

# The Memorial Tournament Presented By Workday

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Dublin, Ohio, USA

Muirfield Village

## Justin Thomas

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome Justin Thomas here to the interview room at The Memorial Tournament Presented By Workday. Justin, you're making your 11th start in this event. Let's just start with how special of a week is this each year on TOUR coming to Jack's Place.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I did not know it was my 11th time. That's kind of crazy. Yeah, we always know it's going to be a very difficult test and it always has an unbelievable field and, yeah, you get excited. I think it's kind of a good middle of the season, if you will. You know, I feel like our season comes and goes in waves, and for me, it's also a great opportunity to, obviously, try to get in contention, try to win a golf tournament, but I think it's going to, in ways, play a little similar to Oakmont in a couple weeks, so I think it's good preparation for a U.S. Open as well.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned difficult test this week. What are some of the specific challenges that Muirfield Village presents.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, pretty much all of it, but I mean, the greens are -- obviously, the weather yesterday and today or overnight softened it up a little bit, but they're still firm enough to be difficult. But the rough, it's always long, but I've never seen it this long, so that's going to be quite a challenge. It's just a tough golf course. I think it would be tough if it didn't have firm greens and long rough, but it has both of those, so that makes it very tough.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to some questions.

**Q. Because you mentioned Oakmont, are you going to go in early? What are your remembrances from 2016? And a third part of that, what's your opinion of 250-yard-plus par-3s?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I actually went to Oakmont yesterday. I got in Monday. Generally, this place doesn't change very much. I think that the years I haven't played well here, I don't think it's necessarily from a lack of course knowledge.



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It's more of an execution standpoint. Practice rounds in especially U.S. Opens have gotten pretty long and can be a little difficult to get all the work done that week, so I felt like it was a better use of my time, and Rev and I just took a day trip, just went and played it yesterday.

It's still tough. I would say all of the rumors and everything are pretty on point. Yeah, I couldn't tell you a par-3 over 250 yards that's good, I would say, architecturally. Obviously, you have 16 at Cypress Point is pretty special, but I definitely think there's some potential viewing reasons that makes it, you know, a great hole. So I'm a big short par-3 guy. I think a lot of us and -- a lot of players and people that watch golf are. Yeah, I just, that's my opinion.

**Q. Did you tee it up from the back on 8 at 299?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I did. Yeah, that's not my favorite hole in the world. I think you could do some other things with that. But everyone's going to have to play the same hole and going to have to execute the same shots, and I would love four 3s on it right now if I could take it.

**Q. Would you take us through today, what it was like getting to play with Coach Saban and Coach Day. Was this your first time meeting Coach Day? Had you met him before?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: It was. I actually joked with Coach Saban coming up 18. I was like, man, I hate to say this, but Coach Day's a really, really good dude, and I hate that I'm going to maybe have to root for Ohio State a little bit because of how nice of a guy he was.

But it was awesome. I mean, anytime I can get with Coach Saban, I enjoy. I just love talking to him and he's always been so unbelievably nice and supportive to my family and myself and, you know, a lot of other players as well at Alabama. But just the nerd in me really wanted to -- you know, I was able to kind of talk football a little bit or ask questions between them two and myself, and I mean, that was pretty cool. I know that that's probably the last thing they want to talk about, but it's pretty awesome seeing two greats just out there and hanging and it was really fun.



**Q. What was it like kind of watching them interact? They joked about having a lot to talk about before the round. Did you guys get all the answers to college football settled in that round?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, for sure (laughing). No. Yeah, they obviously -- they had a lot of fans out there. Coming off of a great year for Coach Day, and I think that they have obviously become closer and friendlier over the past couple years. Yeah, those are two people I think you more sit back and listen than you do try to lead any conversation. So it just was fun to do that.

**Q. It's a mental test this week. Oakmont will be a mental test. Every tournament's a mental test. I'm curious, mental versus physical, what's more challenging, do you think? What's tougher to master?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: That's a good question and I think that it's different for everybody. I think it's different in different times. This part of the season can get pretty busy and hectic and I think it becomes more difficult to be sharp mentally. But that's not the case for everybody. I think some guys are maybe in a little bit more of a groove mentally or physically or whatever it may be.

