

# Sony Open in Hawaii

Friday, January 13, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

Waialae Country Club

## Hayden Buckley

### Quick Quotes



#### Q. Hayden, good playing.

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Thank you.

#### Q. So a little birdie in my ear told me you had a 61 in a college event in Hawaii, and that was a key round for you in terms of self-belief and thinking you could play on the PGA Tour.

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Yeah, I mean, I remember that day. I hadn't really shot -- I think I shot 64 in a round, but that was my lowest ever. To see a round like that and have a chance to be 59 and just have a day where everything went in, it kind of woke me up a little bit to where I realized, this is something I could do for a living.

Not that one round should make or break it, but it was that defining moment where I was studying pretty hard and I studied a little less hard after that because I knew that golf was something that I was going to pursue.

#### Q. What island was that? How far away was that?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I think it was on Kauai, the smaller -- I could be wrong, but think that's the smaller island.

#### Q. Which course?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Oh, gosh, I can't remember exactly the course. There are not many over there. It's a college event. I know it's in the fall, like late October, our last event of the fall.

You know, I think I shot 21-, 22-under par for three days, so that was at lowest I've ever shot in my life. It was one of my four wins in college. That changed a lot of things for me.

#### Q. Warrior Princeville Makai Invitational.

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Yeah, that's exactly it.

#### Q. So you actually legit had a chance for 59?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Somewhat. I think I might have made a bogey in there somewhere. I know I eagled the last hole, so maybe I didn't have a chance for 59, but throughout the round it definitely felt at that way.

It was one of those days, kind of felt like today, where I felt like I had a look on every hole. Just all the putts went in that day.

#### Q. What did you see from yourself that you thought, okay, this might actually play on the biggest tour, the top tour?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Just that willingness to not stop. I think once you get hot you kind of keep going, and in the past I had seen -- I would shoot 4, 5, 6-under on a front nine; shoot 4, 5, 6-under total.

It's one of those days where today I had a slow start, yesterday I had a slow start and made something out of it. I think it's kind of the same feeling where you make a birdie or two in a row and being able to build off it rather than falling back and being comfortable.

That was something that I had never seen it before, before the 64. I think a few weeks later, I want to say my best score was 68 or 69. Really hadn't figured out how to make a lot of birdies until then.

#### Q. What did you figure out to make a lot of birdies?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I think I just got stronger. I was hitting it longer, having more wedges, get to par-5s in two, having better looks for birdie.

I felt like for the longest time -- even out here I've had a stretch where I don't really hit it close to the hole but hit a lot of greens. If you hit it to 25, 30 feet all day you're just not going to make that many putts.

I just figured out how to hit it a little bit longer and got to the gym a little bit more and gave myself more opportunities.

#### Q. Is the wrist okay there?



HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I injured it in college my freshman year and I've been healthy since. It's one of those things where I can't play without the tape on there and probably never will.

**Q. So it's more like reassurance?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Right, right. I mean, the ground is pretty firm out here, so it does help knowing there is some extra cushion.

**Q. Somebody once said, I think it was David Duvall. You stick a club in the ground repeatedly you're probably going to hurt yourself eventually.**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Yeah. My feet are hurting from walking around, so I think it's time to probably sit on the beach and hang out.

**Q. (Regarding you he was telling Todd.)**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Just a small adjustment with my grip, with my putter. The index finger I just extended it down the shaft, something I've done in the past just to feel more comfortable putting. I didn't work on it at all this week. Just something that came to me I think on 16 yesterday.

I made a two-putt coming in, so I rolled with it. I'm in one of those places where I have a ton of confidence, and whatever feels right I'm just going to do it. Whether or not it's mechanically the right thing to do, I'm just going to do whatever I want.

**Q. I was going to ask you, it's more feel than mechanics?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Correct, correct. Whatever feels right I'm going to do it. Long-term if it's not the best I'll look at it. For now I'm going to roll with it.

**Q. And you're at left-hand low?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Left-hand low since the U.S. Open last year, first week ever to do that.

**Q. Before the 61, you went to college to play golf and certainly maybe get a degree.**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Right.

**Q. Did you always want to play the PGA TOUR, or no?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Not really. I played baseball forever,

so really didn't get recruited much in high school to play golf. I peaked a little bit later I think than most guys. When I got to college I walked on. I was studying harder than I was practicing.

I was actually planning to potentially work a good job and I didn't figure it out until about my junior year of college. That's when things started to click a little bit. That senior year, that 61 in Hawaii, that was when it was kind of validated that I could do it, but my junior year is probably when I really wanted to pursue it.

**Q. What were you studying?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Health science. Didn't really know what I was going to do with it, but something in healthcare. I don't know what I could do now, but I'm enjoying every minute out here while I can.

**Q. Can you describe your round a little bit just today.**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Just miserable start. I think I started on 10 with no wind and ended up short-sided in a bunker and had a 15-footer for par. That is not really how you want to start.

Made that, and same thing on 11. Hit it over the green and had another 7-footer for par. Not really the way you're looking to start with super calm conditions.

Then even I think I made a bogey 13 or 14, but then got hot. I found a way to kind of bounce back from bogeys, something that I didn't have last year I feel like.

I don't know what that is. Just mentally feel a lot stronger being able to come back from bogeys. Did it yesterday. My first bogey yesterday I bounced back with a birdie immediately and kept the round alive it feels like.

