



Akshay Bhatia

Quick Quotes

Thursday, April 10, 2025

Q. Rousing finish. Sum things up. It wasn't going so great at the beginning and then you had a great fight back.

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, got off to a great start and then just didn't drive it as good as I have been, especially as I did at Sawgrass, at THE PLAYERS.

The golf course is hard, and then you get some swirly winds. But it was fun. I just kind of stuck to my game plan and made a couple putts. It was nice to finish the way I did.

Q. You were playing with Rory. Does it create any kind of pressure because there's a huge crowd there, the gallery is huge. Do you see all that or do you stay focused on yourself?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Stay pretty focused. It's really cool. As a kid, I've grown up watching him. To kind of be in that group, I was a little surprised. But it was awesome.

I really enjoyed it. Yeah, I just kind of stay in my own lane, and I know -- it makes it feel a little bit more important, which is kind of nice, if you focus a little more.

A lot of Rory chants out there, so I wasn't too worried about just playing with him. But there was definitely a lot of people rooting him on, which they should.

Q. Did you get to talk to him any?

AKSHAY BHATIA: A little bit. I just kind of let him do his own thing. I didn't want to -- as the young kid, I didn't want to bug him too much.

Q. Akshay, Viktor was just up here talking about how treacherous 15 was and obviously you saw what happened with Rory. How would you describe what that hole was like today and especially that green?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, it's a new green, so it's really firm already. It's a very good risk-reward hole. If you lay up you're almost trying to make 5 for that flag.

If you go for it and you have a decent chip like Ludvig, you still have to execute the chip. It's a really good hole. It's an interesting kind of decision you have to make, because if you lay up you're off a downslope to a pretty shallow green.

Q. Pretty solid on the back nine. Talk us through that phase and what led to that remarkable run.

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, I made a really great par on 11, three-putted 12, and then I knew if I could just get it back to even par for the day, it's not the worst thing I could -- continuing to look at the leaderboard.

13, hit a great shot.

14, great shot.

15, I wouldn't have changed my decision going for it. It was a great number.

Then 16, I wasn't even watching the ball, and all of a sudden it's a foot away.

Then 17 and 18, just kind of bonuses, making those putts.

Q. Talk about 18 and tell me how it worked.

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, it's a tough tee shot for me because I curve the ball a lot, so I have a Callaway mini driver in play, which has been a nice weapon for the week. It goes a little further than my 3-wood.

So I hit it off the tee but it went dead straight. Actually the last three holes I had very similar numbers. 17 I hit 8-iron from like 176 -- was trying to hit it 176, and then 18 I had 175, so it was kind of an easy decision when I walked into the ball.

Q. Jason Day was saying earlier that Augusta can psych you out because you feel like you've got to put up a good number and you really have to respect the course and take what's there. Did you find yourself fighting that at any point today?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I haven't played it enough, honestly. I'm just trying to continue to learn, and I feel like it's so important that your short game is good -- everything has to be good, but your short game and your putting and missing it in the right spots is really important.

My biggest problems I had today were I left myself some really tough five-footers down the hill, on 9 and 10 especially, and even 12.

That's the nuance about Augusta National is you can be five feet away above the hole and you're playing so defensive and when the greens get crunchy like they did today, you're just kind of hitting and praying, honestly.

Q. Can you talk about that learning process, trying to figure out the code around here? How much do you learn round by round?

AKSHAY BHATIA: You learn a lot. I was able to come early this year versus last year, so you start to realize where to miss it. You start to realize certain putts. You know what holes are really important and where your focus can't get a little out there. You've got to really be zoned in for a majority of the shots.

You kind of realize there are some pins out here where they're just funnels. You just have to hit it in the right spot.

Q. How have you gotten more comfortable talking to people about your game, the learnings, the mistakes --

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, I think it's part of our job now. I'm still obviously getting more and more -- I guess I would say people are starting to recognize me more, and so whatever I can do to help others and whatever anyone wants to know about me, I'll share as much as I can. I really enjoy talking to media just because it means you're doing well, for one thing, but it's also just fun for people to kind of figure out who you are and stuff.

Q. Talk about your caddie and especially his role on a course like this today.

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, I think experience is huge. He's caddied for a past Masters champion. He knows what to look out for at a golf course like this. A lot of people say conserve energy, so his preparation is a huge help for us when I can just kind of rest and relax.

Q. Can you recall some conversation today that was really helpful?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, I think it's just understanding wind directions out here. It all swirls, as everyone knows, and the vacuum effect.

I think 14 was a good example where it was above my feet, it was a draw lie to a left pin and you can't miss it right for a lefty. So I'm like, man, I need to hold a pitching wedge, but it's so much club for the yardage I had. He felt pretty comfortable kind of holding a 50.

I just executed that knowing the wind was more help than off the left for me, and ended up hitting that to a couple feet.

It's just small things like that where you feel a little more confident in the selection I'm making.

Q. What does it mean to you to have come from your parents' home country and have people writing about you?

AKSHAY BHATIA: It's really cool. I think obviously having Hero Motors now as a sponsor is very, very cool. Obviously for Sahith and I and Aaron to be able to build golf more and more in India is very important to us. I think it probably doesn't get talked about as much as people think.

Like we truly do care about growing the game in a different country. It's very special for them to kind of share our stories, and it's always nice they ask good questions, so I like it.

Q. How much have you been back to India?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I've never been. I was supposed to go in 2020 during COVID, so I haven't gotten a chance to go back. But I think in the near future it's definitely coming.

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