

BMW Championship

Wednesday, August 13, 2025

Owings Mills, Maryland, USA

Caves Valley Golf Club

Justin Rose

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Justin Rose into the interview room here at the BMW Championship. He is fresh off of his 12th win, winning last week at the FedEx St. Jude Championship. Justin, first of all, congratulations. If we could take you back to Sunday and what the last few days have been like.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yes, obviously a hugely thrilling win for me. Time slips by pretty quickly. Pebble Beach 2023 last win. To get back in the winner's circle was awesome.

I felt like I've had some big performances last couple years let's call it, but nothing that manifested into the great feeling of actually getting the job done.

Clearly to win a playoff as well after the Masters this year was an extra thrilling way to do it, I suppose. Yeah, great battle with not just J.J., but Tommy and Scottie before that.

So it was a really great week in Memphis, I would say from start to finish, but obviously the week kind of started slow for me with a little bit of man flu into missing the pro-am and then obviously into playing great. It was a nice surprise to play so well on Thursday and keep it going.

That's the job now this week is to keep the energy up, to keep it going, to clearly learn a new golf course. I actually didn't play the last time, which I don't think is too much of a disadvantage because it's changed so much. Again, another long, hot week, big golf course, and energy is a key theme for all of us, I think.

Q. No. 4 in the FedExCup standings, and you're coming to a tournament you have won before, our 2011 champion here. Talk a little about how this event sets you up for next week at East Lake.

JUSTIN ROSE: For sure. Obviously it's a key stage to be playing well. Last week especially, a bunch of points gets me up into sort of the realms of feeling good about the season, really looking at the top players in the world around you, which is awesome.



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Great to be back, obviously as a champion. It's always nice to turn up at places where you have a parking spot, little things like that to make you feel good about the week.

BMW obviously been huge and great supporters of golf for so long. They stage amazing events at amazing venues in amazing cities, and obviously they do a great job on the DP World Tour, as well, pretty much at my home tournament of Wentworth and the BMW PGA. Always enjoy participating in their events.

Q. You've won 11 times before last week, but how validating is it of the work you've continued to do to put yourself in those positions, even when the results haven't come, to finally get over that hump? Do you prove to yourself that, yes, I still can get there on Sunday?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, absolutely. I think I didn't really sort of have any huge doubts about being able to get there on Sunday given, quite honestly, how I felt in the last couple of times that I've been in contention, namely back nine on Augusta on Sunday. I think for me it doesn't get bigger than that.

I think also you get comfortable playing in contention, and I haven't had that. So to sort of find myself in spots at Troon with Xander, back nine of Augusta, and to kind of feel like I've been able to access my best golf in those scenarios where I've had very few looks at winning, I think has given me a lot of confidence and belief that I've still got that part of my game.

Obviously the consistency, I would say over the last couple years, hasn't been there. I haven't been churning out those opportunities to win, but when they have come around, I've typically done a good job of playing well and playing well enough to win, and obviously it always comes down to a shot here or there. But a little luck on both of those occasions, I really feel like I played well enough to win. So it's important to know that.

That's the bit I haven't been worried about. The harder part is actually creating the level week in and week out to keep those opportunities coming.

Obviously this year again to have played my best golf in the biggest fields against the best players has been



gratifying. I think also it worked differently with the team this year, if I really do think about it. We've done a lot more work away from tournaments.

Living abroad, I've felt like the last few seasons have been working really hard on TOUR, going home, trying to catch my breath, reconnect with the family and all of those sort of things. I've felt like that's been the wrong model versus working really hard at home and coming out on TOUR and competing, not having to sort of find the game on the road.

So that's been the shift that I've made, and I think I've seen the results pop in a little bit more because of that.

Q. At Portrush we were talking about that consistency and that you don't know if you still have it. Do you think it's possible? Obviously when you're playing your best, you're up there in these massive tournaments. Do you think it's possible at your age to compete on a weekly basis with these guys, or do you think it's going to be a more pick your spots? Is that just the reality of it?

