

# Valspar Championship

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

## Luke Clanton

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Luke Clanton to the interview room here at the 2025 Valspar Championship. Luke, it's been a while since you've clinched your PGA TOUR card earlier this month. Like to start off with what it's been like from feed back of having family and friends there at the moment.

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, it's been a lot (laughing), for sure. But it's been incredible. Mom and dad still can't really even imagine it yet, and neither can I. We just kind of have been running around with our heads loose basically, trying to figure it out and to kind of get it done, and to finally say I got my card's pretty cool. So, yeah, it's been incredible to see the support from the outsiders and everyone in the family, it's been amazing.

THE MODERATOR: Are you someone who typically looks back on some of your rounds? Have you been able to watch some of the moments captured from that Cognizant tournament?

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, I think they had a little highlight reel from my Friday round which we watched a couple times. Yeah, just to see that stretch of golf that I had through that front nine was really cool. We weren't really thinking about much except making birdies and trying to make a move on the leaderboard and to kind of realize what happened and realize what I did was pretty amazing.

THE MODERATOR: You've been staying busy, just had your sixth collegiate win.

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: How did that go and how is it to be back with the team?

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, it was great. We went out there with one goal and that was to win as a team and we did and it was awesome. We have great guys on this team right now and we are a national championship contender, for sure. If we go out and we do what we need to do, I think we'll have a great chance. This spring has been

pretty nice to us as a team and hopefully we can go out and keep competing.

THE MODERATOR: What's the mix of emotions now that you have your card, you've also shared that one of the big goals is to win a national championship, so what goes into that to make sure that you get the goal?

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, we're going to keep doing what we're doing. I think we train hard as a team, I think we work hard, and also I think we're kind of like brothers on that team. To see the support that the guys have given me is pretty amazing. We come back and it's straight to business. No one treats each other differently and it's just a great community. I think a lot of college golf teams are like that, but for me it's to kind of come back and to have brothers like that, it's pretty amazing.

THE MODERATOR: It's been almost an entire year since your win at the Valspar Collegiate. What do you remember from your win there that earned you exemption into this week?

LUKE CLANTON: I thought it was going to be my first PGA TOUR start. It's pretty cool. To win that event was probably the biggest one I won in my career during that time. It was pretty cool. To see mom on 18 there again and kind of telling her we got it done to get our first start was pretty amazing. And then it kind of unraveled a little more after that, so it's just been an incredible journey with the whole support, the team, it's just awesome.

THE MODERATOR: What would you have thought a year ago at this time last year if we told you that you would have your card?

LUKE CLANTON: (Laughing). I would probably think you're crazy, to be honest with you. Again, just, it's hard to even think about what happened, really. To have that nine-month, ten-month stretch of golf is, to be competing on the PGA TOUR against the best, it's crazy.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. I was wondering as you look back to last year or**

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**last couple months you had to make a cut to get your card a couple different times and I know obviously one shot at a time and everything, but looking back now did you feel the weight of that compared to what you might feel for this week of making the cut, did that feel different in your mind?**

LUKE CLANTON: For sure. (Laughing). I never really talked about it, tried to keep it very low, for my own sake as well. But again it was a lot of pressure. Teeing it up at Waste Management and teeing it up at Cognizant it was all I really heard of from everybody, but again the support was amazing. Everyone wanted me to do it, which was really cool. To kind of get that weight off my shoulders was pretty nice.

**Q. Are you still planning to play the Valspar Collegiate this year?**

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, I am. I drive over Sunday night and play 36 on Monday.

**Q. How long of a drive is that?**

LUKE CLANTON: I haven't looked yet. I don't really want to look (laughing).

**Q. Very random, but do you remember the first class you went to after getting back from Cognizant?**

LUKE CLANTON: (Laughing). I'm all on line, thankfully, so it's been very nice. The advisors and the whole FSU crew has been very good with me.

**Q. Did you have any sort of, walking around campus, did anyone stop you and say, Congrats on TOUR bound? Did people know around campus?**

LUKE CLANTON: I had a couple people, yeah, it was pretty cool. But I try to stay very low key with everything I do. I'm pretty much golf course and home kind of guy. I don't really do too much outside of that.

**Q. Your caddie, I know he's a teacher.**

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, he's a teacher. Yeah, he's an amazing dude. I don't think he gets enough credit for what he's done for me, the role model he's given me. He's not just a great caddie but he's a great person, a great dad, and he does things the right way, and it's pretty cool to have him by my side.

