

# Cognizant Classic

Friday, February 27, 2026

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Champion Course

## Joe Highsmith

### Quick Quotes

**Q. I don't know if there's a little déjà-vu from last year, but can you describe, you're playing the 18th, I guess you're not sure if you need a birdie or a par. What's going through your mind on that hole?**

JOE HIGHSMITH: For sure. Super stressful day, obviously, being right on the cut line. I was hoping not to find myself in that position again.

I knew that was where I was, and then I bogeyed 14. I figured even was probably going to be the number, at least that was pretty safe, and that made it tough because there's really no birdies coming in. 18 is kind of your last chance at a birdie. Not many birdies probably 15, 16, 17.

It was nice to just get through those holes with pars.

I made a pretty nice up-and-down on 17 and then I was planning on being perfectly fine with par on 18, but I kind of got lucky on that bunker shot and hit it to a foot, so that was nice to not have a stressful putt to make the cut again.

But yeah, overall I was fairly pleased with how I played. I did a lot of good stuff but just too many mistakes. But it was nice to be playing the weekend again for sure.

**Q. How does the vibe on the cut line here now compare to a year ago? Do any memories from last year creep in down the stretch?**

JOE HIGHSMITH: A little bit. I remember last year, honestly kind of choking my way home and then being very nervous. The worst place to be, I honestly think it's harder to make cuts than -- I haven't won very many tournaments. I've won one tournament. But knowing how it feels when you're totally in control of your game and there's pressure and you're still nervous, but when you're not very confident in your game, battling the cut line, I think it's almost harder.

Today I kind of found myself in that same position again. It's always hard and you kind of have to just figure it out and have some determination and just find a way to get it done for sure when you're not totally in control of your



game.

But it was pretty similar to last year. Hopefully the next two days can be similar to last year, as well.

No fun being on the cut line, but it was nice to get through this time.

**Q. What does it mean to be a defending champion, like this experience this week, kind of defending your title?**

JOE HIGHSMITH: It's cool. I haven't won very many tournaments in my life, so this is probably the second or third time I've ever come back to a place that I've won at before. It's pretty cool. It's fun to just relive last year when you step back and all the memories kind of come back. Even today coming down the stretch, it just reminded me of last year's Friday and last year's Sunday, as well, just playing at sunset out here. It's super special.

But yeah, I've had a great time coming back, so hopefully have a good weekend.

**Q. Your mom was out there; what's it mean to have her support? I know she was here last year, too.**

JOE HIGHSMITH: For sure. She goes to most of the events, which is great. It's obviously fun. She wanted to make sure she was going to be here for this one again. Super fun having her out. We'll probably go get dinner tonight at the same place we were going last year, which will be fun to just kind of try and do the same thing I did last year, I guess.

**Q. Same order do you think you'll do, too, as last year?**

JOE HIGHSMITH: Probably. It's this steak place, and I usually would get a filet or a ribeye or something. I don't remember exactly what I ordered last year, but maybe it's the spot that has the good vibes for me.

**Q. Earlier this week you said something about not feeling quite comfortable with your game. Do you feel more comfortable now than you did a few days ago, or do you still feel like you're battling it a little bit?**



JOE HIGHSMITH: Still battling. I wouldn't say I'm battling my game more than I'm battling the mental side of the game. I've been really working hard trying to basically get back into the same place that I was at a year ago here on the weekend where you're seeing things clearly and you're fully committing to your shots. You have that determined attitude and you're playing with passion and you're not really scared of anything, like you're kind of just focused on what you're trying to do and you're not worried about what might go wrong, whereas for pretty much a year now, I've been playing fearful and worried about missing cuts or never playing good again. It's been a lot of struggles for me over the last year.

I feel like I'm very close, but I don't think there's anything more to it than just I have to get in there and do it that day when the shot is right in front of me, get in and focus up and commit to your shot. If you don't do that, you're probably not going to play well, and if you do do that, you're probably going to play well.

I feel like I'm very close. Today I did a lot of good stuff, but each one of these rounds, I've had really good stuff in there, but 50, 60 percent of the round I haven't done a very good job of it. That leads to cut line golf and 50th place or whatever.

I've just got to ramp that up a little bit, but my game is fine. I've just got to be a little sharper mentally, I think, and hopefully just see some decent results again. It's been a while.

**Q. Is making the cut on the number by one, do you consider that a small win? Can that be a small win?**

JOE HIGHSMITH: I think so. I thought it was nice to just hang in there. I had a tough up-and-down -- not that tough, but a relatively tough up-and-down on 15 to save par, and I made a nice putt. Then 16 was, all things considered, a pretty nice grind-it-out 4 playing from that left bunker.

17 was a very tricky up-and-down, and I decided to putt it because I was scared of chipping it, and got that up-and-down, which was nice.

To have pretty much four straight nice up-and-downs, if you will, on the last four holes feels pretty good.

But it was just tough; at the start of the day I was super locked in, made an incredible eagle on hole 3, and then I proceeded to bogey my next three holes and be a little bit sloppy from there on, which was just frustrating because I felt like I was really in control of what I was doing but just let it slip a little bit. It doesn't take much in terms of losing

focus to make bogeys on a golf course like this with these conditions.

I was pleased, though, with how I finished. Better than missing the cut for sure.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

