

# The American Express

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La Quinta, California, USA

PGA WEST Pete Dye Stadium Course

## Justin Thomas

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Justin Thomas to the interview room here at The American Express. We'll open it up for questions in a couple minutes. First, Justin, welcome back to Palm Springs, La Quinta area. You had a strong finish here last year what do you enjoy about coming back here and what do you expect this week?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I always enjoy, I mean, the West Coast and I would say this place is a little different than some of the other spots we go to on the west coast, the weather's a little more predictable, but this time of year it's tough to beat Palm Springs area. Hence, I generally am not getting to a tournament early by any means, but we came in Friday afternoon just to come get settled into the, what the tundra of cold that everybody in South Florida is calling it in Jupiter right now. So it was nice to get out here, get settled. It's just such a beautiful area, beautiful part of the world, and has some great golf courses. I enjoy being out here, being out playing again last year for the first time in a long time, and playing well, so I was glad to be able to add it in my schedule again this year and this week.

THE MODERATOR: More about your start here last year, you ended up finishing T-3 here. What do you like about the multiple courses and the couple different setups that allowed you to go out and open your 2024 season strong?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, it is tough, it's not, obviously it isn't something we're used to. But although the courses are different, La Quinta is very different than I would say the courses here, but they all have the same general idea, that you need to make a lot of birdies, and you need to be aggressive. They're very scorable, so I take the same mindset into all of the courses, it's just, you're standing on the tee thinking, How am I going to make birdie, and what's the best way for me to do that. You have a couple shots here and there that you maybe need to, not think a little bit more you're, obviously in a perfect world you're thinking the same on all your shots, but maybe just giving a little bit more attention or playing a little bit more conservatively, but it's just, it's an offense week, not defense.



THE MODERATOR: Off the golf course you recently became a father. How has dad life been treating you and what have you enjoyed most about this new experience and being a dad.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, she's been great. Molly's eight weeks now and, yeah, the family's out here for five weeks on the West Coast, it's their first time traveling, so yeah, it's cool. I mean, I think you watch it all the time, or at least growing up all the time on TV, of guys winning tournaments and greeting their family and their little ones on 18 green, and I'm pretty excited for that opportunity one day and hopefully sooner rather than later. But, yeah, no everybody's been great, at eight weeks old you're not really getting a whole lot, they're pretty much creatures of habit of eating, sleeping, and pooping, that's pretty much all they do. So getting some smiles and getting to hang out with her has been fun.

THE MODERATOR: If you have gotten any, what's been the best parental advice you've gotten from some of your peers out here on TOUR?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I've gotten a bunch of advice. I think, you know, little things, like there's been, not necessarily looking around you, but there's definitely people less capable of it that have done it, so you'll be okay, that kind of thing. I mean, it's just, it's all just a part of it. It's just a new norm. Everybody's like, How are you sleeping? I'm like, I'm sleeping fine. You know, sleep with an eight week old is different than sleep without a child. It's all relative. You just make the most of it and keep on keeping on.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions now.

**Q. You say this an offensive week, obviously 29-under won this last year, which was the record for 72 holes here. Is it a tournament where you can say, Okay, I got to do this on this course or this on this course, or is this just, let's go make a birdie every hole?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's go make a birdie every hole. While I do think some holes, some nines, courses are easier than others, I mean, you can shoot, you know, 12-, 13-under on any of these courses, it's just, it's all about how you're playing. You have to, you put the ball in play off the tee, you have a lot of wedges, a lot of short irons, the par-5s



are reachable, and the greens are in good condition where you can just get on some rolls. I think that's the big thing is trying to stay patient. I think it's pretty easy and very similar to kind of how Kapalua is. I mean, I just I played fine, I just had like a bad hole each round the first two days and that killed me when 34-, 35-under par wins, like you can't have doubles and a triple, that's just not a -- you're running out of holes at that point. So it's just, yeah, it's make as many birdies as you possibly can every day.

**Q. Where do you start on Thursday?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: La Quinta.

**Q. You said, 12-, 13-under, well, here's La Quinta.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah.

**Q. You had a pretty strong year last year, you had a lot of chances to win, top 5s early in the year, late in the year, kind of in the middle of the year. What's the next step here, is it just win a golf tournament, or is it play as strongly as you played last year?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's definitely win. It's putting myself in contention more often, getting in final groups, having sleeping on leads, just continuing to build and doing it more and more often. Yeah, getting way more of those. Obviously I did, I had a lot of good last year, and played solid golf, but it was a season without any trophies, and that's, I don't want to say not acceptable, but not, it's not my favorite thing in the world, I'll just say that. I just got to, yeah, keep plugging, keep working on what I'm working on, but, yeah, the next step is definitely winning, winning and winning more.

