



ROOSE



A CONVERSATION WITH JUSTIN

By John McAlley

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“You boys ready? It doesn’t take long to warm up a Rolls-Royce, you know,” Justin Rose says, finishing up a brief but intimidatingly explosive session on the practice range tucked amid the towering sand dunes at Streamsong.

It’s the first—but certainly not the last—of the gentle jabs the cheeky but unerringly polite champion chips in the direction of the mates who’ll complete his foursome today. “What are we playing for, anyway?” asks a fellow Brit and childhood friend. “Bragging rights, for one,” responds Rose, who has just returned from Gleneagles, in Perthshire, Scotland, where his 5-and-0 performance led the Europeans to victory in the 2014 Ryder Cup.





"It doesn't take long to warm up a Rolls-Royce"

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Indeed, these are high times for Justin Rose, on the course and off. After securing his first major championship in 2013 at the U.S. Open at Merion, he resumed his winning streak on the PGA Tour in 2014 with a first-place finish at the Quicken Loans National. His subsequent heroics at the Ryder Cup have, characteristically, been downplayed by Rose, whose life, by design, is growing to be about more things than golf. The one-time teenage prodigy is now, at 34, a husband and the father of two, with perspective that is rapidly broadening to accommodate his family, charity work, hard-earned triumphs, and life lessons. Rose, his wife Kate, and kids, Leo, 5, and Lottie, 2, recently relocated from Orlando to the Bahamas, a place the Johannesburg-born, UK-raised golfer has found welcoming and peaceful. Island life, he says, “brings out a lot of qualities in myself that I like.”

In the clubhouse at Streamsong, a few hours before he imposed his stunning game on the resort’s links-y contours and his withering opponents, Rose talked about the commitments that mean so much to him: to his sport, to his family, to his own emotional and physical well-being, and to the Ashworth brand, which continues to grow with him. His accent is unmistakably British—his emphasis is on change.





Congratulations on the Ryder Cup victory. You must be tremendously proud of how you played.

Yeah, proud is definitely a good word. I was looking forward to the Ryder Cup. I'd played in two before, in the States, but this was my first in front of a home crowd, and that support was what I was most excited about. Then, to come through undefeated in five matches—three wins and two halves—put me in a category with only five or so other players to have done that. That's special, but it's about the team effort, right? There were no heroics, no super-big comeback. We were just a good team this year.

Going in, did you feel your game was in particularly good shape?

I've been playing well for a while now. My game's there, or thereabouts, every time I tee it up. But my putting ignited everything. I putted great at the Ryder Cup. Match play, stroke play at the Ryder Cup changes your attitude about putting a little bit—every putt is a must-make, almost like the final putt of a tournament. It has that type of intensity. So that's the takeaway: How do you create that sense of urgency and focus for every putt in a

conventional 72-hole tournament? I definitely learned a few things about myself and my game, and about the importance of getting into that zone. Recreating it's the hard part.

Are there any indicators you can count on that let you know your game is in good shape?

Not really. I've played some of my greatest golf after playing some of my worst golf. One thing I've learned is just to stay patient. You can feel like you're in a bit of a rut and, boom, something happens—a slight change of mind-set and your game's right back.

So you try to be Zen about it, to not get frustrated.

Yeah. I mean, I *do* get frustrated, but I try not to. It's a battle. I'm feeling really high on my game right now. But sometimes, when you're finishing 25th, 25th, 25th, 30th, you go, "Gosh! I feel like I'm playing well, but..." But what keeps you finishing 25th is the frustration. The key is to have patience, and to know that good golf is always right around the corner.





A tremendous number of European players live in the States. Isn't it time that you guys teed it up for the Stars and Stripes in the Ryder Cup?

[Laughs] We're passionate to play for our team, and we want to represent the European tour as best we can. A lot of us have chosen to live in the States quite simply because it's the best place in the world to play golf. The PGA Tour is, by far, the strongest in the world. And, of course, the lifestyle's great here.

Did you consider living anywhere other than Florida?

Not really. For me, Orlando was the place because, at 17, I started working with David Leadbetter, who's based there. I worked with Led for 5 or 6 years, so when it came time to pick a spot, it was obvious that Orlando was the place. But my family and I have recently moved to Nassau, in the Bahamas.

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That feels like a big decision.