JUSTIN ROSE: That's a great question. I'd love to say, hey, no, I can roll with it every single week. I do have some challenges. I'm flying transatlantic 7 to 10 times or more, 12 times a year. That takes its toll. I think I have a lot of other things going on in my life with a busy family, kids growing up, all these sorts of things, almost dealing with young adults now. So there's a lot of other things I have to pay attention to; can't just be solely distracted by golf or solely focused on golf.

I think I should be realistic about what's achievable, but there's plenty of golf tournaments in a small enough window of time that I can focus on, and I really believe that the ones that truly matter to me are all attainable still, and that's kind of why I'm practicing. That's tons of motivation for me.

I feel like I don't necessarily have to be No. 1 in the world again to feel like there's enough to play for for me.

To win a major championship, let's just say, if you want to use that as a goal, which is a goal, to do it I feel like at this point in my career would feel like I'm doing it for the first time again, and that would give me lots of self-satisfaction. That's kind of all I need at this point.

Q. Justin, having won the FedExCup the old way, what would it be like to win it this way? How would you compare it? Obviously it's a different format now.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, absolutely. I think that winning it any way is amazing. I think that we've had some fun sort

of formats. Obviously we've had new ways now this year of sort of rewarding great play during the season. In the past we've been trying to find models that reward the season but make it all about playing well when it counts, and I think now it's just like a nice little balance of that.

We now have important weeks like last week, this week, the other bonuses that are available to players. Playing well to time those is still incredibly important. But then you kind of get back to Atlanta being centrally the TOUR Championship for the FedExCup. I think it's nice to have the 72 holes mean something again and be true, a true test, because you could be the best guy in the week and earn the best ranking points for being the best over 72 holes but you wouldn't necessarily come away with the trophy.

For me it's a really clean way to finish the year, and a lot on the line, plenty on the line, more than enough on the line for us to go, wow, this is a huge opportunity and a lot of fun and makes the tournament stand above everything else.

Q. From the outside looking in, it maybe looks like you've been searching for something off the tee this season, but then last week it really clicked for you obviously in the best way possible. Can you just talk about the process that you've gone through and then the confidence you have after last week?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, good question. I think statistically probably not been great off the tee if I look at it. When I've played well, I've driven it well. This has definitely been a factor of when I have played well and when I haven't played well.

I think, yeah, post-Masters through some of those tougher tournaments we played, Memorial, U.S. Open, just didn't drive the ball well enough to do good in those.

I felt like the reset going into links golf season helped me, and I definitely drove it better in Scotland and The Open. I started to see positive strokes gained off the tee, put a mini driver in play, which I've felt like has been a nice shift for me. Wish I had that at Augusta because holes like 14 and 17 which gave me trouble, they're perfect mini driver holes. Yes, that's been a nice go-to club in a lot of situations for me the last couple of months.

I feel like the body is moving well, beginning to find a little bit of speed, at least in these nice hot climates, to get a little bit more distance out of these big golf courses. Yeah, driving the ball will continue to be a priority because you can't -- I'm never going to be the longest player anymore on TOUR, but you can't be short and crooked. You've got to have a weapon in there somewhere.



Q. If you can think back seven years ago, if your 45-year-old brain will allow you to do that, what did it feel like to win? You're the only one, I think in history, who won the FedExCup without having won a playoff event. Did that still feel like a huge sense of achievement? I guess where I'm going moving forward, can you still call it a season-long champion if it just comes down to 30 guys in a 72-hole tournament?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, so I think I definitely justified it to myself in 2018 that it was a worthy win, and I think obviously I played -- it was a hallmark of my whole year and maybe my whole 18 months. My march to world No. 1 was built through consistency. It was a remarkable amount of top 10s really I was just racking up, and obviously I was very proud of that. We always want to win more, but I was definitely getting my looks. I was winning a couple times over here and a few times in Europe, so I was getting that feeling of, okay, yeah, you're winning, but the overall level was the best I ever had in terms of consistency.

