

# U.S. Open Championship 2025

Monday, June 9, 2025

Oakmont, Pennsylvania, USA

Oakmont Country Club

## Justin Thomas

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming world No. 5, Justin Thomas. Justin, it's your 11th U.S. Open appearance. What's your mindset as you come into this week specifically?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I feel like you kind of take the course for what it is, and obviously Oakmont is Oakmont. You know what you're getting, and it's pretty right in front of you.

You just have to really try to be as sharp as you can, but for me personally, I just feel like it's a great week to be in a great place mentally and very, very patient and kind of picking our spots out there.

Hopefully the weather can be nice to us the rest of the week and can firm the course up a little bit. It will be a nice test.

#### Q. What have you seen out of the course so far?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I just played nine this morning. It's very, very soft. The fairways are -- they've obviously gotten a lot of rain here the last couple weeks, I think. It's still extremely challenging. It's just hit the fairway, and if you don't hit the fairway, you're just kind of trying to base off of the lie and figure out what you're doing from there the rest of the hole and just try to minimize the damage when you get out of position.

#### Q. The USGA talks a lot about challenging your skill and challenging your head. How do they challenge the head?

JUSTIN THOMAS: The good thing for them, they're fortunate with kind of like the main core of U.S. Open courses, they don't really have to do anything to try to do that. You go to a place like this, they don't need to set it up any differently or trick it up or do anything for it to challenge both the physical and mental part of our game. Oakmont is plenty challenging in both of those aspects.

I just think it requires patience and discipline. If you just get lazy, like on any drive, any wedge shot, any chip, any

putt, you can kind of look stupid pretty fast, especially at a place like this.

#### Q. What does it mean to have a good attitude?

JUSTIN THOMAS: That's a great question. I'm sure everybody would define it differently. I think for me just being very committed to what I'm doing, being kind of accepting of the results and being just very, very committed for me.

I think once I start second-guessing myself or not trusting my instincts is kind of where I get myself in trouble. Then when I do that, I naturally am pretty pissed off if it doesn't work out. It wasn't because of the shot, it was more from the lack of commitment. That's where it starts for me generally.

#### Q. In '16 how much did that Thursday storm make the course less difficult, and where is the course now maybe relative to how it was after the storm on Thursday? Similar or less -- do you remember?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I don't remember a lot, just it's very similar in the aspect of it's soft and the rough is extremely lush and thick. I think you can get better lies in the rough sometimes when it's wet. I have zero idea if there's any kind of science or anything behind this, but just to me it seems like when the rough's wet, the ball will kind of not sink all the way down to the bottom. It's almost like the rough is a little heavier, but because of that, it can be harder to get out if it is wet.

So it requires -- it is weird that it's easier to chip out of wet rough, but it's harder to sometimes hit full shots out of it. So that can kind of play somewhat similar. Yeah, it totally changes the golf course, but also if it's firm out here, how much the ball will roll in the fairways will make it so much shorter, that that would change a lot.

You can have a hole like 10, where today realistically could have hit driver off the tee. It doesn't even need to be rock hard; if it just gets a little firm, you can hit a 4-iron down there to the same place kind of thing.



**Q. Did you play the front or the back today?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: The back.

**Q. Did you or will you try to fly the ditch on 10?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: No, it wasn't -- no, that wasn't happening at 7:40 in the morning for me.

**Q. Is it conceivable? Is it a possibility you might entertain it, do you know?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I haven't even looked at it. I don't think it is. With how far some guys hit it nowadays, I'm sure that some people will, but it will require, I would think, a little bit of wind. I literally have no idea. I didn't even know that was possible. Maybe not for me.

**Q. The reputation here, a lot of it is with the greens and their firmness and speed and everything. Does the rain take any of that away, or are they still really difficult, still firm? If it's any less, does it make it any easier?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Anytime the greens are softer, it's going to be easier than if they're firmer, but these greens are still far from normal or easy.

I played with Jordan and Jackson Koivun today, and Jordan and I were saying we were still shocked with how soft the fairways were. The greens still had a little bit of bounce to them. They weren't firm by any means, but they were still taking a hop with wedges and short irons still.

No, just the amount that the putts break and how quick some of the chips and around the holes can be, it's still difficult if it's firm or soft. It just changes it a little bit if it's one or the other.

