

U.S. Open Championship 2017

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Justin Rose

Press Conference



BETH MAJOR: Good afternoon, welcome again to the 117th U.S. Open Championship at Erin Hills in Wisconsin. It's our pleasure to welcome this afternoon the 2013 U.S. Open champion, Justin Rose. Justin is here playing in his 12th U.S. Open this week. He has four top 5 finishes this season, including a runner-up finish to Sergio during a thrilling Masters two months ago.

Justin, I know you've been here for a little bit. Can you talk about your impressions of Erin Hills and your preparations heading into the championship?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, absolutely. I took the opportunity to come up last week, played the course on Thursday and Friday, which I really, really enjoyed. Had perfect weather. It was a little cooler than it has been the last couple of days, so I really enjoyed my time out on the golf course. I felt very spoiled to have the course to myself, I have to say, which is the perfect environment in which to learn it.

Yeah, came away with a really, really good impression. Obviously, I've seen guys talking about the rough and the hay and this and that, and of course, it's a huge penalty if you miss big this week. But if you play well, which is obviously what this championship is trying to identify, but if you play well, it's a very, very fine and playable golf course.

BETH MAJOR: And I mentioned the runner-up finish at The Masters. Can you talk about your form coming into this week over the past few months?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, so, obviously I think my season was going very smoothly into Augusta, and I was very much trying to -- I was very conscious of trying to peak at the Masters, and obviously I did a good job of that. I felt like, like you said, I had a few top 5s prior to the Masters and felt good about the way I was trending in there.

I would say since then it's obviously been nothing to really write home about, but I do feel from a practice point of view, and some of the things I've been working on in the last month, I feel like I'm beginning to trend into this tournament. So although the results might not be there to kind of back that up, I feel good about where the week can go for me from here.

Q. What are your thoughts on the U.S. Open coming to some new venues, and do you prefer more traditional layouts or maybe some more modern ones?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think I probably do prefer the more traditional ones. I think just because there is a lot of history involved in those. But I do commend the USGA for trying to look -- they're obviously custodians of the game in a lot of ways, and they're trying to promote the game in certain ways in certain areas of the country to try to grow the game. I definitely see the big picture of why new venues are important. But I think the rotation from now going on is incredibly stellar and incredibly traditional. So certainly not every other year that we are facing a new challenge. I think that there are a lot of traditional ones coming up in the not too distant -- well, in the next run, I believe. I can't remember them all in my head, but I remember thinking that.

So Chambers was obviously a new golf course. Maybe it didn't turn out quite the way everyone had hoped conditioning-wise, but the champion was stellar. I think when you see Jordan Spieth's name on the U.S. Open trophy, that's probably an outcome that everyone may have hoped for, except me and the other players in the field, but the USGA certainly. So got a good winner. And I think hopefully it will be the same this week.

But traditional golf courses are always fun because you can remember what other great champions have done in the past.

Q. When we spoke at Wentworth you said you hadn't heard a ton of positive things about Erin Hills. Has this therefore come as a pleasant surprise now that you've seen it yourself?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I was very cognizant of coming in here and forming my own opinion, and I think that both my caddie and I, we played our first nine holes when we came in for lunch and we still hadn't formed our opinion yet. Obviously it was incredibly long. The scale of the golf course is something that you don't often see, and after nine holes we're neutral about it.

Then I played the back nine and I came off and I loved it. For me the back nine really cemented my opinion of the golf course. But what I liked about it is that it's obviously incredibly demanding, it's long off the tee, which makes it demanding off the tee, but there is

room to play. It puts driver in play, and there is obviously a reward for hitting a good drive because I think the greens, depending on the weather, will likely get firm, and wedges are going to be important. Short irons are going to be important to the green. But I like the green complexes. Normally on new golf courses you have green complexes that I think are overworked and overdone, and these certainly are not that. So they're going to be able to get as much speed on them as they want. For me, the green complexes are a lot of fun. It's not typically U.S. Open dense rough around the greens. There is a lot of skill to chipping on this golf course too. So if your ball is in play from the tee, you can play the golf course.

