

The Presidents Cup

Wednesday, September 23, 2026

Medinah, Illinois, United States

Medinah Country Club

Justin Thomas

Press Conference



Q. How do you and the team balance fun and focus this week?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It is a little bit of an act, right? I think all of us know well enough of kind of a time and place for stuff. I think it's important to keep it -- I don't want to say keep it light, but also kind of keep it light. It's intense out there. If you had seven days straight of the intensity that we're about to have in competition, I don't think you'd make it through Friday.

It honestly is nice to just kind of keep it light and just good camaraderie and a lot of laughs. But the matches are pretty competitive out there that we're playing within each other and a lot of needling and trash talking.

Q. On that note, how would you describe the readiness of this team on the eve of competition?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, that's the funny thing about it, I said to Cam this morning, I was like, it's weird not playing a practice round with Cam this year. I felt like this time last year I felt like I spent like 20 straight days with him between home and Ryder Cup. You kind of just get ready to go. I think today everybody gets a little bit antsy. I don't want to say you're going through the motions, but a little bit of that, and just time for us to go be us and just go play golf.

Q. It looks like you spent a lot of time with Jackson already. Just your impressions of maybe taking him under your wing and what it's been like watching him early on so far?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, he's impressive. He's a really, really good player, first and foremost, but he's a great kid. He's got his head on right. Hats off to his parents; they've done an unbelievable job. He's very, very mature for his age. I think that's something you can't -- none of us could instill in him in a week.

I think the fact that he has the maturity and the correct outlook on everything, he's obviously really competitive and

he's obviously really talented. I'm excited for him this week. It's going to be an awesome experience for him.

Q. Had you really spent much time with him at all before this week?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, as much as I probably could, given that he was in college and I wasn't. But we played practice rounds the last couple years of the U.S. Opens. I think we played once or twice kind of each of the years he's qualified. I've stayed in touch with him pretty good the last couple years.

I love him to death, but I hate to do it to an Auburn kid. I want to be there to help any kid that's kind of going through what he was going through. I think the decision of turning pro and staying in school was hard. He's a great teammate to his guys, and he didn't know what to do what was right, what was wrong, so on and so forth. I just wanted him to know if he's here if he wants somebody to bounce things off of, and I feel like he did that, and a lot of people in his position wouldn't have.

Q. Do you remember your first Cup, Presidents Cup or Ryder Cup? What do you remember feeling your first time?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It was Presidents Cup at Liberty, 2017. It was awesome. It was very, very different because it was coming straight off the Tour Championship. I came straight from Atlanta, in Sunday night and back at it on Monday, so that was quite a bit different than how it's set up now.

Yeah, I mean, he's going to feel -- I told him that today, you're going to feel some things you've never felt before. You're going to be really nervous. I'm going to be really nervous. Everybody out here this week is going to have a lot of shots and a couple in particular that you -- it's like a borderline out-of-body experience. I know a lot of other 21-year-olds would kill for that feeling. It's going to be great.

I think it's just so huge for someone at this age to get this kind of experience, and it's going to be, I think, helpful. But



like I said, I'm excited to watch him in the arena.

Q. I'm curious your thoughts on the renovations of the course, all the changes that have been made since the last time you were here?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's very different. It seems like there's a mixture of keeping the bones of the course. There's a mixture of some totally new holes. Obviously the routing is very different. It makes it extremely difficult to talk about the course amongst a team because we can't figure out what hole is what based off of the previous design, the actual routing and the current routing.

But man, it has a chance, especially at this time of year, to play really cool. I think visually it looks awesome. Quite a bit wider fairways. They took quite a bit of trees out and the greens have a lot more slope to them with more size. I think when it gets firmer and faster, just the way the course will play versus when it's soft is like night and day different.

I think there's a decent chance that how the course plays tomorrow could be very different than come Sunday afternoon.

Q. A lot has been made about preparations for not only Presidents Cups but Ryder Cups in the future. What are some of the lessons you took from Bethpage?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know. I mean, you're just trying to prepare. It's the same as every other tournament within reason. We have a lot more going on in terms of asking and schedules and whatnot. You're managing around that a little bit.

