

**ROUND 4 PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**SAMI VALIMAKI ( -23)**



**MODERATOR:** We would like to welcome Sami Valimaki into the interview room, our 2025 RSM Classic champion. He becomes the fifth straight first-time winner at the RSM Classic, and he moves to No. 51 in the FedExCup Fall standings.

Sami, congratulations on your first PGA TOUR victory and becoming the first player from Finland ever to win on Tour. Can we get your thoughts?

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Of course, thank you. I mean, yeah, it has been a great week. I can't much say more than that. Yeah, pretty speechless, but it feels great.

**MODERATOR:** Let's go back to the 16th hole, a par that you will remember for a long time. If you can take us through that hole and that 19-foot putt for par.

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah. Chipping hasn't been my kind of favorite shot and I haven't used this week much about it. I just felt like today only comfortable was with my putter, so I thought OK, let's give it a go outside the green and just give me the chance to make a 4. After Patrick had a similar line from there, I had a good read on that, dead center, so it felt great.

**Q. Sami, congratulations. What's it mean, you alluded in your post-round around the green, but to be the first PGA TOUR winner from Finland and to be able to kind of inspire kids in Finland to chase dreams of playing professional golf?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, I just wanted to have, show the people it's possible from there. Of course I want to have just more golfers for the golf in Finland, that's my main goal. If young (audio difficulty.)

**Q. How does Finland and where you're from compare to a place like Sea Island?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Completely different.

**Q. How so?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, I mean, we have more kind of forest and a lot of lakes. I mean, of course in the south and west side there is an ocean, but other than that, if you go even 100 miles from the Helsinki to north there is no more sea anymore.

**Q. And then if I could follow up, I know you're not that old but was there ever a point in your career, whether it be professional or amateur, was there ever a point where**

**you didn't think that you would get here as a PGA TOUR winner?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, I mean, my goal was kind of just to be DP World Tour player and win over there. I did it in fifth tournament over there and after that I feel like that was it, that was kind of like to drive me. And then kind of the opportunity '23 came up, that first top-10 from there (indiscernible) over here and that kind of gives me the new motivation to get those top-10 cards. And then last two years has been just my main goal, get the win over here.

**Q. Sami, the runner-up finish in Mexico a few weeks ago and the Mexico Open a year ago, do you look back at that? Was it disappointing at the time or was it kind of motivation that you were getting close?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, I would say the first one was disappointing. I feel like that was in my hands, but then it a little bit kind of slipped away. Two weeks ago, kind of didn't have a chance. Even I was kind of close, but I feel like Ben, he made those putts what I did today and I kind of needed that. And of course my thing was just to make it for the next year, and then Mexico, just get away from that. I feel like that was kind of a good week.

**Q. You already locked up your status for Europe (inaudible)?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, yeah, I kind of like that was the week before the Mexico tournament, it kind of came up because I think I finished 114, 115. Made it, so it was a little tight in there, yeah.

**Q. Do you have a relationship with Mikko Ilonen at all? Do you know him? Have you talked to him or met him?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, we've met. Of course I think he was actually my first celebration dinner after my first win 2020. He was doing a little bit managing stuff, he already kind of finished his career. After that when the COVID hit I haven't seen him much, but we still, we're talking and having some fun golf (inaudible.)

**Q. I wonder, did he give you any words of wisdom, advice, anything in particular that you can recall?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** I think early when I kind of getting in the DP World Tour, I would always call him and ask how you should do it or whatever, but he kind of say as well that you have to learn by your own way. I feel like that's good advice as well. When you do little mistakes or find the good ways to do it, that kind of gives you confidence, especially when you're doing the right things.

**Q. And who was your hero in golf growing up?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** I really didn't have any. No, I don't. I have to say, I mean, Tiger Woods, of

course he was in early 2000 when I was born, what I remember from that, but no.

**Q. What was it like having a few guys from Finland here to celebrate with you kind of on the green when you walked off?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, I mean, it has been awesome. They came on Thursday on the first tee and I knew they coming. Been here the whole week, and the last four days similar waves. Yeah, of course a lot of good friends of mine and we're going to have a good time.

**Q. And last year could you describe what you were doing on this Sunday of this tournament a year ago when you were kind of sweating the bubble but you weren't here?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, I was in a bubble with a newborn baby, so I kind of had new things in my life. Of course I wanted to keep my card, but I just couldn't do it at that time, just need to wait.

**Q. How did you get started in the game? Tell me about the course where you grew up playing.**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, I have to say my father took me to the range and that kind of started my golf. I had two really good friends starting to play same time and we would like first, five, six years, all the summers just the three of us just playing a lot, a lot of golf. Then kind of from that I started playing more competitions and that's how I got into it.

