

Genesis Scottish Open

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North Berwick, Scotland

The Renaissance Club

Justin Thomas

Press Conference

JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome Justin Thomas here to the interview room here at the Genesis Scottish Open. Your 15th PGA TOUR win earlier this year at the PGA Championship, if we can get some comments on that victory and your season up to this point.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, the year is flying by again. It's crazy how quickly, it's just a couple events left before the Playoffs, so it was nice to win the PGA for many reasons, but first and foremost to knock a major off the belt, but just get in a little better position going into the FedEx in the Playoffs so I don't feel like I have to press quite as much.

But been playing really well, really solid. Definitely haven't converted as many into wins as I would like but still showing a lot of positive improvements and signs, so I just feel like just trying to stay patient and keep plugging at it and hopefully let some good stuff happen.

JOHN BUSH: A couple top 10 finishes in your last two finishes in The Scottish Open. Talk about this event and how much it means to you.

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's cool, for as much as I love links golf and The Open Championship, I have not played it very well in my career. So couple years ago, I was just trying to pretty much try something different to try to stop finishing tied for 50th or miss the cut at The Open, so I needed to do something different.

I'm really glad I decided to come play the Scottish a couple years ago because I feel like it's been good preparation for me. It's a fun golf course. It's not -- it clearly isn't overly challenging. I mean, like most links courses, it's very dependent on the weather you get, and we've had nice weather the last couple times. Haven't had many days like it is out there today at the moment but I just feel like it's a really good opportunity to try to come and get my game in shape and also get acclimated to the time change, the weather, just everything about it, the turf and try to get in good form playing next week.

Q. How good does Guinness taste at whatever time in



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the morning that was?

JUSTIN THOMAS: At 9.45, you could say it is like a filling breakfast because it is pretty filling. The day prior was the first -- no, that was the first Guinness I had had. No, the night prior was the first Guinness, I don't remember when we were getting in and whatnot. It was better than I thought it was to be perfectly honest. It was something I don't know that I could necessarily go have seven or eight of them, at least at my drinking level if you will, but I definitely enjoyed a couple of them. It was nice.

Q. How was the trip overall? Was that a keep part of your plans, to go play places like Lahinch, etc.?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It was really fun. I never had the opportunity to go play in JP's Pro-Am and I had unbelievable expectations going into them but it somehow exceeded them. It was truly incredible. I have never -- I mean, the crowds and the people that were out there, I was just telling John on the way here, it was like every hole walking to the tee you got a standing ovation, every green you got a standing ovation. Everybody was so excited for all of us to be there. There was so many people.

I was blown away at a Pro-Am how many people were out there and the support that Ireland got but to have the opportunity to go play was really cool. My only negative was that I didn't go earlier and I couldn't go play more of those golf courses. It was a very, very enjoyable couple of days.

Q. You've been very honest and open in anything you've said about LIV Golf over the last few weeks. What are your thoughts on four LIV Golf players being in the field this week?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I mean, I guess I was surprised but I also, I'm not near smart enough to know legally what that means and to be perfectly honest, I don't -- I probably don't care enough to like go into it to say I have -- I'm super one side or the other. Again, because I don't know enough, I can't honestly give an opinion because I just legally I don't know what's happening, kind of thing.



But yeah, it's one of those things, it is what it is and I don't know if it makes a difference because the tournament's here versus the States or whatnot. You know, at the end of the day, I'm just trying to go win a tournament and the fact that they are playing, so be it.

Q. Going forward, how important is it for the PGA TOUR and the DP World Tour that you, Rory, Collin Morikawa and others stay loyal to the traditional tours against what's happening?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I think, yeah, I think it's more stay loyal to the tradition that we are doing as opposed to against what they are doing. Not that we don't disagree but I just think it's -- and I'll be the first to say, I've gotten wrapped up emotionally from time to time, and I'm allowed to do that. I'm passionate about it and I feel a certain way.

But at the end of the day, myself and others, first and foremost, need to focus on playing good golf because that's the No. 1 priority. But if we can continue to focus on improving our product, getting our product as good as possible, not only for now, the rest of my career, but future superstars that are going to be coming out. Because if we can make this -- continue to make this the best place to play, bar none, just as it is right now, then at the end of the day we have nothing to worry about.

You never know what's going to happen in terms of other entities or other things being thrown out there but I think we're all very obviously pleased with where we are at and we are just continuing to make strides and progress and changes that are going to benefit everybody.

