



76th Annual CHARLES SCHWAB CHALLENGE Golf Tournament

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Interview with PGA Champion Justin Thomas

JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome Justin Thomas into the interview room, making his third career start at the Charles Schwab Challenge. Congratulations, coming off of your second major championship, your 15th PGA TOUR victory. If we can just get you to take us back to Sunday and also being here at Fort Worth.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it was obviously a very fun and whirlwind of a weekend, I guess you could say, but we've been working really hard to try to get myself back in that situation, that scenario for a long time, and yeah, the five years has felt like an eternity since Quail Hollow, and yeah, definitely glad that I could finally answer the question of when am I going to get my second versus just being a one-hit wonder, if you will.

I'm excited to be here. Obviously the last couple days have just been filled with rest and just trying to kind of recoup and get my mind and body back and ready to go come tomorrow morning, and had a nice early morning this morning, but I'll just relax this afternoon and be good to go tomorrow.

JOHN BUSH: What is the key to keeping that motivation going into this week after such a huge win?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It's just putting it behind me. Obviously I want to enjoy it and I don't want to just act like it didn't happen because it did, but at the same time I have a week next week off potentially to just enjoy it and have some times with my family and friends if we choose to.

I have a golf tournament this week, and I'm just trying to perform and play as well as I possibly can, and hopefully give us something else to celebrate.

JOHN BUSH: Now going from Southern Hills here to Colonial, just talk a little bit about the challenges of this golf course.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, this course is right in front of you, very similar to last week in terms of off the tee you know what you're getting and you can play it hitting a lot of

different clubs off tees. You can play it very conservatively and put the ball in the fairway, kind of play to the doglegs or you can take a lot of drivers and kind of send it over some bunkers or over some doglegs and potentially make it a lot shorter.

Playing from the fairway is very, very important here. The greens were very soft this morning with the rain last night and I guess into this morning, but with the wind that they potentially have forecasted, it can firm up by the weekend, which makes this place play pretty difficult.

Q. Last couple of days when you weren't on the golf course or practicing golf, how did you spend that time?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Well, we stayed in Tulsa Sunday night, so just kind of hung out. We didn't get home until pretty late. I was exhausted. We came here Monday morning, just came in, got settled, had some lunch. They have a great gym facility setup here, so I came and worked out and just -- I feel like for me that's a good -- I don't know if I want to say reset, but just good to kind of sweat and get my body moving a little bit, and then just kind of lounge.

Then yesterday morning I just came out and practiced some and relaxed in the afternoon. I'm trying to make my practice sessions this week short but very, very efficient so that I can just go back and rest and kind of catch back up on all that.

Q. I wanted to ask, just in the last year with Bones, having him on the bag, how do you think that's transformed your game and approached each tournament day by day?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, he's been great. We're getting more and more comfortable every single week. He had a great moment there Saturday afternoon together when I got done, just kind of talking through some stuff and just basically putting me in a little better frame of mind. I think I'll be the first to admit I'm very, very hard on myself, too hard on myself at times, and it was good to have him there kind of as a reminder to just pretty much tell myself to kind of ease off and just relax kind of thing, without saying it directly like that.

There's a lot of unbelievable caddies out there that bring a lot of different areas of expertise and help, and yeah, I feel like we've been a great team, and we've really enjoyed working together and kind of building toward winning a lot of golf tournaments and winning majors. So it was nice to knock that off together.

Q. Beyond that, is there one big thing he's taught you in the last year that stands out in your time working together?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I mean, nothing real particular. I like that if you ask him a question he answers it.

I mean, the caddie I think is the hardest job because they can't -- a lot of times they can't win. If we ask them a question and they answer it and then we listen to them, then they get berated, but if they don't answer and then afterward they say, well, I was thinking that, and then they get berated again. Not necessarily by everybody but some players.

It's a tough job because they obviously see us play and are around us more than anybody, but they get called in in some very, very big situations and important moments in golf tournaments. That's why we hire them.

I have trust in Bones to where if I ask him a question and he answers it -- he wants the best for me. He's not answering it to try to screw me up. He wants me to do the best that I can.

So I think having that trust in him has been very important.

