

# PGA Championship

Friday, May 19, 2023

Rochester, New York, USA

Oak Hill Country Club

## Michael Block

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Michael Block joins us on day two of the 105th PGA Championship. Michael, yesterday you talked to us about your goal of shooting even par all week. You did that again today. How does that feel?

MICHAEL BLOCK: I wanted to be under. Started out great, made some crucial mistakes on my -- I don't know if it's 13th, 14th holes that were just oddballs.

Outside of that, played amazing. I feel like I've got the game this week to compete, to tell you the truth. I've made the cut, which is obviously, like I told you, a huge goal. I feel like I could shoot even par out here every day. I feel like at the end of the four days that that might be a pretty good result.

THE MODERATOR: Let's take some questions.

**Q. How much fun were you having early on that back nine as you climbed the board? You rose to T2.**

MICHAEL BLOCK: I didn't know where I was at. I didn't look at the leaderboards because I knew I was up there when I was 3-under here in the second round pretty quickly. I knew I was up there pretty close, and I didn't know what was happening. I knew if I looked at that, I might get ahead of myself, and I didn't want to do that.

I just kept playing golf, kept my head down, had fun with my caddie, had a good time with the players. Taylor and Hayden were absolutely fantastic, along with their caddies.

The grouping was perfect for me as a club professional. No pressure. Had a great time, and the course sets up for me nicely.

**Q. This is your fifth go-around. The previous four you hadn't made the cut. What is the difference this week? Are you more comfortable? Is it simply that your game is better right now?**

MICHAEL BLOCK: I'm extremely comfortable. To be honest, a couple of my friends in Orange County are Beau



Hossler and Patrick Cantlay. I've played a lot of golf with them now where they've become my friends. I understand where they're ranked in the world. I understand how my game doesn't quite get up to them, but I'm pretty darn close, and I can compete with them.

A lot of times I come out to these events -- when I was in the Farmers, I beat both pros that I was with at the Farmers this year. I shot 73 on the South Course in a lot of wind on Friday this year at the Farmers. I shot 65 at the American Express. My first round I was in 7th or 8th place after the first round of the American Express this year.

Then I look back to that, I shot 73 the second round at Southern Hills in the wind as well last year at the PGA Championship.

I've been gaining that confidence from those finishes in those rounds where I'm like, why not? Why not come here and compete? Why not here at Oak Hill, make the cut? I'm not afraid of them anymore, to be honest.

**Q. The pros that you beat at Farmers that you played with the first two rounds, do you remember?**

MICHAEL BLOCK: Endicott and -- I don't want to throw them under the bus, honestly. A couple of great guys, but, yeah, they were great. For me to, you know -- you're the club pro, the section champion that goes and plays in the Farmers, and you don't want to go and embarrass yourself.

My goal is to usually beat the two guys in my group. If I beat those guys, I think I normally make the cut. I missed it by a couple at the Farmers and missed it by a couple at the American Express, and I made it here. I would have rather made it here than those, so we're good.

**Q. Just one more on that. How many strokes, if any, does Cantlay and Hossler give you when you play?**

MICHAEL BLOCK: Hossler, maybe one. Maybe. Depends how I'm playing and whatever else. Sometimes none. He doesn't even give my kid a shot. My kid is 70 yards by me.



Then Pat and I, we have an odds game. We play straight-up with odds. I'm not going to tell you the odds, but I did go to the horse track one night -- the day before I went to Del Mar opening race day, and I came back, and I was kind of, like -- I told him, I said, hey, club pro horse, 4 in the world horse, what are those odds, right?

We figured out a number. I've only gotten him maybe once or twice.

**Q. Michael, final few holes you parred in after the fifth hole. Those holes are playing really tough, but I know you recounted it out there. Do you mind taking us through the tee shot on 5 and what went through your mind?**

MICHAEL BLOCK: Yeah, I don't know. I had the same swing I've had all week. It was a nice little 8-iron, front left pin. I love hitting baby draw with my 8-iron. I've done it well all week, and all of a sudden we've all been there, done that, and we look up, and I'm, like, oh, my goodness. The ball was just going off, somehow hit the tree, almost killed somebody, and then comes off and goes in the deep rough, and I was actually fortunate enough to make a double bogey after that, after just making a bogey on the hole before being in the middle of the fairway with a 60-degree wedge in my hand.

I went bogey, double bogey. I said, okay, your hands are getting too far out in front of you and getting too far away from you. I played the last four holes feeling my hands a little tighter to the body through the impact zone, and I had 6-iron, 5-iron, and 4-iron into all those holes coming in, but I kinda flushed all those coming in. I was very happy with that. Thank you.

**Q. Jeff kind of stole my question, but I hit a lot of shanks, and I'm wondering as an instructor, what do you tell your students when they have a shot like that that just feels like a horror story?**

MICHAEL BLOCK: What I like to do is set up to the golf ball and swing and hit the ground on the inside of the golf ball. Like not even hit the ball on practice swings. Just take it, hit inside the golf ball a couple of times to feel that space and to get the hands in tight. If you watch a lot of the best players in the world, their hands are extremely close to their body at the moment of impact. A lot of the worst players in the world, their hands are far away from their body at the moment of impact. That's the difference.

