

# Zurich Classic of New Orleans

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Avondale, Louisiana, USA

TPC Louisiana

## Justin Rose

## Henrik Stenson

### Press Conference

DOUG MILNE: We would like to welcome Justin Rose and Henrik Stenson to the virtual media center here at the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. Thanks for joining us, guys.

Justin, you're making your 14th start, having won the event in 2015, and you guys have played together before, so if we could just get a few opening comments from each of y'all. We'll start with you, Justin, on being back and playing together again.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I can't believe it's been 14 years. I've unfortunately missed I guess the last two. I know we didn't play last year, and the year before that I was, actually, we had a family sort of situation and what have you. So it's actually really great to be back. It's been three calendar years since I've been back here in New Orleans, so that makes me feel really old, if I've already played 14 times and I missed the last three years. So really excited to be back. It's a fun tournament. Always fun hanging around Henrik. Can't wait for some up close and personal with his dry sense of humor this week. And, yeah, I'll let you talk about our wonderful success here. (Laughing).

HENRIK STENSON: To come, you mean. Yeah. No, luckily I haven't been here 40 years with you because then I would feel a lot older than I do. But we, yeah, this is the third time, lucky for us, really. Teamed up the first two years and we didn't have much success, so we obviously are hoping and looking to turn that around this time, and same thing, it's a great event. I think it was a great addition to this tournament, having the team format, and, yeah, a lot of players really enjoyed the week, and I think the fans and spectators do as well because it's something different. It's like a bit of a fresh air to see something slightly different compared to the regular 72-hole tournaments that we play most of the time. So really fun week and looking forward to teaming up with Justin and turning that fabulous record that we have here around this week.

JUSTIN ROSE: I actually feel like there's a lot of pressure



on us because reading between the lines, Henrik phoned me up and said, Hello, partner, should we give it one more try? (Laughing) so I guess, let's see. I feel like I better bring all I've got this week.

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, bring all you got.

DOUG MILNE: You're clearly bringing some levity to the situation. Along those lines of added pressure, just wanted to see, is there or do you guys feel any added pressure knowing you're not necessarily playing just for yourself, you have somebody else in the mix? I would imagine in a case like the two of you guys there may not be, but can you see a scenario where there may be added pressure playing with a teammate?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think that's always the case, especially guys who haven't done a lot of team golf. I think that is always that temptation to say sorry or that temptation to try to be too perfect or that temptation, yeah, it's not wanting to let your partner down, but we have let each other down multiple times already, so I think we --

HENRIK STENSON: We got over that hurdle.

JUSTIN ROSE: We're over that hurdle. Henrik can talk about maybe our relationship in Ryder Cups and some of that.

HENRIK STENSON: I think Justin is kind of hitting the note there with the -- I mean, we both kind of try, and in any team out there this week, everyone's going to try their hardest. There's certainly that element that you don't want to let your partner down, but you do that by trying to do your best and trying to play as freely as you can. And, yeah, we are both going to miss and no one's doing that intentionally, so it's just to move on and get on with it, and I think a key part is that we know each other so well for many years, both playing together in the Ryder Cups but also playing amateur golf, and kind of, yeah, going way back, as they say. So we know each other and trust each other and I think that's been obviously key to our success as well in the Ryder Cups and having that comfort. And we also play a very similar game, I would say, when we play our finest and that makes it kind of easy out of a strategic



and tactical standpoint as well. So we know each other well. We know each other's games really well, and it's all about having a fun week out there together.

DOUG MILNE: We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Two questions: First one, if you could just maybe walk me through the strategy of playing an event like this and how you actually go about plotting that out versus a normal week for each of you on TOUR.**

HENRIK STENSON: Well, I think when it comes to the format, we obviously are playing two rounds of better ball and two rounds of foursomes or alternate shot, and it's just trying to figure out the details there on how to play this golf course the best way and who feels comfortable taking certain tee shots and so on. So I think we've kind of suss that part out pretty good at this point since we have been here before. And, yeah, I mean, better ball you, got to play aggressive, you got to play aggressive as well in the alternate shot format because the scores have generally been very low around this golf course, so you don't want to get left behind and try and make up a lot of ground, so you better be out there firing and ready to go when Thursday morning comes.

JUSTIN ROSE: The only thing that we might have learned through the years is that the alternate shot format we're probably pretty good at, that's been our strength probably in the Ryder Cup. I think the four-ball, better ball that's kind of an interesting one. I think the temptation to take on every flag because you feel like you've got a partner standing next to you, but then if you do miss a shot, now your partner's feeling like, if you're going to make an obvious bogey or double, for example, if you hit it in the water, it's very difficult for your partner to then play free golf. So I think the mentality of having two birdie putts on every hole is quite an important one and I've always felt like that that works slightly better than just --

HENRIK STENSON: Than having none?

JUSTIN ROSE: Than having none certainly, but all guns blazing. Because I think it happened to us in the past. One of us will make a mistake and the other one steps up and if the other one makes a bogey off the back of the other one's mistake, that's when you get super frustrated.