Q. Can you compare and contrast the first PGA Championship victory to the second one?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, they were very different. I was much more so in contention starting the day at Quail Hollow. I mean, kind of going into the back nine I think I was one or two back, and once I got to 13 or 14 I had the lead, so I was playing with the lead and I was trying to build it or maintain it versus coming from behind, obviously, and trying to chase a little bit more so.

It's fun; when you have the opportunity to win multiple times in different ways, you're able to learn from each experience, and I was able to learn from both of those in different ways that hopefully will help me more going down the road.

Q. Chase is the operative word; you were eight down at one point. Can you comprehend that?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I can't. I just said that outside to Rex. I haven't had a chance to watch like the full coverage on Sunday, which I'd like to, but I did happen to see -- when I was putting on nine, I was eight back. I was eight back with 10 holes to go. That's unfathomable. If I was looking at leaderboards, I probably would not have thought I even had a chance to win. It's a huge learning lesson for me. You've got to play golf. Those majors and in golf tournaments, anything can happen.

I just kind of kept plugging along, and somehow it happened.

Q. Is there something you prefer about or enjoy about an older golf course like this that you can't get at a big modern course, say at Craig Ranch?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it just puts a premium on ball-striking and playing good golf. I don't necessarily -- I just like the old-school designs because this place is a good

example of you don't need length to make a golf course hard, and I think that's what so many architects and people think nowadays is a golf course has to be 8,000 yards for us to shoot 10-under for the week versus you step up on No. 9 out here and it might be 400 yards, but you look at that fairway and it looks like you're hitting to one of these tables, and if you miss the fairway, then you're grinding or trying to figure out how to make par, but then if you hit a good drive you're rewarded and then you have a wedge and a birdie opportunity.

I just like the opportunity to play holes different ways, just putting a premium on hitting the ball in the fairway, putting a premium on just having control of your ball and understanding where you can miss it, where you can't miss it, because I think a lot of places nowadays is just kind of bomb it, send it as far as you can and just get it somewhere around the green, and the greens are so big that you can usually get up-and-down versus a place like here, they're so small, have some very subtle undulation, that you just have to be smart around here.

Q. You had a moment off the side of the green with your dad right before the trophy ceremony. What were you guys kind of talking about, and were you thinking about your grandfather a little bit there?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Not necessarily. I just was kind of taking it all in. I didn't say anything. I think my dad was kind of talking, but it just was -- it was just a lot. When you're on a roll and you're playing really well and you're fortunate enough to have three-, four-, five-win seasons, I think you sometimes can take it for granted and forget how incredibly hard it is to win out here.

I feel like I've been playing some of the best golf of my career the last year and have literally had nothing to show for it, had no wins, and it just was like, man, it's hard to win out here, and you just don't know when it's going to happen again.

It just was like -- for it to happen at the biggest stage, at a major, to win my second one, my family there, I just was kind of taking it in and couldn't kind of believe that it happened. I was, I guess, just -- obviously I was just happy. I was just really, really happy and kind of enjoying the moment I guess.

Q. There's still a lot of talk about last week in the bunkers and the idea, its being a hazard versus its being something you guys are so good at getting up-and-down on. Do you have any thoughts comparing what you had last week and what you have week-to-week out on the TOUR?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It is a good question. Yeah, the bunkers last week were bizarre. They were very unique. I would say that the most annoying part about them was just the amount of pebbles on the green and the rocks on the greens. They were literally everywhere, and it just was -- it just took forever to clean your line and then obviously made play a little bit slower. It's not like they were small enough where you couldn't

move them. If your ball hit a rock, it was going to bounce off line or bounce up in the air. That was the hardest part.

But I definitely go back and forth when I think about it, because yeah, it is a hazard or penalty, I don't know what you'd call it anymore, but yeah, you get to a place like this with perfect bunkers and there's oftentimes where if we hit it in the rough, you're like, just try to hit it up in that greenside bunker, it's an easy up-and-down, versus last week you didn't know. Some of them were soft, some of them were firm, some of them had just absolutely no sand, and if you were in there and they had a good amount of sand with the rocks and you were short-sided you couldn't necessarily spin it.

I just tried to look at it as it was kind of the same thing, as an opportunity, and just everybody had to deal with it, so there's no reason to complain about it. I think that mindset helped me. I went five-for-five on Sunday out of them. I wouldn't have been able to win if it wasn't for that.

JOHN BUSH: Justin, we appreciate your time. Best of luck this week.

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