**Q. What's his name and how did you guys connect?**

LUKE CLANTON: Jason Wiertel is his name. We

connected at Pinehurst three years ago during the North & South Amateur. I was there about two days early hitting balls on the other side of the range, which I wasn't allowed to be, but I was doing it anyway, and his little daughter came over to me, Lucy, and she asked me how far I hit a pitching wedge. Random question. He came over and asked if I had a caddie and I said, Oh, no, I don't have a caddie this week. And he said, Well, if you want to win you can use me. And I'm like, All right, man, I never met you before, and we'll see. We made match play and I was the first tee time off at like 6:50 in the morning and he was there at 5:30 with a towel in his back pocket and I knew, okay, this guy's legit. We went on to win that week and I looked at him after, I said, I want you here every single step. And at the ceremony I was giving a speech and I didn't see him there. So I texted him, I said, Where you at? This is a cool moment. He goes, I'm caddying for my daughter right now. So drove over, caddied for his little daughter in a nine-hole U.S. Kids event and I went over to give him thanks and I knew right there he's not just there to be there for the awards, he's there for me, which is pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: Valspar does a unique thing of putting on the caddie bib. Have you put any thought of what he'll be wearing?

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, I think we came up with one we're going to put "amateur" just on the back of it. Because it's just been kind of a common theme for us, I think we're just going to put "amateur" on the back.

**Q. Do you have any history at Valspar on the Copperhead course, and what do you think of the course?**

LUKE CLANTON: I played here when I was young, super young in U.S. Kids. This golf course is hard. It's no joke. It's definitely a golf course you have to really compete out here, hit fairways, hit a lot of greens. Again, every week you step out here you have the same goals, hitting the fairway, hit it on the green, and doing the best you can. The rough is thick here, the greens are firm, and it's been pretty windy, so it's going to be a good week.

**Q. Has there been a moment maybe in this past eight or so months since last summer since you've been getting these starts on TOUR, is there a moment that jumps out where you were maybe surprised or impressed with your self with how you've handled the pressure in some of those moments?**

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, probably RSM. It was pretty cool. It was -- funny enough actually, my college best friend was caddying for me that week, Jason couldn't make



it. And we were coming down the stretch and I think I was 1 back or whatever and we got a tie for the lead on 17 tee box and I remember looking over at my best friend and he was shaking (laughing). I was laughing. It was just so cool. To be on 18 and have that feeling of being able to win a PGA TOUR event is something that I think everyone looks forward to. So it was cool to kind of be in that moment.

Actually handled it pretty well. I did hook an 8-iron in that bunker on left side, but other than that that it was a fantastic week. So I think to kind of see that and grow from that was pretty cool.

**Q. Do you feel like that's translated into some of the success you've had back to Florida State this spring?**

LUKE CLANTON: No doubt, for sure. I think I'm able to handle the pressure a little bit more than I used to. Kind of being in that moment a little bit more and feeling that, those nerves coming down the stretch was a lot.

**Q. Do you think that anything from this last year will serve you well as you embark on an NCAA championships in a couple of months and trying to reach that goal?**

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, again, as a team we feel prepared really well this spring. The fall we didn't have the best season, but we knew that we were going to keep grinding, keep doing what we're doing. And we had Gray Albright win the Jones Cup. Tyler Weaver win the Cabo Collegiate Invitational. We had a lot of guys playing well and it's awesome to see, but again, we know what it takes. It takes a lot of golf and a lot of good golf, so we just got to keep putting in our mindset that if we do what we do we'll be in contention and be able to do it. So again, I think the guys are ready to do it and we have still a couple of college events in the spring that we want to complete and finish off, which will be cool.

**Q. You've had obviously so much good in this last year, but some disappointment I guess in various ways, too. What would you say is kind of the toughest loss or disappointment you've felt in golf?**

LUKE CLANTON: Obviously probably the Waste Management, for sure. But I wouldn't call it a loss, I would just call it learning again. I think I was playing pretty bad for that first 27 holes, and then that back nine we knew we had to make five birdies coming in, and to have the chance to make the cut on 18 was pretty cool. I think I really wouldn't call it losing or failure, I would call it learning as much as I can. Again, every single week you step out here it's learning. So for me it will always count it as a rookie

season without a rookie season, which is pretty cool and I'm excited to keep going.

**Q. This week what do you think, is there a key shot you're working on on the range or in practice that you think is critical for Copperhead?**

LUKE CLANTON: Yeah, a low ball and straight (laughing). I think you just got to keep it into the fairway out here. When you get in the rough it gets pretty tough. We've prepped really well coming to this event. I think yesterday and today was pretty nice. The golf course is in fantastic shape as it always is and we're excited to play.

THE MODERATOR: Florida State's not playing for men's basketball in the bracket, are you someone who typically fills out a bracket or anyone you're rooting for?

LUKE CLANTON: I have to fill out my bracket today. So it's -- I do have a couple people I think who are going to win, I don't really want to say, because they might be rivals in golf. So but, you know, again me and my buddies always do it, so we're excited to sit down and watch a lot of it.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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