

U.S. Junior Amateur Championship

Friday, July 20, 2018

Akshay Bhatia

Quick Quotes

Q. It was one of those back-and-forth matches.

What do you think the difference was?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Man, it was a very, very tough battle today. He hit some shots that were great; he made a lot of putts.

So just 18, just hitting that fairway was huge for me. I actually played the last hole -- I think I hit 9-iron from 172, so that's how pumped up I was.

Hit a really good shot on 17; unfortunate lie. Bogey, and you can't do anything about it.

Just really glad to be in the semis.

Q. How exciting is it to be this far at this point?

AKSHAY BHATIA: It's great. I mean, I still have a match to go, so hopefully I'll get that done. Cole Hammer is a phenomenal player, as everyone knows.

But to be here right now is pretty special.

Q. You've had a good run over the last year. What were your expectations coming in here?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Definitely just to get deep in this. I mean, stroke play I played really solid; match play I knew I was hard to beat if I'm hitting it the way I am.

High expectations for sure, but anything can happen in match play. Just staying in the moment and trusting every shot was big.

Q. Not much was known about your opponent, at least in these circles. Did you know anything about him?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I had no clue who he was. I mean, he qualified obviously, so I mean, that shows a lot of strength out of the player. Like I said, he played some great golf today. It was probably just nerves got the best of him just because he hasn't been in a position like this.

I was fortunate enough to play couple big events, and when I needed to make putts or when I needed to do something under pressure I did it.

Q. Were there one or two shots that you think swung the match?



AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, 14.

Q. Uh-huh.

AKSHAY BHATIA: He hit it left and then he hit it -- punched out and then hit it to like four, five feet.

I'm in the middle of the fairway thinking, Okay, this is a green light. I flag it, it goes long. That hole you cannot go long no matter what.

I'm thinking over that shot, There is no way I'm getting this within 12 feet. Like there is no shot. I mean, the shot I hit was just incredible. I mean, I hit it a foot and it went to three inches. That's something you just can't teach, honestly.

That was a really big shot.

Q. What kind of lie and what club did you use there?

AKSHAY BHATIA: It was just off the green. It was like in the rough. There is a huge (indiscernible) kind of there, or a backstop, and I landed it a foot in the first cut. Ended up releasing and almost went in, which was nice.

And then 16th hit it left. That was in the fairway. Hit pitching wedge; two-putted. That kind of -- being 1-up with two to play is key. Really good.

Q. Yeah. And then you had what looked like about a 40-footer for birdie here on 18 and got it pretty close. Did you have a good feel when you were over that putt?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, I just told myself, You just have to embrace the nerves. That's all you can do. Everyone is human. So I just told myself, Embrace the nerves, trust this putt, and hopefully you'll get it close or it'll go in.

I'm just glad I lagged it up there.

Q. Where is your confidence heading into this afternoon?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I know I'm hitting it really well and I know I can read these greens really good. My caddie, like I said, is a phenomenal person, so I'm pretty confident. It's going to be a tough match again against Cole, so hopefully I'll get it done.

