



Justin Rose

Press Conference

Thursday, April 10, 2025

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, and welcome to our first round leader, Justin Rose.

This is the fifth time you've had the opportunity to be here in the interview room as the current leader in the clubhouse.

Congratulations on your opening round, 65 today, matches your career best at the Masters, eight birdies, one bogey. Tell us about your great round today.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, obviously delighted to get off to such a great start, and that start definitely, it happened out of the gates. So for the first few holes everything was going exactly where I was looking, and certainly the first hole, which is definitely one of the trickier holes on the golf course, to knock in a nice 25-footer down the hill right-to-left, exactly what you need to settle yourself into the Masters, and then 2 and 3 are birdie opportunities.

So to be 3-under through 3 kind of really got me on the front foot and felt like I was playing great golf. When I did find myself into in a little bit of trouble, especially early, No. 5, holed a great putt for par. And middle of the back nine I felt like there were a couple moments where the momentum could have changed. But really good up-and-downs on 14 and 15 to keep the round really hot.

Obviously the only blemish on 18, but there's no point dwelling on that.

It was a really good day's golf on a golf course that was a stern test. I think if you look at the overall leaderboard, not many low scores out there. You had to hit a lot of quality shots, and delighted the way I played.

Q. I heard you say yesterday that you really had a feeling that you were playing really good golf and something special was going to happen this week. Did you say something to that effect? And how do you get that feeling? Is it just the stats on the board or just some other inner feeling?

JUSTIN ROSE: I mean, I don't remember saying that (laughs). Mind reading, I love it.

This year I've been saying to people, my good is good. When I have been playing well, I feel like I have been competing at a high level. My consistency maybe has not been as high this year. But my good is good again. So I'm excited about that.

I feel like I'm really working on good things within my game, and I've seen an uptick in my practice and how I'm going about my practice. I'm working a little bit differently, working a little bit harder, and I think that's been showing for me on occasions this year.

Obviously you come to the first major of the year, a lot of emphasis on how you peak and how you go through the preparation cycle to feel like you're going to play well. And, yeah, my range work this week has been good, but my practice rounds haven't been perfect.

But in some ways it's good to come in slightly under the radar. Played last week in San Antonio, made the cut, but finished middle of the pack. But sometimes there's a lot of learning to that, and I feel like I've adjusted really, really well as this week has gone on, and obviously timed it just right well to play well today.

Q. What was your awareness level today of where you stood throughout day?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, so obviously starting the day it was very much just into my own bubble, my own game. And you're off to a good start, and then you're aware you're in the tournament from the word "go" and your name is on the leaderboard. The crowd around you know you're playing well, and you get energy from them as well.

And then there was a nice special run, 8, 9, 10, and got to 6-under. That's when the day felt a bit different. That's when I felt like I was potentially doing something definitely more on the special side. And then you have Amen Corner to come. You're never really ahead of yourself until you're through 12, anyway. But good pars on 11 and 12.

And then I felt like there was an opportunity to really post a low score, to be honest with you, and did a great job on the back nine grinding it out. A couple of really good up-and-downs. Buried the putt at No. 16, and at that point maybe got ahead of myself. Because I kind of felt like 17 and 18 were potential birdie holes with where the pins are.

So I felt like, you know, I was definitely looking forward and looking to do something special today, at that point.

Overall, I think great day. And yeah, I played a lot of golf here at Augusta National. So to come away with my equal best score is certainly an achievement for me.

Q. You mentioned at the PGA last year that you felt like this is the Indian Summer of your career. Do you still feel that way in terms of managing the expectations that are placed on you or that you have for yourself out here?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think for me at the PGA Championship at Valhalla, it was a golf course that shouldn't really suit me, per se. It was a bit of a bomber's paradise. I was in the hunt with a few holes to go there and I ended up finishing T-6, but I was a lot more in the tournament than that finish suggests. The fact that I had those types of results on those types of courses gave me a lot of hope.

And then at The Open Championship, again, I felt like I actually played the golf there to win and played through some of the toughest weather conditions that week and still had a great opportunity on Sunday. Again, more evidence that when the big stage is there, I can kind of bring my game and still compete with the best players in the world.

And that's what -- if you know that in your head, that gives you the motivation to then still work hard. If you don't quite feel like you can do it, or you don't feel quite like you can play at an elite level, then practice becomes hard.

I think those couple weeks for me, and even the Ryder Cup in Rome in '23, they were big motivating weeks where I thought the hard work is still worth it, still believe I can shake it with the best.

