

Sony Open in Hawaii

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Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

Justin Rose

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Justin Rose to the interview room here at the Sony Open in Hawai'i. You're making your first start since 2017, four top-20 finishes in your five appearances here including a runner-up in 2017. Talk about what it's like to be back.

JUSTIN ROSE: Really good to be back. I've always enjoyed this golf course. I feel like it offers -- even the scoring is low here. It offers a good test, especially early in the season. Depending -- all these golf courses are very weather dependent, but if you get a good strong breeze, there's a lot of cross winds, you have to keep the ball in play.

I've always felt like it's been a good benchmark early in the season, but also if your game is sharp it offers you a good opportunity to get out there and get on the leaderboard and feel like -- this is the kind of golf course I feel that fits my game when I'm playing well.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking of low scores, you shot a course record-tying 61 at the Sentry last week. Talk about your form heading into this week.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, Kapalua is obviously just a very unique golf course from that point of view. It's a course where you know you have to go low, but it doesn't always appear to be that easy or feel that easy. Greens are tough to read, tons of slope out there, obviously, and yet people continue to go low.

Obviously for me, the week hadn't gone particularly to plan at all, so it was nice to finish low on Sunday and get something special going, and it was the kind of round where I knew something good was happening, and what I really enjoyed about it is I kind of stayed out of my own way that day.

Sometimes you go really low, you think about going really low, whereas on Sunday I managed to keep flowing with it and stay loose, which I guess is a byproduct of being 40th in the tournament. That helps you stay loose.

The three-ball I was in was unbelievable as well. We were 30-under par between three of us. That must be TOUR record I'd imagine. 12, 10, and 8 was our group. It was a cool day for us.

I played actually with Ludvig, as well, so that was nice. Yeah, I think I can bring a little bit of that. My form feels good. I've been working hard. Haven't had much of an off-season. I played quite late into December playing Hero and Grant Thornton, so that was by design.

I feel like my game is getting to where I want it and I didn't want to lay off for too long.

Q. Do thoughts of 59 creep in, or since you're so far back you can stay in that free wheel mentality?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think there's a lot of personal pride that comes into it at that point. There were a couple of challenges towards the end of the round. My ball slipped off the side of the 6th green, had to make a good up-and-down. 7, I mis-hit my tee shot, ended up making a bit of a tough deal of the hole there, but up-and-downed it from about 40 yards.

You kind of know that a bogey really sets you back on that golf course, so really staying with it and some personal pride for some making that cheap bogey that kind of comes in and halts the momentum of what is a really good day.

Then I stepped up and hit a really good 6-iron into the 8th hole and then two really good woods on to the middle of the 18th, the 9th hole. So, yeah, some good swings to finish the round after what had been a really good day.

Yeah, I took a little bit of pride in the way I was able to close out the round for sure.

I guess disappointed to leave the putt short. It was like a 40-footer, but never shot 13-under in my life before, so that would have been a record for me. But yeah, left it short.

Q. You shot 60 on the Palm Course --

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, Palm Course, 12-under. That's a



long time ago. I had a lot of low ones -- last season, 61 at -- the last couple seasons, when I have got going low, I've actually been able to shoot some pretty low numbers.

Q. This is the first start for the rookies out here. Along those lines, thinking back to your rookie season, what for a rookie goes through your head in your first couple starts as you're transitioning?

JUSTIN ROSE: I mean, I can't remember. It's a long time ago. No one wants my rookie season. You're just trying to make the first cut and get the monkey off your back.

Obviously there's tons of excitement, and I think this is sort of a really unique way to start the year. You're all the way out in Hawai'i, which feels very different. It's kind of these two events have like their own personality, so I think it's kind of a great way to ease your way into it. Although the travels are not overly easy.

But the field is quite strong this week. I think there's quite a few guys that haven't gotten into the tournament, would've expected to have got into the tournament, and being able to get their season up and running.

I think the season has become more cutthroat this year, given the elevated events and given the fact that some guys are not able to get into as many events as they maybe once were, et cetera.

So I do feel like there's a big emphasis on getting off to a good start. That always helps.

So I think that as laid back and as easygoing as it feels like Hawai'i is, there's no time to lose for whether it be a rookie or anybody else in the field. I think everyone is probably pretty keen to get off to a good start.

With that comes some anticipation, and with that probably comes a little bit of nerves, getting the season up and running.

Q. (Regarding Robert McIntyre.) Ryder Cup you guys had a great connection there and making his first PGA TOUR start as a member this week. Have you stayed in touch with him? What do you look back on from that week?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, there's a ton of new faces, lads from the European Tour. It's quite strange seeing some of the -- like stalwart European Tour players here, obviously given the structure that we have between the two tours now and the 10 cards that were up for grabs. It's cool to see those guys out here.

Obviously, yeah, saw Bob the other day, and we've stayed in -- I wouldn't say close contact, but obviously dropping each other a text over Christmas, Happy New Year, all that kind of stuff, and we'll catch up this week. I think we are both staying sort of downtown Honolulu, so grab a bit of dinner.