Q. What have you identified as reasons that maybe your Open record isn't as good as you'd hoped it could be?

JUSTIN THOMAS: A couple of them were -- I mean, it sounds awful to say, but I haven't had a good draw in an Open, so that definitely doesn't help. But the last couple haven't been significant.

The first one I think with Troon, I've never in my life played like so well and grinded so hard to finish 60th. I truly felt like I couldn't -- every morning I would go out and it would be blowing 25 and raining, and I would grind my tail off to go watch golf in the afternoon and the sun would come out. And I was like, well, welcome to The Open, my first Open Championship.

That's just part of it. I hope over a 20-year, 30-year span of playing in this event, I'm going to get my fair share of good ones. But I think also, it's adapting my game plan based on the weather conditions. And a lot of people are going to

have to deal with the same thing.

But I think I, like I do in the States, for the most part, I go play No. 1 at Augusta, and it's going to be a driver or 3-wood. There's nothing else. I'm not going to change anything whether it's raining or whatever, wind off the left, right, down, into. My line might just change.

Whereas I've gotten to some holes in the past, I remember specifically like Carnoustie, 6, the par 5, is it Hogan's hole or whatever? That was the hole in the practise round I was like, okay, I'm going to hit driver, I can hit it past these bunkers if I hit it right, I'll be in the fescue and I'll lay up anyway. But if I have an opportunity to knock it on this green, this is a good chance or me to make a three or a four.

I got to that hole, and it was like kind of raining off and it was off the left, and same type of thing, I kind of stuck with my game plan, if you will, and I decided to hit it driver, and I hit it one of those little pot bunkers because I couldn't get over because it was raining I made 7. Whereas I should have the maturity and understanding of what's going on to hit a 2-iron or 4-iron and play the hole with what the conditions are giving you. I've unfortunately learned the hard way but hopefully I'll adapt to that going forward.

Q. Wasn't your pro debut at St Andrews?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It was, yeah.

Q. What do you remember the course? What are your first impressions of it?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I remember a couple things. I remember the first time I ever played St Andrews in my life, it was pretty similar today but raining. My dad, he was caddying for me, we said, let's go play a practise round in this because if it's in the States I'm just not playing golf. I tried to get used to it, and I hit driver 6-iron into 1 and I holed it for a two. That was a pretty good first experience of St. Andrews.

And then I also remember, I mean, so lucky in terms of the three golf courses, the double tee start, whatever, that my first tee shot as a pro is No. 1 at St Andrews. I remember thinking if I miss this fairway, I probably need to retire before this year starts, so I was glad to get my career off and running in the fairway on No. 1.

Q. You said that links golf is an acquired taste for you and you're getting better, but how important will it be to have somebody as experienced as, say, Bones when you're playing, not just this week but more importantly next week on a golf course like St

Andrews?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I think it will be very helpful. I mean, Jimmy was very, very experienced as well in links golf, but Bones having a major championship under his belt, that's a big deal and also being around St Andrews a couple of times is big.

Although I've played there and it's a very similar course to an Augusta or Pebble Beach to where even before you go or play it, you kind of know what it's like because of the history and watching it so often.

But there's so many, whether it be blind tee shots and different wind opportunities that his experience there will be very helpful, just in terms of knowing when you do get those kind of crazy days or you do get abnormal weather conditions, if you will, or get super firm, whatever, I'm going to be able to rely on him quite a bit at a place like that.

Q. Also I wanted to ask you, what's the most enjoyable hole or what's the most challenging hole that your thought was at St Andrews? If it's not the 17th, even better.

JUSTIN THOMAS: It changes with the day, it really does. If you can get -- I mean, is it 14, that par 5? If you get that hole in and off the left, that all of a sudden becomes a very challenging hole. I think 17, it's a very cliché answer but I think it's cliché for a reason, is it's just a hard hole. If it's downwind and you have a short club in, it's going to be hard to hold the fairway. And if you do hold the fairway, it's going to be really hard to hold the green. And then if it's into the wind, you're just going to have a long club and you can't carry as much.

So kind given whatever wind conditions you get, I would say, as a whole, 17 is still going to be the hardest in my eyes.

Q. The LIV guys have been kept apart from the rest of the golf the first two days but that probably won't be the case at the weekend. How do you think it would go for you?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know. I wouldn't think anything other than it would be normal but I mean, I don't even know how many guys are playing this week. So --

Q. Four.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Four? So I mean, if I know all four of them, then it will be fine. It will be easy. But if I don't, it's not like I would talk to them whether they -- you know what I'm saying. I think it would be one of those things, it would

probably be made a bigger situation than it is.

