

Sanderson Farms Championship

Thursday, October 5, 2023

Jackson, Mississippi, USA

Country Club of Jackson

Akshay Bhatia

Quick Quotes

Q. Congrats on a good start. Pleased with the way you performed today? I don't think you left too many shots out there.

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, solid day. I played good. I hit the driver well, made some nice putts, and I had one bad swing on a par-5, and just a little bit of lack of focus. Other than that, it was a solid day. Everyone in our group played well, so it was kind of nice to feed off everyone.

Q. You line up on that far left side of the teeing ground, lining up for that cut. Is that standard operating procedure?

AKSHAY BHATIA: For the most part. I have another shot if I need to draw it. I don't bring it out too much unless I'm really restricted as far as start line, but I just like hitting a cut. I'm comfortable with it. I rotate very hard. It's just nice when I can swing the driver seven, eight, nine right and know where it's going to go.

Q. I remember when you played here for the first time as just a teenager. You must love this golf course because that wasn't too long ago when you were out here practicing on the range and going out to play?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, I was telling my caddie this week, coming back here -- it's been four years since I've played here, and just the difference I feel now than when I did -- I remember sitting in the hotel room and just freaking out about playing my first professional golf event on the PGA TOUR as a 17-year-old. Now I'm just kind of watching YouTube and hanging out with my fiancé. It's nice to come back here. I think these are some of the best greens all year.

It's a very chill week, so it's nice to have that.

Q. You come back as a PGA TOUR winner. That's got to give you a lot of confidence.



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AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, yeah. Like I said, it's been a crazy formation of my golf career, starting here four years ago to where I am now. A lot can change. It's nice to come here as a full member and earn my spot and always be able to play in this tournament.

Q. You have a very unusual putting style with that long grip. That's a little different.

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, my coach and I, we have some shot options, so we have conventional armlock and then claw armlock. Just a couple different feels if I ever need it, and certain putts, whether downhill I kind of claw it because it softens the blow. Yeah, I don't know. I just try and own that and try and make putts.

Q. What's the golf life been like since you won at Barracuda? I know you weren't able to make it into the Playoffs because of the technicality and just the time off that you had from Wyndham all the way until Fortinet. What's things been like?

AKSHAY BHATIA: The golf is still the same. I think everything outside of it has been really hard, stuff I didn't ever think I'd deal with.

Q. Such as what?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Just a lot of anxiety, a lot of stuff off the golf course that was really challenging, especially at my age. You just make a little bit of money and you have more eyes on you and then you just feel like you've got to make everyone happy.

I got to a point where I wasn't making myself happy and I was trying to make everyone else happy.

It's been hard ever since I won Wyndham and Fortinet have been some tough weeks for me just off the golf course. It's just nice to come back here with a fresh mind, and I'm excited to kind of play this fall season and fine-tune my game.

Q. Is that one of those things where it's like they can't really give you a manual after you win one that



something like that pops up?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah. I mean, I've never -- like I said, I've never had to deal with so much stuff going on off the golf course. You'd think after you win everything would be great, everything would feel a lot easier. But it's kind of quite opposite.

I'm still learning, especially at my age, but I've got a lot of time to kind of keep learning and keep persevering through any challenges that come into my life.

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