

# PGA Championship

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Quail Hollow Club

## Alex Smalley

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Alex Smalley is with us at the 107th PGA Championship. A 67 for you today in the first round. What did you do well out there today?

ALEX SMALLEY: I did a lot of things well. No. 1 key here is to get the ball in the fairway. I feel like for the most part, the fairways are relatively generous, and then given the conditions, the ball is not rolling too far. So if your ball hits in the fairway, it's probably going to stay there.

A little extra added challenge today was playing it down, which I think a few of us were a little surprised by. But for the most part it was pretty good. We had a couple holes where we had a little bit of organic matter on the ball that kind of affected a few shots, but it wasn't nearly as bad as it was for the practice days. Felt like I hit a lot of greens. Gave myself a lot of chances. Played the difficult holes well, just trying to get through those, and then added a few birdies in between.

**Q. This is sort of a local place for you. Maybe explain you getting in at the last minute and how this is sort of your backyard?**

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, I live about an hour and a half from here in Greensboro. I grew up just north of Raleigh. To have a major championship in your home state is awesome. To be able to get in last minute is great. Obviously I feel for Sahith. I know he pulled out last week as well.

I wish him the best and hope to have him back out here as quick as possible because us players and I know the fans really like him a lot. It was a shame to see him not be able to play this week. But it was nice to get an opportunity to play.

I played the Wells Fargo here two years ago. Didn't really play here before that. So I really only have a few rounds under my belt. It's not like I've got 30 or 40.

So yeah, I played decently well when I played in the Wells Fargo. I think I might have finished top 15. So I guess I

like the course and like the property.

**Q. Ryan Fox was just in here and said he was a little surprised to maybe play the ball down. Can you help us understand the line for you guys on where it's like, no, this makes sense, we're playing it down, versus no, we should probably be playing lift, clean and place?**

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, I mean, it wasn't like we had the whole -- a whole quarter or half the ball that was covered. It was only a couple specks here and there, and it wasn't anything too significant, but it was enough to definitely affect the flight some.

It wasn't like it was going to turn 20 or 30 or 40 yards on you. I think I had one on 18 that got me a little bit, and I hit a little long left that I was kind of surprised by.

For the most part it was pretty good. Given, like I mentioned, the conditions in the practice rounds Tuesday, Wednesday, we were stepping in the fairways and there was water coming up with every step. I think that's kind of what surprised most of us.

It will be interesting to see if there's a significant difference between the morning and afternoon wave. I think the afternoon wave might have it a little bit better but they still might have to deal with it a little bit.

So overall, I didn't think it was a bad decision. I think most of us were just a little surprised given the conditions on Tuesday and Wednesday, but like I mentioned, it didn't really affect a lot of the shots out there.

**Q. Can you just tell me, obviously you mentioned practice this week. When did you get the call that you were going to be taking part and how is the preparation sort of in terms of practice and also mentally knowing that you weren't in the lineup but could potentially be in it?**

ALEX SMALLEY: I prepared just like I could any other tournament. I actually went home after the tournament last week in Myrtle Beach. Drove home Sunday night. I think it rained pretty much all day here on Monday, and I drove

**ASAP** . . . when all is said, we're done.®  
**sports**

down Monday night.

Played the front nine on Tuesday after the hour-and-a-half-or two-hour delay we had, and I played the back nine yesterday morning.

I really prepared just like any other week. Obviously it's interesting being first alternate. I was losing hope after every passing hour. And you know, you hear about everybody's ailments as being first alternate, as well.

I found out about four o'clock, 4:15 yesterday that Sahith had withdrawn.

I was prepared to be here all day today if I didn't get in yesterday afternoon or last night. Like I mentioned before, obviously I feel for Sahith, but it was nice to know before the morning that I was going to play so I could kind of mentally prepare for that.

**Q. That's exactly what I was going to ask you. Does it take pressure off you knowing you're not going to play, you're just out here practicing and then you get the call? Just to not have to think about playing, is it any different than a normal tournament?**

ALEX SMALLEY: I think it would have been if I didn't get in until this morning or, you know, might not have gotten in. Just getting into a routine, the same routine that I typically get in, if I wasn't in until this morning and wasn't really sure if I was going to get to play in the morning or have to wait till the afternoon, that kind of would have thrown off the routine because I would have had to have find time to fill.

Obviously I would have had to have been here to be ready to tee off the in first tee time at 7:00 in case someone, for whatever reason, didn't go then.

So I think knowing, just kind of knowing last night just put me in a good space that I could go out and do my typical routine that I typically would on any other given tournament round.

I've been first alternate a few other times, a couple years ago. Two or three years ago at Riviera, I got the call at 5:15 or 5:20 Thursday morning I was in, and similar situation in Houston where I found out 5:15, 5:20 in the morning. I guess I've had decent luck at first alternate before, but I don't really want to be in that position anymore.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

