

U.S. Junior Amateur Championship

Saturday, July 21, 2018

Akshay Bhatia

Quick Quotes

Q. Obviously not the outcome you wanted. First off, thoughts on the match and the week.

AKSHAY BHATIA: I mean, I played great for a lot of holes; he just played a little better. I had a couple opportunities to square the match and I didn't execute it.

But I'm really happy that Michael won. He really deserved it. He played great golf. He stayed very patient and very confident the whole match.

Q. That's a lot of golf to play in one week. How were you feeling coming into the back nine?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I mean, I was feeling fine. Once I birdied 11 I knew I haven't trailed in this match the whole day. Kind of tried to tell myself that.

Then the putt on 12 he made was big. I mean, for me to not make that one was disappointing, especially because the reachable par-4.

He hit some great shots down the stretch. I can't take that away from him.

Q. How did you keep your energy up during this long of a stretch?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Just drink a lot of water. I mean, so much adrenaline going on you really don't get tired honestly. I just ate, I drank a lot of water, I really did everything I could do to try and win the championship.

Unfortunately it's not the case, but I got two more years.

Q. You already had qualified for the Am, and obviously now you're exempt anyway. What do you need to do to prepare for that?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Just go back, relax, hang out with some friends. Kind of take some down time off. Pebble is going to be a very challenging golf course and my game is obviously where I want it to be.

So, I mean, just sharpen up a couple things, and hopefully I can get it done there.

Q. Is there one thing you can take back from this week that you'll take there?



AKSHAY BHATIA: I mean, everything about this week was pretty memorable. First off, being in the finals and having crowds and cameras all over you, it's something new. I think that was pretty cool to experience.

Q. Coming into this week was it your expectation to be in the finals?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Definitely. Last year I was nowhere close to the player I am now. And especially coming in as the No. 1 junior in the world it's something that you expect to do.

To get this far, even though I battled it out in two matches, yeah, I did expect it.

Q. What do you think the biggest difference is between your game last year and this year?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Definitely more confident in everything I've done. A lot of hard work. I mean, I've put so much effort and time into all facets of the game to become the No. 1 player in the world.

Q. And then coming to 18 tee, down by one, what's your mindset?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I mean, the same thing: just take one shot at a time. If I birdie it's going to win the hole most likely. If I par, maybe win the hole with the nerves.

He handled it very well obviously and lagged it up to a foot.

Q. Is there one shot from today that you could take back and redo?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Definitely 12 I could take back, and 17 I could take back.

I mean, what can you do?

Q. And next year you'll still be a junior. Do you intend to come back?

AKSHAY BHATIA: 100% I do.

Q. Overall, what has this whole experience meant to you this week?

AKSHAY BHATIA: It's meant so much. The amount of support I've had over the week and the amount of texts I've gotten from all my best friends, it's pretty nice.

I got a year to go, and hopefully I'll qualify for the U.S. Open the hard way.

Q. Were you surprised that you were leading by as much as you were as quickly as you were?

AKSHAY BHATIA: 100%. I mean, I hit great shots. I should have been 6-, 7-up through the first 5, or 6-up through 6. I hit so many quality golf shots, and my putter just wasn't hot today. You can't control that. It's golf.

I mean, I wasn't surprised at all. I should have been more up than two, but it's all right.

Q. And were you using the wedge around green the whole week on some of the shots that you had in the morning round that you had a little trouble with?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I don't quite understand.

Q. You had a couple of wedge shots around this green where you were trying to bump and run the ball. Had you been using the wedge primarily around the greens?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, around here it's kind of 50/50 with putting versus chipping.

I mean, if you're in that first cut you basically have to chip in. You don't know how that's going to react out of the rough with a putter.

Yeah, I did chip a lot this week and I hit a lot of the great shots.

Q. You talked a little about how you have changed in the past year. How has he changed in the last year?

AKSHAY BHATIA: I mean, I played with him once last year. He played really well. I mean, kid stripes the ball. He clutched up when he needed to.

I mean, I'm so proud of him. To beat all these great players, including myself, to come back after being 2-down through 18, it's something awesome. He's going to go far, I can tell you that. He has everything that you need to be a great golfer.

Q. And then you guys are both in the 2020 class. What does that say about your class as a whole?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, it's crazy. I mean, 2020 is one of the strongest classes you'll ever get. Me and Carl, him now, I mean, you have so many rising superstars that can do some great stuff.

It really says a lot knowing that we can perform against older people or even collegiate players.