

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 9, 2022



KYLE WESTMORELAND

HALEY PETERSON: Like to welcome Kyle Westmoreland to the media center at the Cadence Bank Houston Open.

Welcome. This is a home event for you, so what's it like to be kind of playing in your neck of the woods?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: It's an incredible opportunity. I've wanted to play here since I can remember, from the time it was at TPC Woodlands to the Redstone Members course to the Players course to now here at Memorial. Growing up, we play a ton of junior golf events at Memorial Park and it looks different than it used to about 20 years ago. You know, it's an awesome place and just a dream come true to be able to play here.

HALEY PETERSON: And you'll be making your tenth PGA TOUR start and first here at this tournament. How's your game feeling entering this week?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: We've tried to get better every week. The PGA TOUR, there's data points everywhere so we kind of look at them and see and kind of figure out what we need to do better to compete at the highest level, and I think we've really set out a good game plan with my coach, Jeff Smith, and I and the whole team and I'm just excited to test it this week on a great golf course with some length. We like to hit it far, so, length's always good.

HALEY PETERSON: We were just talking earlier, you went to Air Force. Can you talk about kind of how that helped prepare you and what you learned from there that can translate to the course?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: Shoot, being in the Air Force was quite a joy for me. I'm so thankful to have been able to go to the Academy and serve for five years on active duty. Really, the people that I met and the perspective that I gained from traveling a little bit across the world, working with some of the best people you'll ever meet is an awesome opportunity and that perspective I think is what I try to bring to the golf course and try to bring that work mentality to the golf course and try to get better every week. You're going to win some, you're going to not do well on some, but the most important thing is just continue to put one foot in front of the other and kind of analyzing what you can get better at and trying to strive to perfect the golf game, I guess.

Q. Kyle, what's the response been like these past few months since you earned your PGA TOUR card? Being the first player from Air Force to earn a card out here, what's the response been from past teammates or just kind of from everybody, what's it been



like?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: Yeah, it's been great. The military community's been very supportive of me and even the civilian community as well. Everyone's been very supportive. It's a good story. And I think I told Dave this in the past, I'm glad to be the first Air Force Academy graduate out here, but I hope I'm not the last. Hopefully we can inspire some people to continue playing golf even through their service time, get a little bit better, start putting on those Air Force and Army and Navy putting greens and try to get better and make it out here.

Q. What's life been like on the PGA TOUR so far? I know you kind of mentioned good days and bad days, but what's it kind of been like for you and what have you learned about yourself and your game that you think you can apply to the rest of the season?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: It's been fast, but I can't complain at all. It's been an awesome experience to be able to be out here. Having you guys out here asking us questions, putting us on kind of a platform is incredible. It's something that I've never thought of in the past, right, everything that comes with playing on the PGA TOUR. But I'm just super thankful to be here. And this is golf's greatest platform, golf's greatest game, golf's best competition, so I'm just thankful to be here competing against the best and trying to win.

Q. Coming out of high school, El Cinco Ranch, were you heavily recruited? Were you offered a lot of scholarship offers to play golf someplace?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: I wouldn't say I was heavily recruited, not like most of these guys. I had opportunities to go play at U of H here in Houston. I had some of the smaller schools in Texas at the time were looking at me, but Air Force was really what provided me the best opportunity to go to college with -- you know, it's everyone's -- I guess everyone's scholarship is paid for by the government, right? You pay for it with your service time.

So Air Force was my best option coming out of school. I grew up a Texas fan and that didn't pan out. There's a guy named Jordan Spieth that was a year behind me that I think the coaches were looking at pretty heavily, but I wasn't heavily recruited to answer your question.

Q. You said you played some junior events growing up. Did you play any AJGA as well?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: I did, I did, yes. Unlike the Jordan Spieth, Corey Whitsett, Corey was the same year here as me here at Memorial. They were playing PGA TOUR events, right, in high school.

Mine were more localized. I played all the AJGAs in Texas and kind of around Texas, the Oklahoma area, I guess Arkansas was one. So I played those. You know, I didn't win any of them. I did well enough to get some looks from colleges in certain places, but I started with



Little Linksters here with PGA South Texas section and then the HGA. So kind of what I came up playing and what helped me get to college, and then ultimately kind of what formulated for me playing out here.

