

# U.S. Open Championship 2022

Monday, June 13, 2022

Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

The Country Club

## Justin Thomas

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the interview area. We are joined by World No. 5 Justin Thomas and recent PGA Championship winner. You were here a week or two ago. What were your impressions of the course.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's a great course. I came on Monday last week, and it worked out well very similar to the PGA where I was able to go kind of on the way to the venue for that week. Just wanted to come play because the practice rounds for the majors can be a little long. A lot of guys haven't seen this place before so feel the need to play 18 holes and check it out. I just didn't really want to have a six-hour practice round, so it worked out well to come check it out.

It's a cool place. It's very in front of you. It's old school. You've got doglegs. I haven't been on the course since I was here Monday, but I'm sure it's going to be long rough and firm and fast greens.

THE MODERATOR: What do you look for when you're preparing for a U.S. Open week specifically?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, you always know U.S. Open is a grind. That's why I love it. I think that's why a lot of guys love it. It's one of the few times of the year you're kind of playing more in relation to par, and par is a good score. Driving the ball is going to be very important this week.

I think like any major, especially U.S. Open, scrambling and salvaging and making those putts for par can kind of be the momentum builders.

#### Q. You were here in 2013, right?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Mm-hmm.

#### Q. Do you have your old notebook from that week, and how similar does it look compared to then?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I missed the cut so I hope I don't have it.

I didn't play too bad here. I didn't play the other course

very well.

It was one, I remember some holes, and then once I got there, I would remember it more. It just was the specifics, the little -- I did not remember this amount of undulation and slope on the greens. I love the addition of the short par-3. I think every golf course should have a short, little hole like that, and it's got a diabolical green where they can put some tough putts, you can make 2 or 4 kind of heartbeat.

Yeah, I don't remember enough about it to feel like I came in here with a significant advantage.

#### Q. You alluded in a Tweet yesterday to Rory with that 21, and it had a little smiley face, whatever. Curious if you would talk about the situation in your sport right now, and would you ever consider going to LIV Golf, and if the answer is no, would it be because of your loyalty to the PGA TOUR, or would it be because of going into business with someone like Mohammad bin Salman?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I was obviously very happy for Rory and him winning the tournament. I have a lot of respect for him, not only as a golfer but just as a person. I see how hard he works down in Florida, and it had been a little while since we've had that battle against each other on a Sunday. I definitely could have written the ending a little bit better if I could have come out on top.

It just was a big week for the TOUR. I tossed and turned and lost a lot of sleep last week thinking about what could potentially happen, and I grew up my entire life wanting to play the PGA TOUR, wanting to break records, make history, play Presidents Cups, play Ryder Cups.

The fact that things like that could potentially get hurt because of some of the people that are leaving, and if more go, it's just sad. It's really no other way to say it. It just makes me sad, because like I said, I've grown up my entire life wanting to do that, and I don't want to do anything else.

The people that have gone, like I said, they have the

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decision that they're entitled to make. Not necessarily that I agree with it one way or the other, but everything has got a price, I guess.

**Q. Phil Mickelson making the decision that he made, does that disappoint you?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: What decision?

**Q. Phil Mickelson to go to LIV Golf.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, he was very adamant about it for a while, so I don't think that decision or Bryson really surprised any of us. They were talking it up not only to a lot of their peers but other people.

I think Phil going was not that surprising of a decision just based off of things that I was hearing internally from him and others.

**Q. You and Rory have sort of emerged as leaders in this, whatever you want to call it. The guys who are still deciding, should I go, should I stay, are you making yourself available to them to talk to them, or is this sort of everyone can make their own decision?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I want it to be both. We are all grown-ups. I go back and forth so much on different thoughts and how I feel about it.

I know what I want to happen, but it's just at the end of the day you don't know if it is going to happen.

Like I've said from the beginning, it's astronomical money that they're throwing at people. Everybody has a price for everything. It doesn't matter if you don't want to do it, if you want to do it. There's going to be some kind of number that's going to get people to think about it, and they're reaching that number with a lot of people.

I just want to be able to basically say my part or what I think about the decision or the PGA TOUR. Selfishly I don't want anybody to leave. I've talked to some of my peers that have asked me questions, and I don't know probably as much as others, but I'm, like, you've got to do what's best for you or what you think is best for your career.

