

**Nissan Open
Riviera Country Club
Pacific Palisades, CA
February 16, 2006**

First-round tournament quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH JUSTIN ROSE

DAVE LANCER: We have the other co-leader with us, Justin Rose after a 7-under par 64. Give us a little idea, just general thoughts about your play this morning.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yes, I was obviously really happy to go out there early, not early this morning, but this morning's round and get off to a good start.

It's always nice to feel like you get into the tournament from the word go. That's what happened today. I birdied my second and third hole. From that moment on, I just kept picking off the birdies at nice times in my rounds to keep the momentum going.

DAVE LANCER: Questions?

Q. Justin, do you consider yourself a big hitter?

JUSTIN ROSE: Longer than average for sure, but I wouldn't say a big hitter.

Q. Is that an advantage on this layout, is it different here than other places?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think the good thing about this golf course is that you tend to hit your whole bag. You hit everything from a wedge to 3-iron. So I don't necessarily think it definitely suits one player, one type of player or anything, that's why I think it's such a great golf course.

Q. Justin, you, Luke Donald and several other Brits basically play here full-time, and I am just wondering, I go over there, do the by British press, do the people feel like you should be playing the European TOUR or are they happy to have you over in the U.S.?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think they'd like to see me play there for sure. I've stated many times, my ideal situation is to be firmly cemented in the Top-50 in the world. Therefore enabling myself to play in all of the Majors, and the World Champion events, as you know, count for both TOURS. And therefore, I only have to play 4 events in Europe to be a member over there, to be a full member I should say. Yes, that's what I'm striving for. I'm still striving to get back into that situation to be able to play a little bit more around the world, especially in Europe.

Q. A lot of guys will say they have to come to the U.S. to sort of get their game to the peak, have you found that playing here has raised your game?

JUSTIN ROSE: I feel I really definitely improved a lot the last couple of years. I think I got a good support system out here. I worked with David Leadbetter. I think by being over here I get a chance to work with him more regularly. Therefore, it's easy to make progress. Before I was seeing him once every four or five months. He will give you a lesson, things will get better. And you have to find your own way for three or four months. That's a long time.

I feel like I'm basically making progression. Obviously, the facilities here at all of the tournaments that that we play at, and obviously where I live back in Florida, are great facilities, and great weather, to make every day count really.

Q. Don't take this the wrong way, take it in the spirit it's intended, but do you feel like you're ready to win out now after all the close calls you had last fall, those seconds and thirds and sniffing it down the stretch?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yes, I think so. I feel in my heart of hearts, I feel like I should have won both of those tournaments. I feel like if I would have been in that situation a little bit more regularly, I think I would have finished both of those situations off.

It will be a little bit of time before I had a really realistic legitimate chance to win. I think I did everything right until maybe the last crucial moment, which is hopefully now getting that chance again, I will be able to make the most of it. But the more chances you give yourself, obviously the odds of winning go up. That's all that we can take care of at the end of the day. Keep playing good golf and give yourself chances to win.

Q. Do you feel like you are an old man, what are you 25 now in golf year, are you way beyond your years because of the road you traveled?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think so. I almost feel like one of my strengths, or one of my attributes is experience. To say that at 25 is kind of a strange thing. I have been a pro since I was 17, so eight years now. There have been ups and downs and highs and lows. I guess all of that makes you a stronger player at the end of the day. That's what I would like to believe, I would like to believe that's what I'm becoming, sort of a good solid strong player.

Q. Justin, both Ernie Els and Trev Immelman have said that Riviera reminds them of courses in South Africa, especially Johannesburg, the place of your birth, is that something you agree with?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yes, certainly I think the grass. I'm not sure exactly what the grass is, but is it kikuyugrass. It's the same as what we play on in South Africa. That's obviously, to me, the biggest likeness. The layout, yes, I think. I love the golf course. I love the rugged bunkers. I think it's good. I can't necessarily think of one in Johannesburg or that's very similar, but certainly the grass makes you feel like you're playing on those sorts of courses.