All of us are just trying to prepare as well as we can and as normal as we would for any other event and just kind of inch our way closer and closer to game time, which is coming up here soon.

Q. All the changes in the course, all this talk about that, anything you've seen out there to keep an eye out for? Any professional advice to an amateur you could pass along?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Not knowing anything about your game makes it a little tough.

Q. I'm about an 8.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Still doesn't help me a lot. No, you've got to -- the rough is going to be brutal come Tuesday. But the greens are, I think, a big part of the course. They're going to be so fast. They have a lot of slope. Keep it

underneath the hole.

Q. (No microphone.)

JUSTIN THOMAS: Given it's Thanksgiving, probably be with our respective families. We're the same team this week. That's all that matters.

Q. Do you like the rough, the way the rough is set up here? It's kind of different from the architecture --

JUSTIN THOMAS: Is it? I'm genuinely asking.

Q. Yeah. But this is what your captain wanted.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I'm not sure what to say, to be honest. Yeah, I guess it just is what it is. I'm not sure.

Q. You've probably seen this place certainly more than anybody on the team --

JUSTIN THOMAS: I would say, yeah.

Q. Your overall impressions of the changes are probably so different --

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it is. I think it's super, super dependent, honestly, on the conditions. If it's soft, it's just going to play so different than when it's firm. Even from Monday to today. But from a week and a half ago when we came to now, the clubs that we're hitting off tees and the contours -- kind of how the greens work, it changes it completely.

I think that's just how this course will play. I think if it's soft, it will be very right in front of you and kind of like see pin, hit pin. It's drivers off pretty much every tee. But when it gets firm and the wind can blow here, the fairways shrink quite a bit, and the greens -- it's very, very important where you land the ball and where you're bringing the ball in from and the greens have so much break. That's really in my opinion a lot of the golf course is just dependent on how firm and fast it is.

Q. Do you hear from members who say you're --

JUSTIN THOMAS: Literally all of them.

Q. That you're the reason?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Oh, yeah. I've gotten in many -- I thought it was funny at first and I didn't really find it that amazing the last couple years. I told them, I appreciate what you're saying, kind of, sort of, but I really hope as a membership you didn't completely tear up a golf course

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

because the best players in the world came in and played really well on it.

I had a couple conversations with people about it.

Q. Speaking about match play in general, you've always been a great match player through college and then in team golf at the professional level. What do you think makes a great match player because it's obviously a game within a game; you're playing the man.

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know. I feel like it's easy to feel like you kind of do things differently. It's match play versus stroke play. You maybe have a different strategy or how you play the golf course. I don't feel like I do. I think that's probably the biggest part of it is it's very situational. You're not -- realistically you're not just playing the round of golf and playing 72 holes and seeing where it puts you. I'm playing the person I'm playing or the team that we're playing, and you're reacting or making decisions or changing a line or whatever it might be a little bit based off of that.

I know it's not really answering your question, but it's just kind of a -- you're reacting a little bit to kind of what you're getting.

Q. Throughout your career, is there an opponent that you've had that has really changed -- you seem like you have the ability to compartmentalize and just play golf and not try to think about the stroke play/match play too much. Or is there a Cup match or a match play in general that you can think of?

JUSTIN THOMAS: For sure. There's plenty, whether it feels like it is or I've completely made it up, I've tried to make personal within myself. I think it's a -- I don't know, maybe I'm a psycho and I just do that and nobody else does. But I wouldn't be surprised if other people do it too.

But yeah, over the years you definitely can come up with reasons when you've been out here long enough, yeah, I'd like to beat this person a little bit more because of this. It just happens.

Q. I'm not asking for a specific match. Is there someone who you've played a couple of times who you look forward to playing -- like Scottie said yesterday he likes playing certain guys because he really likes to beat them. Is there a guy you really look forward to playing?

JUSTIN THOMAS: There's quite a few, yeah. Sorry, I'm not going to really give any names.

Q. You've always made team events a point of your goals for the year. A couple years ago -- '24 you missed. Did it lend any appreciation for these events, and how did your relationship change having to watch one at home?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It did. I gave Jim a hard time plenty about it. I'm like, there's nothing personal. I told Keegan last year, I told Sneds, I never want to be on these teams if the players on the team and the captains on the team don't think that I make the team better. I don't care if I'm the seventh ranked in the points and I'm whatever I am. If I do not make the team better in any way, then I should not be on the team.