Sometimes in the past I feel like my rounds stall out, and next thing I know I shoot 1 or 2-under par on a day where I hit it well just because of one bogey.

Mentally I feel a lot tougher. But after that, I hit a lot of greens. Hit a lot of shots right where you want to hit them. The putter got hot. I didn't realize I was making a lot of putts until kind of late in the round. I really felt comfortable on the greens.

They rolled a lot better than late yesterday. Sometimes they go in; sometimes they don't.

**Q. What was the best shot you hit today?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Probably 17. I think I hit it to about



two feet on 17. It looked like it was going to go in. That was a big one. I think was even par at that time and birdied 17 and 18 to make the turn at 2-under.

I do think the front nine is a lot harder than the back personally. I remember last year I feel like I played the front nine close to even par and got all my birdies on the back. It was nice to build that momentum and take it to the front and ended up having a good front nine.

**Q. What's the club on 17?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I think 7-iron, around 190. Landed short and kind of rolled down there. That green kind of does that. I saw a hole in one yesterday behind us. I think it was Ryan Armour. He was right behind me. It was close, but always nice to tap one in.

**Q. What was your position in baseball?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I was a pitcher and a first baseman. I don't like running. That's why I play golf as well. Got to pitch on Friday nights and play first base the rest of the weekend.

I did that up until high school and decided golf was going to be more of my long-term...

**Q. What was the moment that made that decision?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: The high school. They made me choose between the two. They're both in the spring, so they decided -- you make the choice, and I didn't think I was going to make it that baseball being as small as I was, and I think I made a good choice.

**Q. Were you a good first baseman?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I was good enough. I thought my in-field was pretty good.

**Q. What did you pitch as a pitcher?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I had a pretty good change-up. Feels nice. I remember I was 11 and 12 years old, but you throw about every pitch out there nowadays. I thought I was a -- I was the Friday night starter, so I feel like I was a decent pitcher. A lot of my buddies wanted me to play because ball in high school. Couldn't do it.

**Q. Hope you stopped talking to them.**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: No, I love baseball. Spring training is in Florida where we live, and if I'm off those weeks I'm going to go watch some games. I still enjoy trying to throw

as much as I can.

**Q. Where did you grow up?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Grew up in Tupelo, Mississippi.

**Q. (Indiscernible.)**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I actually don't have a sports team, or an MLB team. I had the St. Louis Cardinals close by in college and their spring training is half a mile from where I live now. I guess I'm a Cardinals guy.

**Q. Glad we got that out of you. Who do you have with you this week?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Me and my wife are here. We're enjoying the marriage -- staying here by the beach. I think we're going to go hang out on the beach the rest of the afternoon.

**Q. Talked to Brent Grant who's a Korn Ferry Tour rookie. Forgot about this was the year they started with 500k. (Indiscernible.) What does it do when you play. (Indiscernible.)**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Yeah, there was like two lists, but it was somewhere around 100.

**Q. Did they do the same for you as well?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: No, I don't think so. I think that was just for the guys that made it out, which I think is huge.

**Q. What would you have done differently or would things have been different for you had you had that?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: You know, I don't think so. I'm pretty simple when I travel. I kind of travel alone probably half the weeks. Then my wife comes with me the other half. She is at home with the dog that we love so much.

You know, I'm pretty simple on the road. I don't think I really would've done much different. I think it's a great thing that they have done now, but definitely would've helped with weeks like that where if you want to stay by the course, it is pretty expensive to stay there.

Just thinking about the tournaments to come, LA and Phoenix, and there is a lot more expenses out here than people think, so I think it's nice to see those guys can maybe travel comfortably and enjoy really enjoy the whole process.

**Q. One less thing to worry about.**



HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Right, one less thing to worry about. Luckily I played well enough on Korn Ferry to feel comfortable. Looking back on it, yeah, I wouldn't change a thing the way we did it.

But I hope those guys can enjoy it because it's a really great thing.

**Q. Did you have an equipment deal when you came out here?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Yeah, been with Titleist for pretty much since I turned pro.

**Q. Glove and clubs or...**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Yeah, pretty much everything. Everything that they've given me has been great, and the driver has been the best that -- my driving has been even better than I can imagine.

**Q. Not a change-up?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Oh, no, no. I don't like to change much. I like to keep everything consistent, and it's been great.

**Q. What kind of dogs and what are their names?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: We have one dog. Shih Tzu-Bichon mix, Macey (phonetic). So she's back home right now probably waiting on us to get home.

**Q. Hoping it was a baseball name there.**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: No.

**Q. Speaking of your equipment deal, when is the last time you had to buy a dozen balls?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Oh, gosh, I've got so many balls in my closet. It's been a while. We get a lot of great things out here. When you play well people take care of you. In college, too. They do a great job. Being in the SEC was awesome at Missouri.

I think we had a Titleist deal as well with balls. You know, I remember in high school I used to order custom balls with my name on the side, which I don't know why I did it.

**Q. I still do that. What are you talking about? What's wrong with that?**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I think our high school team was

taken care of, too. It's been great. If you play well you're going to be rewarded, and that's one of the best parts of being out here.

**Q. (Regarding range balls.)**

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Range balls is the best. That's why I don't even practice at home. When I come out here it's perfect range balls and plenty of time to practice. We're very well taken care of. Couldn't be happier with what we get.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