HENRIK STENSON: And you kind of lose the momentum and so on. So, yeah, I mean, the golf course here at TPC Louisiana has got some really good birdie chances, but there's a couple of holes, in particular a few of the par-3s, that are very challenging and you certainly are feeling a lot better if you're standing there with a 4-iron with water down the left side if your partner is on the edge of the green or

on the green rather than in the water. So we'll try and avoid that scenario this time around.

**Q. Secondly, a different question. There's a report out there about the TOUR's Player Impact Program. I know both of you are obviously familiar with the Premier Golf League and sort of that and this sort of seems to be a direct response to that. I was just curious to get your thoughts on the concept of a bonus pool for players at the end of the year and just your general thoughts about it.**

HENRIK STENSON: Well, when it comes to social media content and so on, I'm just not sure if I can keep up with some of the guys and do enough practical jokes to broaden my following to have an impact, but we'll see if anything on that changes.

But, yeah, I mean, it's obviously a combination to premier the guys who will have a big impact on TOUR and the tournaments and so on in different areas. So I haven't really gotten into that. I feel at this point that I would be better spending my time on trying to make birdies and getting my game in shape rather than figuring out what to do to try and impact on that side. So I can't say that I am like fully engaged in that activity at this point, but obviously an incentive to try and play well and bring other things to the table as well.

**Q. Justin, do you feel like this is something? I mean, we're seeing, we saw the Premier League and what they have done in soccer, football. Just your thoughts, yeah.**

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, there's obviously, there are concepts around the world that want to focus on the best players and the best players being together more often, right? And I think with media dollars being so astronomical these days and obviously four, five, six guys always being the ones that are being used to promote the tournament, so I guess it's just away of trying to sort of incentivize them and help them out and -- not that they need much helping out, but a rising tide lifts all ships, so obviously they will hopefully, obviously the whole TOUR has benefited very much from a group of guys. But if you really want to think about it, one guy for so long that it's just a way of maybe saying thank you or, I don't know, but obviously there's lots of ways that that money could also be used in different ways to support the TOUR. So there's going to be lots of people with different opinions. But, yeah, it's going to be -- yeah, I guess it's been announced, so let's just see what the reaction is.

**Q. Just generally speaking, do you like it? Are you a fan of the program?**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

JUSTIN ROSE: If you're in it. (Laughing).

**Q. Fair enough.**

JUSTIN ROSE: Listen, I think you want to, you do want to incentivize the top players to create content. It's very easy for the top players to say no because it doesn't serve them.

So if you are looking at content creation, like Henrik is talking about content, that's where it's coming down to these days. So if it serves the fan and if it serves the game of golf, and it gives the guys a much better reason to say yes to something, then it's probably a good thing for everybody. Hopefully that's the way it's intended.

**Q. Who do you see as the biggest favorites this week and why? It's such a different format than anything else. Do you feel like there's any kind of players that have an advantage in this format and if so why?**

HENRIK STENSON: Good question. To be honest, I haven't really looked into seeing a lot of other pairings. I'm sure quite a few will be similar compared to previous years, but I would say I'm not really familiar with kind of who is teaming up with who, compared to what's been going on before. So I'm not sure if I'm that qualified to answer that question. But I think there might be, a few guys maybe feel a little bit more relaxed or feeling slightly different in this format, and more than anything when you're playing a team event or in team format, you can kind of feed off each other and if you get on a good run you can make each other better and really pick up that momentum and do some good things. So I'm sure we're going to see some good runs from some of the pairings.

JUSTIN ROSE: I would say, just looking at it this morning, Tony Finau-Cameron Champ. I've followed Cameron's career quite closely just based on Sean Foley, and it looks like he's beginning to play really nicely. Obviously Tony is in great form. The way both those guys hit the ball if they get on half a streak around here that could be a really tough team to beat just based on the weapons that they have.

Jon Rahm always plays well. A very competitive guy. Loves the team environment. And obviously, Ryan Palmer, his playing partner is also playing well. So I think those are two of the pairings.

HENRIK STENSON: They won before.

JUSTIN ROSE: They're sort of like defending champions.

**Q. Secondly, being a Norwegian, I have to ask you guys about the first Norwegian pairing in a tournament**

**like this, Viktor Hovland and Kris Ventura. What are your thoughts on them and do you think what they have to compete this week?**

HENRIK STENSON: I didn't know they were playing together. Well, that's fun. Good news. Obviously, as a Swede, it's high on my list to try to beat the Norwegians. You know how that goes, right? I mean, they're both strong players and Viktor obviously had a great run here in the last couple of years. So, yeah, it will be interesting to follow and I promise you from the bottom of my heart I will try my hardest to beat them.

JUSTIN ROSE: I guess I'm Swedish for the week too.

HENRIK STENSON: Honorary Swede for the week next to me here.

**Q. Curious, as an Englishman and a former Open champion, what will excite you most about playing an Open Championship for the first time in two years when you get to Royal St. George's or what will you miss most about the Open Championship?**

HENRIK STENSON: I thought you said Englishman, no?