But yeah, that was a special week for both of us in the Ryder Cup, and anytime you pair up with anybody and earn a point, you kind of have a mate for life. You kind of go into something, go into this cauldron of intensity, and if you're able to survive it, I think it definitely brings you closer.

Q. Based on your play last year during Maui and during all the Signature Events, what kind of advantage do you think you and players in that group have over the lads who are not playing for enhanced FedEx points, et cetera?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, listen, you certainly have an advantage just in terms of the stature of the event and the quality of fields that you're able to play against. Now, is that easier is the Catch 22. I think this is obviously what we're all trying to figure out, how you give everybody that perfectly fair sort of ebb and flow in terms of stronger fields equals more points, which I think they absolutely should have because obviously 10th in a strong field event is better than a 10th in a weak field event. How you distribute those points has obviously been a topic of discussion ^ Check.

So I think it's going to take half the year, which is too long, to figure out if it's right or wrong or how close we've gotten to it.

But absolutely, I think that you have the ability to play for elevated points, and I think if your game is -- if you're playing well enough to compete in those events, absolutely it's the way forward, and that's what we're all striving for out here on TOUR is to be in these big events so we can have that opportunity to amass as many points as possible.

Q. There's probably a lot to figure out this year. We talk about the number of guys who didn't get in where they normally would.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, there's different dynamics at year one FedEx it's taken iterations to find out ^ Check if it's perfect or what needs tweaking.

I'm sure this is a similar type of situation. But frustrating for a lot of guys because there will always be one or two guys that it makes a significant difference to their career and livelihood. It's important stuff to get right, and obviously we

don't make -- I don't want to say we, the powers that be don't make these decisions lightly. It is done with the best of intentions to try to make it correct across the whole TOUR membership.

But hard to keep 200 guys happy for sure.

Q. Are the Olympics on your mind this year? You're around 40, 35 --

JUSTIN ROSE: In the world, yeah. It's going to be a tough team to make. We all know Team USA is a really difficult team to make, but the way I'm trying to look at it is I've got to try and play my way into the top 15 in the World Rankings. I think they can still field up to four players inside that top 15, so I don't see Fitz, Tyrrell, or Tommy necessarily going backwards this year.

For me, it's up to me to play my way into that top 15, and that's a massive goal for sure.

Tokyo 2020 I was actually in the team, and by '21 I had actually slipped out.

The Olympics has been something special for me. Clearly I walked around for four or five years with that tag lines and the fans identify a lot with me, so to have the opportunity to go back would be unbelievable. Paris is a golf course I love and know, and yeah, I feel like I can still challenge obviously for another one.

But you've got to be in it to win it.

Yeah, first and foremost a lot of hard work for me to be able to make the team.

Q. What's the difference in the people you run across in daily walks of life who see you and recognize you? How many from Merion and how many from Rio?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, really good question. I think what I did notice about the U.S. Open was you win one and obviously you're forever a major champion, forever a U.S. Open champion, and the golf fan remembers that.

In three weeks' time there is an Open champion, so quickly forgotten. You're onto the next champion. Whereas the Olympics did resonate for a long, long time.

I think my playing partners probably didn't enjoy four years on the first tee, Olympic champion Justin Rose. Okay, give it a rest. I didn't ask for it, but at the end I was tired of it to be honest with you. I shouldn't have been.

That's the biggest thing about the Olympics for me is I was

surprised how much it resonated with the golf fan. Quite clearly back in 2016 some of the top players didn't really get on board with how meaningful an achievement it is.

I think if the fan begins to identify with it, then it becomes important to the players as well. Obviously now we're a couple editions in, a bit of history there. Xander, great winner as well.

Obviously we have a couple great venues I think. Paris and LA, Riviera especially. It really should go from strength to strength. That's what I hope for it, that it does become something that is sought after in our game.

Q. First of all, congratulations on your 2023 champion player Britain and Ireland. You got the PGA award.

JUSTIN ROSE: Oh, yeah. Thank you.

Q. Following up on the Olympics, how do you think that you like the course? You think it's a good course for this?

JUSTIN ROSE: I do, I think it's a good championship golf course. Creates a lot of drama. Difficult finishing holes there. Nice sort of little amphitheater feeling at the end.

I think that it's a challenging golf course. I feel like it's a type of golf course that suits all types of players. It's not one of the wide open 7,800 yard courses where some players are going to think this is not really in my wheelhouse. There is a huge advantage to a certain type of player.

I think that's what the TOUR have a good set up in terms of biggest events. The PLAYERS Championship and East Lake for the FedExCup are on layouts that I feel suit the majority of the field.

There is not like one outstanding or outlying player that should particularly do well. Golf National in Paris fits that model as well. That's important, that big championships are played on golf courses that are sympathetic to everybody in some sense.

Q. How do you feel it fits you game?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, it's a strategic golf course. Not driver all the way. A lot of nuance off the tee. Relatively tight depending on the setup and rough. You have to hit some clutch shots down the stretch. Bit of water around the 18th hole. Got to step up and hit two great shots. If you're coming down the 18th with chance to win a medal, it's a daunting hole to play.

Yeah, I think all these elements are there to have a great tournament.

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