

Sony Open in Hawaii

Friday, January 12, 2024

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

Akshay Bhatia

Quick Quotes

Q. Akshay, great finish, 4-under your last four for a sizzling 64. How would you describe the day and what allowed you to heat up there at the end?

AKSHAY BHATIA: It was a good day obviously. I finished very nicely. I had a very bad hiccup on the front and kind of -- mentally I was kind of down and kind of wasn't really good. I missed like a two- or three-footer.

My caddie said, just stay patient, take a couple deep breaths, and just restart. We'll try and get it on this back nine, and I did. I'm happy to finish like that.

Q. Take us through the eagle on 9. What did you hit off the tee?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, driver. The wind kind of suited it for my shape, so I hit a perfect drive. Kind of skirted the bunker. I think we had 174. The wind was kind of changing all day today. It was very tricky.

At first I had 8-iron in my hand. My caddie was kind of pushing for the 9 and trying to figure out what way we can do it to hit that, because you just can't go long there. Went closer than I expected and hit a perfect putt that went dead center.

Q. When you think of this being the start of a new season for you and everyone starts this year from zero, do you feel like refreshed? Do you feel different starting off, or just as if any other tournament would be?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I mean, it's hard to say. I've had -- I've never really made goals previous years. This year I have a couple goals that I want to achieve. You know, there is a lot of things that I can't control, and I think as I'm maturing more I'm understanding that. I'm okay with a lot more things.

Kind of switching the mentality around, and the way I talk to myself is a lot better the last couple weeks. I just need to keep doing that. It's a long season. Going to be a long



stretch for me. I'm about to play seven in a row, so just learning in last year in the fall. I played seven in a row and I was getting so fatigue and getting so angry with myself.

Just keeping the happiness around me and just very determined to do a couple things this year. I'm on the right track for a couple.

Q. How did you spend the off-season?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Well, we got a house, so Presleigh, my fiancée, moved pretty much everything in. I played a couple pro-ams and then worked out really hard and practiced as much as I could. Just a fun balance. Played a ton of video games. Went by so quick.

Yeah, just did normal things.

Q. What made you decide to set goals this year for the first time?

AKSHAY BHATIA: To be more realistic with myself. I think I'm so hard on myself all the time. Like I said, switching the way I talk to myself and certain things that I want to achieve, it's not going to happen overnight. It's going to be a long process.

Just try and -- I don't know, it frees me up having those in the back of my head where they're not too goal-oriented but achievable in a way.

Q. This kind of converging forces, on an island, which famously you always play well on islands, and it's almost Exuma week on KFT where you won. Is the island golf trend, is that something you think of and are aware of when you come on the island?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I think it just happens. I think it just really exposes the better ball-strikers. You're hitting so many different shots, especially out here.

It's blowing pretty hard, and last week was a little different. It was not blowing as hard. My best round last week was one of the windier days.



I think when I'm in a position to play in a lot of wind and keep my flights through all the different winds and crosswinds, I just really enjoy that.

I have a lot of belief in the iron play, and I feel like I'm driving it very, very well. It's a good recipe. As long as I make a couple putts throughout the week, kind of saves the momentum for the tournament.

Q. Last one from me: Aldrich Potgieter, he is guaranteed KFT start. He is 19, someone in a similar spot as you were a couple years ago. What would be your advice for someone like him?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I don't really know too much about him. If he has guaranteed starts at 19 and went through the whole Q-School process he's obviously playing good enough to be out there.

So it's a long season. I think we all kind of know that. Pro golf is a lot different than amateur golf. You're playing so many weeks in a row, and especially on the KFT, you got to pace yourself a little bit.

For me, I played my best tournament rounds when I've only played nine holes at a golf tournament prepping, so it's something to think about. You don't always have to go grind every single week.

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