

The Sentry

Saturday, January 6, 2024

Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii, USA
Plantation Course at Kapalua

Akshay Bhatia

Quick Quotes

Q. What did you think of today and how do you feel about tomorrow just given the way the course is playing?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, I played nice today. Didn't make any mistakes. Made some putts. I wish I would have not 3-putted 18, and that's what I'm going to think about, but it was a good day. We all played really well in the group. I'm looking forward to the opportunity tomorrow.

Q. So many holes out here that you're supposed to birdie and you almost feel like you're giving shots away if you don't, and some holes, like even 1 or so that you're happy with 4. How do you balance how you approach those holes and attack those holes?

AKSHAY BHATIA: My caddie has been here plenty of times, and I'm relying on him. Our game plan, we have a nice game plan of what holes we need to play conservatively, what holes we can attack, and then what holes we can just kind of plod around. If you make a couple birdies on the harder holes it's a big jump, I think. Then, like you said, you got to make a lot of birdies. A lot of holes are birdieable, but it's not the end of the world if you don't. You just keep plotting around and hopefully you play this golf course more and more you get more comfortable on certain things. So, that's kind of what I'm going about.

Q. You surprised to be where you are as a first timer on this weird course?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I mean, I don't know. I don't know if I'm surprised, I was just kind of pretty comfortable today and I know my game's really good. Obviously, made a putter change which has been a big help. As far as confidence, I kind of went into the week with a no-judgment attitude on it, and so far it's been feeling really good. I'm excited to see how I feel with the lead or with expectations that I have on myself of winning tomorrow. I'm looking forward to it.

Q. Will this be the first week that you putted entirely with the long putter?



AKSHAY BHATIA: Full week, absolutely the. Maybe I'll change tomorrow, I don't know. I'm kidding. First full week. I used it three rounds at RSM and then one round at Fortinet.

Q. Was it just seeing the guys like Lucas going to that? What spurred the change?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Statistically, my putting has not been good. I think stats can be a little skewed sometimes, but it's just something we sat down and talked about, my mental coach, my putting coach, my swing coach, everyone was kind of involved in what decision I needed to make. For me, the speed's just a lot easier. Longer putts you just kind of feels a little more free. I'm not thinking as much, I'm just kind of visualizing and then hitting. It's a lot more freeing and, yeah, it's fun to, just kind of working with it. I told my coach this week, putting in the wind it's going to be a different challenge with this putter, so we'll see how it goes tomorrow.

Q. What is a no-judgment approach like or how is it different than maybe you were approaching things before?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Just not result oriented. If I make a lot of putts or miss a lot of putts, I'm not judging the putter, specifically. So, it's just kind of how I've been. I'm seeing the ball go in a lot more than I have, so it's nice that it's kind of going this direction.

Q. You're one of the few guys who have gone from the high of winning to getting bad news within like five minutes from when you won. How long did it take to you kind of move past that, and did it change at all your outlook for what you wanted to do this year in terms of signature events and all that stuff?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I mean, it's hard because I don't know if I'm fully over it. Like, I feel like I deserve to be in the playoffs. I feel like I deserved to have an opportunity to get into the signature events and have a different year, kind of looking at the schedule, right, because it's hard to pick and choose. Like, I'm about to play seven weeks in a row just



to try and qualify for AT&T and then, hopefully, Riviera. So, it's hard because that's not what you want to do, you don't want to play seven weeks in a row starting the year. It's just what I have to do. It's unfortunate how the rules kind of shaped out, but hopefully -- I'm sure that will change eventually for guys that are in my position.

Q. Probably this year.

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, probably. But it's all good. I'm going to try and do my best, I have plenty of opportunities to still get there, and it's going to be a long season, so whether I get into the first two signature events or I don't, it doesn't really affect me, because I can still play my way in. It's at least nice that I have the opportunity.

Q. What's an ideal number of tournaments for you to play this year?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I don't know, I love playing, I don't know how -- I was talking to Sahith today, I don't know how guys play 17, 18 events a year. I know they have done it for a long time, but I just -- I played all the fall events, I played as much as I could, but ideally you play I guess 20 to 25 events would be ideal. I think I played around that last year. That was kind of nice. I might have to play more, I don't know.

Q. Is this good content for YouTube?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I don't know, I hope so. I love to -- I wish I could do a little more filming out here, but it's fun doing that stuff, kind of changing people's perspective on TOUR golf, like what we do on a day-to-day basis. Some guys are really private about it, but I love kind of showing my story, and it's really fun.

Q. Sleeping on a lead, is your cousin filming or do you have him film tomorrow or do you tell him to back off?

AKSHAY BHATIA: No, he's not here this week. Yeah, I don't know. I'll call him tonight, we'll chat, and think of ideas for future events, and see how it goes.

Q. What was the, from a creativity standpoint, what was the shot that maybe was the most fun to hit today?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I think 9's always interesting. We played it down wind, into the wind. Today, I hit like this pretty low 3-wood kind of chased it up, almost got it on the green, which was a nice kind of cool shot to hit. But there's some cool shots. You're hitting so many low cuts, for me at least. 18's obviously sweet, you're hitting just, it's carrying 290, and it's going 420. Sahith hit it probably 450

today. It's cool hitting these shots and feeling free. You don't have to hit it into a 20-yard fairway.

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