And yeah, I'm excited about -- look, the Indian Summer comment, of course, I'm 44. Golf is not going to get easier for me in the next five, ten years, whatever it's going to be. So your opportunity is less going forward. So you have to make the most of it.

Q. Was there ever a point where you thought the hard work wasn't worth it?

JUSTIN ROSE: Not really. But, you know, I enjoy the work still, which is a good sign, right.

And I think the other measure I have is if I go and play golf by myself in the evening and still enjoy that experience, then I know that I still love the game enough to make the sacrifices that are required to play well at it.

But yeah, '21, '22, they were not great seasons, and I think having achieved a lot in the game, you start to go through a tough spell. That's when you have to, well, for me personally, I'm not enjoying this, and then you have to make a

decision, which way you go from there, do you make the right changes to get out of it, or do you just shy away from the challenge.

But that's never been the way I like to operate. I like my back against the wall. It probably goes back to missing 21 cuts as a young pro. That's kind of my M.O., the way I do it. So getting stuck in is no problem.

Q. If I read correctly, you've been at the top of the leaderboard after more rounds than anyone who has yet to win the Masters. Is that a compliment or an insult?

JUSTIN ROSE: You know what, I feel like I've played well enough to win this tournament. I just feel like I don't have the jacket to prove it. I feel like, no, it's a compliment. I've obviously played, I've played a lot of good rounds of golf here. Got a lot of crystal, which is obviously always nice.

But yeah, you know, ultimately, you want to be last man standing on Sunday, and I was a shot shy -- I guess Sergio and I in 2017, that was a real 50/50. That could have gone any which way down the stretch. A little bit of Lady Luck here and there is always the difference here at times.

But I've had my luck on occasion and been a champion. But you've got to be playing the golf to keep creating those opportunities, and obviously the only way to do that is to get your name on the leaderboard. I definitely don't shy away from it.

Q. You said you felt like 17 and 18 were gettable, and I saw the frustration on your face at the last, but it's a career day. Leaving here today, where do you land emotionally with this effort?

JUSTIN ROSE: Today I chunked the golf course in my mind, little mini targets, mini goals. And that's the way I approached the day, and that's going to be the approach tomorrow and the approach on Saturday and the approach on Sunday.

So really try to be clear out there. Really try to make sure I didn't hit a shot until I was fully committed. Those are the kind of things that we say often, and they are pretty boring to hear, shot-for-shot, but ultimately there is no other way of doing. It's just how good you are doing that in the moment, and it all comes down to execution. I know my way around this golf course. I have a straight strategy around here. Yeah, it's about making it count and stepping up and hitting the shots.

Q. This is your 20th Masters appearance. You've mentioned being so close to having a green jacket a number of times. At 44 years old, what's still inspiring you?

JUSTIN ROSE: To not be a 44. To still fit into a 40 (jacket size) (laughs) that's what's inspiring me.

To keep working hard and being in shape and giving myself an opportunity to keep competing with the best players in the world and to keep enjoying the stage like I had today. That's a lot of fun.

You know, it's hard just to get into these tournaments. So just to keep that level of golf going, that gives me the access and the ability to keep competing at the highest stage and in the best events in the world. That is what motivates me.

So yeah, you know, from my point of view, that's a lot of fun today, and that's what I'm in the game for is to feel these experiences.

Q. You teed off at noon. After a round like this, how did the morning go? Did you have an amazing breakfast? Did you get an extra hour of sleep?

JUSTIN ROSE: The morning went so fast. I was rushing, quick warmup, 30 minutes on the range, and was actually a bit pushed for time. The morning wasn't quite long enough if I'm honest with you. But yeah, slept well last night. Kind of 7:30 alarm call. Great breakfast, yeah, and before I know it, yeah, I was up here, sort of 9:45.

And by the time you've done some putting on the putting green and then moved to the short game area and gone to the gym, I was like, damn, I'm underestimating every little chunk here, and I kind of put myself behind a bit of time. But that's actually normal as well, so that was perfectly routine for me.

Q. This is a place that historically has rewarded frontrunners in terms of champions getting off to strong starts in the first round. Can you speak to the challenge of being in chase mode, is it more the physical demands of the course as it changes versus the mental grind of trying to make up a gap?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I didn't know that that's the stats, but it makes sense because it's the kind of golf course that needs a ton of respect.

So when you are playing with the lead or around the lead, you have the ability or you're afforded the luxury of patience and respecting holes and respecting pins and things like that. When you're in chase mode, you end up possibly making one or two silly bogeys by trying to play catch-up, and obviously that ultimately hampers the catch-up. Yeah, that does make sense.

