

Sentry Tournament of Champions

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii, USA

Plantation Course at Kapalua

Justin Thomas

Press Conference

JOHN BUSH: Justin, thanks for joining us. He is our defending champion and a two-time winner of the Sentry Tournament of Champions.

Justin, it seems to be a match made in heaven here with you and Kapalua. If we can just get some comments on a place that I know you love dearly.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's a fun golf course. It's a fun event, a fun week. Sometimes you just kind of have to remind yourself you're at a golf tournament. But for that same reason, it's enjoyable. I always get up early with the time change here and I play, go out and play early, and then I pretty much hang by the pool and the beach the rest of the afternoon, and there's not any other tournaments I do that the rest of the year.

So I don't know if it's the laid back vibes, just the kind of easygoingness or the golf course in itself that I enjoy, but it's definitely an overall wonderful week.

JOHN BUSH: We're going to go right into questions, but I do have one item to talk to you a little bit about. Earlier today it was announced that Whoop is now the official fitness wearable of the PGA TOUR. I know that's a device that you rely on a lot. If we can get some comments, please.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I was very excited to hear that. I think it's a great move for the TOUR, for all of us. It's become a part of my life. I thought it was going to be something I would just kind of wear for a little bit and, again, it's just, it's something that is a part of my daily routine and a part of my routine weekly and monthly and yearly because I'm one to try to pick up on any trends that I can to live a healthier and better lifestyle and hopefully improve my golf game as well because of that. Hopefully the other guys that haven't been on, haven't been on Whoop that will now get involved in it will feel and think the same way.



JOHN BUSH: All right. Thank you. Questions?

Q. Just curious, you obviously had a good year in 2020, but I'm guessing you probably think that there was some opportunities missed and you could maybe improve. I mean, how do you look at it and does that make you any more motivated starting out or do you just keep doing what you're doing, because obviously what you've been doing has been pretty good?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I think it's tough and that's something that I've kind of had to look at over the past three, four years is, obviously, we're doing things right, we're doing a lot of things well, but there's always going to be areas where you can improve and get better.

I think that's something that we have all done a good job on, on my team is, look, we're not trying to revamp anything. We're not trying to change my game in any way. We're trying to slowly improve certain areas and get better in certain aspects. But like I said, we're clearly doing some and a lot of stuff well, so I need to continue to work on those things and try to improve some of the flaws I have in my game.

In terms of last year, it was a good year. It was my most consistent year I've had, but it definitely wasn't as many wins as I feel like I could have and should have had, especially in some big events, I feel like I didn't play well over the weekend or on Sundays and that's something that I feel like I've been able to assess and figure out a little bit what it was, and hopefully when I get in those situations going forward I'll handle them a lot better.

Q. We know a little bit about what you did in your quote/unquote off season. You won the PNC with your dad. I'm wondering what else you were able to kind of squeeze in there, and whether you really felt like you had much of a break playing the PNC probably for the first time and kind of shortened it a little bit.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I played Mayakoba as well, which being in December this year was quite a bit different. But, no, we never have a break. Our longest break is realistically probably five weeks, the month of December.



But we have Thanksgiving and Christmas kind of in that off period, if you will. So it's, but we understand that. We know that going in and it's, we know that every single year, so it's not like it's anything new.

But in terms of besides PNC, I just really didn't do very much. I was rested, I hung out at home. I spent time with my family over the holidays and just relaxed. I mean, I played some golf but I definitely didn't do a lot of practice. I mean, I feel like getting rest and spending time away from the game is just as important as spending time working on my game. So I felt like work on some areas when I felt like it, to be perfectly honest, and just played a lot of golf just to hit different shots and try to stay, obviously, you know, stay in my comfort zone or feel good when I come here to play.

Q. What was the most memorable gift, Christmas gift, given or received?

JUSTIN THOMAS: My parents got me a popcorn machine, which is really cool. I have a pretty sweet man cave at my house upstairs and they got me, like, one of the old school kind of rolling popcorn machines. So we'll be making our own popcorn now.

Q. Have you put the new Titleist driver or any new Titleist driver in the bag? And I think you switched balls also. What are you seeing out of those?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I have the new driver in play this week. I've been playing with it pretty much right after the PNC. I was close to being able to use it there, but I just wasn't quite, didn't have it where I wanted. I am using a different shaft, so I messed around with some different shaft there, but I have it in a good spot to where I like, and I feel like this is a pretty good place to kind of give it a try to see, you know, obviously it's going to be windy and the fairways are generous on many holes out here, so I feel like I'll be able to get a good idea.

In terms of the golf ball, I started using at Mayakoba, I like it, I feel like it's able to kind of pick up on some of the areas that I was trying to improve in terms of I was trying to get a little bit more height on the ball, trying to be able to hold greens a little bit better when they get firm or with long irons, and I feel like this ball has been able to do that for me.

Q. What exactly is different with the driver or what did you just like about it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, I loved it as soon as I hit it. I just, I couldn't find something that reacted the same as mine. I think that it's faster, it looks better, it feels better, everything about it is better. I just didn't hit it better than

mine, my gamer. And that was the hardest part is I never really had long enough time off to kind of give it two, whatever, a week, two, three weeks of testing and hitting, going out and playing a bunch of rounds in different winds in different conditions, to try it.

I used it for a couple days in Vegas and I, it just wasn't, it was a little bit too left bias for what my driver, my gamer was, and I feel like I finally gotten it to where when I make the swing that I want, when I look up, it's doing the ball flight that I feel like it should.

Q. I'm curious if either you or your dad or both of you have worn your victory belts over to Tiger's place yet?

JUSTIN THOMAS: We have, yes. We had dinner with him around the holidays and we both wore our belts over there.

