

THE ASCENDANT
presented by Blue

ROUND 1 QUICK QUOTES
July 10, 2025

MICHAEL JOHNSON (-5)



Q. Michael, great round and tied for the clubhouse lead right now. Just walk me through a couple of the highlights today, bogey free with five birdies.

MICHAEL JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, I think I hit every green. I'll have to check, but asked my caddie on 16 if I hit every green, he said he'll tell me after the round, so I'm assuming I did. Maybe missed one, I don't know.

Yeah, pretty solid day. Birdies on the front, trouble par 4, hit it in the bunker, made a good bunker shot to three feet. Then I birdied the next par 5, I think that's No. 5, easy up-and-down, hit it greenside. And then next hole's kind of a drivable par 4, hit a great chip to about four feet. And then I know I said drivable a bunch, but it can get pretty tough after that. It all depends on the wind.

Today was decent wind for me, I kind of liked the direction. And I only played probably three holes when it was really pumping so I was fortunate to tee off when I did. Just solid day. Yeah, pretty solid.

Q. You're someone who's been here a couple times.

MICHAEL JOHNSON: Yeah, I think it's my fifth time. I mean, it's nice, people treat us great. It doesn't really fit my eye, honestly, but if you play well they give you points. Not that it isn't a nice place, it just doesn't really fit my eye. I'm more I would say traditional. I like some of the pot bunkers out there that make you really respect the tee shots. You've got to challenge them and hit a great tee shot or you've just got to respect them and lay up short. I like that a lot, I will say.

Yeah, fifth time here, I know my way around. I haven't really played well here so today was nice to get off to a good start.

Q. Even though it may not suit your eye particularly, but just as a whole is it just a course that is more demanding than probably most out here?

MICHAEL JOHNSON: Certain tee shots are definitely demanding, like No. 4 is definitely a good tee shot. And it's all wind dependent. Like if you're downwind on 17, a lot easier. Into the wind you've got to hit a really good drive or you've got to respect that bunker and lay up short. 18's a tough fairway to hit. It might not fit my eye because I've never played well here.

Yeah, I mean, played well, no complaints.

Q. On 18 with the wind, what did you have left?

MICHAEL JOHNSON: I had, I think I had 140 hole barely in the rough. Tried to hit a 110-yard gap wedge but at elevation, 140 is, 140 minus 14 is 126, tried to land it a little short. So that's another thing, you've got to deal with the elevation. For someone like me being from Alabama, we're at like 700 feet and here's Mile High City, so 5,280 feet.

Q. The wind from prior to the suspension to after is basically 180 degrees difference?

MICHAEL JOHNSON: It's funny, the wind on 16 was the same as I hit, not as strong, and then we get on 17, I hit downwind, and then 30 seconds later into the wind. So I got to play 17 and 18 downwind, which is a huge advantage. Even though I missed the fairway on both of them, but I had wedge into both of them, so if you play those holes into the wind, it's a lot harder.

Q. And how do you feel like your season to date, you're kind of getting in the mix as we get here at the end of the season?

MICHAEL JOHNSON: Yeah, I've had I would say one chance to win, which is always good. Had a top-5 finish, never thought I was going to win that one, Trace played really well.

No, I'm happy. I think I've secured my Korn Ferry so I think that's kind of the first milestone and then go from there. No, I'm happy. I mean, made a bunch of cuts. Even the cuts I've missed, I think I've missed two or three by one, so it's been good golf. I think that can be more frustrating at times when you're close. So yeah, I'm happy. I mean, just trying to fairways, greens, putts, simple stuff.

Q. What would you say like the process for you has been over the last, you know, couple years being out here kind of full time?

MICHAEL JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, 2019 was a tough year, missed a lot of cuts by a lot, then missed Q-School and then COVID, missed the (indiscernible) season, so I had a lot of time to get ready. Then got status, conditional status back in 2022, played decent in '23, I think I finished like 70 -- I was either 76 or 77, so just missed out. That was OK, I knew I was going to get some starts. I played pretty good last year at times. I just went through a stretch where I'd miss like three out of six cuts. It's just tough to get up there in the top-20 when you do that. Not that you can't miss cuts, but I would say it's really important when you're up there to stay up there. It's the way the points are set up are top heavy, which I don't have an opinion on whether they should be or not, I've never tried to do that. You've just got to take advantage of your good weeks.

Q. And what do you think you've improved the most in from that stretch?

MICHAEL JOHNSON: I would say my short game's gotten a lot better. Not really scared to miss a green as much as I was. I had some issues with that. And then putting's gotten real solid. I've fallen in love with putting a little bit so it's been fun to practice. Definitely I would say my driving accuracy is better from previous years. I was always just like, if I hit it well off the tee, I played well. If not, missed cut.

So it's been a lot better, a lot more accurate, which you can definitely feel more relaxed knowing you're going to hit some fairways. I still have days that I miss fairways, but it's golf, it's a hard game.