

U.S. Open Championship 2022

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Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

The Country Club

Hayden Buckley

Flash Interview



THE MODERATOR: Hayden Buckley, 2-under 68. Hayden, 68-68, two rounds in the 60s to start the U.S. Open. You must be feeling pleased.

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Yeah, it feels great. I think it's funny, we've looked at the last -- I've missed six of the last seven cuts, and every week I think 2- and 3-under a day was right there in top 10, top 15.

We've been talking about it for the last few weeks, how simple it is to go out and make less bogeys, make a lot of pars and find a few birdies. Today I was 2-over through, I think, 11 holes and still felt fine. Made a little late charge there and made a few birdies coming in.

I think the biggest thing is just patience. We've kind of learned that more than ever. Missing six and seven cuts, it's hard to have patience, I think, but understanding that if we have patience, we'll find something good soon, and here it is.

THE MODERATOR: Most people are finding the front a little easier. You had four birdies between 12 and 18. What was working well on that stretch?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I just hit a few more fairways. I think early I missed a few fairways to the right. Yesterday was a little left miss.

I also think the storm came through at on hole 10 and calmed it down a little bit, so maybe it was just weather. I don't particularly think any side is harder. I think they're all the same. They're just fairways and greens and holes, and I think I've played some both pretty similar. I think I got a little lucky with weather and just made it count.

Q. I know last year you had a good opening round at the U.S. Open and struggled the second round. What was better this year than last year, and did you learn anything from what happened last year?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Yeah, I think last year I shot 2-under in the first round, I think we were 2 back, and at Torrey I went out there, I think it was a quick turnaround maybe the

late-early side of the wave and just missed a lot of fairways. Again, I think I missed almost every fairway in that second round and just couldn't play.

I think this week I've found enough to make birdies, but my putting has just changed a lot. I've gotten a lot better speed with a putter change this week, and I feel a lot more confident inside of 10 feet, and that's kind of been my struggle all year.

Q. Last year in the second round do you feel like there were any nerves that got to you?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: No, I think it was just -- that second round was at 7:30 in the morning. It was kind of cold. , kind of similar to yesterday's round. I played my shot, and I missed too many fairways. That was the bottom line. I really didn't hit it bad. I just missed enough fairways to really struggle.

I think it was a little bit of maturity. I needed to really grow up and kind of learn how to grind a little bit more. That's something that we did today. Again, 2-over through 11 and fought back and found a way.

Q. Just a little background on you. We saw that you got your card by showing up at a Korn Ferry in the dark, not really knowing if you were going to make the field, and then you won. What's the leap of faith you have to make there to show up in the dark and not even know if you're going to play?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I mean, luckily I lived an hour south, which was nice, but I had played pretty decent. That was the two-year-long season. I had played about five or six events and thought I played well enough to get in that event.

I worked really hard that winter. That was something with the move to south Florida, just really working hard over the winter.

I know from experience what one week can do. I think you see it every week. You see it from guys that qualified this week and made cuts. Everybody is improving their



professional status, and I think about that tournament a lot. I actually watched the video. I won in a playoff. Made about a 15-footer, but I watch that video a lot just to remind myself of what it took that week. It was a grind, and showing up on that range and what that felt like, and I don't ever want that again.

Q. What did it take besides showing up on the range? What was the highlight besides winning itself?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: You know, similar to this week, I made a lot of pars that week. I really grinded it out. I want to say maybe 10-under won that tournament, and I think I had the most pars in the field that week.

So just remembering, it's not as easy on Korn Ferry now. I think you've got to shoot 20-under almost every week, but reminding myself out here how good 2- and 3-under is, I am making a lot of pars. Avoiding bogeys and just waiting for birdies has kind of been my mental strategy for the last few weeks.

Q. As a high school player, you were barely good enough to get into the team. Can you tell us about that and how you've gone from that position so being in contention at the U.S. Open going into the weekend?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Yeah, I played baseball most of my life, so I didn't get recruited much out of high school. The two local colleges just kind of told me that I wasn't going to play on their team.

