

Men's Olympic Golf Competition

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Saitama City, Saitama, Japan
Kasumigaseki Country Club

Justin Thomas

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with questions. We had Xander and Collin in yesterday, but I would love to hear your thoughts on representing Team USA as part of the Olympic games.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I'm very excited to be here. It's been very -- it's been an unbelievable experience. I mean, I think it started to really hit me when I was traveling here, when I first got here, when I got in the room and saw all the gear. It's, it might be the coolest thing I've ever been a part of. It's an unbelievable, it's just, there's not very often where you get so excited about just being a part of a tournament.

I was fortunate to go to the village and check that out. Obviously, I wish things were normal to where we could see other sporting events, but that all being said, the main priority is to, I'm here for a golf tournament and to try to win and give myself a good chance to do so. So, yeah, get ready and get going tomorrow and see if we can do it.

THE MODERATOR: Take some questions, please.

Q. You were in America and then England and then America and Japan. You've been here a couple days. Do you have tricks for making sure your body resets to the right time? How long does it take you to get ready to compete with like a body that's, feels like it's here?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's tough. I've struggled this week. I mean, not sleep-wise as much, but just fatigue, a little tired. So probably having to cut some practice sessions a little bit short just to make sure that mentally I'm sharp. But, fortunately, just from playing and experiencing it some, I know that kind of some little things to do and just what's important and staying out here, especially in this kind of heat, beating balls all day probably isn't going to be the best thing for me.

But the biggest thing for me is always that flight over and just trying to get on the sleep schedule as quick as



possible. So I always set my watch on wherever I'm going, what the time is, and just try to go to sleep, get as much sleep as I can that night. Sometimes it's three hours and, but I slept like almost seven hours on the flight here. So I wish they were all that easy, but sometimes it's not. Just trying to get my body on that as much as you can. I think everybody, especially that's traveled and done it enough, will tell you that as soon as you get used to it, it's ready to go back home. So I'm going to be nice and comfortable and then I'll get to go to Memphis.

Q. Did you meet with the Team USA basketball team last night?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah.

Q. Can you talk about that experience. And when you're with other athletes at that level, what's the communication like? Do you seem to speak the same language, I guess, is what I'm asking?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, we didn't really hang or talk much with the team specifically. We spent a lot of time with the coaches, which was really cool. Draymond sat with us for a little bit. But for the most part we were just hanging out with Jay and Steve Kerr and Pop came in for a little bit. So, I mean, it was cool just to talk to those guys because you could tell they're such big golf fans. So all the questions that we want to ask them about basketball they're asking us about golf, so it's almost like the other one doesn't really feel bad because the other one, we're just kind of going back and forth. They're great people and were very supportive of us and we got to meet a couple of the players, a couple of the women's players and coaches as well. But at the same time, we hadn't started yet. They're in, I think the women had just had a game and I know the men play if they haven't played already today, so some of the guys were probably getting rested and getting ready and everything. But more than anything it helped me stay up past 9:30, so that was good.

Q. You're out there playing with Xander and Collin, and it's got the feel of a Ryder Cup practice round even though this tournament is nothing like that. I wonder if you could just speak to just kind of the atmosphere



that you're in at the moment.

JUSTIN THOMAS: It is tough and it's weird because, yeah, I don't know what it is, if it's just having the team uniform on with the bags. It does feel like we are a part of a team and it feels like we should help each other out or whatever. But in reality, I hope I beat those guys' brains in. You know what I mean? It's like, it's odd, but I would say more so than any other event, if we are not able to medal, then you're obviously going to pull for your country and want your guys to get it done. But I definitely had to maybe remind myself a couple times that it's -- I think those team events you can kind of get away with maybe not having your best stuff or just you kind of can pick and choose and kind of pick your way around because obviously you have a partner and you're able to feed off the energy a lot more versus not going to have that this week and you don't have a partner. So it's a little bit different, but I guess we have all adjusted to it okay.

Q. I know you're trying hard and want to win every tournament you play, but where do you put this, this year on somewhat of a priority list to you in terms of what it means, what you would like to do, and why does it rank the way it does?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Like say in terms if I was to medal or win a gold medal?

