

ROUND 2 QUICK QUOTES
March 29, 2024



AKSHAY BHATIA (-5)

Q. Akshay, first of all, I guess the eagle on 16, that was an awesome shot in. What were you planning, what was the club, what was the approach on that shot and then just pulling it off?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I don't remember what we had flag. I pulled my drive, luckily it flew the water. Then I was off a little upslope, it was straight downwind. I told my caddie I don't think we'll ever go for that green but just the scenario was great. I hit 5-iron, I don't think it covered by much. Obviously I was trying to hit it at the flag and it ended up going a couple feet. I told my caddie if we could get just three good looks coming in and try to get two birdies out of it would be a successful day. Thankfully I hit some nice shots down the stretch.

Q. You're obviously a winner out here and being more and more in contention all the time. What's your comfort level now at being at the top of the leaderboard than where it was when you kind of first came out here on Tour?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I don't know, I don't feel like I've been in contention necessarily, I've always just kind of crept into those top-10, top-15 finishes. It's just golf. A lot of guys will come back and if you just kind of stay patient and hit some good golf shots and have a couple putts fall, like you'll be surprised where you end up in the final round. I've kind of learned that especially when I won, like I didn't start out great but I just kind of hung around and fortunately the cards went my way.

You're never comfortable, it's a stressful environment and I've been working pretty hard on some mentality, you know, just a couple switches, just the way I talk to myself and the dialogue. It's been a nice change. I've been working with a new guy for the last couple weeks and starting to like it.

Q. I know the wind was kind of shifting up and down today, gusting at some times. Do you consider yourself a player who can kind of excel when the wind is like this?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, love the wind, it's fun. It just adds an extra level of focus, especially in the intent of the shot. You've got to hit it solid. It's a lot of fun, I love playing in the wind. I feel like my ball-striking's generally really good, but once I play more in the wind, I don't know, it just brings a different kind of focus for me.

Q. Obviously a couple weeks left until the Masters. What's kind of the prep to kind of just making sure your game is hitting the right stretch kind of when you hit this major point of the season and make sure you get these invitations?



AKSHAY BHATIA: I can't control anything that is coming up. I obviously have a goal of playing all four majors. Whether that happens this year, whether I play three, whether I play one, I'm just going to try and get in contention more and more. You know, just kind of grow mentally has been a big thing for me, that's all I'm kind of looking forward to. Obviously I'd love to play the Masters, but I'm focused on this week and trying to get this done.

Q. Is the -- you and Joe Highsmith, both leftys, both up there. Do you feel like there are certain courses that fit you better as a lefty or can that be pretty random?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I think it's random. I mean, Joe, like our game's so different, he hits it high, he hits it long. It just kind of depends. I play golf very differently than most players. Maybe some tee shots fit me better, but all in all I feel like it evens out over the course of a year.

Q. When you say you play golf different than most players, what would you say kind of as to why?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I think I'm not afraid of hitting a lot of club in the winds, I'm not afraid of hitting big draws, big cuts. I feel like I have a lot of shots in my bag, I just think it pays off especially into the wind getting to some pins and understanding like what -- how to get the ball close. I feel like that's a little different than some guys. Some guys are just one shot, there's plenty of guys out here that are successful doing that. To me it's not that simple, I wish.

Q. I have a couple questions about Michael Thorbjornsen from PGA TOUR U. From playing with him kind of junior golf and Junior Ryder Cup, what impresses you about his game and what do you see in his game?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I think he hits it amazing, I think everyone knows that. I think he's not afraid of the moment. I feel like pretty much everyone around my age now is not afraid of coming out here and playing well. He's obviously done that and contended in a couple Tour events. All in all, he's just a good dude. He doesn't try and be someone he's not and I think as a person he's awesome, fun to be around. I think he's going to be very successful out here.

Q. He's got a good track toward either getting a Tour card this summer or pretty soon. What do you think -- how do you think his game or his approach will translate to the PGA TOUR when he gets out here?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I mean, I think he'll do great. I think when he does get His tour card he gets to play golf courses that are a little softer. He's played a bunch, I think three or four U.S. Opens, so he knows how hard it can be out here. I think being able to kind of ease into some of the tournaments in that summertime is going to be great for him. He'll still get so much golf and learn and travel. It's so different, and I think Nick has said that before, it's just a lot different not knowing where you're going, not knowing many guys out here. I think he'll do



great.

Q. Do you have a favorite memory of him from the Junior Ryder Cup?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Man, I don't remember it too much. I have this video on my phone where him and I were playing together alternate shot and I remember chipping in against the Hojgaard brothers and he kind of just raised his arm, I went in. It was pretty cool just having that memory with him.

Q. That's the photo that she sent. Do you remember that one?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Oh, yeah, I do.

Q. Where would that be?

AKSHAY BHATIA: That was in Paris, yeah, Junior Ryder Cup. That was kind of when we clinched it. It was fun hanging out with those kids, that whole week about being on the bus with everyone, singing songs and getting to know everyone, being at Disney is pretty cool.

