

# Charles Schwab Challenge

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

## Justin Thomas

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everyone, for joining. Thanks for joining us, Justin. We appreciate the time. If you could just let everybody know what you've been up to during the break and just some thoughts on being back to competition this week at the Charles Schwab Challenge.

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, obviously the first couple months is very -- I guess two months or month and a half for us was very similar to everybody elsewhere you're following along with guidelines and staying inside and kind of quarantining yourself, but it was weird, but it honestly was happening so long, it just kind of became the norm. I got very used to being at home. I was able to get in a great routine in terms of I was using my backyard as a gym every day, so that was nice, and we had our small group of people that we would hang out with whenever we would do something. But then Medalist stayed open fortunately so I was able to go play golf with one person to a cart and no caddies and minimal groups and no rakes and stuff like that, but other than that, just kind of trying to stay rested and stay in a routine, and then the last month or so I was able to kind of bump it up a little bit and get prepared.

#### **Q. You're making your debut here at the Charles Schwab Challenge; could you let us know if you've played the course yet this week and just some initial thoughts?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I just went out and played nine this morning. It's awesome. It's a place that I've always watched on TV and I love how it looks. It's a fun tournament to watch. It's just unfortunate it never comes at a good time in the schedule. It's a place that I feel like I would like, and I do, from the nine holes that I've seen. It was blowing about 15 or 20 this morning at 6:45 or 7:00 a.m., which was a little odd and made it more challenging, but you can just -- it's all right in front of you. It's just a great old-school golf course where you put the ball in play and then it's a second-shot course, and hitting to the small greens, and you have pure bent greens. I'm just excited to be here, because again, it's a place that I've always wanted to come to, just never worked out in the schedule, and obviously would have liked to come under a little bit different circumstances than this year, but no matter what, I'm glad to be here.

#### **Q. You kind of mentioned your debut, but I think the last time a first-time player has won Colonial was 2001, Sergio. What sort of disadvantage is it not playing this course and coming to a new course, new tournament, so to speak?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's hard to play anyplace for the first time competitively, not just here. The fact that I have Jimmy, my caddie, who's been here and won here a couple times with different players is huge because I'm able to rely on him on any questions that I have. I'll definitely be using him quite often this week.

#### **Q. What part of your game will be the quickest to come back, and what part of the game will take the longer time to come back?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: You know, honestly I think the hardest thing for me is just going to be getting back into it. The fact that that four-footer I have on the first hole matters, and yeah, if I hit this ball in a hazard, okay, that's a penalty stroke, or a penalty area or whatever, and it's real. It's not just going out and having a money game with your buddies. Every count shots, it matters, and it's cumulative score for four days, and that's I think for me the thing that's going to be the hardest because I sometimes feel rusty after two, three weeks off, let alone four months. That's going to be weird, but at the same time it's going to be weird for everybody, so I'm just going to hopefully try to get back into that as quick as I can. I've been playing a lot, so hopefully hitting different shots and shot shapes and yardages and stuff like that is something that won't be too forgotten since I've been working on it quite a bit. That's something that I'll continue to rely on.

#### **Q. What has been the strangest thing over the last few weeks as you've gotten ready to come back to play golf? Has it been the testing at home? Has it been whatever you've experienced here at the golf course as far as not having interaction that you normally have?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: You know, we're fortunate in Florida where I am that it's not too crazy different. You know, the courses are open now, and I mean, the only -- the biggest difference is there there's just not normal food and beverage at most of the courses and you can't take a caddie or you can't take the pins out or rake the bunkers. But it's like I'm still able to get all the preparation in and practice that I want.



For a little while I couldn't have guests or coaches out, so my dad couldn't come with me, so that was a little bit of -- he couldn't really come out to any courses where me until about two weeks ago, so he came in town last week and then we were able to get some work in, so I would say that part has been the hardest.

We have so many guys in Florida whenever we want to play, it's just, all right, who wants to play today, we've got these seven people, where are we going to go, we'll go out here, four guys are members here, the three will be guests, we'll go play, whereas now we don't have that luxury.

