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An Interview With:

JUSTIN ROSE HENRIK STENSON MATT KUCHAR

THE MODERATOR: They are the first Olympic golf medalists in 112 years, and I'd like to introduce them: Bronze Medalist from the United States, 13-under par, achieving a 63 today, Matt Kuchar. The Silver Medalist from Sweden at 14-under par shooting a 68 today, Henrik Stenson. And the Gold Medalist from Great Britain, 16-under par, shooting a 67, Justin Rose. Congratulations, gentlemen.

Q. How did the medal ceremony feel?

JUSTIN ROSE: That was a really surreal moment to be honest with you. It's a moment you've seen in many other sports and moments we've witnessed this week prior to our event, if you've been along to some other events. The medal ceremony is what it's all about, really. That's what everyone is striving for here in Rio.

So for the ten days that we've been down here and all the fun that everybody's had, there's a moment where obviously it does get all down to business, especially on the golf course, the final round. And actually when it's all said and done, you're standing up there on the podium, actually myself and Henrik, Henrik looks over to me, it's a very surreal moment. It felt very different to any other golf tournament.

Obviously when the National Anthem goes up, it's a very proud moment. I feel that that's what the Olympics is about, as well as representing yourself, more so you're here representing your country and I think that's a big deal. It's a very, very proud moment when you're able to share it with people back home.

Q. How big a deal is this for Olympic golf? Yourself and Henrik were very keen to be here, and Matt as, as well. How important is that for Olympic golf going forward?

JUSTIN ROSE: I think it's really important for Olympic golf going forward. I think that you need obviously -- I don't know who wouldn't want to be part of great competition and obviously on Sunday afternoon when you're playing against the best players in the world when it means something to them, it means that they are playing their best or they are trying to, and that's what competition is all about.

Obviously I love competition and I love competition at the highest level. And for me that's what the Olympics is all about, across many sports. It's about the best of the best going head-to-head and bringing their best times. The amount of times you see great athletes break world records when they need it most and they are able to turn up at the track or the pool or wherever it might be, the tennis court, and bring out their best stuff. That kind of was my mentality today to draw off other sports.

The first three rounds, they were all great and I was in a great position, but it was about trying to come out on a Sunday in a final and try and bring out your best. That, for me, is what's fun. Obviously the Olympics is a great arena for that.

Q. They always say second place sucks; does it suck a little bit less because you still have an Olympic medal?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, I mean, that was one of my goals this week. I wanted to put myself in contention and fight it out for the medals and I did that. Of course I would have liked to sit there with the gold rather than a silver but all in all I'm pretty pleased with my performance.

Like Justin said, you play for your country and I think I did that pretty well today. It was always going to be a battle -- or I was hoping it was going to be a battle with me and Justin for the gold and the silver, and it was in the end. I think we both pleased to be a couple of shots ahead of Matt there coming into the last couple of holes, and it was down to the last hole and Justin just swung that a little bit quicker than me up the 18th (laughs).

Q. Because it was such a great battle, did you think back about your battle with Phil Mickelson at The Open at some time during the round?

HENRIK STENSON: Well, I think no one really gave anything away, and we were just trying to make some birdies here and there, and we kind of did that all the way along. It came down to the last hole. I didn't really think about it too much, what's happened in the past.

I think I just didn't hit my best pitch and Justin had a slightly better angle from where he came and played a great shot. When I didn't hit it close, that kind of opened the door and he felt like this is a good time to hit it close, and he did. Came down to one of the last shots and he played it when he needed to.

Q. You seemed so focussed this week. How much did you prepare?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I made it a big deal in my schedule and made it a big deal all year. I made it a highlight.

I got down here Friday before the tournament. That's typically how I try to prepare for major championships. I try to know the golf courses as best as I can and I feel like there's always a slight edge in preparation you can get on the rest of the field and that was no different in this tournament than any other. Obviously I had the benefit of getting down here and taking in stuff like the Opening Ceremony, too, which was all part of the plan.

I felt very inspired this week, for sure. Felt very focused. Yeah it's definitely been -- it's definitely been something I've been looking forward to for a long, long time, and I guess I felt very motivated this week all week. Stayed very disciplined, as well, focused and disciplined. I felt that I recovered well after each round. I felt that I slept well, I ate well. All those little things I felt like I was staying on top of all week.

Q. Just wondering if you've thought where you might put the medal in your trophy cabinet when you get home? Will you put it beside the U.S. Open medal, above it, below it? Have you got that far ahead?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I think it sits alongside the U.S. Open trophy for me for sure. I think people want to keep comparing the two, major championship or Olympic Gold, I don't think they should be compared to one another. I said earlier this year that if my resumé one day read "multiple Major Champion and Olympic Gold Medalist," I would be a very, very happy man. Just going to tag on another major now.

But the point is, I think that they shouldn't compete, and I think that maybe -- I won't speak for those guys but I'll speak for some of the other guys in the field; that once we got down here, we realised what a great time it was. I noticed so many positive comments from guys who weren't in contention for medals.

Obviously to be honest, this is where all the players wanted to be because there's no money, there's not much else to play for, really, other than right up here. And yet somehow the guys really enjoyed the whole Olympic experience, and I think that says it all.

