

PRESS CONFERENCE
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ALEX SMALLEY



JACK RYAN: We would like to welcome Alex Smalley into the interview room here at the Wyndham Championship.

Alex, you're a member here at Sedgefield Country Club, making your third start in this tournament. If you could just talk a little bit about how special it is to play an event on the PGA TOUR at your home course.

ALEX SMALLEY: Right. So anytime you can play a PGA TOUR event in your home state it feels pretty special, but to be able to do it on a course where I'm a member at and I feel like I know relatively well, it's awesome.

Got family here this week, have a lot of friends that I play out here with all the time that will be here this week. So yeah, it's really nice to be familiar with the course. I feel like I know it pretty well. Yeah, it's going to be a really fun week.

JACK RYAN: You've got a couple of top-10s in your last four starts including the runner-up at the John Deere Classic. Coming into the week No. 47 in the FedExCup, not in jeopardy in terms of making the Playoffs, but if you could just, how important is it for you to kind of stay in that top 50 and make a push towards the TOUR Championship as we head into the Playoffs next week?

ALEX SMALLEY: Right. So with the schedule changes for next year, obviously everybody wants to be in the top 50 to get into those elevated or just designated events. Once that was announced, obviously it was a goal of mine to be in the top 50 at the end of the season so I could play those bigger events next season, I guess.

So yeah, if you would have told me early on in the year I would have had a pretty decent chance of that, I would have taken it. Obviously I feel comfortable here, so if I can just kind of do my thing this week and obviously play well next week in Memphis, then I feel like I would be in pretty good shape to be in that top 50, so yeah.

Q. What does prep for you look like at your home course versus a course that's not your home course? How's this week different for you?

ALEX SMALLEY: It's not terribly different. I would say the only thing that is different is that I'm staying at home, sleeping in my own bed, that kind of thing, not staying in hotel.

I'm still out here Monday, I played nine holes Monday before the pro-am yesterday, played nine holes today, playing the pro-am tomorrow. I'm still kind of going through the same



motions that I would any other tournament week just because, you know, it's routine and kind of sticking to what I normally do, just kind of preparing like I normally would.

Obviously I've played the golf course a bunch of times before, but it does play differently during the tournament this week than it would regular play. The greens are a little quicker, obviously there are some pin positions that they use for the tournament that we don't really ever see for just normal play. The fairways are a little firmer, they tend to roll out a little bit more, so there's a couple tee shots where I actually have to club down from what I would normally hit if I was just out here playing.

So it is a little different, but preparation-wise it's not -- you know, I'm still playing Monday, Tuesday. It's not like I would just take Monday, Tuesday off because I know the course. I'm still kind of going through the same thing that I would do any other week.

Q. Alex, just curious from like when you were growing up or coming up to now and being on the Tour, does it feel like there are more people, golfers from North Carolina around? Anecdotally it does, there's more in the Junior Am than there used to be, there's more in the Girls Junior than there used to be. Obviously it's always been a great golf state, but it does feel like Raleigh, Charlotte, Greensboro are producing more pro caliber golfers than they used to? Do you get a sense of that or do you see that out here with guys you see on Tour?

ALEX SMALLEY: I would certainly agree with that. I probably had a pretty good sense or notion of that when I was in high school or college just playing in, you know, junior tournaments around the southeast, North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida. I mean, there was a lot of really good competition.

I mean, even my high school golf conference, we had Grayson Murray was a few years ahead of me in school, but Grayson Murray played at the high school that was in my conference.

Carter Jenkins was on that team, he played at UNC, he was a really good player, still is a really good player. Stephen Franken I played growing up with, he played at NC State, he plays professionally. Trying to -- Doc Redman, I grew up with him, he's out here, played at Clemson, won the U.S. Amateur. I've known Ben Griffin for a long time. I grew up two streets down from Akshay, I've known Akshay since he was 8 or 9 years old. We grew up at the same club together at Wake Forest. Ryan Gerard, who just got special temporary -- I mean, there's so many of them.

I didn't travel a whole lot in junior golf just because I felt like there were so many good players here in North Carolina and the Carolinas. Yeah, it's nice to see a lot of familiar faces and guys I grew up playing against. Even guys that are older than me from North Carolina like Webb Simpson, Brendon Todd, Chesson Hadley, there's a decent number of them.

Q. (No microphone.)



ALEX SMALLEY: I wouldn't be part of that rivalry because I didn't grow up playing at Wakefield.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX SMALLEY: We grew up at Heritage Golf Club. I know Akshay went over to Wakefield a number of times, but yeah.