I'm, like, but selfishly I don't want you to go. That's how I kind of end any phrase or any conversation that I'm having with somebody about it, because at the end of the day I'm not their parent, I'm not the person that's making their decisions. All I can do is plead my case. But everybody out here is a grown-up, they can make their own decisions.

**Q. How many holes did you play today?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I played zero holes today.

**Q. You were here a week ago?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I played Monday.

**Q. A lot of big moments here have happened on the 17th hole. Can you describe the 17th hole and how you go about surviving it or getting through it?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's unique. Unlike a lot of holes out here are pretty self-explanatory off the tee, it's just am I going to hit a driver or am I going to hit a 3-wood, whatever it is, but I think that hole presents a lot of opportunities of different clubs off the tees.

Especially with how a lot of guys are playing nowadays. A handful of guys are probably going to hit driver, try to hit it right in front of the green. Or if you get a helping wind, maybe the tee is up, you can knock it on the green.

But then again, I'm sure the rough is going to be nasty up there to where you get opposition. It's tough, and then it's, like, do you lay up? Do you lay up to a good number?

It's a hole that you can have a two-shot swing on it pretty quickly for it being a pretty short, easy hole, but it's really just going to be how you want to attack it or approach it once you get to that point, especially come Saturday and Sunday.

**Q. With Rory, it seems he's really taken a leadership role being pro-PGA TOUR. Are you surprised that he has taken that mantle, and is he someone that a lot of guys on TOUR really look up to?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, I would hope so, just for the sake of -- I know he's accomplished a lot more than I have. He's been out here longer. He's been more successful. But there's nobody that, I think, acts better for -- acts more humble and more grounded for what they've done and who they are than him.

I remember being a rookie and moving down to Jupiter, and he was out at Bear's Club. Being the person I am wanting to learn, going up to him and saying, hey, I'd love to play sometime, introduced myself, and he's like, any time, and gave me his number, and we kind of hit it off. We're very similar personalities.

For me, I definitely think that other people should look up to someone like him. I do in some aspects. There's definitely other parts that he's still a competitor and someone that I'm

trying to beat, but there's still a lot of things that as a leader that he does really well, and I think that he's very honest, like I am. I'm not going to sit in here and feed a PC answer or just say something to maybe please a certain crowd. If you feel a certain way, you feel like you should say that.

That's what he does, and he does it for the best reasons and hopes that it's going to be the best for the PGA TOUR.

**Q. How much with all the things that this press conference, the one that Phil Mickelson was in obviously earlier, is all the talk about LIV Series? A lot of them probably not talking about the U.S. Open. How much of this becomes a distraction, the fact that you have to answer questions --**

JUSTIN THOMAS: It is.

**Q. How much is that going to play into the way you play and the way that other people actually play the tournament?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Well, I hope it wouldn't change anything with how I play. Like I said, when I kind of have off time and I'm sitting there and able to think about some stuff, obviously, you can't go anywhere -- I'm sure it's the same with y'all. You can't go anywhere without somebody bringing it up.

That's one of the things I spoke to earlier; it's sad. This is the U.S. Open, and this is an unbelievable venue, a place with so much history, an unbelievable field, so many storylines, and yet that seems to be what all the questions are about.

That's unfortunate. That's not right to the USGA. That's not right for the U.S. Open. That's not right for us players. But that's, unfortunately, where we're at right now.

**Q. Did you get a chance to see Jay's comments? You were obviously playing when he went on the CBS broadcast --**

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, I didn't. Sorry.

**Q. Never mind on that front. Where did your Boston sports fandom come from?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Well, it's more I like the Red Sox. So my uncle is from up this area, and he's a big Red Sox fan, and it just was kind of something that it was no birthday or Christmas gift that was for me from him was anything but Red Sox. It was, like, I had a lot of jerseys, tee shirts, a lot of hats, a lot of blankets.

**Q. Which players?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I had a Nomar. I had a Manny. Then my first Red Sox jersey was a David Ortiz jersey. I think I even had a Varitek one.

He took me to a Yankees-Red Sox game at Fenway for my birthday one year, which was really cool. I think I was probably 12. Went to a Yankees-Red Sox game at old Yankee Stadium. I remember because I had my Nomar jersey on, and I was getting yelled at and cussed at and given the finger and I was 9-years-old. That was my first introduction to the Yankees-Red Sox rivalry.