Q. What's the biggest difference between here and Johannesburg?

JUSTIN ROSE: Altitude, drove it like 6000 feet, the ball goes miles, that's it really.

Q. Traffic?

JUSTIN ROSE: Traffic. Exactly.
(Scorecard.)

Q. Trivia time, we are drawing a blank here, who was the last Englishman to win a 72-hole event here. Luke was 54, and he didn't have to sweat out the last round?

JUSTIN ROSE: Faldo? Did he win like in '95 or '96? Obviously he won Augusta.

Q. Faldo won here?

JUSTIN ROSE: '97 was it?

Q. Does that seem like a long time to you, it does to me?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yes, I think it's a long time since the Europeans won a major too, isn't it?

Q. But you are from South Africa?

JUSTIN ROSE: Come on.

Q. At Birkdale in '98, you made that great finish and you turned pro, what didn't you know about the game, or about the TOUR, whatever it was, I know you struggled for a while that you do know now, and how long did it take to learn?

JUSTIN ROSE: That's probably an impossible question to answer. I think it's just feeling comfortable.

Q. That happens to him all the time. (Laughter.)

JUSTIN ROSE: I think it's just feeling comfortable to be honest with you. At 17, the next youngest guy was 23, of course that's a six year age gap already. I didn't really have any peers as such. That's the hardest thing I felt at the time.

Obviously, I turned pro early enough, and I begun to see guys like Luke Donal, Paul Casey, these guys that I grew up playing amateur golf with, and suddenly they turn pro, the whole environment becomes a bit more familiar, I don't know, you begin to become more comfortable. I think mentally you also matured. I think that's why you see players playing their best in their mid-30's, or whatever it might be. It seems to be getting younger, but I think players mentally handling the game.

Q. Do you regret turning pro after that open?

JUSTIN ROSE: No, I don't think so. I think if I could go back, I would maybe not put so much emphasis at 17 or 18 of having a full Tour card in Europe. I think I was really forcing the issue too much and putting too much pressure on myself.

I think at the age of 17 or 18, it's just important to make sure you're always learning, and you're getting better, whether you're getting better playing mini tours or Challenge TOUR, or Nationwide Tour, wherever you are playing, as long and you say are improving at 17 or 18, that's the important thing.

Q. Could you share your thoughts on that hole out when you were an amateur at The Open and the crowd's reaction and everything? I was wondering how big of a role did that play in your decision to turn pro?

JUSTIN ROSE: Well, first to answer the last part of your question, it's a misconception that I turned pro because I finished fourth at the British Open in '98. The truth is when I didn't win the British Amateur in June that year, I said to myself, okay, well, I want to turn pro, get a couple of invites, and end up at TOUR school at the end of the year and try to start my professional career.

What happened at Birkdale gave me a lot of opportunities to walk straight into the European TOUR, if you like, through invites. So I already had invites locked down at the Amateur Open and

Scandinavian Masters before I played the British Open. The last shot was just a fairytale ending to a fairytale week, really.

The crowd had just got behind me from day 2, or from when I shot a great round on day 2. The weekend I just had a great reception from them wherever I went. I think that was a large reason why I did play so well.

Q. Given what happened with you, I'm wondering do you think there should be an age restriction? There is 18 here, and 18 on the LPGA.

And, secondly, all of the young guys who have come out and struggled, I'm sure you still see Tye on occasion out at Champion's Gate, have always said that golf was the easy part and was that your experience as well, it's the extraneous agents, media, sponsors, the stuff that really eats up your time.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yes, sure. I think the physical side of things, you get a lot of 18-year-olds, who technically and in ball-striking-wise, they are about ready to play. The hard part is the mental side of things. I don't think there should be an age limit, no. If you are good enough, you are good enough. It is a sink or swim atmosphere out here, if you can't cut it, that's it, you can't cut it. If you earn your shot at it, you should be given a shot.

