

FedEx St. Jude Championship

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Memphis, Tennessee, USA

TPC Southwind

Justin Thomas

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined here with 16-time PGA TOUR champion Justin Thomas. Justin is entering the week No. 5 in the FedExCup. Start with some opening comments on what it's like to start the playoff season.

JUSTIN THOMAS: It seems like it gets here quicker and quicker every single year. It's wild that we're already in the Playoffs and here in Memphis. Yeah, it's great. It's the time of year that everybody wants to be obviously peaking and playing their best.

I think it's very exciting. It's such an accomplishment, and in my opinion becoming as challenging as ever to qualify for the Playoffs and then BMW and TOUR Championship.

It truly is, I feel like, the best fields that we could get in the course of who has played the best the whole season, and I'm excited to get going.

Q. We haven't seen you since the Open Championship; anything in particular you've been working on or even some weeks off with the family?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, very was excited to take some time off. It was quite a grind, quite a stretch from really the PGA until about the Open. It feels like a lot of golf, a lot of traveling.

Yeah, it was just nice to honestly take some time away, just relax a little bit, not do much and get back into it. I think at least for me, the time off is nice to where I'm excited to go out to the course and practice and feel like I'm getting ready for something again because if not it can become a little -- some days wake up and maybe not quite as motivated or excited as others.

Honestly, just happy to be here and rested and refreshed.

Q. Just wrapped playing the back nine. How is the course looking entering this week?



JUSTIN THOMAS: The course looks awesome. Obviously having been closed with the changes and no play, it's in unbelievable shape. The fairways are so perfect. The greens are brand new. They're firm but they're some of the best surfaces that we'll ever putt on.

I feel like the slope of the greens are definitely softer, and that part will be a little easier in terms of kind of around the greens and chipping once they settle and aren't quite as firm and fresh like this, but the rough is the longest I've ever seen it, so it's definitely a premium on putting the ball in the fairway on every hole kind of thing.

Q. You posted you have a Memphis playlist. How has that been going listening to it on the course, and what's your favorite song on the playlist?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's good. Not necessarily any favorite song in particular, but yeah, I have -- I don't know what adjective you would use to describe it, but I definitely like my rap now and then and saw a couple good Memphis rap playlists, so probably something a lot of people didn't think I'd listen to, but here we are.

Q. You talked about course changes and improvements. Do you think it makes it a tougher course or more player friendly course, and what about some of the improvements off the course itself like that chipping area? How much of a benefit is that?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, the chipping green is great. That was something I remember the staff or some people had even asked last year what I thought of it, and I was like, honestly, I think it's kind of a wasted great space. You don't very often on a property get a chance to have a big chipping facility like that. The green just had way too much slope. You couldn't even use like half of it. They did an unbelievable job of two different greens there. I think it's a great addition.

I think the course -- the greens being brand new, they'll be very firm this year, but like I said, they softened a lot of the slopes. They made the greens a little bigger in some areas, so anytime there's less slope and made the greens a little bigger, that's going to make scoring, I would say, a little easier over the long run.



But it'll be a couple years before the greens are not still fresh and really firm. But a lot of it, when the rough is like this, it's a different golf course.

You have a lot of holes where if you don't hit the fairway, you're not going to be able to get to the green. So it's just with it playing like that, I think it might play a little easier over the long-term, but I think it's definitely more playable for your everyday member, which is great.

Q. You've had a very nice season; are you happy with it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I think so. I don't know. I definitely know three ways I could make it a lot happier and feel a lot better about it. I'm definitely not going to make any judgments or assess anything for the time being with three big events left and three tournaments I feel like I could have a good chance to go out and try to win and put myself in contention. That's the goal, just to try to do that each week. I'm teeing it up these next three, and hopefully we can try to get a couple of them and ultimately the FedExCup.

It's hard to say right now, but ask me again in three weeks hopefully.

Q. There's four big events with one in New York coming up too. Back of your mind somewhere, just wanting to get that form even better than it is now?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, a little bit. I'm thinking about it, but in terms of form and playing well for it, first and foremost, I really, really want to earn -- I want to be in that top six. Just for me personally, it just would mean a lot to me to get that done because having been picked or having to rely on a pick a couple times, I definitely like the level of low stress and just the sense of calm knowing that you're qualified versus waiting for that phone to ring.