Q. You had kind of an Olympic-sized come back. Wonder if you can talk about what you think led to that and talk about your day.

MATT KUCHAR: It was an amazing day. We all show up here to win a Gold Medal. All the players here, we all came with the intention to win a Gold Medal. I played three steady rounds that weren't great that left me a long way back. But it's an amazing thing this tournament, compared to others, where fifth place doesn't really exist. You know, fifth place means a very nice tournament and a nice paycheck when we're on the PGA TOUR.

Here it's a nice finish, but you have nothing to take home. My goal, certainly today, was to put on as good a run as possible. Now, that being said, I have that same goal a lot on Sundays. It doesn't always work out. I go with the intentions of, hey, I'd like to win this tournament, I'm a ways back, but it doesn't always go that way.

Today, it went my way, and as I plodded along and made some birdies and made an eagle, I thought, let's strive for more. Let's keep your head down and try to keep making birdies and see where this may lead. But I can't begin to explain to you the amount of pride I have with finishing third. Typically would not say that.

But as I was out on the golf course thinking, you know what, right now, I stand a real shot at a medal. The overwhelming sense of pride that I felt was just remarkable.

Q. Describe, it looked like you were pretty aggressive when you got to third place. Can you describe the weird position that you're in, chance at a medal.

MATT KUCHAR: It is a very weird position, absolutely. Here I was in third, I wasn't quite any sort of cushion that I had. Certainly had I made a handful of bogeys and finished fourth, it would have been awful. But we all showed up here to claim the Gold Medal. The point of this tournament was to come claim the gold.

Justin was the man this week and I was doing my best. I kind of had things going my way, and was seeing how many birdies I could make and how maybe I could make that number come close. I came close, was not enough, but certainly the third place finish is something that I was shooting for.

It was an interesting story, went to a Bronze Medal match in tennis, U.S. men's played Canada men's. It was Steven Johnson and Jack Sock. We were sitting with Daniel Berger's father, he's the coach of the men's tennis team, sitting in the players' box, Team USA wins. The boys come running, jumping up into the box, hugging everybody in the box. And their sentiment was: "I get to wear the jacket."

And we're all presented this podium jacket and this outfit to put on. It's a cool outfit. You see all the other people in sports putting on their podium jacket and you think, you know what, I'd really like to put on that jacket, and I don't want have that just as a keepsake to take home. I've earned the right to wear this jacket, and now this medal. It's just an amazing sense of pride. I keep going back to that work, just an amazing sense of pride that comes with this finish.

Q. Two things. One, can you talk about the back and forth nature of what seemed to be the back nine between you and Justin, and did you think anybody could get close to catch you? And two, could you talk about your back?

HENRIK STENSON: There's a lot of backs in those questions (laughter). Yeah, I'll throw one back at you (laughter).

Yeah, I thought it was going to be a battle with Justin today, and exactly the way it turned out, he was a little ahead most of the day, and I guess I equalised back on 10. We were back to even on 10. And then on 13, he couldn't get up-and-down and I got one ahead.

But at that same time, after my tee shot on 13, I felt my thoracic spine kind of lock up on me and started giving me a little grief. It wasn't the best timing to have that happen, but I had my physio come out and he could loosen it up a little bit. I think it just potentially put me out of rhythm a little bit.

I hit a couple of bad swings, second shot on 13 wasn't great, tee shot on 14 not so, and second shot on 15, either. You can't say it's purely down to that, but I don't think it was a helping thing, if I put it that way. So that being said, I was quite happy to make the up-and-down on 15, and then produce a good birdie on 16 to put it back to even again.

So it was game on and it came down to the last hole. I looked at the leaderboard on 16, so I saw that Matt had finished 13-under and I was quite pleased that we were two ahead, so we could kind of focus on our little battle towards the end and not have to worry too much about third position at that time.

I guess that is one of the differences, it kind of easily creeps in here (your mind), when you still want to leave with a medal, even if you don't get the one you want, you still want to leave with one. If it couldn't be the gold, then I'm quite pleased with the silver.

It was just down to the last pitch and last putt, and I think I had a bit of a tougher angle on the last. I didn't play a great shot and when I didn't, it opened up for Justin, like I said to, hit a good one in there tight and then I had to try and force it from, I don't know, 25 feet over the ridge. Those are smaller-made percentages.

Great experience, happy to leave with a medal. I didn't play my best but I played good enough to be up in contention all week. I think I did both myself and my country proud.

Q. Fooch mentioned a photograph of Michael Phelps racing that you used for motivation, something about pushing forward. Could you explain that?

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, I think it might have been in a practice round, Fooch is walking from 13 to 14, and he just sort of kind of had, I don't know, an image or a premonition that came to him about staying in your lane or staying focused this week. Actually I think the picture sort of circulated on social media a little bit. I think Michael Phelps is literally just doing his stroke, eyes forward, and then there's a guy to his right kind of looking at him. You know, part of our mentality was just to keep our eyes forward and play as hard as we could and take care of our business. That's what Henrik does so well. I knew that would be a strategy that wouldn't necessarily give me an advantage today but it would kind of -- it was something that was going to be very, very useful. It was a nice, powerful image on which to work off.