I think on the LPGA side of things, I don't know, if you look at tennis as well, girls seem to maybe mature -- strength isn't such an issue, girls can compete at a younger age in terms of lady's golf. But, no, I don't think there should be an age limit.

Q. Justin, do you keep track of the rankings enough to know what your highest has ever been?

JUSTIN ROSE: World rankings?

Q. Yes.

JUSTIN ROSE: I was in the low 30's at one point.

Q. Briefly or sustained?

JUSTIN ROSE: I was in the Top-50, it felt like a couple of years, '02, '03 into '04.

Q. Obviously, it gets you in most of the Majors anyway, is it that important for you to be able to play on a re global schedule without having to worry about your position on the Money List here. Would you like to be in Europe four or five more times?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yes, definitely.

Q. Why? If you are playing most of your golf over here anyway?

JUSTIN ROSE: Why would I want to play four over there? To show my commitment to the European TOUR. To keep that part of my golfing roots alive. The European Tour had been very good to me and is very good to me. I think the European Tour has some great tournaments if you can play at the right time of year around the British Open. Or in May, the BMW PGA, there are some really good events that I would love to play. You can definitely work your schedule where I feel you're not going to miss too much of the PGA Tour schedule and also fit in your four events on top of your Majors and your World Championships.

Q. Secondly, did you map out a route, if you will, to the Ryder Cup this year and what is it?

JUSTIN ROSE: My route is to play well here in the early part of the season. I'm not really going to entertain Ryder Cup as a possibility until I've won over here. I think I need to earn a lot of world ranking points to get into the Ryder Cup. I think world ranking points is my easiest way into the team. If you look at the Money Lists, guys have already earned a million Euros so I'm giving up a lot of ground there. So I think world ranking points is my way in. I can do that here by playing good golf.

Q. Did you get some type of special membership in Europe for the year to be eligible should you get the ranking points?

JUSTIN ROSE: No, my ranking in Europe is just as a past winner, so category 15. It doesn't give me entry into any tournaments, other than the tournaments that I've won. So there is no real special favors there.

Q. If you were to pick up a lot of rankings points early in the year, and look like you might be on that team, would you have to be sure you played your 11, would you have to commit to 11 to be on that team?

JUSTIN ROSE: I was just having this conversation earlier, I have heard both reports. I haven't had it confirmed as such. I don't feel it impacts me. It doesn't impact my mindset. I got to go out and play well. When it becomes a possibility, I will worry about it. But I think as far as I know, the world ranking points I'm earning now are counting towards the list.

Q. Last question, which was going to be the first in the first place, if you look at other guys in your age range, Adam Scott and Sergio, and Charles Howell, who seem to be in the Top-50 quite a bit the last three or four or five years, do you feel like there is much difference between them and you, and do you feel that's a place that you should be in the first place?

JUSTIN ROSE: They are nearly as good as me. (Laughter.) I've grown up with those guys. I rate myself every bit as good as them. Obviously performance, results speak. There is no doubt those guys have done fantastically well. If I look at it from an ability standpoint, there is no reason why not, you know.

Q. You took a little bit of a gamble coming over here and playing because you knew that the talent pool is probably going to be a little deeper, your world ranking is going to take a hit, and it would be harder to make the Ryder Cup team and go back to the Masters after you were leading it after two rounds, has it been worth it, I guess? You're still here, I guess, the answer would be yes?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yes, I think it definitely is worth it. I have much enjoyed my golf over here. I'm enjoying the lifestyle over here. I think obviously there is many things that I do miss about home; friends, family, things like that. But I think career-wise I can really see a progression and I'm improving.

Some people say why don't you come back to play Europe this year and really give Ryder Cup a full goal? I thought that would be great, but one week I feel like I'm hopefully really on the verge of breaking through here. It would make the last two years that I spent over here pointless to go back to Europe full-time this year and not sort of -- I feel like I put in the ground work the last couple of years to hopefully have a good year this year.

DAVE LANCER: Anything else? That's great. Justin, thank you very much.

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