It is a big decision. Orlando is a big part of our lives. We've still got our place there. And our charity work—the Kate and Justin Rose Foundation—is very much focused there. We feed 1,600 kids in the Orlando community, which is something we're very committed to continuing. But we've chosen to move to the Bahamas. My boy, Leo, who's 5, has started school down there. So, yeah, we're gonna give it a go. Every time I'd visited there over the past eight or ten years, I felt calm. It brings out qualities in myself that I like and given me a few more hobbies, things that get me away from golf. There are personal challenges, too. I haven't necessarily felt comfortable near the water. Growing up, I never did much of it. But I have the urge to do it, to push myself to go spearfishing with the boys or to get my diving certification; paddleboarding in the evening—stuff that's just, I don't know, therapeutic. It's all on the to-do list. I think about it this way: The more well-rounded a person I become, the better dad I'll be.





Is this the first time you've been to Streamsong?

Yep. It is. First time. Heard a lot about it. I love Coore/Crenshaw courses. Obviously, Tom Doak's a great designer, too.

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*This place is designed in the spirit of links play, but there's no ocean here.
What, in your mind, is the definition of a links course?*

A course built on the land that links arable farming land to the sea.
That's how links came about, if I'm not mistaken.





And in terms of play, what is it?

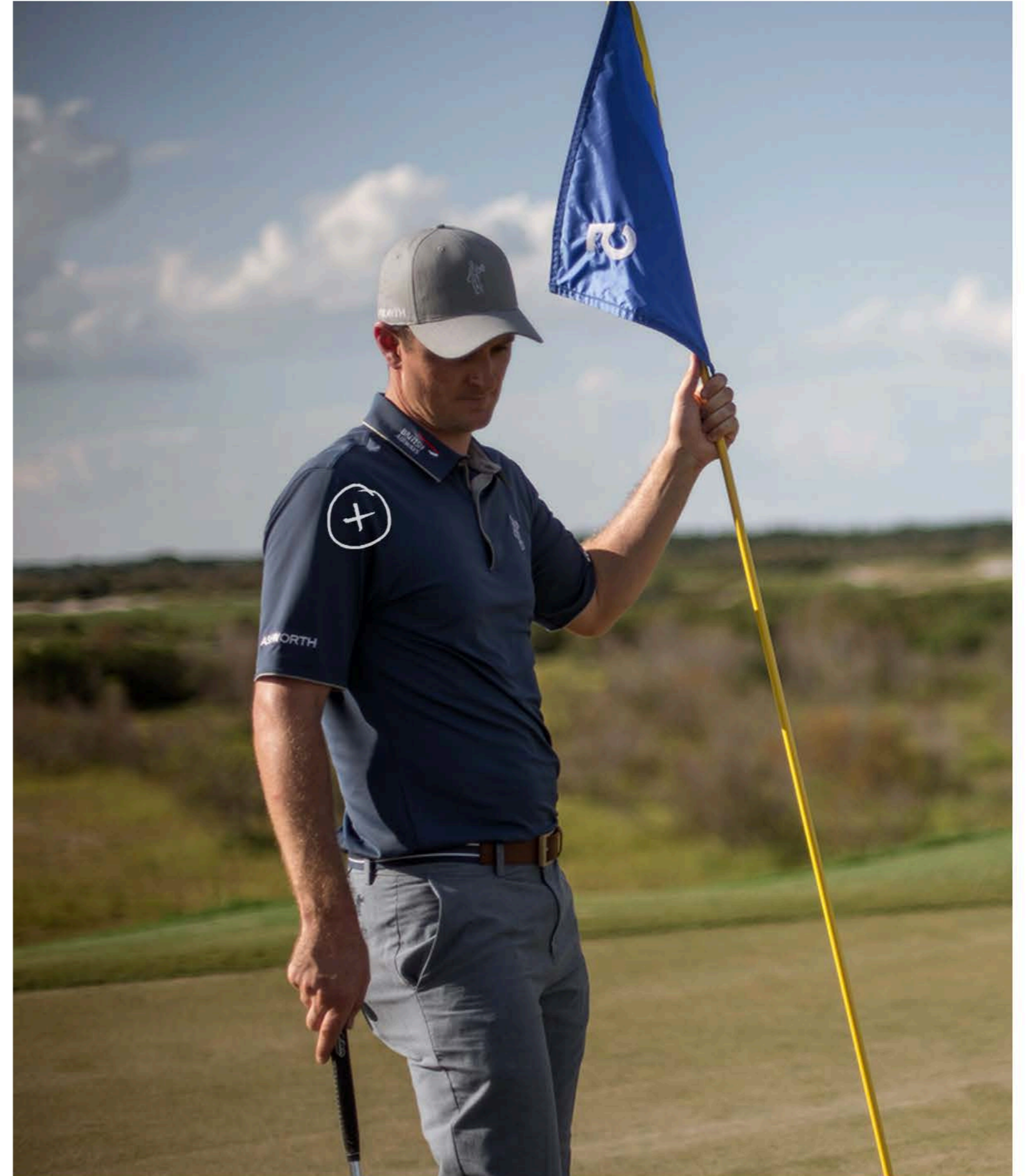
For me, it's about fast and firm, learning to play the ball along the ground. And trajectory: Learning to flight your ball in the wind and other weather variables. From day to day, the course might be completely different. You can go out in 31 and come back in 42; and the next day, go out in 42 and come back in 31 because of the wind direction. If I had to play one course for the rest of my life, it would be a links course because the elements make it a different course every day. Bunkers are in play one day that aren't the next; the lines change 30 yards off of a tee box, depending on wind. That just doesn't happen in Florida, that just doesn't happen in *most* places.