I don't necessarily think we're going to be having any like gamesmanship or needling each other out there. At the end of the day, they are here for the same reason we are and that's just trying to play well and give yourself an opportunity to win The Scottish Open.

Yeah, if it so happens that it comes to that point and you have an opportunity to you're trying to beat one of them to win the tournament, it might be a little better but I'm sure they would say the same thing.

Q. You have been quite outspoken thus far. Have you had any pushback from any of LIV guys about what you've said?

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, I haven't. I just -- I tried not to read too much or look into it. I'm just answering the questions for how I'm being asked and say how I feel or what I think about it.

I feel like the more I read or the more I listen to what else is going on, potentially the more frustrated or upset I'll get or -- I don't want to say sensitive to it but I just don't want to get too wrapped up in it. I made that mistake early on, and it's a distraction. I'm focused on what I'm trying to do and I'm just really trying to do that.

Whenever I'm asked about it, which unfortunately nowadays is not necessarily by you all, but players, friends, whatever it is, it's a daily conversation unfortunately. But that's where we're at and you've got to deal with it.

But I haven't necessarily had any pushback or altercations by any means. They have said what they have said, we've said what we have said and it's just a part of it.

Q. I know you've spoken a lot about legacy, and I'm sure money doesn't play a role in that, but have you done any math in terms of watching people turn to news when they leave the Tour in terms of their sponsorships from various sponsors which adds up to a tidy sum of three to five years, in terms of what they might get in terms of an assurance or guarantees when they sign up, and then of course being on the Tour also means a lifetime of opportunities which may not be there the other side.

JUSTIN THOMAS: I haven't personally done the math just because my interest level is not very high, I think it's pretty obvious. A part of it is it's one of those things I don't care to or want to because I know you can't compare those two situations. They are very different.

But you know, all I know is just I'm very fortunate to have a pretty cool little home office with some great trophies from the PGA TOUR, and I take great pride in those.

I'm very -- and I also understand that I'm not -- not everybody is in the same financial position that I am; that I can sit up here and speak on behalf of everybody saying, it's not about the money, it's not about this. And I've said that; that people are allowed to do that. Just in terms of me or maybe other guys that are in my position, I don't agree with that or I don't necessarily see how it could be a thing.

But yeah, you have so many opportunities. I mean, more opportunities than I even know that I could end up getting to continue to do what I'm doing playing on TOUR. We just hope to keep creating memories and legacy and history and produce some great golf tournaments, like I'm sure we're going to this week.

Q. Did you follow the results of the two events which have been held so far in London and in Portland? Did you follow them?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I saw who had won but I definitely didn't follow them by any means.

Q. Just in terms of the top quality players that we've here, 14 of the world's 15, how does The Scottish Open rank now in your calendar? Where does it feature? Amongst for you personally, but also all the players, is it a conversation about how important this competition is now?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's definitely getting up there, and I think the partnership and now having so many PGA TOUR guys here is cool, and it's only adding to the strength of field.

If you throw out the majors, I would have to think that this is going to be one of the two, three, four, best fields that we play the entire year, which you know, for The Scottish Open, for Scotland, for the DP World Tour, PGA TOUR, that's a huge deal, and it should be. Everybody involved should be very proud of that and I know I'm happy and proud to be here, and it's some very impressive and unbelievable players have not only played here but won this -- not necessarily here, but this tournament.

So it is -- and this just kind of goes back to what we were saying. It's adding your name to that list. It's becoming a part of that history. It's something that I definitely want to be a part of but I got, you know, 14 of the Top 15 and plenty of other good ones to try to beat. So it will be a fun week.

Q. Obviously a lot of anticipation about Tiger's appearance in St Andrews next week. You know him better than most; what can you tell us about where he is now in terms of his game and what we should maybe expect from him next week, or conversations you've even had with him?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, talked to him some but I would say anybody who had a TV probably watched all 36 holes that he played at Adare, and I didn't see any, so you guys would probably know better than me. We kept joking with him and Rob, all of us were talking about our legs being sore. We asked if his butt was sore sitting on that cart the last couple of days.

I know that he's been circling this on his calendar for a while and he's been vocal about that and it's I think his favourite golf course in the world and he loves it, and obviously he's had some great success there.