I kept working hard and kind of got lucky with the University of Missouri. My swing coach knew the coach and pretty much offered me a walk-on spot without watching me play golf, but that was because of word of mouth that I worked hard, so I remember that a lot.

That was an opportunity where even in college I studied hard because I thought I'd be working post-college. I struggled really my first two years. I got hurt my sophomore year of college. I didn't really understand what taking care of your body was, and I finally learned all these things, and it all came together my senior year.

I won four times. Our team struggled a little bit at times, but I knew if I kept going, that I'd have an opportunity to play for a living.

I actually did an internship after my senior year that summer, I worked in a hospital for a few months, and I realized it just wasn't for me, and that made me work even harder.

I think once you realize this is what you want, you've just

got to go after it.

Q. What do your high school and college teammates say when you speak to them now?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: One of them is actually here. One of my college teammates is here this week, and they're all proud of me. A lot of them, it's pretty consistent, they knew. They always say they knew I had it in me just because of how hard I worked.

I didn't know that. I didn't know that until about senior year of college, but knowing that those people still believed in me, it's a great feeling.

Q. What does it say about the level of competition that you guys face week in, week out on the PGA TOUR that you've missed so many cuts recently and then you come here and start winning -- or are in contention?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Again, my ball-striking has been so good, and I think that's honestly what wins tournaments. At the same time I've been struggling with the putter and figuring it out this week, but I really feel like the confidence never went away because of how good the ball-striking was.

I think I'm top-12 in driving and top-30 in greens in regulation, so there was just a little something mentally off, and I got that fixed with Scott Fawcett the week after Colonial. We went out there, and we worked on course strategy, and the next week I qualified for this. The next week I missed the cut by one at the RBC, but things started to get better.

I kind of realized that there was a little bit of course strategy issue, and that was it.

Q. Going back to what you just mentioned, what did you study in college? What did you think you'd be doing right now?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I was a health science major. I tried to be an engineer for a year. That didn't work out. I was looking at healthcare administration.

I did an internship in a hospital, and he was great, and he had a great time, he said, but I didn't enjoy it. It was a quick no more of this, let's get to golf.

I ended up graduating that next fall and then missing at Korn Ferry Q-school and going to Canada the next spring. Canada changed my career. Finished sixth up there and got to Korn Ferry finals. Obviously Sarasota, the win in the playoff changed everything as well.

Q. If you could refresh my memory in the playoff at Columbus, were you first to putt? Did you hit a long one, or did you have the short one?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I birdied the first with David Lingmerth and then we went to the 20-footer, and he was probably 12 feet out or so.

We kind of both felt like if we're in and first alternate that we'd probably get in, but I didn't really want to risk it, and it was nice to see a putt go in.

Q. How long have you been watching the U.S. Open?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I don't watch golf. I don't really enjoy watching golf. It's just for me I like to play golf and go home and hang out with my fiance and our dog, and I just don't watch golf. I'm out here all day, I just don't want to watch it.

Q. I mean as a kid. Did you ever watch it as a kid?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Not really. Again, baseball was my passion. I thought I'd be in the MLB right now, but at 5'11" and 150 pounds --

Q. You've got two jobs now that aren't golf that you've come across, right?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Yeah. I had dreams, but those were crushed pretty early.

Q. What kind of engineer?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: I didn't know. I thought it sounded cool, so I signed up for it, and the classes were so hard, I had to get out.

Q. What was the one that just kicked you out of it?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: Oh, gosh, probably taking chemistry and calculus in the same semester. I barely passed, I think, that semester and knew it wasn't for me.

Q. What's the dog's name?

HAYDEN BUCKLEY: It's Macy. Macy is the best. We had her out a lot on Korn Ferry last year. We need to get her out this weekend probably.

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