

Valspar Championship

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

Michael Visacki

Press Conference



HALEY PETERSON: We would like to welcome Michael Visacki to the interview room here at the Valspar Championship. Michael is making his PGA TOUR debut after advancing from Monday qualifying in a playoff. So you holed out a 20-foot putt in the second extra hole. What were your emotions after you saw that putt fall.

MICHAEL VISACKI: Shocking. Dream come true. Knowing that I'm able to tee up in my first PGA TOUR event.

HALEY PETERSON; since then you've gone viral on social media, showing emotions with your father. Can you kind of just speak to that on what yesterday's win meant and going into this week.

MICHAEL VISACKI: Yeah, Pops was emotional, never seen him cry so much. We're not very much of a crying family, but this is the first time in a long time I think that we all cried because we knew how much work and effort, blood, sweat, tears, has gone into me trying to make it and to finally be able to do it, it's a dream come true.

HALEY PETERSON: One final question before we open it up to the media, what does this mean to be making your PGA TOUR debut in front of a home crowd.

MICHAEL VISACKI: Best feeling in the world. Being able to do it near home.

HALEY PETERSON: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. You talked about what the sacrifices that your folks have made for you. Can you give just a quick run down of like what they do for a living and are there any other siblings that also live in the home with you?

MICHAEL VISACKI: No, so I am an only child. My parents own a transport company, pretty much wheel chairs and stretchers and they have been doing it for about 16, 17 years. There would be times where what they have done for me, I mean I can't thank them enough I can't repay them enough. Sometimes there would be nights where

they wouldn't eat, just to give me some food. They would sacrifice, sometimes maybe not paying a phone bill just so that I can go and play some junior tournaments back in the day when I would travel down to Fort Myers or up north to Orlando, every weekend there would be days where tournaments would, they would want us to register about two weeks in advance to know that they had so many players in. And sometimes money was tight where my parents would call the director and be like, Do you mind putting my son in? I'll have the money for you when we get to the event. And they knew that I was a really good junior golfer, so they would accept that, they would waive that restriction for me back in the junior days.

Q. Real quick, your dad's name and your mom's name?

MICHAEL VISACKI: My dad's name is Mike Visacki and my mom's name is Donna Visacki.

Q. D O N N A?

MICHAEL VISACKI: D O N N A. Yes.

Q. And what's your hometown again?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Sarasota, Florida. It's about an hour south from here.

Q. How many miles are on your car driving around to all these mini-tour events?

MICHAEL VISACKI: I'm about to hit 200,000.

Q. What kind of car is it?

MICHAEL VISACKI: A 2010 Honda Accord. I got it in 2015, it had 32,000 miles. So almost approaching 170,000 miles in almost six years. I drove it back and forth from Utah.

Q. What has kept you going the last 10 years?

MICHAEL VISACKI: My dad pushing me because he knew that I had it. If he knew that I didn't have it, I don't



think he would have been pushing so hard, but he saw the talent, he kept on saying keep your head down, keep grinding, because I've seen what you're able to do. I've been playing some pretty good golf and he said just keep knocking on the door and you'll step in and I finally stepped in.

Q. Have you any idea how many Monday qualifiers you've attempted?

MICHAEL VISACKI: For the PGA TOUR I've done probably about six or seven. I missed getting into a playoff like three years ago by one shot. That was the closest that I've been before this.

Q. Lastly, have you picked up any other jobs on the way? Have you worked at any other places on the way to keep this dream going?

MICHAEL VISACKI: When I left college after one year I was practicing at a local golf course, because they had a good range membership deal for 35 bucks unlimited golf balls and they were watching me practice every day and they offered me a job and I said, you know, at first, no, because I'm trying to play professionally, and then two weeks later I was like, you know what, I probably should take this job, just to make a little bit of extra money and still continue to grind, just so that it's a little bit cheaper for me. And I kept doing it for about four years, being a cart guy and a pro shop guy at my local golf course back home.

Q. I was talking with John Sprague earlier today. We talked about how initially before he saw you hit a golf ball he wanted you to play football. Did you ever look into that?

MICHAEL VISACKI: No, I was never the football type of player. I'll never forget, he offered me to playing offensive line for him, first day of freshman year of high school. I said, Sorry, coach, I'm playing golf. And he said, Okay. And then three years later he became my golf coach and the first shot he saw, he's like, Now I know why you chose golf.