So I'm very thankful for my college coaches. I went to Air Force and was able to play immediately and those coaches really invested in me. And I didn't like doing homework, so I found out if I stayed at the golf course and worked and practiced, I could miss some school days and miss some military training, but my coaches really helped me be here.

Q. I saw your age, I knew you were from the area, I was going that's pretty much Corey's age. I figured you had to -- is there anybody on the Tour now that you kind of played against in AJGA?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: You know, there's a pretty neat little like picture one of my buddies sent me when I made it to the Tour and it was through the Korn Ferry Finals. It was a PGA Texas section North versus South when I was like 15 to 18 years old. In that picture, like the 13-to-15 or 12-to-13-year-old boys were Scottie Scheffler and Will Zalatoris. They were there. They were younger, though.

For me, Cody Gribble. Cody Gribble played a little bit in Texas at that time. I think he might have been a year or two older than me. There's so many good players in Houston. Corey was really the biggest up and coming thing and he's doing great things now in Birmingham, but just not in the game of golf.

Q. Okay. Eight years ago you said Jason Dufner was your favorite golfer. Is he still your favorite golfer or has it changed?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: I didn't know I said that.

Q. It's in the Air Force media guide.

KYLE WESTMORELAND: Nice. That's probably about the time when Jason Dufner was near the PGA -- top of the PGA Championship.

My favorite golfer. You know, I really, I really like the Zach Johnson type golfer out here who has done so much on the golf course, but has done so much in the philanthropic space. I think that's what the PGA TOUR does best to set itself apart from any other organization out there. It does an awesome job of giving back.

I got to be a part of the First Tee clinic yesterday out here that they put on here. First Tee of Houston's incredible. Those organizations that they do, Zach Johnson does it as well as anyone I've ever met. He gives back so much of his time and assets. I would say I envy now someone more -- kind of like a Zach Johnson. I don't know that Jason Dufner doesn't do that, I just know that Zach Johnson does it really well.



Q. What's the strongest part of your game?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: Statistically, I think the strongest part of my game is driving distance. That being said, out here the biggest factor, the biggest stat is proximity to the hole, so whether that comes from hitting more fairways and hitting a little closer to the pins on scorable holes or that comes from just being a really good iron player. I would say that's my aspiration to hit it a little closer, make a few more birdies. You can ask me this question again at the end of the season and we'll say scoring average.

Q. Do you still reside in Cady?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: I'm sorry?

Q. Are you still living in Cady?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: I don't. My whole family does. I live in Charleston, South Carolina, now. I got stationed there with the Air Force and we moved back there when I got out of the service time. Met my wife there, too. I think there's a good chance we end up here at some point, but we're not there -- we're not here right now. But we're still rooting for the Astros.

Q. It's been a few months, that final day at the Korn Ferry Tour Championship. Have you been able to reflect on that day kind of in general and just how it played out, and now you had a chance to think of what you did that week and those three events?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: Yeah, that week was nuts. If I could go back, there's really nothing like it that I've experienced in golf even from getting the Tour card for the Korn Ferry Tour, to go to Korn Ferry Finals, being on the bubble. I wish I would have just picked up one more shot in Ohio and then it wouldn't have been an issue.

Yeah, I'm just thankful to have been on this side of it, right? There's so many factors that go into where you fall, how you play, how the guys that are right around you in the numbers play, how the guys ahead of them or behind them that day are playing. There's so many more factors than I could have ever imagined.

My wife and I, we've talked about it. It's just an awesome experience for us. It's a huge checkpoint in the game of golf to be able to get to the PGA TOUR. But getting to the PGA TOUR isn't our end goal, we're here to do some damage and we're here to really test our mettle against the best in the game and try to get better. While getting here is a great thing, we have a lot of aspirations, a lot of goals left still to accomplish.

Q. Do you remember those like 90 minutes after signing before that last putt dropped and basically you were able to get ahead of Garber?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: Yeah, 90 minutes are like three days. That was the longest 90



minutes in history, especially because the 17 and 18 holes there are just carnage. So you're watching guys that are ahead of Joey make bogeys and doubles coming in and you're seeing Joey climb up.

I heard I finished in like -- I heard he finished in like a five-way tie for 12th. If he would have been in a three-way tie, I would have been kicked out. Just absolutely nuts in those 90 minutes.