In the off-season, do you try to put your clubs away?

Yeah, I do. I think it's important to miss the game of golf. That's my benchmark. I kind of try to starve myself of it, to hold out another day or two just so I can get that enthusiasm back.

Are we talking about days or weeks?

Ten days to two weeks is, I think, important. I'm talking mentally, but physically as well—just to give your body that rest time. But I'm also at the age where I can't afford *not* to do anything for two weeks—gym or golf. I really get tight, and my body hurts, and gearing back up is so much harder than it used to be. So I'm cognizant of not resting too much.





During the season, what's your routine for staying in shape on tour?

Basically, doing as many 20- and 30-minute sessions as I can. If it's an hour and a half, I just don't do it; I haven't got the time. Days are long out there with practice rounds, pro-ams, this, that and the other, the tournament itself. So I've learned how to get in the 20- or 30-minute sessions.

In a facility? With a trainer?

My go-to, is the fitness trailer that travels with us on tour. I can find the equipment I need there. That keeps my momentum going throughout the year. But maybe 10 or 12 times a year my trainer comes in from the UK, and we hit it pretty hard. Now, if I have a week off in the middle of the season, my priority is fitness training, not practicing.

Why is that?

I find that hitting a lot of golf balls is now detrimental to my body. I tighten up, things hurt, my joints don't handle it as well as they used to. Also, I'm quite comfortable with my swing. I'm not changing it very much. So I don't need to put in those hours, hours and hours re-ingraining it.

So strength is the key to advancing your game?

Strength, for sure. I've definitely picked up 10 yards in the past couple of years. Probably more than 10.

With upper-body work?

No, it's all legs and a--. Basically, a lot of dead lifts, kettlebell hip swings—anything that uses the rump. It's all about inflection and extension at address. That's the move that's going to translate into speed and power on the golf course.

Does your family travel with you on the tour?

Not so much right now. My boy just started school, so I kind of lost him to that. My children are now at that age where they're at home a lot more. They used to come out 80 percent of the time, now that's reversed.

So do you find yourself suddenly palling around with the other guys on tour?

Not really. Life's busy at home; it's busy everywhere. On tour now, I just sort of value watching basketball, watching *SportsCenter*, because I don't watch sports at home. The kids aren't into sports yet.





Since turning pro 16 years ago, you've won six times on the PGA Tour and seven times on the European tour. Tell me about what it takes to win—now, with the perspective of time.

A great season is now one win. And a really great season is multiple wins. With the strength and depth of the tour, it's difficult. There are 156 guys, every week, trying to win a golf tournament. I only play 18 on the PGA Tour, so statistically my odds aren't great. All things being equal, I'm not going to win a tournament. So I need to rely upon all things *not* being equal. I need to rely upon being a lot better than everybody else to give myself a chance to win. That's pretty much it. The guys out there are good, so it's hard to separate yourself. If you look at the amount of top fives and top tens I have, I'm really close to a multiple-win season. That's the next step for me: to have a dominant year on the PGA Tour. That's something I'd love to have happen, that I've been working towards. But I'm really proud of the fact that I've won for five straight years on the PGA Tour. First priority: make it six. And after that see what you can do.





Tell me about your dad, who died more than a decade ago. He coached you as a kid, and it's obvious he had a tremendous impact on your life and game.