**Q. Do you have an over/under how many fairways you need to hit if you feel like you're going to make a decent score, or does it matter?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I haven't thought of it. Obviously the more, the merrier. One of the best rounds of golf I've probably ever played in my career in 2016 here on Friday, I think I hit four fairways, but I remember I hit seven greens and I shot 69. I chipped in three times. I was beyond exhausted when I got done.

I actually played with Brooks the first two days. I remember he was so pissed off. He just couldn't get over it.

So I would prefer to not do that, but if that means I shoot 69 every day, I'll take four fairways and seven greens right now.

**Q. Are you against hack-out rough, or are you okay with it?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm fine with it. I don't know. I understand the strategy aspect that people are like, well, it doesn't require any thought. You just take a lob wedge and hack it out. To me it's like, well, at the same time, that just puts even more of a priority on hitting the ball straight, which I would think is going to lessen the chances of guys just pulling driver out of their bag and sending it as far as they can every hole.

Also, like Jackson had a lie on 15 today that we were kind of thinking is it a 6-iron? Open up a 6, or could you hit 7? He tried to hit 6-iron, and it looked like he could, and he hit it like four feet in front of him. It's not like every time you hit it in the rough, you're grabbing lob wedge and hit it out. You have to think, how far can I hit this?

I think that, to me, there's no such thing as complete hack-out rough. These guys -- we're going to get luck. A lot of people walking in the rough, you're going to get some lies that are decent, but you're going to have some tempting lies that may -- guys might try to push the envelope when they shouldn't kind of thing.

**Q. With the forecast looking like it's going to firm up over the course of the week, does that make the tournament round a little bit harder if during the practice rounds it was significantly wetter, significantly softer?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: For sure. Luckily for me, though, at least everybody else is doing it too. It's a part of it. We've played enough tournaments and enough golf courses over our life and career that we did -- I mean, the courses change. Especially weather permitting, we know that, if they get the week of weather they'd like, the course is going to play completely different come Saturday and Sunday than it did Tuesday, Wednesday.

If it's an adjustment we all need to make, then it is, but we still feel like we're able to get the proper prep around the greens and on the golf course, soft or not.

**Q. How many drivers, given the condition of the course right now, would you envision hitting around here? And should it dry out, how many would you hit then?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I hit one, two, three, four -- I hit five on

the back nine today. Probably would have hit one on 1, maybe 2, 3, 4, maybe 5, 7, maybe 8 if they decide to have the tee back for some stupid reason, and maybe 9.

The thing is you have a hole like 15 today, I mean, I hit driver, but again, if it gets a little bit firm and it's downwind, I could hit 5-wood. I think that's cool. I think you have a lot of tee shots out here where you're not just like grabbing a club. You're stepping it up on 1, and some guys might hit 3-wood or they may hit driver. On 2, you can see anything from 5- or 6-iron to driver.

It really is just kind of a comfort thing in what people are feeling. It may be a certain game plan they have.

**Q. Do you envision one of the very longest hitters not having to hit too many?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Potentially. You look at someone like Rory McIlroy, you drive it like he does, I would pull that driver out as often as I can. He hits it further and straighter than maybe anybody that's played the game. It's hard to argue why he wouldn't hit driver as often as he could. It truly is dependent on the player and their strategy.

**Q. Because of all the different strategy things that you've got to think about, how much more difficult -- not necessarily difficult, but how much different is practice these couple days here at this golf course compared to other venues and whatnot? Do you have to do a lot more homework, so to speak?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yes and no. Not to come off the wrong way, these are some of the worst practice rounds of the year at a U.S. Open. You tee off in the middle of the day today or tomorrow, and it's going to be probably a three-, three-and-a-half-hour nine holes. Everybody's got to hit a chip and a putt from every single spot on or around the green, which it is helpful, but for me, if I feel like it's a place I haven't seen, I understand why you want to do that.

Again, at the same time, at least what I've noticed, it is very helpful, but if I'm not hitting it where I want and controlling the ball like I want, it doesn't really matter if I've hit shots around the green or not. I'm going to struggle if I'm not hitting it well.

It's getting kind of the general lay of the land, and I was fortunate enough to take a trip before this to maybe spend a little more time, but it's more so, so many of these holes, you can stand on one part of the green and look around and be like, okay, this is not good, this is fine, this is not good, this is fine. Write it down, remember it, whatever you have to do, and then move on.

I feel like I'm going to spend -- personally I spend more time on the practice green or on the putting green. That's where I'm trying to dial in the stuff that I can maybe do on the course. Then when I'm out there, pick up little stuff here and there.