**Q. I don't know if you've had a chance to play Stadium yet.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Um-hum.

**Q. Have you noticed a difference since they did a pretty massive renovation of the greens?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Oh, yeah. They're about like this table. They got some funky slopes on 'em. They altered some greens more than others. You're definitely going to see some questioned looks, I would say, after some putts. Just a lot of movement and very, very subtle movement versus kind of constant slope. They're very firm, so although, you know, it's still obviously a very gettable course, it requires more strategy than the past where it was just, there's a lot of holes you just hit it as close to the green as you could and you would be fine, but maybe playing angles a little bit more and having the appropriate yardage or club into

greens will be a little bit more, actually it will be a lot more important this year.

**Q. You've always been such a cool and calm player, and can you share a bit about what you do practices maybe for mental fitness?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I definitely have my moments of not calm and cool too (smiling), but I think the, I mean, something that I feel like I was fortunate to, I don't know whether I was told or maybe just kind of got to an age where I matured into realizing it, but everybody is different. I think the sooner I realize that not everybody's going to have the same demeanor and not everybody is going to look the same and act the same on a golf course -- I mean every sport, every profession, but for me a golf course -- when you see it all the time. But I think just not acting like anybody but myself. I've always been fiery, I've always maybe had a little chip on my shoulder, whatever you want to call it, but I'm not the guy that's hits a shot and is, Oh, golly, gee, and it's, this is, you know, That's okay, the next one will be better. It's just, no, I may get pissed off for a couple seconds, but as soon as it's done I'm on to the next one. That's just how I cope with it, it's how I deal with whatever's going on.

I think to answer your question, it's just, I know who I am, so I don't want to act necessarily like anybody else. I know when I'm at my best mentally it's working on staying in the moment, not letting anything in the past, looking forward not backward, I can only do anything about where I'm at at that moment. Coach Saban always says, Be where your feet are. I mean, that's a very, it's a very true or good, I guess, way to live in anything you're doing. There's plenty of different things, but us golfers are kind of sick in the head, so who knows.

**Q. So no off-course practices or meditation or calming?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I've tried meditation, it's just not for me. I've, seriously, I've tried it five, six, seven times, it's, my mind's a little too busy, and that's why meditation's good for it, but I don't know, I've fought with who I, you know, Julie, who I work with, with, you know, the mental side multiple times, she wants me to try it, but it hasn't worked. So it's just, yeah, I talk to her quite often, and she's very helpful, but, yeah, just getting things outward is generally a good thing.

**Q. I don't know how many of the first two matches for TGL you were able to watch, but if you saw any at all you can glean how it's going in your opinion, and also as far as the competition goes, is there anything you learned that maybe you'll use when it's your turn?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: There's definitely some things I've learned. I'm not going to share 'em until we play, for sure. No, I've been pleasantly surprised. I don't want to say that in a sense of like I thought it wasn't going to do well, but I just, I truly didn't know. I think all of us went into this like I don't know how it's going to be, this is totally different, how is it. I've really enjoyed watching it, and the coolest thing for me is and I mean, I'm sure can relate to this, but I just, I cannot ever, I can't think of a time where I've seen six golfers have that much fun, so like that's, to me, that's a good sign. Because whether we're not -- when is the last time you saw Tiger just getting his ass kicked that bad and was smiling that much? I mean, obviously it wouldn't happen if he was playing this week, but there's something to be said for that, right? I understand it's competitive, and we're competitive and we all want to win, but at the same time like it's different. It's a simulator golf league, like this isn't the realest thing in the world. But I've been pleasantly surprised and I really enjoyed how much fun those guys look like they're having. So I'm excited for my match next week for that same reason, because I think it will be fun and hopefully -- well, actually, I was going to say hopefully it's a better match, but hopefully we're in the same end as the two winning teams. But I've enjoyed watching it, so I'm excited to play.

**Q. We talked in the Bahamas about you using a slightly longer driver, would this be one of those rotation of courses that you would consider using that on or, and are you still using it at all?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, yeah, I definitely, I used it, I totally plan on using it here. I would think I'll use it most courses. I didn't use it the first two days in Kapalua, because, honestly, the tee boxes aren't very level, you kind of have some up slope tee boxes, or like a ball above your feet, and it's very windy, obviously, so I feel like you have to hit a little bit more shots, and when you're hitting on big elevation and everything like a longer driver, it doesn't exactly feel the most controlled thing. I drove it pretty a poorly the first two days anyway, so I just used the long one on the weekend. But, no, this is definitely a place that fits the mold and what I'm using this week.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Justin, best of luck this week.

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