**Q. How old were you when you started?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** I think I was 5. I get my kind of green card, I was ready to get it when I was 6 but my pro, he said that you need to be able to ride, so it took one more year when he kind of really gave me the opportunity to have to do the ruling thing where you need to have those answers.

**Q. When did you think this might be a career and when did you start thinking about the PGA TOUR?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, I think 2018 was kind of the first. That was my last year as an amateur, I turned pro early 2019. But not much before that.

My main goal was playing NHL, that was kind of my whole idea, but they didn't pick me in the national team. So they picked me on the golf national team, so I said OK, let's give it a go for this one, and this road has been working out as well.

**Q. I was actually going to ask about hockey, and your brother obviously plays at a very high level.**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Cousin.

**Q. How was your hockey game? What position did you play and how would you describe yourself on the ice?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, I was center, forward. I had a good shoot. I feel like I had a good chance over there. I feel I need a bit more speed, especially now when you look, the guys are just so good. But I feel like I had still a good career over there if I had been given the go.

**Q. Just staying with hockey for a minute, is your cousin still with Utah?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, he's Utah, but his knee's a little issue so he hasn't been able to play this year.

**Q. So when you're developing as a golfer, I'm just curious, what did hockey players in Finland think about golf? What was their perception of golf?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** A lot of them, I would say most of them like to play golf so that's a nice thing. I would say there's many of those guys have been watching today.

**Q. Secondly, with this first Tour win to go on with two in Europe, what is in your sights next? What would you like to achieve next?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** I would say my main goal is still kind of get those Signature tournaments, play over there and get the four major kind of really on my calendar because I mean, of course you can say my target's winning the majors, but still I need to get them kind of every year in my calendar. Now it's just kind of exemption for the PGA or Masters. I never played even Masters so it's hard to say that that's my goal to win. So I feel like next step is try to make the top-50 and get in all the bigger tournaments in my calendar.

**Q. You get into a couple of the Signature Events for finishing in the Aon Next 10. What do you think that means to you to be in those big money events, some of them no cut?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, of course that was the goal for the week, to make it inside top-60 and get in those first two events. After that I at least can kind of prepare for them, play the first three and then probably get into Pebble Beach and Genesis if I'm right. Those are going to be kind of the first five tournaments.

**Q. What were some of the emotions you were feeling coming down the stretch? There were some guys coming, charging behind you.**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah, I knew because the wind wasn't blowing that much like in the first 12 holes, so I was actually surprised no one didn't come earlier into kind of, kind of gave me the pressure. So I was actually pretty happy to see I was still 1 ahead for the guys and still

had a 15 to play for, and then I knew it, I just got to make the birdie over here and then try to keep it for the last three for the pars.

**Q. What do you think the celebration will be like back home for this win?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** I think it's going to be good. Of course it's starting to be nighttime over there, but some of them will have a good time even today.

**Q. Thinking back to Winged Foot when you made basically your first trip to America for The Open in '20, and if I remember correctly, you ran into Tiger and didn't talk to him, you just smiled at him. Do you remember that?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** I just remember that, that was kind of funny thing for me. I was at the range and suddenly there was all the cameras was coming in. I was like OK, there might be someone else coming, they're not coming to take the pictures for me, and then I saw Tiger was hitting half an hour next to me the ball. It was cool.

**Q. I only mention that, at what point did you have a sense of belonging out here, that you were good enough to be playing?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** I feel like last year Torrey Pines, and then there was some other decent finish before the Mexico. I felt like then I knew my game belongs over here and that kind of I feel like that gave me the boost for the last year's Mexico tournament.

**Q. And then lastly, going back to your youth, you had mandatory military service, right?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah.

**Q. How long did that last? What was that like?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** So you're going to go in, I was kind of in the sports army so they had a little bit more freedom for us. Like we could practice after the days, or then if you needed to do like a one week practice, then you have to arrange it with them, with the people.

So you're going to go there. First two months you don't even know if you're going to be six, nine or 12 months, so they're going to tell you. No chance to -- of course you can try to get it in six months, but they don't tell you.

**Q. Did you get the six?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** I got the six, yeah.

**Q. Did you shoot anything? What was the worst part of it, or the hardest part of it?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** I would say, I mean right now I feel like that was the best part, but in that time we were staying two weeks in the middle of the forest and it was minus 20, 25 degrees, of course in Celsius, so I don't know how much is that. But just living in a tent two weeks in a row, I feel like that was hard time over there. Now if you think back, that was the best two weeks.

**Q. What's the coldest you've ever been on a golf course?**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** A couple times in Scotland, those tournaments, they are cold over there.

**Q. Must have felt like a breeze.**

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Yeah.

**MODERATOR:** Sami, congratulations once again.

**SAMI VALIMAKI:** Thank you.