Q. Why did you choose golf? What's the background there?

MICHAEL VISACKI: So I was playing tennis when I was really young and my dad was watching two old couples at the local golf course where I grew up playing in the summer, and while I was having my tennis lesson my dad watched this old lady and old or her husband, hit two golf balls into the water, about 10 feet in front of them and he goes, Man, I can do that. And ever since then he just got hooked with it and he knew that I wasn't going to be the

tennis player, so he said, let me try golf. And on my 8th birthday I said, Okay, dad, I'm going to go try. And then ever since then never let go of golf.

Q. Do you have any sense of why your story seems to be resonating so widely? Why so many people are tweeting about it, sharing on Instagram?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Just a lot of people give up on their dreams, probably because they can't afford it. But I've been lucky enough to be with my parents and been able to help me out sometimes to keep living it.

Q. What was more impressive to you and more important, I guess, was it getting up-and-down basically from a bush in the first playoff hole when you probably could have felt like everything was against you or the 20-footer when you knew it was on the line?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Definitely the up-and-down from the bush.

Q. Can you walk us through what happened?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Yeah, so I was feeling confident with driver and I was a little downwind, blowing a little left-to-right and I just thought about just hitting it right down the middle, picking out a specific target. And I just missed it about 10 yards and it just kept rolling down into a little bit of a bush. I was quite actually lucky that it didn't go about a foot further or I probably would have had to take an unplayable. But I was able to pitch out to the fairway and I had a similar yardage from the morning and I had made birdie. So I was like just let's just hit one, the same shot and I hit it a little bit better and I was fortunate enough to make that putt to keep it going.

Q. And then I guess what were the nerves facing the 20-footer?

MICHAEL VISACKI: The first thing I was like, man, I have a chance to, if I make this putt I'm playing, I'm going to be playing in the Valspar. But after that I was like, okay, I got to not think about that, I got to think about putting the best stroke possible, picking out a good line with me and my caddie and we picked out a great line and I hit the spot and it went in the hole.

Q. And now what for you? Like do you reset the goals? Are you really going to still try to play with a little bit of freedom, you got the chance, let's just get out there and have some fun?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Yeah, I mean this is a dream come true so I'm going to have to take every opportunity I can

and I know I can do it.

Q. Can you talk about to your mini-tour success. Seems like you've won a bunch of tournaments out there. At what level do you need to win at to actually make any money? I mean how hard is it to eked out a living, even winning as much as you've done?

MICHAEL VISACKI: It's extremely hard. Sometimes entry fees are 4 to 6 hundred dollars and if you don't win or come second, I mean you barely break even and then it's not like every week is a free entry fee that we're just playing for a prize, like if you miss two or three cuts and each cut, each tournament costs you 500 bucks then in two, three weeks you're down 1,500 just in entry fee, not alone practicing, having to worry about paying rent, phone bill, electricity, gas, hopefully the car's not going to break down. Even with all my success, it's still very, very, very hard to make a living. If I was having to pay rent I would probably still wouldn't be able to play professional golf as much as I've won in the past.

Q. Are you able to say maybe what your best year was money wise and then in terms of and then like what would the net be after all the expenses you have to pay?

MICHAEL VISACKI: 2018 was my best year money wise. I think I made \$68,000 on the mini tours -- I did Monday qualify for a Korn Ferry event and I finished 27th, so that was a good paycheck. Probably, I probably don't net that much, just with how much -- you know, the more money I made, the more I wanted to travel and play bigger stuff, so I mean if I make a few more dollars, I would like to go and try and do a Monday qualifier or go play a bigger mini-tour event that has a higher entry fee, to where if I play well I can make a lot more money than just sticking locally.

Q. Can you speak to the sort of the difference between where you're at and what it would take to be out on TOUR? I mean is it a fine line or do you have to make a lot of improvement to make it on either the Korn Ferry or the PGA TOUR?

MICHAEL VISACKI: I mean I think it's just trying to get one percent better every day. I feel like I'm not that far off. I've missed getting Korn Ferry status by one shot two years ago where I lost a ball in a tree on my 17th hole on the second stage of Q-School final round to miss getting to finals by one shot. So I know I'm capable of doing it.