I firmly do believe that, and I think that that's just how it was in Montreal. I felt like -- it's coincidental, I felt like I played quite a bit better in '24 than I did in '23, and to be on '23 and not on '24 felt weird. But it was, you do take it for granted. I think there for a little while, I just assumed -- it also kind of makes you grow appreciation for guys like Tiger and Phil and Rory and the Poulters and the Westwoods that just did it every year, and it was like, you just assumed that that's how it was. However many years I play golf, that's how often I'm going to be on these teams. That's just not the case. The talent, how deep it is, and you have to really, really play well to earn your way on these teams. I respect that. I understand that. I always want to earn my way on these teams.

Q. What do you find so enjoyable about these events that maybe is not obvious to the rest of us?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I really enjoy the golf side of it with the guys. The amount of sharing and talking through stuff on weeks like this, to me, I really, really enjoy. I don't know how other guys are, but I pick the brains of my teammates and my captains a lot.

I remember I would literally wait until team events to ask Phil questions because I knew that he wouldn't tell me in regular tournament, but when we got to a team event, I knew he would because we were teammates and he wanted to help me out. I would literally wait and follow him around asking questions.

I just think it's really cool because we have the 12 best players in the U.S., and we all go about it differently, but kind of somewhat similarly in the end result, end game. But just how we all do that and get to that is just fascinating to me, and I just love hearing it because I think there's a lot of things that we all learn from each other and push each other in.



Q. In a team event in front of larger galleries, how nerve-racking is it to have out of bounds all along the left side on holes 1, 2 and 3?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it is, it's very nerve-racking. It's there. I would just say that every single person that's playing a match and hitting shots on those holes this week is thinking about them or maybe approaching them differently than if that fence was just a fence, if it wasn't a boundary fence. So it's there, and it's going to -- it will be a part of the thinking somewhat.

Q. When you first saw that, what did you think?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's a part of it, and everybody else has to deal with it too, so I'm not the only one. It's all the more reason to just get in a good head space and get up there and hit a good shot on those holes.

Q. How tight is the second shot on No. 2 then with that fence there?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It just depends. It depends on where the pin is, the wind. It's very, very, very situational. Yeah, I came and played a round a couple weeks ago, and the pin was front left, and it was very, very tight. You get between clubs and you're kind of looking at it like I can hit a pretty good shot and hit it 18 feet left and I have to re-hit. Sometimes maybe match play makes you feel a little bit differently, in a way, but yeah, it's still there.

Q. What are the pros and cons of the U.S. playing a team golf event every year as opposed to every other?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's a good question. You'd like to think and hope it's more reps, more opportunity to play with guys, different teams. I mean, I think there's probably something to having the every other year, just the importance of it, I would think feels different. I'm just assuming or guessing.

It's like if you -- Christmas already feels pretty special, but imagine how much more special it would feel if it was every other year, right? I would have to think there's maybe something there. But it's hard to say. Yeah, it is what it is. But I feel like I would like to think and hope that we can and should use it way more as a positive than any negative.

Q. Would the vets on the team ever hold it against any of the other vets if they needed a year off even if they were among the top qualifiers?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I would. I can't imagine anybody who's been a part of these events that wouldn't want to be a part of it.

Q. You make a bunch of birdies, right? If you get put out in four-ball, do you prefer playing with another guy that makes a ton of birdies, or do you prefer playing with somebody that's kind of steady-Eddie consistent?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't care. I really don't. Best ball I feel like is a format you can be a little bit more lenient on who you're with. But it's more to me that I like who I'm playing with and I've got a team full of 11 guys I really like to play with. It's more about getting it going. No matter what it is, you've got to ham-and-egg well. You've got to try not to make birdies on the same holes and try to make them as often as you can. If it was as easy as trying to birdie the different holes and making enough of them, then golf would be really easy, but it's never that easy.