Q. Just coming into the tournament. I mean, I'm not trying to compare it with the four majors, but I'm sure you put those on a level with THE PLAYERS and Kapalua. Where do you put this and why?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's tough. I mean, obviously, if I'm going to choose do I want to win a major or win a medal in the Olympics, I'll take a major. But this is something that, it would mean the absolute world to me, and it would just be the coolest thing to always be able to say not only did you play in it, but that you medaled, won a gold medal, whatever it is. And it's just so different. I've thought about it. I've tried to compare them. I've tried to think about it. I mean, this is obviously -- this is obviously more special and I would say harder to win because you have less chances, but major championships change your life in more than one way, so, and I think this being as new as it is, I think potentially down the road it could be a different answer just because it hasn't been around long enough to necessarily be in history books, if you will, versus majors have been around long enough to where you're, I hate to say, not judged, but your career is made off of them. So I think there will be a point in time where the amount of medals or gold medals that you have could be something that's on that list in the Olympics, just not at this moment being this early in the process.

Q. You had great success in Asia before, four wins, two in Malaysia, two in Korea. Does that give you extra confidence coming into this week? And as a secondary, having had so much experience playing in Asia, how different is it going to be without spectators?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's going to be very different. I got very excited and comfortable having the spectators. It's been fun again. But in terms of the success over here, yeah, that's great. I'll definitely be able to use that as confidence. And, I mean, I like the golf course. Obviously, every golf course is different. But I feel I've proven that I've been able to get adjusted to the time, and my body and everything has adapted pretty well, but this is a field full of guys that know how to do that and are coming here just as hungry as I am. So just because I've had past success doesn't necessarily mean I'm going to do well, but it definitely does give me a little bit of a boost of confidence knowing that I have done well in Asia and hopefully can recreate some more of that this week.

Q. Golf is normally such an individual sport. I wonder what sort of sense you get of being part of a wider Team USA here and just what that means to you and whether you've been inspired by any of the performances you've seen of the other U.S. athletes, maybe not in person, but on TV.

JUSTIN THOMAS: I haven't done a good job at all. I haven't watched anything on TV other than if I've been sitting having lunch or breakfast or whatever it is. I haven't even turned my TV on in my room. I just, it's, because of how far it is back and forth, not really that much time being spent in the room. But going to the village and checking out the USA building, walking through and just, it's just, it's so hard to explain, but I really do truly think that, I mean, Ryder Cups, majors, whatever it is, I mean, this is the coolest thing I've ever been a part of. It's just unbelievable. It's given me -- I mean, everyone's going to think differently about it. There's going to be some people, and I know there's some people that may not think it's that big of a deal or think it's that cool, but, I don't know what it is. Maybe it's just because we're, being an Olympian you're known as the best athlete in the world and maybe that's just something that golf isn't exactly always related to. But just going to the gym, walking around the village, seeing the other athletes, and seeing the, maybe it's just the team camaraderie and seeing everyone, every country just kind of being together, especially in a day and age where that doesn't really seem to be what's in and what's the thing. And I think it's just sport is such a great thing because it brings people together and it brings everybody a common goal and that's cheering for their team. It doesn't matter

what anybody thinks about anything going on in the world, anything politically, anything within one's family, whatever it is, you're just rooting for that team, that country. I think that's something that's so cool about sport and what, another reason that makes the Olympics so special.

Q. Do you remember the moment when you decided: If the Olympics is an option, I will do it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: As soon as they announced it was in the Olympics.

Q. And then does the course remind you of anything you've played before? How would you compare it to just other courses you see on TOUR?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't necessarily think of any like course individually in the States. It's got some, it's got very similar grass to, in terms of the fairways, to next week in Memphis or like TOUR Championship. It's got that Zoysia, the ball that sits up perfectly. It can go pretty far on your iron shots and wedges if you compress it well. The greens are pure, really, really good. The golf course is pure. The rough is long. It's very important to hit the fairways. It's got huge greens with a lot of slope and it really is, I've had a hard time comparing it to any golf course that we play. It's got just a good mixture of a lot of different holes. You can definitely make a lot of birdies, especially if you drive it well. But if you don't, it's going to be hard to score out of the rough. And the fairway bunkers, the ball can sit down a little bit to where it's hard to get clean contact. I think it will be a place where you can, you'll see some low scores, for sure, but you could kind of see a big disparity depending upon how the golf course is set up, obviously.