I think that's typically what a season is all about in theory, and that's definitely what got me to the top of the rankings. I had no problem justifying it without winning. I would have loved to have won. I felt like the numbers crunched to where I needed to birdie one of the last two to get it done, and whether you call it winning a tournament or winning the FedExCup or whatever it is, when it comes down to having to pull off a shot to win, as a player, that's winning. Winning a trophy, winning what's on your mind at the time. For me, it felt like -- very much did feel like a win.

Now I don't know if you'd call it a season-long race for the FedExCup, but I think the FedExCup is the crowning jewel in the schedule, and it's the most elite and sought-after tournament to be in. I think that's what we're chasing, that opportunity to be there in Atlanta, to look at each other on the 1st tee and go, okay, boys, who's got it this week when it counts? So I think that's what it's really all about.

Q. First, on the golf course, I know you didn't play back when it was last year, but just playing the 18th hole last time, that was the hardest hole on the golf course. I'm just wondering the challenge of that particular hole, if you've seen it?

JUSTIN ROSE: Here this week, yeah, absolutely. It's clearly a well-bunkered hole on the left because you know what's down the right. There's obviously a beautiful hazard with cascading waterfalls and rocks. It looks great. Then well-placed bunkers. I think most guys won't be able to cover those, so they're very much in play.

For me, it's a good probably classic example of going to the mini driver, which pulls me just short of those bunkers and leaves me a 6-iron to the green probably. That's probably how I'll choose to play the hole. It's about execution. Clearly you have to hit the fairway and step up and hit a good iron shot.

Green is semi-blind, as a lot of them are here, with a couple little humps and hollows, and halfway up the green, especially if the pin is deep in the back, you have to hit quite a positive iron shot to get it back there. Otherwise you kind of roll back to the front edge, and it's going to be a tough two-putt. Yeah, demanding, challenging hole, and it will be again.

Q. You win, it gets you an automatic spot in the Ryder Cup. Just wondering if you felt like you needed to do more coming into the playoffs to make that team or if you felt like you had already had a body of work that would have gotten you there? Just wondering your thoughts on it.

JUSTIN ROSE: No, that's fair. I think I felt very comfortable with the conversations that I had with Luke and his team that they want -- their preference was for me to be on the team. I just needed to kind of give them some decent evidence to sort of get me on the team. Whether that meant I needed to finish in the top 12 for a pick or the top 15 or just be relevant in the conversation, I felt like that was the brief that I was given, and I felt like that was really fair because obviously I think I think I do balance the team on one end and you always have the youngsters coming through. A good team always has a nice mix of different types of characters and people on it.

From that point of view, I felt like I knew what my job was. I haven't been putting myself under a lot of pressure really because of that to make the team because I felt like playing a little bit better in Scotland and The Open Championship was sort of enough to make sure they knew my game was still right there, and they have confidence that I can sort of pull it together when required hopefully.

Yeah, certainly to be -- from personal pride, to make it without a pick is huge. I've only ever been picked once for the Ryder Cup, and that was last time round. So it's nice to not have to rely on that. It's obviously getting harder to make with six guys. So a lot of pride in making the team at this point.

Q. Just your resume would dictate that you'd be considered for a captainship of the Ryder Cup at some point. Would you prefer that to be after you would not be considered as a player? Would there be difficulties being a playing captain?

JUSTIN ROSE: I don't think there's ever a perfect time to be Ryder Cup captain. It's a big commitment. That's what I've learned over the last few years of watching Luke go about it. It's an undertaking that is really, really important, and it's probably a two-year -- it's probably at least a 14-, 15-month commitment, and who knows if this day the modern way to do it is try to do a home and away? Obviously that's what's happened with Luke now.

It's a big decision if that's the decision you take, and if it's a decision that you choose that you want, you want that opportunity and also that obligation because I think it is one.

So you're either going to do it while you're still a relevant player because actually in some ways that's great because you are around the players and you're on TOUR, or you're going to do it when you finish playing, and that means you're going to spend two years on TOUR anyway when you're not that good at golf, and that's kind of a frustrating place to be as a competitor and a player.