I'm trying to feel a draw, my hands -- I'm trying to get it more out to the right and work it to the left. I overdid it, but it is what it is. I'm going -- in my head I'm going, you have got to be kidding me right now. I've been flushing it all day.

Last couple days the driving range is like a video game. I see that, and I'm, like, oh, here it comes (laughing).

I got it back, thank goodness, and finished it off. I can't wait to go have lunch with my family.

**Q. For the folks and the golf fans that are getting to know you for the first time this weekend, what's the one thing you want them to know about you as a player and then off the course?**

MICHAEL BLOCK: I'm one of them. 100 percent, I'm just your local club pro. That's what I do. I don't hit balls. People think I've got the best job in the world. I do have a great job. I have a very supportive club that lets me go play, but the amount of times I hit a bucket of balls is not even once a week.

I always tell everybody, I practiced a lot when I was young. I'm old now, and my swing is what it is. But, yeah, the people out there, they understand. They've hit that ball out into the bushes on the right side and they don't know what's happening, but the lucky thing about me is I figured it out pretty quick where I was going wrong. Club pros I always heard figure it out within a couple shots. Tour pros figure it out within one shot, and I was lucky enough to figure it out within one shot this time.

**Q. It sounds like you had a great attitude coming into this championship of why not me, but at the same time trying to stay in the present. Now you are where you are. Is it going to be a challenge to manage the thoughts of I could put myself in contention here?**

MICHAEL BLOCK: I've already been in contention, so I feel good about it. I was rolling around, I believe, in second place for quite a while. I was actually very comfortable. Honestly, the couple bad shots I hit had nothing to do with where I was at that time.

So, yeah, who knows who I'm paired with, right, tomorrow? If I'm paired with Jon Rahm or Rory or -- I have no idea how these guys are doing. I have not looked at the leaderboard. I don't know who is going to make the cut or who I'm going to be paired with. Yeah, that could be kind of huge for me, but at the same time I play with Patrick all the time. He is No. 4 in the world.

It is. It's golf. I'm ripping it, and I'm putting it. I would love to see my stats. I don't know if anyone is putting better than me except Taylor Pendrith, who was in my group. That guy was rolling the rock today. It was really cool. I can't wait to see his putting stats from today.

**Q. What's the genesis of the ball stamping that you**

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have?

MICHAEL BLOCK: Why?

**Q. Yeah.**

MICHAEL BLOCK: A long time ago I questioned myself over every shot like most people do, and I came up with one day I was going to win it. I was coming close to winning a tournament. Why not win? Why not just clip this, spin it to the right three feet, and make the putt? I go, why not? I started saying that, and so to do it, they started stamping my golf balls.

So I was over a putt in 2007 at Bear Creek in Murrieta, California. I had a 22-footer in a playoff to get into the U.S. Open at Oakmont.

I was behind the putt, and my caddie whispers over my ear and says, if you make this, we're in the Open. I out loud, over the ball, while I was over the golf ball, I said, why not? Then I proceeded to drain it and made it into the U.S. Open at Oakmont, which is my first event I ever played in.

**Q. What would be the ultimate "why not" this week?**

MICHAEL BLOCK: To win, by far. As weird as it sounds, I'm going to compete. I promise you that.

**Q. You mentioned a little bit ago that you're not afraid anymore, and I'm sort of curious when did you sort of get past that fear to think that you could belong?**

MICHAEL BLOCK: Last year, 2022 PGA Championship, Southern Hills. Tiger was either one or two groups ahead of me or behind me. I forget what it was. Because of that, I think it was him, Rory, and Jordan were paired together. It was ten deep on every hole I played. I shot 73 with everyone there. My GM even said, that was you not being a club pro anymore.

So it was a big moment for me. I've kind of lived off that ever since.

**Q. You talked about the physical teaching aspect of the shank, fixing that. How often do you think you're going to teach the mental aspect of hitting that shot, making a double, and then bouncing back with a handful of pars?**

MICHAEL BLOCK: That's in the brain. You've got to erase it. You absolutely have to erase it and commit to the next shot 100 percent. If you're not committed, and that happens every once in a while, that's our big motto with my caddie and I, John is to commit to the shot and tempo.

A lot of people let it affect them, and my big thing is to spiral upwards, which is what I really try to do, but I used to all the time spiral downwards. I've learned how to start going forward rather than going backwards, and it's been a huge help for me in the game of golf, which, as you know, can go sideways very quickly.

**Q. You mentioned Jon Rahm earlier. I just want to get your reaction. You're beating him by six shots.**

MICHAEL BLOCK: Pretty cool, to say the least. Yeah. I wish you guys could come to my office and hang out with me and come teach with me on the back of the driving range with my students who are out there right now (choking up). Yeah -- sorry. I don't know why that makes me emotional, but it does. Sorry, Jon.

Yeah, no, I don't know who I beat, who I didn't beat. I'm going to go out there and do my best and put my head down and play as well as I can for the next two days.

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