There's really nothing to explain it because I don't -- you try so much in life and in the game of golf to only focus on things that you can control and I had no control over that. What I do is done. I wish I would have just played better and that would have taken me off the bubble, but being on the bubble is a crazy experience. I have some gray hairs I'm sure from it, or loss of hair. I'm not going to take my hat off to show you, but there might be some loss of hair.

It was an awesome time. Those 90 minutes were cool and just happy to be on this side of it. And Joey Garber's a great dude and he finished so well. He made a double and like three or four birdies in a row to get there. I'm sure we'll see Joey out here soon.

Q. This is more general, but do you have things that maybe you learned in the Air Force to cope with pressure when you're on the course, whether it's a shot or a --

KYLE WESTMORELAND: Yeah, the biggest thing for me is just general perspective. You control the things you can control and you let the things you can't go. Any excess worrying or angst is not beneficial. And when something happens when there are nerves on the line, you always can fall back on this is the game of golf. It's a big thing in life, it is what we do, it's not who we are, but there's a lot outside of the game of golf. So if it doesn't go your way, I'm going to get off the course, I'm going to give my wife a kiss, we're going to eat some food and we're going to be back at it the next week or however long it is.

But, you know, in that moment you try your best to accomplish whatever task it is and if it goes your way, great. If it doesn't, you work your butt off to try to make sure you do accomplish it the next time it comes around.

Q. Your fitness, have you always been a big guy or did that come with your military service, and if so, was there ever any concern about what it might do to your swing?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: Yeah, so I grew up playing a bunch of different sports. I grew up playing football, baseball, basketball and golf. Golf was really -- kind of migrated towards golf as I guess sophomore year, freshman, sophomore year of high school.

I've always liked fitness, I've always liked being in the gym. In Texas, everything's built around football, so you start your weightlifting in junior high, seventh grade and then you kind of go up through there.



At the Academy and military time, I definitely escalated that a lot. It's a different type of fitness than golf. It's more pushups, situps, it's not really any rotational aspects. Got really into it. I think I told them earlier, I didn't really like doing homework at the Academy. If you were at the school, you were subject to training, right? So I liked working out, I liked practicing golf, I liked working out and I liked just trying to get better. So I did it a lot in the military time throughout my school time and my active duty time.

There's not a golf course everywhere you go, but there is a gym. But most places, whether it's a conex box or whatever it is, there's a gym. That was one of my hobbies, that was one of my past-times. I felt I could get better. If I wasn't getting better on the course, I could get better in other aspects that could help me in the game of golf. The last couple years of service I transitioned from doing like traditional bench presses, squats, dead lift to kind of more the Olympic training, kind of more functional movements to help me with the game of golf. And then I got out here and realized that when you're playing week to week, you can't do that stuff, right?

So what I do now, it's tailored way down, kind of really delve into kind of the science behind it. I think golf fitness is becoming so much more prevalent. Lost a few pounds since the military time, but it's probably a good thing.

Q. Kyle, you mentioned you played other sports besides golf growing up. Was there a particular time or a moment when you realized that you may have a good future in golf?

KYLE WESTMORELAND: Yeah, I think it was there's a tournament called the Patriot All-America Championship where all the Division 1, Division 2, Division three All-Americans compete in Arizona in December, right? Before the new year.

It was my senior year my junior and senior year I played it. They invite one person from each service academy as well as the All-Americans and I was able to win that tournament. So you take the best in the world, you take the Brysons, you take like I forget who else was there. There's a slew of people that were there. Take all those guys and I beat them that week. I was like, you know what, I can do it. These guys are the best amateurs in the world. At the Academy you can't really play a full amateur schedule, so you're not going to go out and play all the A-list events to really boost your amateur world ranking.

I think I broke 100 maybe once or twice when I was in college; the 100 list, the amateur ranking. But when I won that tournament, OK, I can do this, I'm going to do this, it's just a matter of time. We didn't know if it was going to be right out of the academy, two years or five years. Kind of depends on who's making the policy at the time, but it ended up being the full five years and I was fine with that because that's what I signed up for and then we got to it.

HALEY PETERSON: Kyle, it was great to hear from you and thanks for taking the time. We wish you the best of luck this week.



KYLE WESTMORELAND: Thank you.

