

Charles Schwab Challenge

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Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Colonial CC

Alex Smalley

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Alex Smalley to the interview room here at the 2026 Charles Schwab Challenge. Alex, you're making your fifth start here, can we get some opening comments on what it's like to be back at Colonial.

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, it's a great place. I actually played a college golf event here a few times at Duke, the Nike Invitational, so fairly familiar with the golf course. Obviously they have had a renovation a few years prior. So I played, I guess if you want to call it the original design maybe two or three times. And then this new redesign maybe two or three times as well. So always nice, always a nice place to come back to, a lot of history here, so I'm happy to be back.

THE MODERATOR: We saw you out there today, you played the back nine, I believe?

ALEX SMALLEY: I did, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: What were your first impressions of the course?

ALEX SMALLEY: I know they have -- there's been a lot of rain here the last week and a half or maybe couple of weeks, so the golf course is definitely a little softer than what I remember it being. I remember you typically get a decent amount of roll off the tee. Greens can be kind of tricky with the first bounce, especially since most of the green complexes are fairly new still, trying to settle in a little bit there. Definitely softer. Wedges were spinning back today, which I haven't really seen a whole lot before. Not the longest golf course, but it doesn't have to be. You have to be a really good driver of the golf ball around here because even if you miss a fairway you still have a shot to the green, but the Bermuda rough presents its own challenge. It can be tricky to control spin and ball flight coming out of the rough. And then another added factor that you typically have here is wind. So when you add firmness and wind together it can present a good challenge.

THE MODERATOR: You have top-25 finishes in your last six starts this season. Talk how your season as a whole has been and how you feel the state of your game is heading into this week.

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, I feel like the season has -- first, it's gone by really quickly. It's hard to believe that we're near the end of May already. But I felt like I've played pretty solidly through most of the year. First three or four months I feel like that I put three good rounds together and then I had a fourth round that just was average or maybe a little below average. That's where most of my maybe 30th to 50th finishes were from. But this last couple of months or so have been really good. I feel like most of my game is been really solid, kind of firing on all cylinders in each aspect. And then just being up around the lead in a couple events gets you a little more comfortable when you're in that situation again and I find myself -- I found myself there a few times the last few weeks, and it's certainly been nice to be up there. Yeah, you know, I feel like the season's off to a good start and I'm hoping to finish just as strong.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll open it up to questions.

Q. Going back to one of those times when you were in contention a few weeks ago at the PGA Championship. How did your emotions sort of evolve over the course of the final two rounds as you started Saturday and Sunday and how you settled in?

ALEX SMALLEY: Well, going into Saturday I was tied with Maverick and so I guess we were both in the spotlight a little bit. It wasn't just myself. I've mentioned a couple of times since a couple weeks ago at the PGA that those two pairings on Saturday and Sunday probably helped me. I played with Maverick a few times and then I played with Matti a number of times. I think we were the same year in college, so I was very familiar with him. So just being paired with both of those guys on the weekend allowed me to kind of settle in a little bit more. Maverick's a great guy, Matti was a great guy.

But going into the weekend I've never been in that situation before on a stage like that, so had to get that, get used to that a little bit. But, yeah, I felt like I handled it decently well.

Then going into Sunday was a little different, just because I



was on the lead on my own by a couple of strokes. Once I got to the golf course on Sunday it just felt like any normal round. I would say the lead-up going into overnight Saturday night and then waking up Sunday morning, it definitely felt a little different than it typically would. But by the time I got into my routine when I arrived on the golf course on Sunday it felt pretty standard for the most part.

Q. You mentioned outside that was four weeks in a row I think at the PGA Championship. How, if at all, is that finish going to change your schedule going the rest of the way? Maybe not play four weeks in a row.

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, my schedule certainly changed for the better since -- oh, it wasn't just from the PGA Championship, you know, a couple weeks leading up to that I had had some decent finishes, and that got me into some of the Signature Events. But, yeah, the PGA's done a lot for me schedule-wise. I knew I wasn't going to play the CJ Cup after the PGA. I knew that for a fact. But from my finish I got into the U.S. Open, I got into The Open Championship. So my schedule's definitely changed from what I thought it was going to be from the last few weeks and I think it has a better cadence now. Because I'll play this week, I'll play next week, I'll take a week off, play U.S. Open, Travelers, have a week off, and then I'll go over and play the Scottish Open and The Open Championship. So it's kind of a nice cadence of being on the road for two weeks and then having one week off for the next stretch.

Q. What have you found, two of those starts came in Texas, two of the top-25 finishes earlier this year, what have you found in your time on the TOUR that it takes to play well in this state?

ALEX SMALLEY: What it takes to play well in the state?

Q. Yeah, just in terms of the conditions, the different weather conditions that you see here.

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, well it obviously changes based on the year. I mentioned earlier that I haven't seen the course here as soft as it is this week so far, so I have to get used to accounting for spin on some of the wedge shots. Texas is known for some wind. A lot of the golf courses we play in Texas are quite different though. The tournament in Houston, Texas Children's, the golf course is pretty wide open, so you can, it's essentially hit it as far as you can and then try to get it close to the hole after that.

San Antonio's more of a position golf course like this week is. You really have to hit your spots in the fairway because once you get off the fairway it can be difficult to score.

And then I know they redesigned the golf course last week,

I obviously didn't play it, but my previous years, you know, you have to be fairly aggressive. There's a lot of birdies to be had.

So each course in Texas presents its own, you know, challenge. But growing up in the southeast I'm fairly familiar with Bermuda grass, so it's always nice to come back to a golf course that's pretty dominantly Bermuda. I feel like that gives some of the players that have grown up on that type of grass a little bit of an advantage. So it's certainly nice to come back to a venue that has it.

Q. Personally, last week what did you do anything to decompress from the PGA Championship? Did you go on vacation or did you take any time away from the clubs?

ALEX SMALLEY: Yeah, I didn't really do a whole lot Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday. Honestly, most of it was just trying to figure out travel to the upcoming events. Tried to find a place to stay for the U.S. Open. The last couple of days have really been trying to find a place for the Open Championship. So mainly just trying to figure out travel to and from different tournaments.

But spent most of the day on the couch when I got back home on Monday from Philadelphia, didn't really do a whole lot. Didn't touch a club until Thursday, so took three days off. It was a pretty light week last week. Even when I did go to the golf course I wasn't there for much more than two and a half or three hours. So just tried to take it as easy as I could while still trying to prepare for this week.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Alex, thank you for the time. Good luck this week.

ALEX SMALLEY: Thank you.

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