

**HAYDEN BUCKLEY**

**Sunday, December 15, 2024**

**Final Round – PGA TOUR Q-School presented by Korn Ferry (Final Stage)**

*On returning to the PGA TOUR…*

A big relief – you come into this week, and you can’t really think about playing into the top five. I know we talked on Thursday, and we talked about the top five, and you just can’t think about it too much. At the end of the day, I was in a place where I didn’t have any starts on any tour, so I just needed four good rounds. There was a time today where I felt it slipping away, but I had a great feeling this entire week from the second I stepped foot on the property. Just the vibes I have here – obviously the hole-in-one two years ago. I had a feeling all week. Everything felt right. I really hit the ball so well that it felt like I had to get through, but just down the stretch making putts, and knowing that I am back on the TOUR. I know that it won’t look the same by any means – I probably won’t get as many starts as I did last year, but I will take advantage of every opportunity I have, so it will be nice to go relax this holiday season knowing where I am going to be playing next year.

*On the feeling he had this week…*

I got here on Monday, I was practicing, and something felt a little different. It’s no secret that I played awful this year and really this whole entire fall season, I played really bad golf, but I knew I was so close to playing good golf. I put a brand-new driver in play, a brand-new 3-wood in play, and just what I saw from those – that was my whole week. I hit a lot of fairways, I’d have to look at the numbers, but I know I was pretty high up there in fairway percentage. It made these two golf courses a lot easier – playing out of fairways, not really hitting any penalty shots. I think I had one bad tee shot on Friday when it was so windy, but just getting it in play and giving myself chances, it made it a lot less stressful for me.

*On what Q-School can be compared to emotionally…*

It’s hard. The closest I’ve been was the runner-up at Sony and I felt a lot of nerves there, but at the same time, I knew a second-place or a top-five or a top-10 on TOUR is always great. Here, you are just fighting to have a season. It definitely felt different. I would say that it felt a lot better just knowing that I’ve been in a situation similar. It’s hard to compare to Q-School, but knowing that I have been in contention before, I’ve played on the TOUR for the last three years, it helped me a lot just coming down the stretch. I birded two of the last three, made three great putts on the last three holes. At the same time, that goes to a lot of hard work that I’ve been putting in on the putting green the last few weeks. I really just felt like myself again. I felt like my rookie season, the start of my second year on TOUR, I was really playing good golf and I felt like that again this week.

*On if finishing outside the top 150 in the FedExCup entered his mind this week…*

It definitely did leaving Sea Island. I understood that if I showed up here and didn’t play good golf that I would maybe get Korn Ferry [Tour] starts – maybe some past champion starts. It’s a pretty harsh reality check. You go from playing every week, playing in THE PLAYERS every year, really enjoying a lot of great golf tournaments, playing in the playoffs two of the three years on TOUR – next thing you know, you could have nothing. That’s not the best feeling in the world, but at the same time it motivated me. I think just showing up here, I felt comfortable no matter what happened. If I ended up on the Korn Ferry Tour, I was going to make the most of it and have a great season, but I ended up in the place I wanted to be. I feel like my mind was a lot more at ease this week, and again, it’s just from experience. I used to be the rookie, the guy that just got out here. The first time I tried Q-School I missed in Second Stage and it’s a terrible feeling. It was tough out there. These two golf courses were really hard, but I was really proud of what I saw.

*On what it means to be a PGA TOUR member…*

It’s everything you work for. If you’re out there for three years, you don’t ever imagine leaving. You don’t want to miss out on the opportunities, especially now. We are playing for huge purses, great golf courses. A lot of changes coming – you just want to be out there. Every guy here wants to be out there. Probably almost every kid in college that’s playing wants to be out here. It’s been a dream of mine forever and I don’t want to lose that again and I’m going to do everything I can this off-season to just be prepared for, hopefully, a much better season next year.