**Q. Is Ortiz still in your email address?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: It is, yeah.

**Q. When you're like midway through a really difficult U.S. Open round, is there anything you do or say to yourself that you kind of reset, start from the beginning, refocus, and just to kind of get you through the rest of the difficult round?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I wish I could say something because it never seems like it's that easy. A lot of it is kind of depending on how you're playing. If you're cruising and everything feels good, you just basically keep doing what you're doing or just really try to stay focused and in the moment and present.

It's when things start going south or maybe you get a couple bad breaks or you get some wind gusts, whatever it is, to where you just get thrown some adversity, and it's like, how are you going to handle it?

Those are the times especially in a major that I've learned that I become a little impatient. I almost try to force the issue sometimes. At the end of the day or at the end of the week in a major that's how a lot of guys are going to end up losing the tournament. I'm trying to get to a point where I don't do that anymore. I wish it was that easy to be able to say, I'm going to stay perfectly in the present and in the moment and I'm not going to let anything affect me, but it's not that easy, so you just kind of have to make way with whatever you have.

**Q. Is there one kind of past USGA Championship that you played that kind of eats at you the most? Doesn't have to be a U.S. Open. It could be an Am or a Junior.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Like the most, like I wish --

**Q. Like one you felt really got away from you that you felt you could have had a shot at it?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: The U.S. Am at Cherry Hills. I was one match away from Augusta and the U.S. Open. Played Michael Weaver. He was 5-under through 10 on me at a very hard golf course.

That was a bummer because you only obviously have such a very short amount of time in your career to play in events as an amateur. Not that I think that that affected my career in any way, but it still would have been pretty cool to play in the Masters as an amateur. So I've got to thank Michael Weaver for that one for beating me.

**Q. With everything going on at the PGA TOUR and LIV Tour, what would be your message to young golfers who are dreaming of playing on the TOUR in the future?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: You know, I think my dad said it best. Just was talking to him about not only everything going on with golf, but just going on in the world. I mean, my dad is someone very old school, just he loved to work. He'd work 80 hours a week as a club pro, and he would pull the carts down in the morning, close the shop up in the afternoon, and he'd be the first to say, he's like, I made no money, but I just love to work.

You have to love what you're saying is basically what I'm saying. There's no amount of money that you could get that if you don't love or enjoy what you're actually doing, the amount of money you have doesn't -- you're still going to be miserable. You're still not going to enjoy it.

Although you might be miserable in a bigger house or a nicer car, that doesn't necessarily mean that your life is going to be any better.

I think it's what's very important for juniors and everybody growing up is you've got to be passionate about it and play for the right reasons and just want to get better and strive for that and keep working at it.

**Q. I'm just curious, if there is this further fracturing of the sport with the way things are going, what do you think that will do for the majors or how do you think it will affect or change the way majors are?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't know. The decisions that the majors make are not in my control at all, so I'm not sure how they're going to handle that.

I mean, I just want to play against the best in the world and I want a chance to try to win majors. With that being said, the best players in the world need to be here, but at the same time I don't necessarily want guys to be able to do

both. It's a tough spot to be in.

Like I said, the majors are the ones that have to make those decisions, and I've just pretty much got to deal with it, I guess.

**Q. You've got a lot of traction, I guess, when you talked last week about kind of separating the person from the decision of maybe someone going to LIV. Why do you think that struck such a chord with people?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Because I think it's honest. I'm guilty of it. I've tried to get better, but I just truly think it's just the day and age of -- I mean, social media has just gotten that way to where it's like so negative anymore.

Like I said, I'm the first to admit that there's times where people do something, and I bash them. Obviously not externally. Maybe internally with friends or whatever it is. It's not necessary.

You can disagree with the decision. You can maybe wish that they did something differently. You can maybe -- another thing is being in the media as a writer, you have to write about it. I understand that. But for people at home to necessarily say that Dustin Johnson is now a bad person, that's not fair. That's just not right.

Now, again, I said it last week, I'll say it again, do I wish he wouldn't have done it, and am I a little sad about it? Yeah, but it is what it is. You've just got to move on and make the best out of what you've got. I guess just worry about yourself a little bit sometimes.

THE MODERATOR: Justin, thanks for your time and good luck this week.

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