Q. The bunkers, the designers have openly said they have made many of them as difficult as they possibly can be, and some of the players have never come across bunkers as difficult as this. In the old recce on Thursday and Friday, did they even go and look at the one on the back right of the ninth, which the far end has a little pin pool?

JUSTIN ROSE: Back left as you play it?

Q. I thought it was back right.

JUSTIN ROSE: I didn't go there, but I definitely went back left. For me, the way the hole is designed, it would be almost difficult to hit it long right. Very easy to hit it long left, and I definitely scoped out the bunkers long left. There were a couple of them with jagged little edges, and you can certainly get into spots there where you may have to come out sideways, or the bunkers are certainly a hazard this week. I think the sand is incredibly soft and heavy. The ball is going to plug. If you go in there with a short iron as well, the ball could plug. When you're playing a bunker shot, it tends to come out very slow. The ball comes out slow, which means you have to put a lot of speed into the way you play the bunker shot. So they are very untraditional from that point of view, but they feel like hazards this week, for sure. Not every bunker is a green light. On TOUR, often you think get it up in the bunker, that's good. But the way the ball can react around the green and roll into a bunker this week, it's not always a given that a bunker is a good play.

Some bunkers are good plays on this golf course, and you have to identify maybe which bunkers are and which bunkers aren't because there are some nasty little hooks the way they're designed. You're probably going to get called out once or twice this week because of that, for sure.

Q. The epic dual you had with Sergio at The Masters and the feeling that was one that got away, do those sort of things add fuel to the fire for the next major for you?

JUSTIN ROSE: I sort of tried -- in the aftermath of the Masters, I kind of feel fine about what happened. I feel really good about the way I played and my execution down the stretch for the most part. I also think you'd be naive to think you can go throughout your whole career and not have one that gets away. So for me, I've been fortunate in some big tournaments, this one and the Olympics where things have gone my way, and I've come out, for the most part when I've been in contention in the biggest of events, they've gone my way right at the death there. So it is one that got away, for sure. But I think that's part of the game, so I'm fully accepting of it.

I only really judge it at the end of the year, because if I win this week or Birkdale or the PGA Championship, I'm going to walk away believing it's a fantastic year. And just judge The Masters at the end of my career. I'd love to win it more than once, but if I win it once, I'm more than happy. So I feel I have plenty of opportunity left.

So I'm really not trying to judge it, to be honest with you, but, I feel like this tournament could be the first tournament back since then. I really feel motivated. Obviously there is always a peak and a trough to your preparation and sometimes your form too, but I feel like, like I said earlier, I'm excited to try to get the game peaking again.

Q. With Sergio Garcia winning, it was another first-time major winner. We've seen six consecutive first-time major winners dating back to the 2015 PGA Championship in Wisconsin. Tough on many levels to answer. But why do you feel we're seeing this continuing pattern? What specifically is prompting it?

JUSTIN ROSE: Well, for me, you can call them first-time major winners, but we're talking about Dustin Johnson, Sergio Garcia, Jason Day, they're guys who maybe paid their dues. We're not seeing unknown names breakthrough and just walk away with a major championship. These are guys that have worked hard. They're at the top end of their game. They've probably all been top 5 in the world when they've won their major. So for me that's reassuring that the top players should be targeting the majors and feeling like they're actually great opportunities to win. They're not outside shots.

Even though the first-time major winner tag, I can't even think of the other three off the top of my head, but just those names popped into my head. I think all the top players should be thinking about them as these are our opportunities to have good weeks.

Q. As a quick follow-up, obviously you remember

winning your major title and the special things that go with that. What's it like, generally speaking, when you see a fellow professional have a really massive emotional victory?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, it can be inspiring to you. You can kind of use it as fuel because there are certain players out here that you know you play with week in, week out, you know your skill set is every bit as good as theirs and you see them break through and win, so it can be inspiring from that point of view. Obviously in the case of Sergio, I know there were a lot of guys out there really pulling for him because of so many close calls he's had throughout his career. If you think about Sergio Garcia going through his career without having won a major championship, it would have been sad to have had that happen. So obviously in situations like that everyone, and myself included, obviously, I was the guy, unfortunately, that was on the wrong side. But as I said at the time, I'm very happy for Sergio. It's well deserved.