Q. How much of a blow was that? Did that take a little while to get over something like that?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Yeah, it took me about two or three

days. Definitely the car ride back home with my caddie, I don't know how I was able to even drive. We had a four-hour drive back home and I would be staring at the road and I would just not be thinking about driving, I would be thinking about what I just gave up, because it's my dream to obviously be on the PGA TOUR, but stepping stone through the Korn Ferry, it was really heart breaking. I had a lot of people ask me, how were you able to get over it? I said I can't think about that, because if I think about that it will just make me feel sad and you can't do that in this game, you have to keep pushing yourself and keep going.

Q. In the course of those 170,000 miles that you've driven over the last few years, was there a moment when you decided that's it, I'm done, putting the clubs in the trunk for good or was there a moment that you had to be talked into staying out there on the hunt?

MICHAEL VISACKI: No, I never once thought about quitting. I knew I have -- I know I have the game to compete out here and I never once thought about quitting. I said I got to keep going, I'm not getting any younger, so just keep on fighting.

Q. How many tournaments do you play in a year?

MICHAEL VISACKI: I play roughly anywhere from 30 to 45 events. Winter's always probably a little bit slower, we'll probably play more one-day events down in Florida. But in the summer I do like to travel a little bit more, I'll go up north, so I probably average about three events a month. Maybe a little more. I'm the type of player that I like to play a lot, rather than play one event and then take two weeks, three weeks off, play one event, take two, three weeks off. I like to stay active.

Q. In terms of your background you played one year in college, is that correct?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Yes, one year in college.

Q. Did you plan to turn pro right away? Was that always the plan?

MICHAEL VISACKI: No, but I knew I wasn't going to stay for very long because I knew I wanted to be a professional. After I left school I did stay one more year amateur, played a couple more events that I couldn't play while I was in school. I knew it was a time when I finally was starting to make a little bit of money from all the work that I was doing, working 40 hours a week and then going out and playing it was tough, there was a lot of, I think there was some weeks that I worked 80 hours and then went out and played every day, practiced every day, because I knew

that's what I wanted to do.

Q. This week how many people are coming from all over the state to take part with you in this event?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Oh, I don't know, (laughing), a lot.

Q. Your age? Are you 27, is that correct?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Yes. 27.

Q. Who was the person that you hugged after you made the 20 foot putt in the video there?

MICHAEL VISACKI: My caddie, Kaylor Steger.

Q. Okay. And is he your caddie like all the time or is he just your caddie this week?

MICHAEL VISACKI: He's one of my best friends we have been playing and practicing. We met in a couple mini-tour events a few years ago and then we started talking to each other and he's like, Yeah, I live in Bradenton. And I was like, What? You live in Bradenton? I'm in Sarasota. And then we just started playing and practicing probably five days a week. We're always competing against each other, trying to make each other better.

Q. His first name is Caden you said?

MICHAEL VISACKI: K A Y L O R.

Q. Last name?

MICHAEL VISACKI: S T E G E R.

Q. And he's trying to make it as a professional as well?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Yes. Yes. He's a pro. He's about almost two years younger than me from Wisconsin.

Q. Do you guys have matches to kind of keep sharp?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Oh, yeah, all the time. We'll go out and we'll play and then we'll have some putting contests and then he'll always beat me and then we'll have a ball striking contest and then I'll always beat him. So we try to make each other better in the areas that we're weaker.

Q. You just mentioned that sometimes you would work these really long hours and then try to keep playing golf. This was working within the game though, right? This was working at golf courses?

MICHAEL VISACKI: Yeah, yeah. I worked at Serenoa Golf Club in Sarasota for about four years and there would be times I would close the pro shop at 5, 6 o'clock and then I would go out and play 18 holes, way 'til darkness and there would be days where I would work 15 hours in the summer trying to do doubles, to make a little bit of extra money and then come out the next day and go on the range, beat three, four hundred golf balls and then go out and play 36 holes on my days off. Because I knew this is what I wanted to do.

Q. Did you ever drive the tractor?

MICHAEL VISACKI: (Laughing) No, no, I just, I did the pro shop and the cart barn.

HALEY PETERSON: That's all the questions we have. Thank you, Michael for taking the time to join us and best of luck this week.

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