Man, it's hard to say, but if you could choose to be a hundred percent at one, what would it be, because -- especially at a major championship or at a U.S. Open like Oakmont. I would like to think my hundred percent physical would produce some pretty good mental as well. But is it the chicken or the egg? You never know. But you just hope that they're both as high as possible.

**Q. Bud Cauley got in this week, which is great. I know you guys are close. I think he missed three years after the incident here. How happy are you for him to be here? And do you remember back to 2018, what that was like, how traumatic that was? Just take us through that and how far he's come.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I'm so excited for him. He's so good and so talented. He's got one of those games that can just play out here for so long and can win out here, and I think he's showing that this year. And he's just putting himself there more and more, which I think, for him, has probably been the biggest hurdle is that it has been a career full of injuries to where he hasn't consistently been able to do that to feel comfortable, to get it done when he gets there.

He's doing that this year, so I think it's just a matter of time. But he's playing great and, yeah, back to, you know, the incident here was awful. I'm so happy he's not just playing again, but playing well, because he's one of my best

friends in the world and it was a terrible, terrible night and week -- and, yeah, and really couple years, just because he didn't know what was going to happen. And, yeah, I'm just glad he's back.

**Q. He actually teed 9 the next year, but then he had some setbacks, and I just remember it shook you pretty good when it happened, even your play here, I think you said at the time.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: For sure. I mean, it was just like nobody -- no doctor could figure out what it was, and it was all kind of stemming from the accident and the surgery and his ribs. And that's, obviously, hard when you feel like you're doing everything you can but not getting anything out of it.

But, yeah, he's shown a lot of resiliency. He has an unbelievable wife in Kristi and now two kids that I'm sure have kept him sane during those times as much as possible. So them and all of us out here are happy that he's doing well.

**Q. Can you give your scouting report or assessment of Ryan Day's golf game? And do you get a sense of just how hypercompetitive he is even for something like this?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, he impressed me for what he said beforehand. He's like, I've never done one of these. And he's like, I'm going to be nervous and everything. And it's like, well, you know, this isn't what you do, so it's not something you should be really comfortable in.

But he hit a lot of really good shots. He definitely struck me as somebody if he gave it some time and some practice, that he really could be a solid player. But you know, he hit some bad ones, but he hit enough, like, solid ones and kind of hit the shots that were required that you don't just do by accident-type thing. But, yeah, I don't think he's got any time for picking up a hobby anytime soon.

**Q. Was there anything about your conversation with him that stood out to you?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: He seemed very genuine. I told him on 18, after we kind of exchanged and said nice meeting each other and hanging out, I said, you know, I respect anybody who is able to be successful in what they do and, obviously, being a college football fan and, you know, the hard work, and I always think that it's so impressive to me that, you know, Coach Saban, but all these coaches, how they're able to get 18-, 19-, 20-year-old kids to be disciplined and listen in college.

I mean, college is the most fun time of your life and especially now with NIL and everything, you got a lot of distractions and a lot of things that can get you off path. I think I just admire anybody who is able to kind of lead a group like that, and he's done that.

**Q. Could you talk me through your approach to the third tee shot out here and specifically when you might consider going down the other fairway on the left like I believe you have done a couple times in the past.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I just did that one year. I think Jack got wind of it, and it's some of the longest rough in Ohio, I think, so that was a one-year wonder. I just think with how the green is now, it's always kind of been -- I don't know, I guess you could kind of say like peanut shaped, if you will, but it's like a, the back of that peanut has gotten very, very, very skinny now. So it's just, it's a tee shot that's kind of, it's very bland in front of you, but because of that I hadn't necessarily hit it well, so with how the rough is here, if you miss the fairway you're laying up essentially. But even if you don't get a great number to those back pins, when the greens get firm you can hit a pretty good shot that can one hop in the back bunker, can go over the green, and just is in a very tough spot. So I thought the year that I did that if I just hit a driver basically at 4 tee, just hit it up in the rough there, I could always advance it to kind of the front of the green to where I would have either a chip or a 2-putt. And if I was able to have a lie or a clear shot then I was just chipping right up the green. But yeah, doesn't happen anymore, so -- theory was good.

