place, so I fortunately don't need to overdo it in practice. I think, especially this time of the year, rest can be just as important or more important than anything.

So in terms of golf standpoint I'm done for the day. I'm excited to be here. I absolutely love this golf course, very similar to how I feel about Sawgrass. It's a place that I get comfortable every time I come to and I feel like it's a place I am going to win at some point in my career. It's obviously a little different now with the staggered start, and starting as far back as I am this week. But I do know that if you drive the ball well, you really, really can tear this place up. So that's kind of the game plan this week and seeing if we can do some damage and try to get another one.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Staying on that point, what do you think about the staggered scoring system?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I like it more now than I feel like I did when I first heard it. It's tough. I mean, it's easier for people to understand at home, which I think was the main reason that it's happened or that it kind of came about, and having the opportunity to have a different TOUR Championship winner than FedExCup. I'm not really a big fan of whoever finishes lowest wins the golf tournament because that's not necessarily the fact and winning golf tournaments out here is a big deal. So I personally wish that that wasn't a thing because, I mean, you know, obviously, if you're 10-under, you have a lot better chance to win the actual tournament versus everyone starting at



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the same score.

And then you obviously get into the fact of, I could have the greatest season of all time on the PGA TOUR. I could win 15 times in a season and I could come here and I could just have something just detrimental happen to where I either can't play or I have an injury and I don't play, then I finish 30th in the FedExCup because of that. And I don't think that's fair. I think that's something that could somehow be tweaked or fixed.

But I do like the fact that everybody that's here this week knows exactly where they stand and they know what they have to do and they just have to go out and get it.

Q. How would you describe this year and where is your game, your state of game right now?

JUSTIN THOMAS: State of my game is it's good. It's getting a lot better. I felt like last week was not really a very good place to kind of show how you were playing. I mean, it was, clearly, by the way the score showed, it was a very easy golf course and it was just if you weren't making a lot of putts, then you weren't going to have a chance to win.

I was hitting a lot of good putts that were just kind of burning edges and just missing, so that's why I finished where I did. But in terms of the year, I mean, I would, golf-wise, I mean, I would call it a poor year. I mean, I didn't play very well in the majors. I won THE PLAYERS. That was my only win or has been so far, at least, and I got off to a good start and just really kind of stalled once the year started and I have been working probably harder than I ever have and I've traveled more than I ever have this year. And, I mean, I think that stuff, although you don't like to use it as an excuse, can sometimes weigh on you more than I probably know.

But I just, I've been excited for this last stretch because I feel like I'm getting closer and closer to where I need to be. I'm mentally in a lot better state than I was in the middle, second third of the year, where I just wasn't really in a very good place mentally. So come this time of year, that's very important. So like I said earlier, I'm excited to see what this week holds.

Q. Have you given any thought to what you would do

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with \$15,000,000?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, I wouldn't do anything differently. I'm fortunate to be in a good place. But I don't play golf for the money. I just would be very happy to have a FedExCup. But I'm sure I could come up with some dumb stuff to buy.

Q. To follow on the format question, obviously, when you won the FedExCup, you did so without winning the tournament, but we had two winners, or there was the possibility for two winners. Xander won the actual tournament. Are you, are you better with that, the way they used to do it? Obviously, there was still some disappointment for you at the end of that day, but yet you won the big prize, but yet somebody else, the guy who shot the lowest score still got a trophy.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, that's what I like. I like the fact that whoever shoots the lowest score should win the golf tournament, not whoever ends up the lowest should win the golf tournament. I mean, I understand they win the FedExCup. But whoever shoots the lowest 72-hole score should win the golf tournament, in my opinion, because they did. They played better than everybody else over the course of four rounds. I don't know, I go back and forth. I mean, at the end of the day, the end of the week, somebody's going to be happy with the format this week and it might as well be me. But I mean when you look at it, it's easy to say from the outside, but once I saw the statistics and how it panned out over the years of who the winner was with this format and the old format it was almost identical, which was obviously a sense of relief, if you will, or just good to know that it pans out how it should. But, yeah, I mean I was pissed that year. I mean I was mad I didn't win the golf tournament. I was so close and I really wanted to get that sixth win of the season and, yeah, it was nice winning the FedExCup, but I wanted to win the TOUR Championship as well.

Q. Would you be in favor of any system that, obviously they seemingly just want to have the one winner, they want to have the FedExCup champion be the same. Would you be in favor of any system that saw everybody who got here having an equal shot at it? Obviously that would be a huge change from what we have now.

JUSTIN THOMAS: What do you mean?

Q. Well like say the 30th guy in, who barely made it, if he wins this week, he wins the FedExCup. Obviously that's drastic, but that would allow for them to have both, the winner of the tournament also wins the FedExCup.

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, I don't like that at all. I think for the amount of money that we're playing for and the amount of history that's there, no offense to someone that could do that, but three good weeks shouldn't mean that you win the season-long race. I mean, yeah you could argue that you have to play well at the three right times, which I agree, I'm all for that, but at the same time you look at other sports you still have to play pretty well to get in the playoffs and then you have to beat these teams in a series, whether it's NBA, NHL, MLB, and then you have to play a lot of different games in the NFL playoffs and beat some high-quality teams. And at the end of the day the best team is usually going to win. You're going to have some upsets here and there, but I don't like that just for the sake of I still think that if you played the best over the season you should be right there to have it -- it is called a season-long race for a reason. So that's just my thoughts on it.

Q. We hear a lot from players about how the season can be long, arduous lonely, stressful at times with all the travel. This question may be kind of corny, but I was curious how much of a difference it makes to have a friend like Jordan Spieth who is out here with you, because I don't think every player or maybe even many players have a friendship like that, that can kind of maybe make things a little easier.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I think a lot of guys are close like that, that are closer than other people might think. I think it's just a different friend group or maybe it's not highlighted as much, if you will. But I think a lot of guys have their crews that they play practice rounds with every week, guys that they will go to dinner with. And it is helpful, I mean it's helpful for me, Jordan, and a group of a couple other guys that we'll share houses, that we'll have dinners with, all of our girls are very close, so it's easy for them to want to hang out because then we're all hanging out.

And, yeah, it is, it's a long season, it's grueling, it's tiring, so when you're able to spend time, whether it's away from the golf course or here at the golf course with someone that's able to relax you a little bit, that definitely does help over the course of a long season.

Q. If I asked you the question of why you guys worked as friends, would it be because you're similar in the right ways or different in the right ways or how would you analyze that?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I would say that we're more similar than we are -- we get along from our similarities probably more so than our differences. I mean we're both competitive, we're both play golf for the same reason, we're



both want what's best for the game of golf, we both like being good ambassadors for the game, we're both very hungry, fiery, probably a little too emotional at times. I mean we both have those kind of characteristics, that's probably which helps us get along, I guess.

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