

Barracuda Championship

Wednesday, July 13, 2022

Truckee, California, USA

Tahoe Mountain Club

Joe Highsmith

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Joe Highsmith here at the Barracuda Championship. You're making your professional debut. Just want to get some opening comments about the excitement entering this week.

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, I'm super excited. This week has been really a dream so far, just like my first PGA TOUR event. I got to play the U.S. Open last summer, and this is to me just as cool, just with everything and all the setup. The course is great, and we're staying on property this week. Yeah, it's just been great so far, and can't wait to get it going.

Q. Talk about how you found out about the sponsor exemption.

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, I called Chris Hoff a few months ago and just wanted to introduce myself. I had heard that I had potentially had a chance of getting a spot, so I was just told to reach out to him and kind of get the relationship going, and I really didn't expect it because I hadn't heard anything until last week.

Then he called me and just was like, hey, what are you doing next week. It's like, oh, nothing, just hanging out at home. He's like, do you want something to do. It's like, yeah, I'll take that for sure.

Q. So I mean, that was kind of how I found out about it. I really didn't expect it at all, so it's just like a dream come true, and I'm super excited about it.

Q. Decorated college career, finished top 10 with PGA TOUR U rankings. Just kind of talk about how you got to where you are now.

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, my college experience was great. We had such a good team at Pepperdine pretty much all four years that I was there. My coach had helped me a ton in terms of my personal growth and my golf growth, as well.

It was great. The PGA TOUR U was super helpful to get



me a place to play starting after school. I just learned so much throughout college, so it was great to kind of be here now, and I'm excited to see how I stack up against these guys this week.

Q. Going off Pepperdine, kind of having that pathway of seeing past waves kind of make it, what are ones you keep in touch with? Did you reach out for any advice ahead of this week?

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, well, so I played nine holes with Andrew Putnam yesterday, so we've known each other for a while, just from -- we both played the same course in Washington and obviously the Pepperdine connection, as well.

He was just telling me, it's just golf. It's obviously a bigger stage now, but you've just got to believe that you're good enough and go out and do your thing and not get caught up in the stage and what it means and all that stuff.

That was great, and then I was really hoping that Sahith would be here this week, but I was pretty pumped for him to get into the Open Championship. We were planning on playing practice rounds and hanging out. But it was cool that he got to get into that tournament, and he was just kind of telling me the same thing, dude, you're good enough to be out here and kind of just go do your thing and don't get caught up in like the PGA TOUR and all that stuff.

Q. You'll have to meet up with him for a future practice round.

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, exactly.

Q. You've had quite a fun start already on the Canada Tour with great finishes. What were the takeaways? Kind of more motivation or disappointment from such exciting finishes?

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, it was nice to know just that in my first couple starts I could hang out there and play well and compete. I've been playing really well, so it was nice to at least have some good finishes in there. It was disappointing the first week to lose in the playoff, but it was still nice to just know that I can compete out there. Been playing well and kind of just trusting that the good golf will take care of itself. It's been great. We've seen a lot of cool



places in Canada and kind of traveled all over so far, but it's been going well.

Q. Could you reflect on how you got into golf and what it is about golf that inspired you to pursue this as a career?

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, I've just loved the game since I was young. I grew up playing golf since I was really young. Like my mom actually was hitting balls the day that I was born, so it kind of runs in the family and we grew up on a golf course and all that. Yeah, I didn't really know that I could pursue it for a living until maybe 2015. I had started to play well on like a national level in the junior ranks, and then as it's gone on, the PGA TOUR has always been like a long shot. I've never really thought about, oh, maybe I could be here one day, but just in the last couple years as my game has gotten better and I've played well on the amateur stuff, it's been like, well, maybe this could be a reality.

Yeah, so it's just super exciting time. I just can't believe that I'm in the field this week, so I'm super pumped about it.

Q. Did you start college thinking you might work in the, quote-unquote, real world?

JOE HIGHSMITH: I never really wanted to. Probably since maybe like my junior year of high school, I was like, yeah, I definitely want to play on the PGA TOUR. I got to play in like the Junior Presidents Cup team and we were like inside the ropes and hanging out with all those guys that week on the actual Presidents Cup team.

I was like, this is like the coolest thing I've ever seen in my life, and I really want to do what I can to get here.

Yeah, I've always -- school, I never loved school and was always just kind of like, let me focus on golf. I think I could have a chance doing this. I don't think I could ever work a real-world job.

Q. What impresses you about Sahith? He's been having a great rookie year on the PGA TOUR. Your memories of him at Pepperdine and seeing him have success as a rookie?

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, he's just like crazy good. He's pretty much good at everything. I love playing with him and hanging out. His short game is insane. He's just such a good guy, as well, and he's been so nice and great to me over the years.

Seeing him going out, he's just pretty fresh out of school and he's already, whatever, top 35 in FedExCup and he's

having a great year. It's really cool to see that just like a good friend is doing that, and knowing, competing with him all the time and stuff, it's cool to see that -- he's obviously better now but he's having such a great year and so much success. Yeah, just super happy for him.

Q. Josh McCarthy, was it cool to see him Monday in, as well, to join you in the field here?

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, that was awesome. We played a practice round yesterday. I hadn't seen him in forever, so it was great to catch up, and I'm excited to play with him this week. Yeah, I think last time I saw him, it was like, I don't know, maybe last year when our season ended and I was like, yeah, we'll see you on the big tour, so we're actually here, which is pretty cool.

Q. Bucket hat, has that been a style for a while or where does that comes from?

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, I played with like a skin doctor at my home club a while ago, and he was like, oh, you probably should wear the big hat, protect the sun, you're going to be in the sun all the time. I ended up wearing at this AJGA for the first time and I had like a really good week.

It kind of just stuck since then. Now I feel like I look weird in a normal hat, so I've got to keep the bucket going.

Q. Back to mom hitting balls the day you were born, how long -- did she go right from the range to the hospital?

JOE HIGHSMITH: I don't know if it was straight from the range, but I know she hit balls like that morning. I was born at like 10:00 p.m. or something. But yeah, it's pretty funny. It's like I was born to play golf, I guess.

Q. Do you play golf with her still?

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah. Yeah, we play a lot, and she's still pretty good. We'll go and play at LaQuinta a lot, and she's got to move it way up to the front tees, but it's still pretty funny, and she's actually good, too.

Q. What family and friends are out here following this week?

JOE HIGHSMITH: I think just my parents and grandparents. I had a couple people that said they might come if I was having a good week on the weekend, that they might drive down. But for now it's just family and friends -- sorry, just family, parents and grandparents. Hopefully some friends make it out. Yeah, I don't really

know anyone in the area.

Q. For those not familiar with your game, how would you explain your style of game?

JOE HIGHSMITH: Yeah, I've been like a pretty good ball striker since I was pretty young. That's usually my strength is just driving it and iron play. My short game is kind of lacking a little bit. When I'm playing well, I usually putt well and don't have to chip much. Hopefully I can play well this week. But yeah, that's kind of my game. It's just mainly ball-striking is my strength.

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