

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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CAMIKO SMITH

MODERATOR: Like to welcome Camiko Smith to the interview room here at the 2024 Butterfield Bermuda Championship.

Camiko, you're making your third start in the event, won the local qualifier to get in. What was that pressure like in the local qualifier for you to make it to this tournament?

CAMIKO SMITH: Pretty interesting. Last year, this year it's been pretty interesting. Been kind of -- my coach (indiscernible) searching for my game and last year's qualifier I was leading it and I gave it away.

Ended up caddying for George, which was a great opportunity, a lot of learning. Come full circle leading up to this qualifier. I had plans I was not giving it away this year. So we went out, shot 3 under the first round and finished 1 under for the total event.

So it means a lot. Just everything clicked at the right times. I'm happy to be here again. Third time is usually a charm as they say, yeah. And it's right in my neighborhood, too. Port Royal's my backyard, front yard, home, hill community. This is home. Pretty special.

MODERATOR: You mentioned missing last year and that was obviously gut wrenching, but you did say you ended up caddying for George Bryan in the tournament. What was that experience like and what did you take away from that that might help you this week?

CAMIKO SMITH: The experience was great, just to be back inside the ropes. I know I'm a player but at the same time I'm happy to be on George's bag, he's a great guy. But the experience itself was just learning patience, being very patient, one shot at a time, you belong out there.

Yeah, seeing that, and caddied for him again in more events, same thing. Seeing that I'm capable of doing the exact same thing these guys are doing if I just keep working hard at it. A lot of good positive learning, good vibes.

MODERATOR: In the previous five editions of the Butterfield Bermuda Championship, there's been 14 different Bermudans playing in this event, including yourself. None of them have made the cut as yet. Is this going to be the year that this happens and how meaningful would that be for you to be that one?

CAMIKO SMITH: It would mean a lot, making the cut. That's what we want to do in these Tour events is take advantage of the opportunities, make the cut. This being home, it would be very, very special. Like very special. I mean, for Bermuda, a small place, like I said, this is



home so it would mean a lot to do this, make the weekend. If all of us make it, even better. But if I get through -- well, plan on getting through, it would mean a lot.

MODERATOR: Where else have you been playing? What sort of does your season look like this year?

CAMIKO SMITH: This year's been a bit rough. Financially, I haven't had the finances to really do what I wanted to do. Monday qualifiers, haven't been able to really do many. I've actually been -- I got over to the U.K., did British Open qualifying, was able to do European Tour Q-School. Some people chipped in, helped me out a little bit with that, so that was a big thing. Big learning experience.

Bumped into a caddie named Andy -- I hope he's watching, I hope he sees this -- he helped me a lot. Just slowed me down with things, helped me believe more that I can do this, I belong where I am.

And so I guess you could say a lot of different people that's added to the puzzle and really helped me along the way. Yeah, I was able to do that, then pretty much just get ready for this, the qualifier here. My mind was locked into this. After Q-School, I said let's go.

MODERATOR: What sort of crowds can we expect to see following you this week?

CAMIKO SMITH: From what I understand, my mom's been a big, big advocate this year. Well, every year, but she's been telling everybody come out. Hopefully it's a big crowd.

It would be nice to see more juniors come out, just more people in the early 20s getting into the game, coming out. Bermuda is a small place, usually pick up things a little later. So it seems to be like golf is booming in Bermuda now, seems to be on the uptick so it's a positive.

And yeah, being a local professional, I hope they come out, see us play, see what we do and hope it inspires them to want to play some more. It doesn't have to be professionally, but if it can just inspire them to come out, play, be part of the game, be outside, be outdoors and just enjoy the atmosphere, it would be great.

MODERATOR: Do you feel a responsibility to be an inspiration for them having said all that?

CAMIKO SMITH: I do, actually. I do. It's -- again, it's a tiny island, we play golf, it's a hobby here. One of few playing professionals who's actually taken it further. Michael Sims took it far, Kim Swan played on the European Tour back there, he's a trailblazer. You look up to these guys. So kind of take it a step further. Even Oliver when he played last year, he's been playing since he was 9 and watching him come up and just pushing him, try to inspire him. And his sister's playing. Just trying to bring up a new generation that you can play at this level. Just because you come from a tiny island doesn't mean you can't play at the big level.



MODERATOR: You mentioned a small island, it's kind of a hobby for a lot of kids, but how did you get involved in it and sort of what other sports did you play and what made you choose that direction with golf?

CAMIKO SMITH: So my grandparents, they're probably for fortune tellers I would say, but they have a house next to No. 4. Basically, that's it. We have a house next to 4. I used to jump over the fence, come over and hit a few balls. But before that, several people that's actually played a big role, I need to touch on it.