Q. You seemed like one of the most excited players to be here -- can you talk about that?

MATT KUCHAR: I'm guessing I speak for all of us up here, but we're all fans of sport, Olympics come around only once every four years and as a fan of sport you just can't wait to watch and root on the guys for your country and just see great things happen.

For me, I grew up that way. I grew up a fan of sport. I had the dreams most boys have of hoping to compete in an Olympics, hoping to win a medal. The sport I ended up choosing was the sport that through my lifetime has not been an Olympic sport. When it did become an Olympic sport, the lights went off and said, how amazing, I can't believe I now potentially have the opportunity.

I had a great last couple months of golf that crept me inside the Top 15 in the World Ranking, which was able to qualify me to make the U.S. Team. It took a couple guys not playing for me to get in and I thought this might just be fate. This might be fate for me to make the team and if I make the team, I might as well make the most of it. And it was -- to just be a part of it, to say that you're an Olympian. It is really a dream come true. And then to make the most of it, to return home with a medal, is amazing.

Q. For Justin and Henrik, compared to the major tournaments that you guys have won, how would you compare the pressure and the nerves on the back nine, and did it seep into your head, as Pádraig Harrington said, for every 16 major tournaments, there's one Olympic golf tournament. You guys looked a little bit nervous on the back nine. Can you talk about your emotions and feelings there?

JUSTIN ROSE: You know, I felt as with Merion when I won the U.S. Open, I was surprised how calm I felt in the moment, and somewhat similar today, how calm I was in the moment, probably surprised me, as well. But it caught all of my attention and I had to fight for every single bit of everything today.

Every skill set I've ever learned came into effect today. That's why you play. You want to put yourself in the biggest moments in the sport so you can see how you fair. Obviously it went in my favour today.

So going back to your question -- got myself off-track a little bit.

Q. Were you feeling the nerves? Were you feeling pressure down the home stretch?

JUSTIN ROSE: 100 percent we were feeling the pressure but then you have this slightly added dimension of the crowd. The crowd element is a little bit different to a major championship. It's a little bit more, I don't want to say Ryder Cup-style, but you've got pockets of fans who are really pushing you forward.

At a major championship, you have 50,000 people who are there to witness golf and they want to see who is going to win, but they are not really pulling for their guys specifically.

So you kind of have a lot more good energy out there, so to speak, with people really pushing you forward and really keeping you moving forward. Sometimes when you make a mistake, or make a bogey, sometimes their energy can be positive and helpful.

So there's a few different dynamics; that you cannot compare a major championship to an Olympic Games. Obviously I thought there was a good Swedish contingent out there cheering for Henrik. Team GB were quite loud and proud, as well. I think from that point of view, it's a slightly different atmosphere.

HENRIK STENSON: I agree with what Justin said. It is slightly different and I don't think you necessarily need to compare, either. It's a whole new experience for us as golfers, participating here, and it's been a fun one. I'm really happy I went. It's memories of a lifetime being here competing, and we're competing for our countries more than we do normally in a way. Yeah, it's been a nice ten days in Brazil.

Q. Justin and Matt, if you wouldn't mind talking about this, in 2017, golf's future beyond 2020 will be determined in terms of whether it's going to be an Olympic sport. What would you tell people if asked about whether it should remain?

MATT KUCHAR: I'm not sure much needs to be said other than what transpired this week. I think you look at the guys up here. Henrik's been playing some of the best golf of anybody in the world. Justin is certainly a world-class player. I'm thrilled to be up on the podium.

But to look at the support that was out here, to look at the guys that came through, won medals, I think it speaks for itself. This event has gone over I think fantastically well. Amazing support from the crowds. I wasn't really sure what to expect as far as golf in Brazil. I didn't think that it would have great support and it really did.

If you take the broadcast and then look at what a great showdown to have these two guys battling down the end. I don't know that it could have gone much better for the game. It's a clear winner to move forward.

JUSTIN ROSE: Yeah, anybody making the decision going forward, I would just ask them, were you in Rio on Sunday. I think the crowd felt incredibly well supported. I think it was jam packed. I think it was a sellout, which is more than some of the other events I've been watching on TV. There's been a lot of open spots in stadiums, and it was incredible to see golf so well attended and so well supported. So I think from that point of view, it's been a very successful event and successful sport this week.

Q. With the fan support today, do you think that maybe golf should go for a different format or do you like it the way it is?

JUSTIN ROSE: Well, I think 72-hole stroke-play is the truest format we have. I think it churns out the deserving champion more often than not. It's the format that we choose to identify the best player on the week. So from that point of view, I thought it was the right format.

Depends how long we have; would it be fun to be down here for two weeks like the tennis and you have various formats and mixed doubles? That would be great fun. But it depends on scheduling and depends on so many different factors. But I think if you're looking for the truest champion on the week, 72-hole stroke-play is a safe bet. The only other potential format would be some type of a match play style format. But if you go with history, the four big ones in our sport are all played with this format, so I think it's pretty proven.

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