There's never a perfect time to do it, but the opportunity for me personally, it's a huge honor, and I'd love to take it on.

Yeah, to answer the second half of your question, I'm sure you're thinking about Keegan and want me to say something about Keegan, but you know, he's probably created -- he may not have seen -- the overall honor of leading out the team was probably his decision-making at the time, yes. That's going to trump all for him, New York, lead out the team. He's obviously a charismatic and fiery competitor, and obviously, I think with that will become a great captain. He's almost played too well for his own liking in a sense.

The team may well require him -- the best way to win the Ryder Cup is to win points, so if he feels like he's an absolute strategic, brilliant mind, then maybe he's focused one way. Or if he thinks, damn, I'm playing well, I need to win points, I'm going to do it that way. So he's going to figure out the best way to do it for him. That's his job as captain now.

Q. Take you back just a couple of years, not all the way to '18, but you missed the FedExCup playoffs, even the first leg of it. What was the reset, what were the conversations like with your team at that point to get to where you are now?

JUSTIN ROSE: There's never been any panic, really, I don't think. I don't think there's ever been any, well, that's it, you're washed up. There's never been an injury or a problem with the movement, or there's never been the hips

or there's never been something mad that I've had to get over. This has been kind of just a bit draggy sort of form that's just sort of been lingering.

I think partly a lot of that is kind of a post-COVID stroke, moving different countries, changing lifestyle, changing travel schedules, and maybe just not doing a great job of adjusting to that, first and foremost. Like I alluded to, I think just doing the work, the work was just doing it the wrong way round.

I think it's so competitive out here, if you miss a trick with your performance and your preparation and those types of things, if you drop 1 percent here or there, it's going to show up somewhere. So I think it was just a bit of a refiguring out the goals and the process. Not so much the goals, but refiguring out the processes and the plan and working the right way. So I was incrementally getting better again.

I do feel I'm getting better again, which is the exciting part. Yeah, there's been no panic in the team, but definitely some changing of how we're doing things, yeah, for sure. You're always trying to pivot. You're always trying to learn and improve. No panic, I'd say, yeah.

Q. I know we talked a little bit about Keegan, but it's been a really long time since a European captain has been back to back. What was it that Luke did last time in Rome that made it so compelling that he should get a second turn at the job?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think he just made it easy for the players really. He just took the responsibility of so many little decisions, and I felt like the players felt like there was a freedom to play golf. That's kind of what it boiled down to. I think the players enjoyed -- they enjoy it being as simple as that, I think, from that point of view.

I also don't think there was necessarily a captain ready and waiting in the wings, and Luke, I think also, there's so much learning done year one, or for Ryder Cup one, I just felt like he was the perfect guy for Bethpage. He's meticulous, and we've enjoyed working under him for sure.

Q. How did you celebrate the win on Sunday? And then quickly, kind of turn your focus to getting here, learning the course, and get ready for another week of tournament?

JUSTIN ROSE: So I'd made plans to fly here with Matt Fitzpatrick, and he kindly waited around for one, two, three playoff holes. I'm sure he was getting frustrated at either one of us missing or making putts. Yeah, so I got here into Baltimore probably 11:00 on Sunday evening, where my



son was waiting for me. He'd flown from the UK. Yeah, I had a celebratory hug with him. He stayed on the couch, as he likes to do. He loves the couch, he says.

We kind of stayed up, one or two drinks, chatting about it until probably 2:00 a.m., and just tried to get as best night's sleep as I could after that, but adrenaline keeps you up. Probably got up around 8:00 the next day. Short night, but didn't do much on Monday. Just spent some time with my boy and settled in. Yeah, it's been a great week.

I think probably a lot of us took most of Monday or certainly had a light Monday. So I don't really feel like there's been much of a -- I haven't given up much. I think all of us are sort of scrambling a little bit to be prepared for Thursday trying to understand this golf course, yeah.

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