

Valspar Championship

Sunday, May 2, 2021

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

Sam Burns

Press Conference



HALEY PETERSON: We would like to welcome our winner of the Valspar Championship for 2021, Sam Burns. You captured your first PGA victory. Can you tell me about the emotions you're feeling right now.

SAM BURNS: Yeah, it feels good hearing you say that. Wow, just what a day. Just so many people that have helped me along the way, really I have so many people to thank that are just behind the scenes that people don't realize and so I owe a lot of it to them. Man, what a fun day and I'm really glad that we were able to get it done.

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

Q. Wanted to ask you kind of how you felt along the back nine and is it possible, as much experience as you get from being in that position having a couple of close calls this season, does that make it actually harder to get your first one, do you think?

SAM BURNS: That's a good question. I don't necessarily think it makes it harder. I think it makes it, you have a better understanding of what it takes and I think having those past chances that I wasn't able to convert I think it got me ready for this moment. Going into the back nine Travis and I just really wanted to stick to our game plan, stick to the process of just being really engaged on each shot and we were able to do that.

Q. And on 14 you had a three-shot lead yesterday that was gone by the time you finished. Were you in any type of position to get there? Was there too much wind and how did you play that hole? Just the second shot. You played it nicely?

SAM BURNS: I think that's where Travis, he did a really good job there. He said, you know, we're not talking yet, Keegan is hitting, but as soon as he hits, we're walking over to the ball and Travis says, Tree's in your way, we're laying up. And I'm like, What? He goes, Tree's in the way, we're laying up. I'm like, Well what about this and that? And he's like, Nope, you got 180 to this number right here, it's a perfect 7-iron, this is your line. I'm like, Okay, let's do

that.

I think that was just a moment where he knew that he knows me, he knows that I'm always trying to go pedal down and then in that situation that just wasn't the play. It would have had to have been a cut 3-wood that would have had to cut 40 yards probably and just, he knew that if we got a good number down there we could hit something in there close, and that's what we did.

So it's been cool to see how our relationship has progressed over the last year because a year ago he would not have done that and today he did and it's one of the reasons that we were able to win today.

Q. How much did the injuries derail things and when did you start to kind of finally feel normal again and were you able to do everything you wanted to do on the golf course?

SAM BURNS: Yeah, I think really the injuries were just, the injury to my ankle was more frustrating than anything. When you're not able to perform the way you would like to and the way that you know you're capable of and your body just won't allow you, it's really frustrating. And that was a moment of just me trying to push my body, I wasn't ready to play yet, but I tried to play. I just played awful for a month straight and just finally was like, hey, this is not a good idea long-term, I'm only creating bad habits and my body doesn't feel good, my ankle doesn't feel good, so let's just shut it down until we feel like we're ready. And that was a big learning moment for me.

Q. I wanted to confirm the story your mom installed a putting green in the backyard in return for you playing one more year of football, is that correct? What's that story from your football career?

SAM BURNS: Yeah, 8th grade year I was just going to play golf only. And we were always a football family and my dad played college football and my brother played college football at Louisiana Tech, both of them. And I was like, you know what, I'm kind of done with football, I would rather just focus on golf. And she was just devastated because that was all she ever knew was going Friday night



watching football.

And I said, Well, mom, how about if I played one more year, we can have a little putting green in the backyard, that way I can still practice after football practice. She goes, Okay.

And so my dad got home from work that day and my mom told him the story and he was like, Well, you agreed to that? She was like, Yeah, you know, it sounded like a good deal. And he was like, Unbelievable, I can't believe you did that. But, you know, they agreed to it. So that was good negotiating on my part.

Q. Who all did you have here today and have they been here all week or did they get here at some point this weekend?

SAM BURNS: Yeah, my wife is here. She's been here all week. She came with me when we left home on, I don't remember, when did we leave, Tuesday? Tuesday. And then my parents were planning on coming on Saturday and then they came, my sister came with them and my brother. My brother's wife also came today and my sister's husband came today as well.

Q. What did it mean for all of them to be there?

SAM BURNS: I don't think I could have dreamed of a better moment just to have my wife there who's been, we have been together for, not married but together for five or six years, and she's seen really good golf, she's seen really bad golf and she's just been there by my side for all of it. So to have her here was really special. And just a moment that we'll get to have for the rest of our lives, we'll get to tell our kids about one day.

To have my parents here, they sacrificed so much for me growing up, taking me to golf tournaments and letting me pursue my dream, really cool. And also my brother and sister, I'm really close with them, and their husband and wife, too. So it was really cool.

Q. Seemed like everything kind of flipped on 13. You guys were neck and neck and then that was the turning point. Keegan hit it in the water. What was going through your head at that moment and did you kind of feel that that was the break that you needed to knock out your first win?

SAM BURNS: It seemed like in that moment it was going to be me and Keegan. I think we had pulled ahead by three or four shots at that point. And so, like I said earlier, you never wish that upon anyone, you never wish to see someone hit it in the water. And I was hoping Keegan

would play his best. I wanted to see how I would hold up and see if I could beat him with my best against his best. Unfortunately for him he hit it in the water there and I really felt for him. I've been there, I've done that.

So I think for me I was just trying to focus on 2-putting that ball. I knew that was going to be a challenging hole, I knew where that pin was there's just no way to really get that ball close. So we were just trying to make a 3 there and I was able to do that.

Q. You spoke about how you really stayed in the process with your caddie, you excited 14 as an example. I'm curious, at Riviera a few months ago you had a chance after making the turn. Did you ever feel like there was a moment there where you started thinking about it or you got ahead of yourself, what was different about this time versus Riviera?

SAM BURNS: Well I think at Riviera I was fighting my golf swing a little bit. It appeared that I was playing really good golf, but I didn't feel like I actually was.

This week I just felt so much more confidence with what the golf ball is doing and the control that I had. So it was funny, we got on the putting green this morning and the wind starts picking up and I look at Travis and I'm like, I hope it blows, I hope it keeps blowing. And he's like, Yeah, me too. Just because like we knew, we knew that we had the control that we wanted and you don't get that very often, it's something we're always searching for out here. So just to have that little bit of confidence today was big.

Q. You said you have a better understanding after those close calls a better understanding of how to win a tournament like this. I'm wondering if you could go into a little more depth in what you mean about that?

SAM BURNS: Yeah, for sure. I think I always felt that you had to play perfect golf to win. I always felt that you had to play your absolute best on a Sunday to win. And after those experiences I realized that it's not the case. I was trying to do too much. So today I think when I say, talking about sticking to our process and sticking to our game plan we knew that coming into today the golf course was going to play difficult.

So I just think Travis and I just had a good understanding, we were on the same page about the shots that we were trying to hit into greens and that's just something he's really, really good at. A lot of this credit really does go to him.

Q. Which ankle was it that you broke?

SAM BURNS: My right.

Q. You mentioned that this was a dream come true. When did the dream of winning a PGA TOUR event, when did that begin?

SAM BURNS: Yeah, I think as a kid growing up with my buddies -- I grew up with some really good players. So just being able to be on the putting green when you're 10, 11 years old and you're like, I have this putt to win whatever tournament. And I can just remember hitting that putt so many times and you just hope and practice so hard to have that opportunity. And it was just, man, after I had the bunker shot on 18, I just got kind of choked up thinking about that moment and thinking about you wanted to have that opportunity so bad for so long and now you do. So it was really special for me.

Q. The tee shot on 11, did you think that was maybe headed out of bounds?

SAM BURNS: No, I knew there was a little bit of room there. There's those two trees just left of the bunker. It's such a weird shot too because I really, I'm not very good at drawing my driver. I usually cut it. So it's kind of weird just to see that ball come off drawing that much with the wind. It was definitely a fortunate break, it was a break that I needed. Sometimes I think it's just, you got to have a couple of those to win. And that was one of them.

Q. If somebody were to ask you what does it take to win out here, how much different would your answer be now than it would have been a week ago?

SAM BURNS: That is a good question.

Q. Did you graduate from LSU?

SAM BURNS: Did I graduate from LSU?

Q. Yes.

SAM BURNS: Yeah, in two years.

Q. Okay. You have no excuses now, Sam.

SAM BURNS: Yeah, it's like I said, I think before this moment, before I won, I really thought that I just needed to play so well and I needed to do everything perfect. I couldn't make a mistake, and that's just not true. I think for me today I just knew that if I could put the ball in the right spots with the golf course playing difficult that I was putting it well enough that I liked my chances.

So I don't know, I think everybody's different, but for me it

was just managing the golf course, managing my ball around the golf course and putting myself in the right spots.

Q. When you got your invitation to the PGA at Bethpage, did that surprise you?

SAM BURNS: When I received the invitation?

Q. Yeah. Because you were about 110 in the world, 111, something like that.

SAM BURNS: Well, I wouldn't say that I was surprised. I was happy. But I think I had a chance to get in. It wasn't like, oh, wow, the I didn't expect this at all. It's not one of those type of moments. But it was definitely something I was excited just to have the opportunity.

Q. When you come out here after a good college career and then obviously in 2018 all the success, it probably can be easy to be impatient about winning, but it sounds like you have a really good perspective on the close calls before. Is there someone who is helped you with that perspective or where does it kind of come from?

SAM BURNS: Yeah, I think Jesus Christ. I think just knowing that my timeline isn't always best, my timing isn't always right. So just trusting, knowing that, if I don't win, I can be okay with that. If I do, you know, give Him the glory. So just being able to trust that -- and obviously at times it's frustrating, you want things to happen, but just really deep down believing that His timing is perfect and His plan is perfect and so just trying to trust in that.

HALEY PETERSON: Thank you for taking the time for joining us and again congratulations.

SAM BURNS: Thank you.

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