**Q. I was just wondering if there's anything that you kind of liked about this new simpler way of playing or practicing, if you kind of like that you don't rake the bunkers or don't touch the pins or if there's anything that's sort of just simplified and that you appreciated?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I like riding in my own cart all the time. That was nice. You zip around. We had rounds -- three, four of us would go play at Medalist, and we would take our sweet time. We wouldn't hit multiple shots, but we wouldn't be zipping around by any means. We played two and a half, three hours tops every single time we played. That part was pretty nice, and we got spoiled with that.

Other than that, like I said, it wasn't too much different. Other than riding in your own cart and not raking a bunker or not taking the pin out, it just -- for me if I'm doing work, I'm practicing, so not much is different there; I'm going out and chipping and putting or hitting balls, so in that aspect not much was different, but it was nice riding in my own cart and zipping around.

**Q. I just was wondering what you expect the quality of play to be like this week since obviously some guys like you have been able to play a lot, some probably haven't, and just secondly, what are you anticipating the atmosphere is going to be like this week without the fans? It's going to be a totally different vibe out here.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, first of all, the atmosphere will definitely be different. It will be -- but then again, everything is different than what we've been used to the last three months. I would say that every single person in this field would gladly say that they would rather be playing without fans than wait and play with fans, if that means it's a couple weeks sooner. That's the luxury we have on the PGA TOUR. If you have your TOUR card, you don't have to play if you don't want, so if someone was really worked up or bothered by that, they don't have to come. But I think the strength of the field this week and the amount of top players in the

world that are here showed that it's not going to be too much of an issue because we all came.

Just in terms of the quality of play, I think the TOUR did a great job, and obviously international and some people either choosing not to come or just not being able to, that is tough, but in the States, everybody at least has been able to do enough, and that was the main thing that we talked about a lot in the PAC calls is that we need to make sure there's enough time and preparation for guys to get ready, but also I just think the quality of play is going to be all over the place just, again, because of rust, because of how much guys have been practicing but also just being away from competitive golf that long or how they choose to use their time off.

You're going to see definitely a wide variety of scores, not just because of the golf course but just to see who used their time well or not.

**Q. Do you think the time has come on the PGA TOUR to allow the players to wear shorts, practice rounds, right through Sunday afternoon?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I mean, the fact that we're now wearing them in practice rounds is a great start. I love that, especially with the high of 102 that it is here today. I'm very happy that I was able to wear shorts. But for tournaments, I don't mind it. I mean, I like kind of the persona and just the history that golf has of being a very classy and I guess elegant sport, if you will, and I just -- I don't know, for me, I just think it's very professional looking that we are out there wearing pants. Obviously it is hot, but I mean, you go to Moline, Illinois, you go to Fort Worth, Texas, at these times of year it's going to be hot whether you wear shorts or pants, it's not like it's going to be that much better. That part to me, I just love the aspect of guys, us wearing pants, and I don't know, that may be just my own -- obviously if we wore shorts I'd be fine with it, but if I had my choice, I'm fine keeping it how it is.

**Q. What did you do for dinner last night, and can you give us an idea of what your routine will look like for the rest of the week in terms of hotel, course, that kind of thing?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, so that's something that we were kind of trying to figure out what we wanted to do in terms of hotel or whatnot, and I'm someone who I'll get houses from time to time, just depending on where it is and what works out, but we felt like, one, most convenient or the safest possible option, and then two, the most convenient was to get houses and bring a chef every week. We have a chef with us who's going to be every single week, we have him for the next three weeks, and Rickie and I are sharing houses, so we just had dinner at the house last night. We're having pretty

much every meal in the house. We just felt like the more things that we control and the less variables in terms of either food I was eating or stuff I was touching -- Rickie, Alison, Duf who's in the house, if we just kind of keep our circle small and stay in that circle, we felt like that was going to be the best option, and it's something that we've done a lot in the past, but it just felt like it made a lot more sense with everything going on the rest of the summer, so that's something that we're going to be doing a lot of.

**Q. Just curious what your curiosity level is in terms of how this plays out with all the protocols in place, and there still being obviously some unanswered questions. Certainly no system is perfect, but things like if players were to -- if there were positive tests and so forth, how that would impact things. Again, just kind of curious your curiosity level from that standpoint.**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I would say it was a lot higher. My curiosity level was a lot higher probably the last couple months, as the PAC meetings were going on. I mean, they were longer than they've ever been because everybody had so many questions, which understandingly so. But to me, especially after going through everything, I mean, I'm done for the week in terms of the only thing I have to do is I have to pick up my golf balls and my gloves. I have to figure out where to get them from. But I've done the testing. I've gotten approved. I have my pass that gets me in the locker room, that gets me in the clubhouse, dining. I have my pass to go in the facility and got my dad the instructor pass, so it's like -- it really wasn't that hard.