But I have a lot of golf tournaments and a lot of big events between now and then. I'm obviously thinking about it a lot. But in terms of actual golf, I have plenty between now and then to focus on.

Q. How has your practice regimen at home changed since you became a dad? How have you balanced the time now that you're concentrating on somebody who's going to take up a lot of it, and rightfully so?

JUSTIN THOMAS: For sure. First off, I'm very, very fortunate to have a great wife in Jill who is understanding that this isn't just a fun hobby that I'm doing; this is obviously my job. More so the changes are when I'm away

from the golf course. It's just not that I'm able to be gone for six or eight hours during the day and I just come home and sit on the couch. I'm well aware that not only is that what I feel like I should do, but it's also what I want to do. I don't want to be a father that is not really present or helping very much. We're very fortunate where I have a wife that does so much and helps that it's nice to return the favor when I can.

I'm way more structured in my practice. I think in the beginning it was -- I didn't realize how often I would go to the course not really knowing what I'm doing. But I need to know what I'm doing and try to just manage the time and just make it much more efficient. I feel like my practice has been a lot more efficient.

But I'm still spending a lot, a lot of hours out at the course. It's just maybe a little more refined and productive.

Q. You lead the TOUR in birdie conversion percentage this year. I'm just wondering how would you maybe explain that? What makes you good converting birdie putts? How do you do something like that well?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't really know, to be honest. I like making birdies. I like making lots of them. I don't necessarily feel like I have a different mindset on a birdie putt versus a par putt. I'm sure I do somewhat, but I don't know. It's a very good question. I unfortunately don't have a very good answer, or it sounds like any answer for you. I just know I like making them. That's about the best I could probably tell you.

Q. Every time I see you on the range you've got some obstacle in the way between you and the golf ball. I'm wondering, how did you land on that being a method that works for you, and what's the thinking for why you use that stuff?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I think it just started with my dad at a very young age. I think it's like if you're -- I do it all the time in pro-ams. It's like guys that slash across it, if I put a head cover in front of you to the left, you need to avoid that head cover. Quite often they will hit it, but it's something when you're on the range -- everybody reacts to different things differently, but for me, it's just if something is there like I'm subconsciously going to miss it, and then what I'm trying to do is I'm trying to associate a feel to what I'm doing to miss that, which I feel like is swing properly or move how I want to.

Yeah, it's something I've always done. I feel like I just react and respond well to objects or sticks or whatever it is, and I'm able to just kind of react to them, and like I said, I'm just trying to put something to that, kind of thing.



Q. This is your sixth year playing at TPC Southwind and you've always had a great relationship with the patients at St. Jude. What do the moments do you have with these patients throughout the week mean to you amid such a high stakes tournament?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's great. It's so powerful. It's extremely -- yeah, it's hard to explain. Just every encounter and opportunity -- I've been fortunate to meet some of these kids -- I just met the sweetest little girl Michelle on the 11th tee this morning, and she just was -- not only was she so smart, just spoke so well. But she just was so positive, so happy and so gracious to be out there. Didn't really know anything about golf, but she didn't care. It was 7:15 in the morning. I said to her, you should be in bed right now, but she didn't -- she just was happy to be there.

I'm sure it gives those kids a whole new perspective and just an opportunity to look at things a little differently, and I know it does for us too because it is, we're so lucky to be able to obviously do what we love and do it at a high level, but then to have a tournament like this and have St. Jude involved and so many of these kids involved, it's a really cool thing.

Q. A few years ago you had a moment with a patient named Bailey. I don't know if you remember him. He was actually one of my childhood best friends. Do those moments like that give you something extra to play for?

JUSTIN THOMAS: For sure. It felt like a little -- a cool connection. I remember a couple years doing the shoes and having like Bailey designed a pair of shoes for me. Yeah, I've been fortunate enough to kind of see some of those kids at the tournament or at a different tournament and their parents' families.

Yeah, it feels like you're -- I don't want to feel like I put too much pressure on myself. Obviously it's like I want to play well for the kids and for myself, but yeah, it's just another great opportunity, I'd say.

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