Q. You mentioned the Playoffs earlier and trying to climb the ladder. Describe what goes through your mind, because at this time of year it would seem the pressure and the need to perform intensifies and the margin for error is almost nonexistent. How do you process it and how do you approach it?

ALEX SMALLEY: So, I would say I'm in -- I'm very fortunate and grateful to be in the position I'm in. I have my job locked up for next year kind of already, my card.

So I recognize that there are a number of people that are in a different situation than me looking just to get inside the top 50. You know, there are guys that are just trying to keep their card for next year.

So I think personally, I think that pressure's a little more than just trying to get into the top 50 and trying to get into the Playoffs. You're playing for your job, your livelihood. I feel like that pressure's a little more intense than kind of the stuff that I'm feeling right now.

It's very difficult to not think about that kind of thing, but I feel like I've done a pretty good job of just kind of, you know, going through the motions and, you know, controlling what I can control and that's just how I can play. I can't control how other guys play that may jump ahead of me or that kind of thing, I can only control how I play. So I'm just really trying to focus on that aspect of it and everything else will take care of itself.

Q. Describe your last two years and how you just grind and grind and try and get your card but get there and you still have to play well, and you have played well. Describe that road and how your life has changed over the last two years.

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, so it's crazy, two years ago Mark Brazil was very kind to give me an exemption into this tournament. At that point I was on the verge of qualifying for the Korn Ferry Finals based off of the number of nonmember FedExCup points that I had accrued through the couple of events that I played.

It's crazy to think that just two years ago I was in that situation and, you know, like I just mentioned, trying to play for my livelihood, trying to play for my career.

Now I'm sitting here and I can't believe it's been two years already and I'm getting ready to finish my second season. It's gone by really, really quickly. So yeah, it's crazy what two



years can do. It's been a fun two years.

But I'm sorry, I didn't get the last part of your question.

Q. How your life has changed?

ALEX SMALLEY: Obviously I'm traveling a lot and playing a lot. I wouldn't say it's really changed a terrible amount, just playing more golf than I was at this point two years ago.

Q. (No microphone.)

ALEX SMALLEY: No, I'm not really one that really splurges on anything. It's funny, one of the caddies asked me if I was a car guy earlier today and if I had bought a new car.

I'm like no, I'm still driving my 2020 Honda Accord. I'm not one who would go and buy a whole lot of things. I don't know if I ever will be.

Q. Have you made any aces out here, or closest you've come?

ALEX SMALLEY: On Tour or --

Q. At Sedgefield.

ALEX SMALLEY: You know, I have not at Sedgefield. I think I was close a couple years ago. On 16 in the final round I think they put the pin in the bowl section, in the front section on 16 and I hit it to three feet or so. But no, none out here at Sedgefield yet.

Q. Maybe this week?

ALEX SMALLEY: Maybe this week, yeah.

Q. You mentioned Akshay earlier. Just what's it been like for you to just sort of watch his development? A young kid, the decision obviously to turn pro early and then what he's done the last couple years really cementing himself to get to the point where he won two weeks ago. What's that been like for you to watch?

ALEX SMALLEY: Well, knowing him for so long, I think a lot of people could see it coming. You know, not a lot of people skip college in the U.S. and go straight to the pro ranks anymore. To be quite honest, I can't remember -- off the top of my head, I can't think of anyone else who has really done it and has been successful.

Obviously Europe it's a little different, it seems to be -- I don't know if this is true, but it just seems that more Europeans tend to kind of choose that route and don't play in college.

But he is very, very talented and I think it was only a matter of time before he was, you



know, going to be out here for a number of years. Obviously he got his special temporary membership earlier on this year and ended up winning a couple of weeks back. It's very cool to see someone that I grew up with who's not only succeeding, but is winning as well.

Very, very happy for him. Hopefully, you know, we get to see him out here for a long time.

Q. Again, given your home course, do you feel extra pressure this week? Do you feel there's extra pressure put on you this week?

ALEX SMALLEY: I don't know if I would say that I feel like there's extra pressure put on me. Obviously I have expectations about how I would like to play, you know, based off of if I'm just kind of playing by myself or playing with friends, how I would normally play. Obviously I would have those kind of expectations.

Yes, there is a little more pressure just because, you know, I play here all the time, I feel like I should play a hole a certain way or shoot a certain score out here. But it's not like I get a head start out of everybody for the week, we're all starting in the same place.

But yes, there's certainly a little extra kind of, I wouldn't call it pressure but just kind of trying to manage certain expectations will be one of the more difficult things playing a Tour event on your home course.

JACK RYAN: Any more questions for Alex? Thank you very much for your time and best of luck this week.

ALEX SMALLEY: Thank you.