Q. You mentioned the excitement of getting in your room and seeing all the Team USA stuff. What bits particularly stood out for you and what are you most excited about what bits of kits and what are you going to do with them once you get back home?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Probably wear most of it. I've been wearing a lot of it this week. Just, t-shirts, shorts, shoes, just anything that has that Team USA and that Olympic logo, it just, it kind of goes back, again, to my thing of being with a country, and I walk around and I'm in the village and people, if I walk around in my normal clothes they probably wouldn't think I'm an athlete playing in the Olympics just because of my stature and what I look like. But I throw that Team USA gear on and it's like, Okay, you know, he's playing in the Olympics. He's a part of the Olympics. And to me, that's pretty cool. I know like I'm pulling for them. Hopefully they're pulling for us, some of the guys on Team USA. Hopefully me a little bit harder. But it's just, it's something that definitely we'll be able to have as a

keepsake to remember this week and hopefully for good reason of good play as well.

Q. You could definitely be a skateboarder.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Oh, yeah, sure I can.

Q. Now that we have had a couple goes at it. In terms of the Olympics, and it seems to be off to a really good start, do you think it's time for them to at least lobby to try and get some kind of a team aspect to it, and if so, how do you think that might work and could you even see a mix team, and then I'll hang up and listen.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, that be would interesting. I think a team -- I'm always for a team, especially as few team events as we have. I think it would be fun. I think it would be really hard to perfect. It would be, especially a year like this year with the amount of Americans playing well, say, if you were to take two players then we would be leaving the fifth ranked player in the world at home, which it's bizarre, but that's just the way that it would be. So that part would get a little bit tough. But if there's a way that they could somehow incorporate it and do it, I think it would be great because then, yeah, it would be, you're rooting for your team kind of thing. I don't know. I think it would be tough to do, but if they were able to perfect it and get a good system, I think it would be fun. I mean, a mixed tournament would be pretty cool. Again, I don't know how they could do that, but it could -- maybe a country that's maybe not as strong on the male side could be, the female side could pick it up for them and vice versa. So, yeah, whatever, if it could somehow work out, I'm for it.

Q. I've covered a couple other sports this week, and they have been individual, and the athletes talk about there how important their process is, I mean, extremely important to the point where they're 95 percent of it is on process. Can you talk about how important your process is and how you've refined it over time?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it is very important. I think everybody's process is different and I think that's what's most important is there's not, the way that I do it might not work for Collin or might not work for Xander. But it's just about perfecting your process and understanding what works for me and what do I do on my off-time, what do I do during the week of the tournament, what do I eat, how much sleep do I need, whatever it is, to where when I put that tee in the ground tomorrow at 8:25 in the morning, I feel as ready as I go and I just am able to go. I think it is tough, and I think I'm, I have a pretty good idea of mine, but I'm still always trying to figure out and see if there's something I could do better, not to the point of changing things that worked for me, but just maybe add one little

thing or take something out that hasn't worked as well for me.

But it is, especially getting to know Coach Saban as well as I have and how process-oriented he is with his guys. But I definitely think in team sports especially, but individual, you're able to just kind of plot it out and look at what you want to accomplish and figure out the things and the time that you need to do to make sure that you have the best chance to accomplish those goals.

Q. With this COVID 19 climate you're only allowed to go back and forth between the hotel and the golf course. Within that, what are your impressions of the country? Is there any favorite Japanese food, would you talk about the Japanese culture.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, the sushi's been unbelievable, we have had sushi a couple times at our hotel and that's been awesome, so I've enjoyed that. But, yeah, I mean, it's not a fair judge because of everything going on. I mean, I've been fortunate to play in Miyazaki for the Dunlop Phoenix, which is awesome, also unbelievable food, unbelievable beef there and we came a day early and spent a night in Tokyo. So I was able to experience that a little bit, although it was a Sunday and most things were closed, it wasn't the true experience, but just a breathtaking city and just so big, I couldn't believe how big and all the buildings -- I mean, even looking out my window this week and then the Zozo Championship a couple years ago, obviously being a -- geographically I'm not, I don't know exactly where that is in relation to here, but I do know that it wasn't too close. But that was a very similar situation where it was kind of, because the amount of things we had in our hotel, it was kind of hotel/golf course. So I would love to be able to get the experience and time to visit Tokyo and Japan a little bit more, so maybe I just need to come play more golf here.

Q. How can you see from your window from the room?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Not much. I can just see a bunch of buildings. I don't necessarily know anything specifically, like I don't know if that building is some certain building or whatever it might be, but it's just, it's just mind blowing looking out and just seeing so much all right there. Yeah, it's a pretty cool city.

Q. You cannot see Mount Fuji or something?

JUSTIN THOMAS: No.

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