It's probably going to seem like a pretty easy walk compared to Augusta and Southern Hills. I know I'm excited for him to be there but at the same time like the other events, I'm not -- I'm hoping for the best for him but I'm not worried about him. I'm trying to get myself and my game in the best condition as I can, but I know everybody will be very eagerly anticipating and ready to watch him play St Andrews because it's going to be a pretty historic week.

Q. Can I just ask you, we've giggled in this room quite a lot, but can you talk about playing in the Slime Cup (with Nikki Bella) and how that will help grow the game?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Grow the game?

Yeah, I definitely -- I could chalk that up as things I never thought that I would do is play and be shown on Nickelodeon playing on a golf tournament at 29 years old but I'm glad I was. It got great feedback from people. It was freezing cold being covered in slime those L.A. nights.

It was really cool, how good of a job they did with it just with the display of it and the graphics of it and everything and the creativity that they have, and that's what it's all about. It's an opportunity for us to reach out of this group right here, you guys are going to see us play every week, whether it's on Golf Channel, SKY Sports, CBS, NBC, whatever it is.

But to have the opportunity, like you said, for the six-, seven-year-old that's watching Nickelodeon every night with their family, their parents, golf looks pretty fun, pretty

cool, like maybe I want to get involved in that, and if it means that ten kids from however many watched that show that night decide they want to start playing golf, then I would call that a success.

I promise you, if they had the opportunity to watch Paw Patrol or SpongeBob or the PGA Championship that night, seven years old -- I'm probably not a good example, I would choose the GA. But any other kid would choose the show on Nickelodeon.

So I think that's a great example of just, like I said, even if it's just a couple kids that have the opportunity to want to go play golf and, then end up doing it and they say, you know, it's exactly like you said, some kids like me grow up saying, oh, I want to win the PGA. Some kids might say, oh, I want to play in the Slime Cup. It's bizarre to even just say and hear come out of my own mouth, but if that's what it takes, that's what it takes.

Q. Apologize from taking you away from Slime Cup to LIV Golf. According to Talor Gooch, the team element at LIV Golf must be similar to a Ryder Cup, just wondering your experiences, especially at Whistling Straits, the way you got the fans fired up, is he correct in saying that?

JUSTIN THOMAS: He's definitely incorrect saying that. And I mean, some people said things, like I did an interview yesterday or two days ago at JP's and I compared this crowd's Ryder Cup; that was in no way, shape or form a shot at him. I think he gave himself a shot enough just speaking a quote like that.

Yeah, you can't compare those. I mean, there's no event on TOUR that's like The Ryder Cup or the Presidents Cup until you stand on the tee in France and there's, what, 10,000 people there and I feel like wouldn't even be able to get a golf ball on a tee I'm so nervous and my hands are shaking so bad, then yeah, I probably wouldn't comment on saying that one is like the other because it's not.

Q. So Scotland is obviously, they call it the Home of Golf, and there's so many interesting things that you see on the golf course, outside the golf course. Last night I was at a diner at ten o'clock and saw two guys in their golf shoes with a pitching wedge and putter in their hand and walking in to eat gelatos. Have you ever seen or experienced something over here which made you think, okay, wow, this place is different when it comes to golf?

JUSTIN THOMAS: For sure. Actually, I joked, I had this guy, Danny, caddie for me the last couple days at the JP McManus Pro-Am, and he was the GM at Old Head, which

is an unbelievable course in Ireland. Had a great time with him.

On Sunday, like I said, we went and played Tralee and got out there on Monday and whatever, hit my drive down the first hole and had like 158 yards to like a pin in the centre of the green, like downwind and 9-iron. Like should be hitting this inside of ten, 15 feet all day, and I hit it to 35 feet, and every single person clapped.

I just handed Danny the club and I was just like, well, you know we're in the U.K. if we got a clap for all those shots. We wouldn't be getting those claps if we were back in the States.

It's just stuff like that, respect for the game of golf and how excited everybody gets. We had a couple hundred people following us when Jordan, Rick and I went and played Tralee, and it's like they -- yeah, they maybe want to have the opportunity to get a picture or an autograph, but they just want to watch us play golf. They want to see the shots we hit. They want to hear the sound that it makes, the flight it has.

And it is -- and golf is unbelievable in the States as well, I'm not saying it isn't, but it's different, like you said. It just has so much history over here, and it's definitely something I wish that I could -- I wish it was closer so that I could come over here more and spend some more time and play some different places because I've never had a bad time over here playing golf for sure.

JOHN BUSH: Thank you for your time, best of luck this week.

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