

Cognizant Classic

Sunday, March 1, 2026

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Champion Course

Austin Smotherman

Quick Quotes

Q. How do you sum up the week? I know you were dreaming of a little different outcome, but you still seem pretty happy.

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: No doubt. First ever final group on a Sunday in this scenario, holding my own, making some birdies down the stretch, grinding out some pars, grinding out a bogey. All those things just felt like I kept myself in it. Never felt like I was going to let it slip, and I have just going to be present and hit the shots.

Hit some bad shots and didn't make the putts today, kind of at least those mid- to long-rangers that were kind of stealing them the last couple days, at least Thursday, Friday.

The up-and-down on the last was huge. That was points for the season, and a big tie or dropping down to third or fourth or whatever it would have been is huge.

Q. When you've got a front row seat, Shane is up three --

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Yeah.

Q. How does that affect you when you see him unravel like that?

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: The unravel, it's uncharacteristic of Shane, major champion, but it's just a testament to what this game is like. You have to stay in it for 72 holes. That's why I might have been six back or four back, five back, but that's why this stretch of holes coming down are so exciting. I got to watch Nico's putt and the fist pump from the tee on 17. I don't know what he's doing hitting it right of that pin, but that's pretty sick.

We're pretty good buddies. I'm happy for him.

Q. When did you first meet Nico? Did you guys play together --

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: We played two years of Latin



America together. The year I graduated in the top 5 to go to the Korn Ferry, he finished second on the season, and Harry finished No. 1 that season. So we had a lot of cool photos together. We were on a couple teams and things like that together.

I just told him, too, last time I finished runner-up or third to him was when he won in Brazil. He won at Saõ Paulo Golf Club. Here we are, freaking 10-year pros. So wild.

Q. What is your favorite moment from this week as you look back now?

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Well, I haven't really looked back too much yet. I only finished like 15 minutes ago.

Favorite moment? Probably just having the last putt drop on 18. That's not a bad spot to be, knowing that the work is done. It wasn't exactly holding the trophy or getting to a playoff, but held the lead for 54 holes. Was way back; birdies down the stretch are going to matter a ton, and pars down the stretch.

The two-putt on 16, 65 feet, whatever it was, after kind of some squirrely stuff, knowing Shane is dropping shots and we have the two holes coming up like we did. I learned a lot. I'll digest it more over the next 10 hours before I tee it up again.

Q. How do you think this will serve you well moving forward in your career, just this whole week?

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Yeah, this was kind of just my first really big pedestal. Kind of had a back door-ish top 5 in the Mexico Open at Vidanta a couple years ago, and never really had the same kind of moments coming down the stretch, especially on two different types of golf courses, too.

This will be a week I always look back at. The friends and family over here, my brother-in-law just surprised me. He said he watched me all day, said he was hiding and ducking around so I didn't see him. Some other extended family in Florida came by this week, and I've got all these kids right here waiting for an autograph, so it's pretty awesome.



Q. What's it mean to get into API next week?

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Huge. First ever Signature Event, first time playing Bay Hill. Watched it on TV, a lot of iconic shots. I'll go see them in person and realize just how tough Arnie used to make that place.

Q. Do you have a favorite Bay Hill memory that comes to mind?

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: I mean, it's all the famous putts on 18 from Tiger and whatnot. Getting to see those shots and be on that green, I've never been there, so we'll see you in Orlando.

Q. The craziness in terms of Shane dealing with everything, you were able to keep your game together and everything with the delays. Talk about the mental fortitude it took to stay in the moment.

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Yeah, that's where I think leaning on my caddie Zach was huge this week, keeping things super light. We were joking, having fun, talking with the people in the crowds, talking with the cops walking with us, just anything to try and stay loose and just not go so internal in our own head.

Those shots coming down the stretch mean a lot, and they don't mean any more technically than the first shot we hit on Thursday and any other putt or shot we hit all week, and that's what we can kind of trick ourselves. If we can actually feel that and realize, hey, this is just another golf shot, just another six-footer, hopefully we're a little bit more calm to execute under those pressures that we put on ourselves, and that's all it is. The moment is no bigger than what you make it.

Q. Your chance to play in front of so many fans, the screaming --

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: It was so good. I love it. It's kind of the refocuser for me, hitting shots in that environment, and I chose to play a few times even when there was noise and things going on. If you can't do that, major championships, Ryder Cups, anything like that, it's all part of the process. You've got to put yourself in it, so I felt like I did well with that today.

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