But you know, it's going to be different. I mean, I think that's the thing that I was trying to get across to people is that you can't go into this thing it's going to be normal because it's not. I would say 2020 is beyond a bizarre year so far, and especially in the world of sports it's just going to be different. If we all want to get back and play the game that we love and not just for us but for the fans and everybody at home, we're just going to have to get over the fact that it's going to be different and be a little weird.

But after going through all the protocols and doing everything thus far, it's been a very, very easy process and the TOUR has done an unbelievable job of making it organized and making it very easy once we get there and quick. It's gone by very, very quickly, and yeah, I mean, I hope everybody feels the same way I do. But it's been nothing but easy so far.

**Q. The social distancing aspect of this, on the course with your caddies and things and having to remind them you have to pull the club, all that, will that take a while? And practicing nine holes today,**

**did you kind of walk through any kind of scenarios to say, okay, what can we do Thursday through Sunday and let's make sure that we're on top of that before we get to Thursday or Sunday?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, we talked about it a little bit, because I'm someone who's -- if I ask Jimmy a question, I'm usually -- my head is right here and I'm looking in his book, so it's going to be difficult for everybody. I would love to say that everybody is going to be perfect and everything is going to go as is, but I mean, you saw in the match, you just forget, and as long as we continue to do as much as we can and sanitize as much as we can and just do everything we possibly can, I think that we'll be more than okay. We'll be great, and it will be difficult, but yeah, it was just simple things like -- little things like on the range where Jimmy is throwing me balls with a 3-wood or driver where I take them and put them on the tee, I'm grabbing them, I'm getting the clubs out of my bag. So it's just little things like that that -- well, I guess, yeah, you take for granted and you just don't think about that everyone is going to have to get used to. As it usually happens to work out, it's probably going to be -- everyone is going to be getting used to it and everything is going to be great, right to the fact when we go back to normal again and then we have to go back to it. That seems to be usually how it works out. But yeah, I'm sure everyone will be trying as hard as they can, that's for sure.

**Q. How much are you aware of the whole sports world is going to be watching you guys?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I haven't thought of it until just now. I mean, I like to think that golf has a pretty good following, and a lot of golf fans watch it, and especially on the weekend. Fans from all across the country, the world, whatever, watch it. I'm not going to be trying any harder or any more nervous I would say because we are the only sporting event on TV, but it is good to know. This is a great opportunity for golf to grow even more and get to an even better level than it is, and hopefully people can see that maybe don't usually watch golf that we're the best players in the world and the best at our craft, and we can do some pretty unbelievable stuff with the golf ball, so hopefully everybody will enjoy.

**Q. What do you know about the CBS plan to have this little "confession cam" tent where you walk in and answer a question, and are you one who would agree to be mic'd during competition?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: I've never heard of the first thing you said until you just asked me, and I would not wear a mic, no. That's not me. What I talk about with Jimmy and what I talk about with the guys in my group is none of anybody else's business, no offense. I mean, as close as those mics are on the tees and the greens

and as close as I get to boom mics during competition anyway, I basically feel like I am mic'd up. I can't say some stuff that I usually say anyway, and it is not that it's bad, but no, if I want somebody to know what I say, I'll say it in a press conference, I'll say it in an interview or put it out on social media, whatever it is. But I personally am not one that would care to get mic'd out there.

**Q. What did you miss the most about playing competitive golf?**

JUSTIN THOMAS: What did I miss the most about golf? I missed the competition, the opportunity to win a golf tournament, seeing different people, seeing my friends. I mean, golf is so weird that we have -- you hate to say different groups of friends, but you really do. You have people at home, your friends you grew up with, family, whatever it is, and then you have these guys and caddies and wives, girlfriends, kids of different players that you spend probably over half your year with. I'm glad to be back out and I'm glad to see a lot of familiar faces, media and officials. I mean, this is what I've wanted to do my whole life, and it's what I've loved to do forever, and it's nice to be back out playing competitive golf again.

THE MODERATOR: We appreciate the time, Justin.