

ROUND 1 QUICK QUOTES
February 19, 2026

AKSHAY BHATIA (-3)



Q. Akshay, played well again. Just kind of what did you like about your game today?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, I mean, pretty stress free minus a couple holes on the back. Was playing very tough. Had all the elements today, wind, sunshine, rain. So yeah, I mean, controlled the golf ball pretty well and made some really nice four- to five-footers today.

Q. What did you learn just from the final round at Pebble and going through that experience and contending again?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, I played great Sunday. Just hard, you know. It's hard to make putts out there when it's blowing hard and greens are slower. Honestly, yeah, I mean, there was two shots that I think weren't great, but all in all, you know, I talked to Joe, my caddie, and we just like, we're trying to figure out is there anything I could have done different and there really wasn't.

Q. So what do you do during the break, between the weather delay? I mean, how do you handle that?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, like played cards for about an hour. Ate food, hung out, and then did some stretching and tried to just loosen back up and get ready to go back.

Q. Is it difficult to kind of ramp back up quickly?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Not too bad, no. I mean, it was -- you know, we had plenty of time, we knew how much time we had and we were only off the golf course for a couple hours so it's not like your mind really shifts too much.

Q. You've spent a lot more time around Tiger in recent months, whether it be at Hero or TGL or this week. Does playing in this tournament knowing that he's hosting it and that he was here earlier and he'll be here to hand out the trophy, as much as you may like to treat this like any other tournament, does that inside kind of elevate maybe the want or desire to win this week?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Obviously it's like a bonus with Tiger here, and it's really cool just to be with one of my idols.

But yeah, it's cool. This event, I've heard so many great things about Riviera first of all. Obviously played here last year but at Torrey Pines. It's just a really cool experience that Tiger does, Genesis, everyone involved with this tournament. So regardless if it's here or



whatever, a TGL match, I just want to win regardless of who's here.

Q. Also your stature within the game and the PGA TOUR is growing seemingly by the week. At some point you'll probably have a big say in where the Tour goes. Do you have anything that you're super partial to just in terms of maybe what you want to see the schedule look like or whatever?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Not really. Only a couple things when it comes to like certain things that I think can help grow the game, whether it's some YouTube stuff or just different things where people can really see our personalities. That's kind of where I feel like I can help a little bit just because I'm more engaged with, you know, social media.

And so any talk I've had with Brian Rolapp has been mostly about that and I leave the bigger stuff up to all the bigger guys.

Q. Is that story true? Did you text Brad and John when they were down at Dye Preserve and set that up with you and Sahith?

AKSHAY BHATIA: We kind of all set it up. I mean, me and Sahith were planning to play and then they wanted to do a match. So it was great, perfect timing and it was a lot of fun.

Q. What did you learn from Sunday at Pebble?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Played great. You know, it's hard to obviously have a lead. It's hard when it's blowing that hard. Greens got slower and didn't hit many bad shots. Hit one shot maybe. Just seeing one putt go in really changes the momentum there, but all in all it was a great week. Played great, just Collin played really good.

Q. Is it one of those things where you want to get back out immediately? Did it take a minute to kind of digest that and come back out? Like what was the mindset as you flipped?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, a bit of both. I mean, frustrated like -- frustrated in a sense of like I feel like I'm playing good golf, but at the same time Joe reminds me, he's like, dude, we've lost to four people in two weeks out of, you know, call it 200-plus players.

Again, I know I'm playing good. It's fun obviously being towards that side of the wave versus missing a couple cuts or not playing great.

Q. I know you believe you can contend every week but now kind of putting multiple weeks together where you're up there, is that just kind of where you feel like you're progressing and what you feel like is kind of the embodiment of where your game's at right now?

AKSHAY BHATIA: Yeah, just have an idea with my golf game, I feel like everything's



coming together. This is what's great about this game. I mean, I played not great the first couple weeks and here I am kind of starting to catch a little bit of a stride. So it's fun just being -- you know, playing good golf and trying to eliminate mistakes.