He was awesome, he really was. He somehow treaded that really fine line of understanding I had a talent to play the game, nurturing it, and pushing me, but also making it fun for me and helping me feel that I'd never really missed out on anything. My relationship with him was fantastic, and I enjoyed being out on the golf course every day. But there were definitely times when he made me understand what I needed to do if I really was serious about competing. He gave me that, I don't know, *perspective* or experience or wisdom at 12 years old. I trusted him, and it made me think, *Well, I do have to work hard*. Other sports fell by the wayside when I was 14, and I began to singularly focus on golf. He coached me until I turned pro, so I'm assuming he did a pretty good job. He kept things simple. He read golf magazines. He wasn't a very good golfer himself, but he knew *me*. I think that was the thing. He knew I was competitive; he was competitive himself. And we prepared for tournaments, I think, like nobody else in my age group. A week or two in advance, we'd figure out what the course required, and we'd try to hit those sorts of shots. Even nutrition-wise, kids were drinking Coke and eating Mars bars, and I'd be on the bananas and water. Just thinking about doing things the right way. I guess that was all of his influence, really.





When he died, did you feel his absence on the course? Did you feel you'd lost an essential guiding force?

Yeah, there was a huge hole. I remember being on the golf course and just bursting into tears at times for a year or two after. I remember playing St. Andrews and walking down, I think it was 15 or 16, and having a flashback of him giving me a putting lesson, and I just lost it.

There would be certain triggers.

Absolutely. I remember being in a hotel in Paris, feeling very alone and, yeah, it just sneaks in. It sneaks in for maybe a year or two, and then, the old cliché, time is a healer. But I still miss him.

Clearly, he was on your mind when you won your first major—the 2013 U.S. Open at Merion. You were openly emotional when you tapped in for that win.

Well, it was Father's Day, and I felt his presence. Over the years, there were many struggles; there were times when my career was doubted, and times when even *he* was criticized. And so to fulfill what he believed was my potential was amazing. When I tapped in, I was able to have that 30 seconds to just let it go. I actually really enjoyed gettin' emotional on the 18th green. My thought was not, I've just *won*, my thought was that I'd gone out and given it my all on that Sunday, that I'd competed in a way that made me feel proud and that had done my dad justice.



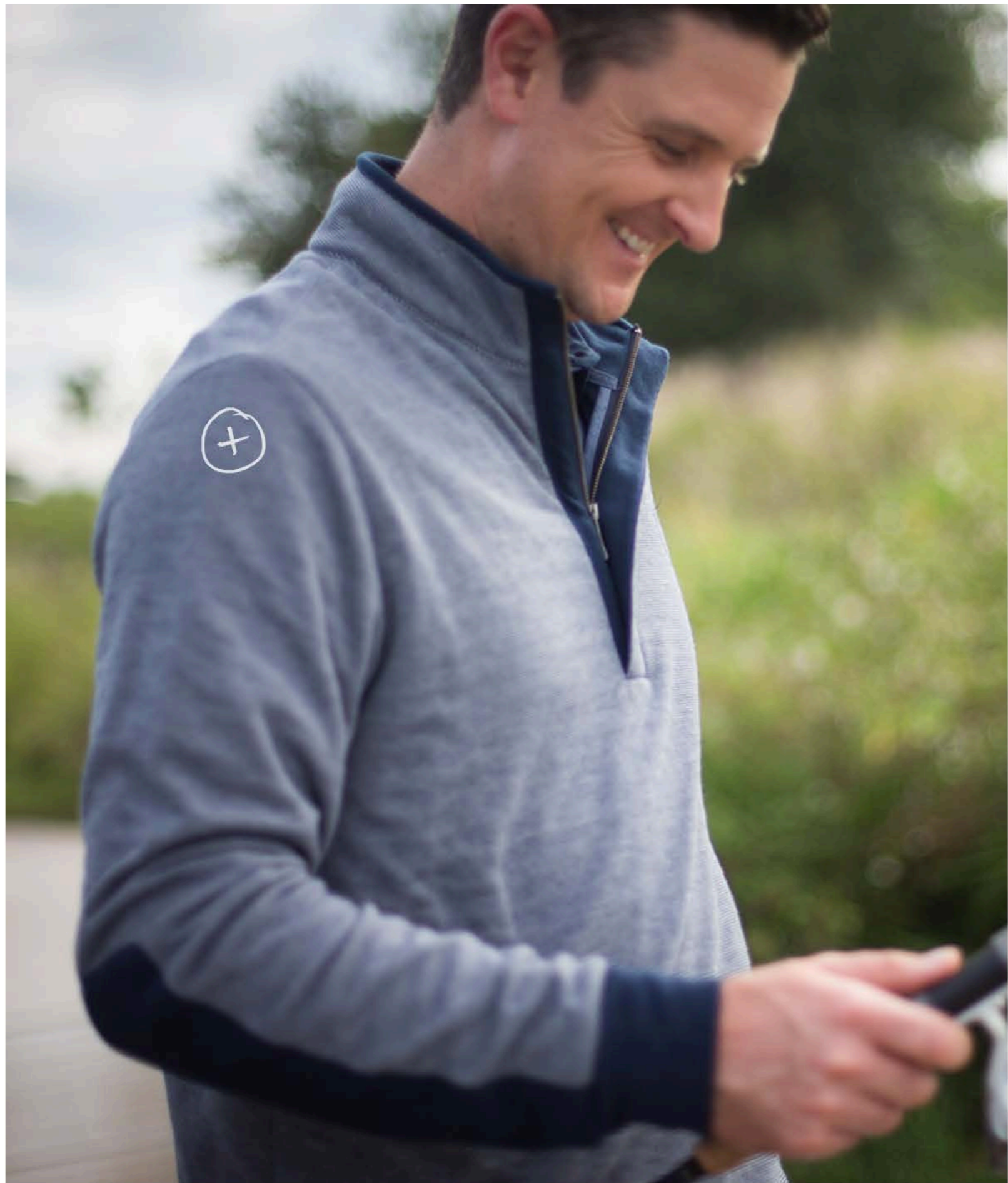
Was there a low that followed the high of winning the Open? A reality check after having fulfilled such a long-held dream?