**Q. You said you played with Jackson Koivun today. Is there something about his game that impresses you? I'm curious what your thoughts are on his game.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: He's a lot of it. He's very impressive. He's a great kid. I love his action. He's got a great swing. I feel like his ball flight's really good. He seems comfortable.

It was great. I was glad Jordan and I got to play with him today. Chris Williams, who's caddieing for him, I played a lot of junior and amateur golf with Chris. It was good to kind of hang out with him. I think he's got a very, very bright career and future ahead of him. I'm excited for his opportunity to play in here this week, and I'm sure he'll do great things, not just this week but going forward.

**Q. About the mental aspect of the game, how much does this course psych a lot of the other players out who have heard so much about this course and how difficult it is, and how do you maintain your mental focus after having played here in 2016?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm sure it does a lot. Being perfectly honest and very selfish, I hope it psychs a lot of players out. It's a part of the preparation, like trying to go hit wedges or trying to get the speed of the greens or anything. It's getting a game plan for how you're going to approach the course mentally and strategically.

I understand this place is hard. I don't need to read articles, or I don't need to hear horror stories. I've played it. I know it's difficult. I also have faith that if I go play well and I'm driving the ball well and I'm hitting my irons like I know I can, I'm going to have a lot of birdie opportunities.

I just need to kind of pick my spots and take the hole and the course for what I have that day kind of thing.

**Q. I don't know how long you've had a 5-wood, but why did you first put it in? There's a lot of guys who have been putting it in lately for kind of gnarly rough. Does it work out of this one?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Some lies it -- I mean, it certainly works way better than any long iron. I hit that club out of the rough a lot. Especially West Coast, like Torrey Pines, I remember I hit it from 160 or 170 yards on Thursday on the 10th hole in the rain. I was just looking at it like there's no

way I can get a 6-iron out of this lie, and if I hit anything less, I can't get it through there, but I can hit a 5-wood through this, and I did.

It's nice to have it for that aspect. I'm going on my tenth year with this 5-wood, and I got it for Augusta. I always used the 2-iron, but a 2-iron didn't exactly hold those par-5 greens very well. I love that I feel like I can hit it really low, I can hit it really high, I can kind of shape it both ways. It's been, honestly, a huge club in my career, and I've hit a lot of great shots with it. It's nice to have on weeks like this.

**Q. Golf hasn't had a gap at No. 1 probably since you were in high school. It's been like 15 years. You got to the top once, and I'm sure there were times you were thinking about maybe getting back. Where is it even on your mind right now or do you think with most players, just given how big it is?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's still on my mind. I even had the thought last week of -- I'm sure some people will laugh, but if I can even catch him this year. Win however many tournaments the rest of the year, and maybe Scottie doesn't play or something.

I think that's the thing about it is guys are playing unbelievable, like Xander did last year, like Rory is this year, but it's just that Scottie is also doing that. You can't really catch that if he keeps doing what he's doing.

It's still on the forefront of my mind, and it's something that I'm working toward. I obviously can't do anything about what he's doing, and he doesn't seem to be showing any signs of slowing down or wanting to. Just try to go win some tournaments, and hopefully get close sooner rather than later.

**Q. What is he doing? If someone asked you that and you had to sum it up briefly, what would you say?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: What is he doing? Well, everything. It's effortless. Every single aspect of his game is unbelievable. I think his mental game is better than anybody out here. To be able to play with those expectations and to stay present as often as he has to me is maybe more impressive than even the golf he's playing.

I just think it's so, so hard to do, and it's also hard to explain if you're in his shoes. He just doesn't make any mistakes and almost kind of lets himself be in contention versus forces himself in contention. He just seems to be playing better.

**Q. Where are you in terms of forcing your way into contention and letting yourself get there, in terms of**

**measuring where you are?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I'm getting better at letting myself get into contention, better at -- I feel like I was letting myself last year, but then come Saturday, Sunday, I was forcing it and trying to win the tournament versus just playing and trusting and believing. I feel like I did that in Tampa this year. I feel like I did it at Hilton Head. I feel like I did it for 15 holes on Sunday of Philly and then forced the issue on 16 and made bogey.

It was like at Hilton Head I just had full, just kind of acceptance, like I'm just going to play here. Of course I wanted to win, but it's just like I'm doing the best that I can out here. I'm not like, if I have a birdie opportunity, I'm going to try to make birdie because I want to make birdie, not because I need to to try to win this tournament. Just getting into that more so would be better.

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