From my point of view, I know what holes suit me, what pins suit me, where I want to play defense, where I want to feel like I can be on front foot. So that's all I can do, really, going into the next few days.

Q. I wanted to ask you how much of today was down to your putting today, quality of your putting, and would you care to compare today's putting with some of our other days at Augusta?

JUSTIN ROSE: It's hard to compare. I think this was a stage where I was more strokes gained putting in major championships than anybody else. I don't know what time frame that was, but definitely, let's say, from 2017 through 2022, I think I was putting better than a lot of guys.

That is a good sign to be able to do it on these golf courses.

These greens, I've been here 20 times. They always change a little bit, a couple of greens get tweaked or rebuilt. So you can't completely go off memory. You have to sort of still be very aware of the moment and some subtleties out there.

And conditions change. If the greens are incredibly quick, things do break a little bit more. Or if there is wind, it can hold the ball up. So, yeah, you can't just be, oh, I know this putt, bang, let's go.

Today was a great putting round. I'm sure statistically it was very, very strong. I holed a lot of medium- to long-range putts, and took my chances when I hit great shots. When I hit the ball in tight, I made those 5-, 6-footers, which is exactly what you have to do.

There was only one putt I feel like I missed really, 13. My whole group had trouble around that pin. It was so fast.

Yeah, obviously when you shoot 7-under and you clip a major championship field by three, you have to do a lot of things well, and obviously the putter was a big part of it.

Q. Obviously it's a great field and so much great players, but when you consider Scottie, just what he's done in recent years, and specifically his recent history here, when you're starting out, you already see him out and going, is there any like -- not being pressed to keep up, but almost like kind of a pace car situation, if he's going off, you have to kind of keep up?

JUSTIN ROSE: No, there's absolutely no mentality like that whatsoever. Because I think we all are running our own race as hard as we can. You just don't have the -- you're not afforded the luxury to think that way, at all.

But you do notice Scottie on the leaderboard and you're like, that's a great start for him. You know, he's going to be tough from there for sure. Like you know that. But it doesn't rattle you or change what you're doing or influence you in any way.

But you're like, okay, his position in the game right now and obviously the way he's played in recent years, that's a great

start for him. Probably a perfect start.

Q. I wondered how much time you've had to reflect on what happened at Royal Troon in the last eight months, and do you think that experience of being in contention there will help you over the last three days here?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I hope so. I think at Royal Troon, it was all about, again, I had a great game plan. Felt very comfortable on the golf course. Felt like I had a great strategy of how to play it, even though the wind did shift around during different days, and I feel like I locked into how best to approach the golf course. I did a lot of good things that week.

Again, I felt like probably in hindsight, I felt like I played good enough to win the tournament, 100 percent. So I took a lot of confidence from it.

So when I look back at it, yeah, I came off the golf course, and, yeah, I was kind of emotional, as well, because I knew how close it was, and I knew what a great opportunity to win it was. And to not do it, for sure, really hurt.

But to feel that was actually really motivating, as well. So I don't look back at it with any regret. I actually look back at it with a lot of hunger knowing that opportunity still exists for me.

Q. When you were chasing world No. 1, I remember you telling me you felt you needed to carry the driver 300 yards minimum to have that chance. Is there some stat or something you're trying to do now to keep up with these young guys?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, there were a few things this year that I needed to improve on, and it was like 75 to 125 was a key area. Being better out of the bunker again, which is something I've always been incredibly good at, but bunker play had fallen off a touch. And getting better strokes gained off the tee.

But I think aging out a little bit, to kind of go down the bomber, that model, is probably a little dangerous. But more the Collin Morikawa model of more fairways. So that's definitely something I need to do to compete week-in, week-out.

Q. Just go back to your Indian Summer theme, as well. You worked so hard to get here, but you're already a major winner, an Olympic Champion. Do you feel this is a bonus time for you to have, or do you still feel you want to work for your legacy, and do you feel the pressure to add more?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I think you always feel self-pressure to add more for sure. I do feel that I could make a statement with how well I played the back end of my career. That's a great opportunity though, for me, not pressure.

I think to answer your question, yeah, I see it all as upside now. I think my résumé is nicely rounded out. There's a few big glaring gaps. Obviously three major championships I haven't won. Maybe a PLAYERS Championship as well.

So there's tons of opportunity to do things I haven't done before, but the major headlines are kind of all in place for me. So I should use that as freedom to take these opportunities and use them to kind of freewheel and use it all as upside, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Justin, and best of luck this week.