Yeah, it's a good bit of people, but Daymon Bean, a family friend, he used to come into our yard, it's a family yard so everybody comes into the neighborhood. Used to hit balls. A really good golfer, great ball-striker. We used to have a chair on the water catch that's next to 4 if you look to your left, he used to try to hit the chair and he would bang, pelt the chair. I was like 6 years old watching that. Just the sound that it made, it was phenomenal.

I grew up, I played a little bit of cricket, did a lot of track and field. Running, my uncle's a top distance runner, Kevin Smith.

Yeah, there's been a good bit of people along the way. Teddy Greaves that used to work up here like 30 years ago. He was influential in giving me a golf club, taking me down to the driving range. I mean, I'm popping my head over the little counter at 9.

He could have told me to go home, but he took me out to the driving range, gave me a golf club, bucket of balls and said, "Fire it." From there he gave me access to the club. He used to take me out every now and then when he could.

Yeah, a big, big thanks to him because I don't think I would have been -- I would have had access. Nobody really -- nobody in my family had membership to a golf course, but it's right here and I'm 39 now and I look at it and say, well, here we are. I mean, took it a long way. I took it further than people thought I would have taken it. Just want to keep going with it. Yeah, really happy.

Q. So having grown up playing on the course, do you remember like how old you were when you first played it?

CAMIKO SMITH: My mom says I was 2. I don't remember anything at 2. Between 9 and 12. I used to sit out on the fourth hole at the old golf course, the streetlight and pretty much just practice. I'd take the club that Teddy gave me and work on my bunker, because I love bunkers. Used to work on my chip shots at night. I'd be out there, mom call me yelling. My sister can contest to that.

Yeah, so that's been it. It's just been a passion of mine since even '97 watching Tiger win the Masters. That was a big inspiration. I didn't really know what was going on, but watching him fist pump and that was exciting. Like hey, I want to do that.



And Daymon Bean pretty much told my mom about junior golf and got me involved with junior golf. A buddy of mine who used to live in the neighborhood used to play as well, so used to take us to junior golf at different places if my mom couldn't drop me or I had to catch the bus to get there. Yeah, around 9 to 12.

Q. So I know you played here a couple times now, but is it still really special to you that you're getting to play the course that you grew up on?

CAMIKO SMITH: Yeah, very, very special. Touched on Frankie Rabain used to be the head pro here, rest in piece. He -- I think if he would know this, he would be ecstatic. It's amazing to have this event here now. I mean, it would be awesome to see an LPGA event here, maybe a Senior Tour event, but definitely the yardages, it would be great to have it here.

Yeah, having this in my backyard is pretty, pretty special. I mean, literally walking through my neighborhood, walking the holes I used to play when I was younger, continue to see at night, even after junior golf, get dropped off at the gate, I walk in, tee off on No. 5, I go 4, 5, 4, 5, 4, 5 until it's 9:00 at night.

It's been nice. Pretty cool to see how far it's taken me. As Kobe says, see how far it can take you. You have a talent, see how far it can take us. As anybody, even what you do, see how far you can go.

Q. After caddying for George last year, how cool is it that you're getting to actually like play in the group with him and Wesley this year?

CAMIKO SMITH: It's pretty hilarious actually. Their mom came up to me and said hey, do you know your tee time? I'm like no, I haven't got it yet. She's like, I just got it, you're the third person with Wesley and George.

Pretty exciting, it's cool. We're all different personalities, so it's going to be a good vibe. I told George already last year, like, look, not on your bag, bro, I'm playing, I'm a player.

Being put together is pretty special. Those guys have been good to me, caddied for Wesley in Jacksonville at finals for Q-School, caddied for George at Myrtle Beach. So it's pretty cool, really, really cool. Looking forward to it.

Q. Do you guys, do you think you're going to be like the most talkative group out there?

CAMIKO SMITH: I don't know, that's a good question. I'm pretty quiet sometimes. I think we'll probably most likely give each other a little bit, a kick in the butt if things are going sour, but we'll get something going. We'll see.

Q. You mentioned it a little bit earlier, but I kind of think of Bermuda as a sneaky



great golf spot. Came here on a golf trip a couple years ago. I think there's a couple courses that people maybe don't have in their lexicon but are really great. How would you describe the courses and the golf culture here and how it has maybe changed throughout your life?

CAMIKO SMITH: Courses are phenomenal. Like you said, it is a hidden gem. A lot of people don't know about it until recently with George, Wesley coming here. It has been on the map, but now with the social media boom a lot more people are seeing it. Yourself, I'm sure.

Yeah, it's a hidden gem and it's literally two hours away from New York, Westchester. Bermuda, which is just come on board with me, help me out with my flights, they fly direct to Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando, to Westchester, Boston, Baltimore. It's a quick hop, you know. People don't realize that. It's faster to get from Bermuda to New York than it is to get from, let's see, what is it, the Vineyards. No, not the Vineyards. Going off form, sorry. Yeah, it's fast to get here, it's a good hop. Probably cut that out.

MODERATOR: Camiko, thanks a lot.

CAMIKO SMITH: Thank you.

