

LEGENDS Reno-Tahoe Open
Montreux Golf and Country Club
Reno, NV
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Pre-tournament quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH NOTAH BEGAY III

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Notah Begay into the interview room for a few minutes today. Notah, you are a past champion here, your general thoughts about the tournament and how you're playing.

NOTAH BEGAY: I think it's great that the tournament survived this long, I mean realistically, because I know they've faced some sponsorship issues and some date issues. I mean it's testament to the hard work of the organizers and the community, and finally they have a title sponsor. I think it's fantastic to have a chance to come back and try to recapture and relive the '99 memory.

THE MODERATOR: You've played a little on Tour this year. You've played in Europe. Can you talk about your season to this point?

NOTAH BEGAY: I kind of played a little bit of everywhere. By the end of the season, I think I will have played on six or seven different tours from the Golden State, Gateway, The Adams Series, to the European Tour, The PGA TOUR, Nationwide and a couple of State Opens, all in an effort to just keep the dream alive, so to speak. I haven't played very well, and I have been battling injury, so it's often difficult to find places to play.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Welcome back, Notah, how much of a special place in your heart does this tournament have?

NOTAH BEGAY: I think your first victory, I think most players will probably agree it's usually up there in the ranks of your most special one.

The only other thing that might precede that is maybe my first Major win, or the birth of my daughter. But other than that, this is up there. I can still remember what it felt like coming down the fairway on Sunday, with the first year of the event, and everybody was excited and just kind of a sign of relief. It's like, golly, I've worked all of these years and finally did it. It certainly is a special place for me.

Q. There is a lot of new blood with this tournament this year; a lot of new ideas, out on 16 they're going to be having a mariachi band, kind of a party out there on that par-3, are you more of a traditionalist, or do you like the idea of bringing in new ideas to kind of expand the game?

NOTAH BEGAY: I think golf is serious enough. The TOUR out here tends to get a little bit monotonous at times and repetitive. I think anything that tournaments can do to enhance the experience for the fans without compromising the atmosphere, the competitive atmosphere for the players is good.

These areas, Nevada, Las Vegas and Reno are places that creativity is supposed to be a real prominent feature of these places, so I'm ready to see some creativity.

I think there is a time and place for the quiet times and the traditional values and principles of the game, and those would be, you know, our big Invitational events and the Major championships.

Outside of those weeks, I think that it would be best for everybody involved to get as creative as possible.

Q. You talked a little bit about the injuries, can you talk about the state of your game also in terms of what you've been working on the most to get back?

NOTAH BEGAY: You know, my only goal this year, when January kicked off, and everybody else was playing, and I was sitting at home still hurting, was to be ready for Q-School and healthy. I'm well on my way.

I mean, I've seen some signs of life in my game. Coming out with an opening round 66 at Hartford. An opening round 67 at the AT & T National. But I followed those rounds up with poor performances. It's something that Tiger and I have talked about time and time again. He has been through this with me every step of the way, and has been one of my biggest supporters by telling me, you got to build it nine holes at a time. We joke now because I've gotten to 18. I just can't get to 27. Unfortunately we play 72-hole events. Unless I'm playing in the member/guest back home, I got along way to go. I feel better. I don't hurt in the morning. That's huge.

I had a big disk herniation, and I reinjured it last year in Italy at the Italian Open.

I really thought about hanging it up the last couple of years just because most guys out here at this level put a lot in and at least get two or three weeks of good play, and I haven't had a good week in two years. So sometimes I wonder why I'm still out here.

Q. A little bit of Stanford home week, you, Michelle, Rob Grube is out here, do you get a chance to talk to them much? Do you encourage them at all?

NOTAH BEGAY: I talk to Rob a little bit. I don't know Michelle. She is a little tough to approach at times. She just keeps to herself and her family is always around and whatnot. She practices pretty much by herself at Stanford. I never really had a chance to talk to her. I would love to. I think she is great for golf. She is great for this event. I know that there are opinions to the contrary. We are supposed to beat the best players in the world regardless of gender. I'm glad she is here, and I look forward to hopefully seeing her play well. I would love to see her make the cut.

Q. Can you talk about the conditions of the course, the weather, what you expect to see maybe in terms of scores this week?

NOTAH BEGAY: Well, I if the greens stay -- I have seen it change. It just depends on the TOUR staff. I don't really know. There hasn't really been a consistent pattern with the set ups at times. We have seen courses start off firm during the week, and by Thursday or Friday, they are drenched without any rain. So they turn the sprinklers on, they don't want to see the ball rolling.

But if the conditions stay similar to how they are, the scores are going to be a little bit higher than normal if the traditional winds show up in the afternoon. Because the ball is releasing on the mid to short iron anywhere from 4 to 7 yards. You got to put the ball in the fairway, and you have to shape your shots if that's the case. But like I said, I haven't been out there today. I don't know how much

water they're going to put on the course between today and tomorrow. So it could change. If they put in a lot of water on the greens, it's going to be your typical set up. The ball is not rolling much in the fairway, and you can hit right at the flag every time and the scores go lower. It's really not up to me.

Q. Notah, talk about the course itself, how it fits your game, what you have to do to be successful out here, and how the course is attuned to your game?

NOTAH BEGAY: I love this golf course. I grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico playing at the same exact altitude. So I think that's one of the biggest obstacles that players face. Coming up here, having a wedge in your hand, and knowing you can hit this wedge 140 to 145 yards, but not over swinging. And so, you know, most guys out here don't swing 100% every time. If you have a wedge in your hand, and you don't think you are going to hit it far enough, and you give it a little extra, and you hit it 150, you are sailing the pin.

So I think that's the biggest thing that players have to get under control. And the things that you really have to do well, you really got to read the greens. There is some sneaky breaks out there, and there is some definite trends in the way the ball wants to break. Gravity kind of has its way of playing tricks on you at times.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Notah. Thanks for coming in.

NOTAH BEGAY: Thank you.