Q. Four years ago you had a win on Father's Day. As a father, is it a different kind of feeling when you win on a day like that? And what would it mean to you to bring home another win on Father's Day this year?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, well, for me, it was a huge gift to be honest with you, winning on Father's Day. The whole weekend, for some reason, my dad was very -- not for some reason, but my dad passed away when I was 21, but he was very much in my thoughts the whole weekend, and that alone made it a special Father's Day, really. Because obviously a lot of time had passed since he passed away. You always think about them, the loved ones that you lost, but time is also a healer and life goes on. But that weekend I felt so incredibly connected to him, which is the one thing I look back on my U.S. Open win and I'm most thankful for is giving me that moment of connection, the really deep connection again.

Obviously, being a father now myself, it's sort of generational, right? I tried to play golf how my dad taught me to. And I tried to play golf in a way that my kids can look up to. So it's always a good reminder for me to try to be my best and to be a good role model for my children but also make my dad proud. So from that point of view, it's a special day. If you are in contention and things go your way, it's a beautiful way of being rewarded professionally, but then kind of realizing why you do it and obviously realizing that family is first. Yeah, that win for me was very special.

Q. What is your take on the set-up of this course, especially with the overall length that you're probably going to have to driver on most of the golf holes, where when you won at Merion you could hit

irons occasionally?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I think I like it. I think Merion in some ways played like a baby version of this, but you had to play similar golf. You had to be patient. You had to pick your times to be very aggressive. But I think at Merion, if you were overly aggressive you were going to get punished, and it might be the same this week too. You still have to keep the ball in play. Even though it's wide, you have to keep it in play. If you don't keep it in play, a water hazard could be a stroke penalty. This hay is more than a stroke penalty because there may be nowhere to drop it. Or you might be forced to having a couple of goes at it out of the hay. So it really is paramount to keep the ball in play, as it was at Merion. I think at Merion I accepted that and I played the course accordingly. This week's going to be much the same from that point of view, just keeping it in front of you.

BETH MAJOR: Even four years past when they announce your name on Thursday on the first tee as U.S. Open champion, does that still give you the same thrill four years past?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, for sure. I think winning a major championship is a dream. It's what I aspire to as a kid. There's only one in my resume right now, so it's still my biggest golfing achievement, so to hear it never gets old.

BETH MAJOR: Have you been to Merion lately?

JUSTIN ROSE: No. I always try to once a year make a trip. So once we kind of get to the northeast for some of the playoff events, I always try to make a trip. It's a special day.

Q. I was curious, you talked about inspiration before, and I'm wondering if in your experience you've seen other players draw inspiration after someone like Sergio wins? So, for example, you, prior to winning at Merion, was there a victory like that that you said, hey, why not me, kind of thing?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, absolutely. There will be lots of players doing that. And maybe players getting towards the end of their careers that think, you know what, I paid my dues too. Maybe, just maybe. Darren Clark, for example, had it at the Open Championship. It could be a Lee Westwood or someone else like that, someone that's been incredibly close and it might be their time. But the way I look at it as a player is it's the theory of large numbers. If you put yourself there more and more and more often, eventually the door is going to open. So as a player, you can't just hope. It's a dream and a magical week. It's hard work. You have to look at it and take the long-term approach. I might have 40 majors ahead of me in my career, and if I

prepare very, very hard for all of them and I stay fit and healthy and keep working on my game, those 40 can hopefully produce 15 chances, and of those 15 chances, hopefully I can convert a few of them. So you can't just kind of look at it and go, I hope this is my week. You have to have a bit more of a plan.

BETH MAJOR: Justin, thank you so much for joining us today. We wish you well throughout the week.