No moment that springs to mind other than bein' just really hard on myself.

In what way?

Just bein' really hard on myself on the golf course. Just gettin' really frustrated.





As if winning a major had shifted your perspective on what kind of player you were suddenly supposed to be?

Exactly. And what I was meant to live up to. Mentally, things just got out of whack. You always hear about how a major is going to change your life, but the truth is you've got the same old issues, the same problems following you. Yeah, there's elation for a week or two, or a month. Then all of a sudden, the next guy has won the Open Championship, the focus shifts to him, and life goes on. It doesn't really make you any happier. That's what I've learned: Right now is as good as it gets. Winning one major is as good as it gets. And when I win my second, *that* will be as good as it gets. And hopefully, if I win the career grand slam, *that* will be as good as it gets. You can't keep shifting the goal posts on yourself and expecting it to make you happy "when." That realization has made me shift attention to what is important in life. I still wake up hungry. And, absolutely, I'm tryin' to be the best golfer I can be. But it's now also about being the best dad I can be, and being the best person I can be.





Let's talk about Ashworth. How long have you been affiliated with the brand?

I switched over to Ashworth in May 2012. The BMW Championship, in the UK, was my first tournament wearing their clothes. I was gettin' into my thirties, and I felt it was a brand that was going to fit me well going forward. I wanted to start wearing clothes that I felt comfortable in *on* the golf course, but felt comfortable in *off* the course as well. I thought Ashworth could be that, and it has. It's steeped in history and is such an authentic golf brand, but I think it works beautifully in a lifestyle environment as well. As a company and partnership, I'm really excited about where we are now and

where we *will* be going forward.

Do you have superstitions about what you wear on the course?

Not really. I've talked to the Ashworth people a lot about color. I like a lot of different colors, but not those that are bright and in-your-face. For me, it's all in the details. It's not about spotting someone from 150 yards away. That's not fashion to me. Fashion to me is about shakin' someone's hand and thinkin', *That is a nice shirt*. It's in the fine details. It's the little things that make it a great look. That's how *I* feel comfortable, anyway.





Do you have a vision of your life after golf?

I'd like to be someone like Nick Price, who loves the game, still enjoys playing, plays *because* he loves to play, but has a very healthy outlook and a great family life. I'm 34 years old, and if I'm lucky I'm only a bit more than a third of the way through my life. There's so much more to achieve. To this point, I've been very single-minded, but it would be a sad thing to go through my life and just be one thing. I'm excited about learning through my children. If Leo wants to play football, if he wants to play baseball—I know nothing about those things, really. So I'm excited about learning through them. Golf's opened a lot of doors for me, and who knows where they'll lead. I have a lot of dreams outside of just winning major championships. I wouldn't say I'm there yet, but in the back of my mind I'm beginning to think about something bigger for me as well. Something else. *Something even more.*





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