JUSTIN ROSE: You're an Open champion.

**Q. One Englishman, one Open champion.**

JUSTIN ROSE: From my point of view, I guess it's the crowds, that's the local support, the home support, the one major championship where you do get that. I always feel like an Open Championship roar, an Open Championship fan experience, is a little bit different, and as a home player. Obviously, a lot of them are in Scotland, but I do feel like the Scots even do a decent job of cheering for the English. But being sort of in England itself you got Birkdale, Royal St George's, Lytham. There's only a few that are actually in England, so for me that's an added special feeling for an Open Championship. And Henrik can talk more importantly about what it else feels like to hold that Claret Jug.

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, it's a special event, no question, and one that I grew up just longing or wishing to one day tee it up in, and then of course, it's nothing short of a childhood dream to stand there one day on the 18th and get announced as The Open champion and the champion golfer of the year. So that was nothing short of spectacular on my end.

And like Justin says, the crowds are amazing. They're knowledgeable about the golf and they appreciate good golf no matter how, who hits the shot and who is the one

that makes the ball go to the hole. So, yeah, it's a very special week and it was dearly missed last year, so really looking forward to teeing it up at St. George's this upcoming summer.

JUSTIN ROSE: And looking forward to the some good weather. I feel like the pocket where Royal St. George's sits, is like that's the one opportunity where you do play in 30-degree sunshine. I'm not saying that's going to happen, but there's definitely a little microclimate in the southeast that it can be very different to playing up north.

HENRIK STENSON: I love a five-hour car wash round, though. There's nothing bad with that. (Laughing).

**Q. Justin, playing with Will Zalatoris Saturday at Augusta, what did you see in his game or what impressed you most about him as a young and upcoming player?**

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, just it, it's a situation that's not easy to deal with. After being out on TOUR 20 years, playing in the final group of any major, the Masters probably especially, and he made it look easy, and I guess that's what struck me the most. I like his game. I like the power that he has. I like the fact that he, I like the way he hits the driver specifically. I think he's kind of got the right -- he hits it the right way for the modern game. And, yeah, just how the fact he's unfazed and he seems to have a good perspective on everything right now. But I'm sure the expectations will creep up now and I think he's been playing off the gratitude for quite some time and that is going to be his next challenge is really the expectation that comes along with his great play now. But as a golfer, unbelievable.

HENRIK STENSON: I think it was just extraordinary to see someone hit the ball that far when you're that skinny. That's just amazing. (Laughing).

**Q. With the driver, is it just the power fade you're talking about as far as for the modern game?**

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I love the fact, because for me, you should hit up on the driver, and this is where I'm going to talk about the Trackman, which Henrik loves. We did a clinic together one time and I went like 10, 15 minutes into the most complex deep plane analysis, and Henrik is, like, Right, everybody, I'm just going to, like, put your heads back on your shoulders now, and then whatever he said. But, no, the fact that he hits up on it, you can say that he stays on his right side, hits up on it and hits a nice fade. I think with high-ball speeds it seems to be quite difficult to draw the ball, and I think, yeah, for me that power fade seems to be the easiest way to hit a driver at speed.

DOUG MILNE: One last question, I know both you guys are both advocates for increasing playing opportunities for women interested in the game, so forth. Justin, with your Pro Series for women in the U.K. and Henrik, the Scandinavian Mixed Play you co-host with Annika. Just a few thoughts on how you see the success and so forth of playing opportunities and interest among women in the game.

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, we had the first like a media day the other day together with Annika, obviously on I'm super excited to co-host the Scandinavian Mixed together with her, she's a legend within the game and also someone who cares a lot about the game and puts a lot of time and effort back into it and we try and do the same. So I'm really looking forward to the event, it's a unique one, the first of its kind having both men and women playing together in the same tournament for the same prize check. And it is going to be interesting to see, I'm sure we are going to have some little challenges getting the setup and getting all that to work out perfectly the first year, but it's innovative and inclusive concept and it's not just going to be a celebration of golf in Sweden on the men's and women's side, it's, I think it's going to be an event that's going to be seen and heard around the world, really, and that's really the part where you can get those benefits and really spread the word around.

JUSTIN ROSE: I think that's unbelievable is obviously the concept that these guys have and obviously the slow and steady march towards equality and pay equality within the sport is you know, what I'm trying to help push. And obviously I think that that pay structure doesn't come without the ladies being profiled and highlighted and their stories told and people at home and the fans beginning to know their names and their faces and kind of get a little bit of background on who they are. And obviously that's sort of been what the Rose Ladies Series is all about, creating a platform for them to play through lockdown and also try to support times of the year where their schedule isn't as strong, so just giving -- like as an athlete you got to keep your skill set sharp, so we're trying to support the playing opportunities, but at the same time very cognizant of telling the stories and trying to create the upward profile so the journey towards a better pay equality is possible and that's why your event is amazing.

DOUG MILNE: Thank you, very well said. We'll let you guys go. Thank you for your time.

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