**Q. The U.S. Women's Open is at Erin Hills this week. What advice would you give for that golf course setup for a national championship?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Hit it as far as you can and high. I felt like -- I was actually talking to Curtis Thompson a little, he's caddieing for Lexi, and he texted me a couple weeks ago asking about it. He said the same thing, like any advice, and I'm like just, Tell Lexi to be Lexi. Like just send a driver. They're big fairways, it was very un-U.S. Open like, in my opinion, the golf course, just with how the fairways were so big and some of the greens were big. But it just was, you know, it was a totally different look and setup. But it required, or I felt like if you put driver in your hand, if you drove the ball well and further, at least for the tees and kind of distances were setup on some holes, you would have a huge advantage. So somebody like Lexi who is on the longer side of her competitors, it could be a big advantage. So I would look for a longer hitter or a girl that could put a little more height under their irons to probably be successful.

**Q. When Preston said this is your 11th, I think it was**

**11th Memorial you were kind of surprised. Which made me think about have you thought about legacy at all?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: In?

**Q. Meaning like what you want your legacy to be.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: For sure. I mean, I want it to be a lot of things. I think first and foremost the competitive side of me wants to have my name on as many trophies and record books and majors as possible. But I want to be somebody that kids are growing up idolizing and wanting to be a role model. I think that's, you know, because I think when you are that person -- I mean, I was looking back at when I was growing up, you obviously have your favorite players, but it almost is like you need like the okay from your parents, if you will, you know what I mean, like they're going to steer you in a direction which then they also, you know, would want their kids to look up to or try to model themselves after. So I think that that's, you know, you want to, you feel like you're doing things right or helping grow the game or helping, you know, whether it be different cities that we're going to, all these different things that golf has the ability to reach that we're so lucky to, I just think that that's a part of a legacy for myself that I would take a lot of pride in, I would say.

**Q. When you were in college were you hard to rein in too?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Pardon me?

**Q. Were you hard to rein in as a player when you were in college?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, golfers weren't quite as popular as the other sports, so -- and especially going to Alabama, where I didn't really have too many friends other than the golfers, yeah, it was pretty right in front of us.

**Q. If I remember correctly part of the reason they went to the staggered start at the TOUR Championship had to do with your feelings about not getting both trophies when you won the FedExCup. Have you been unfairly labeled as being a supporter of staggered start?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: You're the first I've heard that's told me I'm a fan of it, so I'm not really sure how to answer that. There's no way that the TOUR would change an entire product or system based off of my belief. Not to my knowledge at least. But, yeah that label is, it's unheard of to me, so I'm not sure.



**Q. What are your feelings about the change that's coming for this season?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I'm excited. I think it's obviously something different and something new, which I think a lot of us players felt was needed. And we want to, all of us want to have the excitement. We want you guys to have the excitement, and the fans, and us players to have the opportunity to go to the TOUR Championship and win the FedExCup. And it's always been a big deal, but I think players are starting to just realize how much harder it is to get to the TOUR Championship than maybe any of us realized, to where I think we're fully understanding and grasping that, if you're at the TOUR Championship and you're at that final event, then you have all the right in the world to walk away with the FedExCup. So I think that's something I know that I'm behind and I think a lot of people are.

**Q. Do you feel 30's the right number for that event?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I would, yeah, I mean I guess, I don't, I haven't really given it a lot of -- I just don't know if you, how much you have to change either way to make a difference to what it may be. So I think it's just something that's, you know, it's a thought and a talk in process or whatever, but yeah, I'm more focused on kind of what the excitement and the opportunity to kind of a winner take all this year.

**Q. You mentioned that this is the longest the rough has ever been in your 11 years playing here, is this the thickest rough that you've seen on TOUR this year?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Definitely. Yeah. It's very, very penal.

**Q. And when you, I guess view it that way, does that change the way that you navigate and plan for this week specifically?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Definitely. I think it, pending the weather and if the fairways get firmer and faster, that will definitely change things of some clubs that we hit off tees, but it's a, the hard part is, I don't want to say, there's a number of holes that are long enough to where you can't just step up on the tee and be like, all right, I just got to put it in the fairway. I think the days of kind of hitting a 2-iron around a course are gone because of how then firm the greens are and how small they are or whatever you want to call it. But it is, it's an event at least for me personally that if I am between or if I'm not really sure, because there are some holes out here that give you options off the tee, that it is a fairway first kind of thing and picking your spots kind of week. It's not one where you're standing up on every single tee like I'm thinking birdie, I can birdie this hole, birdie the next hole. Sometimes it's just what's the easiest

way I can make par and sometimes bogey. So just kind of take what you can get.

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