Q. It's no big mystery, it seems like you're playing a little bit of a mentor role this week. Can you think back, when you were in your younger shoes maybe in 2017, who was the biggest mentor that stood out to you?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, both Rickie and Jordan were huge for me. '17 I played with Rickie pretty much the whole week. I played with Berger one match, but I played with Rickie that whole week at the Presidents Cup. Then Jordan was great for me in 2018. I think that first Ryder Cup, being in France was a very -- it was very nerve-racking. It was night and day different, in my opinion. I told Jackson that. It was four-ball the first session, and Friday of the Ryder Cup Jordan and I were partners. You always ask, do you want to go first, do you want me to go first. Pretty much every time both guys say, I don't care, and you just figure it out. Jordan was like, you just let me know. Let me know come Friday what you want to do. We were talking to the tee, and I'll never forget walking over that bridge and seeing that horseshoe and the vibration and just the hair, and I just like, I'll go. I'm going to go. He's like, you got it, you're good. He knew exactly what I was feeling and what I was going through, and that's why he was a great partner. It's a bizarre feeling that's hard to explain, but it's pretty sweet.

Q. To follow up on the question about waiting to ask Phil for advice at these team events, when was the first time someone started asking you for advice and what did that feel like, at one of these team events?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I feel like around the greens is probably where we do it the most. I feel like especially when we're chipping, some places the ball sits differently and we're usually hitting the same chips to different pins, and it's how do you hit that shot or how do you hit this shot, whatever it is. Pat is very similar to me, Cantlay, of picking

people's brains, especially guys that -- he does everything unbelievably, and I think he has one of the best short games out here, but he's always been, I think, very strategically smart in that aspect of doesn't feel overwhelming, but when he wants to learn, he's like any of us. He wants to learn, and he'll go and ask, how are you doing that, or you changed the ball position, what are you thinking. There's not necessarily one particular moment, but I know Pat and I have had a lot of times around the greens of kind of chipping together and learning from each other a little bit.

Q. What do you think the margin of victory could end up being, as overwhelming as your team looks to be on paper?

JUSTIN THOMAS: As long as we just have more than them, that's all I care.

Q. Speak to the chemistry or take us inside the team room a little bit, the passion that all of the golfers are feeling for this opportunity.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, we're a very close team. We all get along really well. Each year I feel like, this is the closest team I've been on, this is the closest team I've been on, and it really is. I think we all share the common goal of wanting to come here and play really well and win for our country and win for our captain.

I think we kind of through that bond and through that similar feeling and thinking, we just have a blast doing it.

Q. Even with your major victories and your pretty full trophy case, you excel in these team events. Can you talk about what it is about them that gets your juices flowing?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know, to be honest. Good partners, that helps. I've really liked and enjoyed who I've played with, and I think that's very, very important. Not only do I want them to bring the best out of me, but I feel my role as a partner is to bring the best out of them. I take a lot of pride or I take that seriously, I should say. I don't want it to just be, I really like this person that makes me feel comfortable. I want to do the same thing for that person I'm playing with. Yeah, that's what I try to do.

Q. A bunch of the guys have talked about how sports is such a great unifier. What do these weeks mean for you as far as people might disagree on politics but we're all pulling for the red, white and blue?

JUSTIN THOMAS: For sure. I've been playing a lot of practice rounds with an Auburn kid this week. I won't be

looking to do that Thanksgiving weekend, that's for sure. I love him to death, but I hope he has a terrible Saturday after Thanksgiving. I think sport is great like that, especially when you're playing for your country. We have everybody here that's pulling for the USA. Guys aren't coming out maybe to see one person specifically a little more, but if you're cheering for a person on a certain team, you're pulling for that entire team, and I think that's pretty special.

Q. With President Trump expected to attend this week, can you take us back to when you had a chance to play a round of golf with him, what that was like?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it was a cool experience. He's down in Florida quite a bit. I know a number of guys that have played with him, and it was pretty cool for the opportunity to play with the President. I'll always feel that way.

Q. Just in general putting on the red, white and blue, it seems to unlock something different inside of you. Where does that come from?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know. I just enjoy it. I enjoy the energy. I enjoy the opportunity. Yeah, it's bigger than me for this week. It's about how all the guys are playing, teammates, playing for the country and the captain and just doing the best we can and just out there grinding, trying to get a point.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports