

# Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship

Sunday, 9 November, 2025

Abu Dhabi, UAE

Yas Links

## Aaron Rai

### Press Conference

CLARE BODEL: Welcome, Aaron, you're now a two-time Rolex Series Event Series winner at the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship, in only your first start since you played the BMW PGA Championship in September.

Can you just try and sum up this week for us?

AARON RAI: Yeah, amazing week. Didn't really have too many expectations coming into the week. I think it had been six or seven weeks since the BMW PGA, which was the last event that I played in. So yeah, I actually came here two weeks ago to do a little bit of practise, which helped massively just getting a feel for the course and a feel for the grass.

But yeah, coming into this week, I wasn't really sure what to expect, so to be sat here now is hard to put into words.

CLARE BODEL: A lot of moves on the leaderboard. Were you keeping an eye on that or were you focused on your game?

AARON RAI: I didn't look at too much. Playing with Nicolai and Tommy, they both played great today. I was aware that they were very close in our group, but outside of that, I didn't look too much at what was going on, which helped just to stay focused and to keep playing the way that I saw the course.

Yeah, I think that helps, just to keep plodding away and just stay in one place.

**Q. The putt on 14 from two feet, what did you tell yourself, and what does it tell about you to have that kind of a grip to come back from that?**

AARON RAI: My caddie, Jason, played a huge role after I missed that putt, walking to the green. After hitting the tee shot on 15, he expressed a couple times to keep me present and keep me focused on the hole we were playing and finish off as well as we could. I think I would have struggled to hit the shots that I did down 15 and 16 if it



wasn't for him and what he said to me. It was critical to have him pull me through that moment.

**Q. How much credit to you give to your wife for this is this?**

AARON RAI: Huge, absolutely huge. It's hard for me to really sum up how much of an effect she's had on me as a person, and also that actually feed into my golf.

This year has been truly special with us getting married, caddying for her, being with her, getting married, practising and playing together. It's just a peaceful thing to be able to share different parts of our lives with one another and being with each other every step of the way. Yeah, very special.

**Q. How much of a help is it to have someone as your partner who is also a professional golfer?**

AARON RAI: Massively. First and foremost, the understanding of just what goes into playing professional golf, not just being away at the tournament, but all weeks where there are not any tournaments; the amount of practise that you have to do; the way you have to live your life; the choices you have to make; the control that you have to have around just the way you live your life. And I think it's hard for someone who isn't in this line or who has the understanding of the game to really be able to know the things that you have to do. So she's been incredibly understanding in that regard, and just sharing things together has been beautiful. Yeah, I couldn't ask for anyone better.

**Q. How much confidence does this give you, beating Tommy Fleetwood who is probably playing the best golf in the world right now and a charging Rory McIlroy?**

AARON RAI: I think, again, as cliché as it is, me and Jason, my caddie did a great job just playing golf the first three days. It's definitely harder to do on a Sunday when you're in the final group and you're aware of especially how Tommy and Nicolai were doing with us today. Still did a great job of just playing golf and going through what we



usually do.

I think that created a chance for us to even be in a position in the playoff. It's amazing to have played well this week and then to be here in a strong field and a huge event on the DP World Tour. It's a privilege to be here.

**Q. Will you allow yourself the opportunity to reflect on the players that you beat to give that you extra confidence going forward?**

AARON RAI: Yeah, I think it's a huge thing to be playing against some of the best players in the world and to be competing with them.

I think what is special, as well, about this week, I've struggled in the Middle East for quite a while. So it was great, even getting off to a good start and getting comfortable and knowing that I can play well out here. To win this week is very validating and gives a lot of belief about my game and how it stacks up around the world, and amazing competing with some of the best players in the world.

**Q. You strike me as someone who wants to stay in the moment and not get ahead of yourself -- but what goals do you have?**

AARON RAI: Honestly I try not to really set too many external goals. I don't put my focus on things that are too far outside of myself. There are so many variables in one round of golf, let alone a tournament with four rounds, or the whole season; and not to mention the amount of players who can do amazing things in the world of golf.

I try and stay away from those things as much as possible. I try to put my focus on the small day-to-day things that I can do and see where those put me. It might take me a long way or might not take me as long of a way, and we'll just see how that falls in the years to come.

**Q. Let's do a memory exercise. In 2020, you won The Scottish Open by beating Tommy Fleetwood. What one do you recall from that? And between this playoff and the 2020 playoff, which one was harder for you?**

AARON RAI: Honestly as I was walking to the scorer and recording on 18, I was aware we had played together; that was over five years ago now in The Scottish Open. I thought it was really cool that we had the chance to play with each other again on the other side of the world in a completely test of a course and I thought that was a really cool moment. But I didn't really think beyond that or see it in any other way.

Regarding which one was harder, so in Scotland, The Scottish Open, I hit a bad tee shot and got out of position. To make four, that was probably more -- just with the way I played the hole, it was just amazingly hard for myself.

Whereas today, I hit a great tee shot, great second shot and great wedge shot. This wasn't easy by any means but at least I was in position through that hole whereas in Scotland, I really wasn't.

**Q. You've been waiting a long time to win again on the DP World Tour. How does it feel to be back in this position?**

AARON RAI: I think it still hasn't really sunk in just yet. It's extremely special to win on the DP World Tour. The standard gets stronger and stronger. The players coming through are better and better. Let alone at this event with an incredibly short field. These things don't come around that often. So, yeah, it's pretty special to be here in front of you guys right now.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about your dad. He was walking with you. We all know how supportive he has been of you and the routes that you have taken through professional golf. Can you just talk about your dad a bit and what he has done for you?**

AARON RAI: So, so much. He doesn't come from a sporting background or golfing background. He used to read books and just try and teach me how to play golf just from reading books. He didn't really have knowledge himself of the game. He taught me from the age of 3 until I was about 10 or 11; he was with me every single practise session, every single day.

And then since then, I was very fortunate, my two coaches, Piers Ward and Andy Proudman, who I'm still with now, they have been incredible. My dad has been right there alongside them, not just helping with my swing or technical about the game but being there for me on those really hard days, trying to teach me things mind-wise. Obviously trying to help me become a better person over the years.

It's been incredible. There's so many things that go into even just getting to the DP World Tour. It's hard to fathom how much support and how much time and how many things need to go your way to have these kind of opportunities. My dad played an absolute huge role in that.

My mom, as well. She has been by my dad's side. Yeah, she's done just as much as him. It's hard to put into words how much they have helped.

**Q. How much are you looking forward to Dubai now?**



AARON RAI: Yeah, I think it will be a pretty quick turnaround. Be nice to just reflect and enjoy this over the next few hours. Get there on Tuesday. Try to get into as normal of a routine as I can. I'm sure things will be a little bit different on the back of a week like this, which is great, but hopefully get some good preparation. I haven't played the course in probably five years. Be nice to see how it's playing and what it's like.

CLARE BODEL: Thank you, everyone, and thank you, Aaron, congratulations again.

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