Q. How did that go over?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Oh, it was great. We would expect them to do the same thing. And, no, I mean, Charlie just kind of laughed when he saw us and Tiger just said, you know, well done, well played. And you know, it was all in good fun. But they fully expected it, I think.

Q. How good was that note that Charlie left for your dad on the drive on Saturday?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It was good. It was the -- I mean, the part about it is the whole story wasn't really told. My dad left that note for Charlie in the practice round because he hit it through the fairway and he didn't draw it or didn't turn it over, so my dad wrote a note and put it under his ball and somehow he was smart enough to keep the note and use it in the same situation. So it was very well played. It was very smart for a kid his age.

Q. Bryson mentioned already that he's striving to reach 210 miles per hour. Do you think that's doable?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, a hundred percent it is, for him. I mean, not other people, but, yeah, I mean I think it's pretty clear that when he sets his mind to something or a certain speed, he's been able to achieve it. It's just a matter of how long it will take, I think.

Q. Two quick topics for you: I think your first European event was France back in 2018. You're going to Abu Dhabi here in a couple weeks. Do you have a philosophy on when, why, and where you go as it relates to non-TOUR stuff?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, my No. 1 priority at this time is the PGA TOUR and playing as many PGA TOUR events



as I can that I feel like I have a chance to win and I've always felt -- I would love to join the European Tour one year. I would love to have a chance to win the Order of Merit and have a chance to be able to win both. I think that obviously would be unbelievable.

And so that's something that is important to me and I would love to do at some point, but it's just I'm not at that stage of my career. I feel like I have a lot more that I need and want to accomplish on this TOUR first.

But my thought is, playing in Abu Dhabi was not going to affect any events that I would play in the States and play on the main TOUR, and that's kind of my main philosophy or main thinking is that I'm not going to go play in an event that is going to jeopardize any TOUR event that I would play in. Like I knew, after last year, that I wasn't going to go play Sony, this year at least, and I was, because that's always why I haven't gone to play Abu Dhabi. I've had opportunities to go, but I love Sony, I love the golf course, and it just isn't realistic to play them both. And I knew this year with not playing that one that I would have the opportunity to go over there and not affect my PGA TOUR schedule.

Q. But to that point, and Abu Dhabi's always been a good attractive spot for a lot of people over the years, have you become a, whatever they call it over there, an affiliate member or anything like that? I mean, Collin almost won the Race to Dubai without even going over there. It's so easy to do it now, why not?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Because I think there's a certain amount of events I think you'd have to play in, at least there has been in the past. Last year might have been a weird year. But I feel like we -- I talked about it with Mark every year, is that I have to go play in, I think, like, probably two additional or three additional, and it's like, and then when you look at the year as a whole, you just, it's kind of hard to find a hole of adding an event, let alone an event overseas or an international event.

So, yeah, it will be, in terms of finding the right year where I feel like it makes sense to where I may be, may be a year where a TOUR event that I usually play in is at a different course and I'll be able to add an event that week or whatever it might be.

Q. And then secondly, when you consider the amount of really amazing talent out here on TOUR, we're seeing it now with D.J., we have seen it with Jason Day, we can go off a big, long list here, and you're on it as well, I would be curious if there was a time when you first came out that, did you always feel like your game was good enough to beat anybody or did that

take time from the time you joined the TOUR to realize that?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I think I always knew it was, but or I always -- I shouldn't say knew. I always felt it was, but you don't, it's hard to say because like I said, I felt like I was, but I don't think I truly felt it until after winning my first event. I mean, it's something to where it's like, look, you can think all you want, but in reality until you do it, it's hard to say -- you know what I mean? It's hard to be like, Oh, no, I can beat everybody. It's, like, well, you haven't, so it's clearly you can't type of thing. So it was something that I felt like I could and I knew somewhere down in me that I could, it was just a matter of literally I hadn't done it yet. And so once I did, then I at least was able to back up my own theory.

Q. Is there a player out there now that when you got to the first tee tied in the final round, they would get your attention more than someone else?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It depends how they're playing, I would say. I mean, I feel -- if I'm playing how I feel or if I'm playing well, I feel confident going up against anybody. But I mean, there's, yeah, I mean, there's obviously a couple people that are, have a little bit more on their accomplishment list than others, so I would say that those are going to be, those guys are going to be harder to beat than others.

Q. You've been here a lot, welcome back, wondering two things: Your impressions of the course a year after the refinements have had a chance to grow in; and with this field we're talking a No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 and No. 5 in the World Rankings today, how special is this field this week?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, in terms of the golf course, it's the best I've ever seen it. I think the lack of play or just, with everything that's been going on, they obviously haven't had near as many rounds, I mean that's going to help any golf course. And, I mean, the fairways were, I was blown away when I came out on Sunday and played, I mean they were in perfect shape, the greens were in really, really good shape, everything's healthy, the greens are substantially softer than last year, so I mean the course will play quite a bit easier. But it's still soft. I mean they get so much rain here that it's going to be hard for it to play firm and fast.

So the course is great, it's been great to come and see how the course has grown in from last year. I'm sure the greens will get a little bit quicker from what they have been the last couple days.

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But the field is incredible this year. I think everyone's jonesing to play. And I know myself, D.J. and I talked about it yesterday, I mean, you can put us two on a list of we'll never turn this place down if we have the opportunity to come here. It's an unbelievable place to start the year, it's so relaxing, it's enjoyable, and it's a great tournament to have the opportunity to start your year off with a victory.

So I'm excited to be here and I know I love getting a win or trying to get a win early in the season so I can get myself back.

JOHN BUSH: All right, Justin, we appreciate your time. Best of luck this week, sir.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Thank you, Mr. Bush.

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