

American Century Championship

Friday, July 11, 2025

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

Charles Barkley

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have Charles Barkley with us, the heart and soul of this event for 30 years, without a doubt.

CHARLES BARKLEY: I played with two really good dudes today, Nate Bargatze and Larry The Cable Guy. We had a great time. I played as well as I could, best round ever. It's been fun.

I've been grinding working hard on my game with Stan. I just got one day. And can't wait to get out there tomorrow.

Q. 81 today. As we said, the lowest round you've had in 30 years here. We know you have grinded, grinded, and kept --

CHARLES BARKLEY: And sucked and sucked and sucked.

It's so crazy -- listen, man, I played one-handed here. I played left-handed here. But it just wasn't working for me. But I still had a blast when I came here. But I kept grinding.

And now, I told you, I met Stan Utley a few years ago, and he changed the entire dynamic of my golfing life.

I'm not going to play great all the time, but I'm going to play pretty good. And I can get it around.

So shout out to my coach. And obviously I put a lot of time and effort into it. But, man, I tell you, shout out to Lake Tahoe and American Century and NBC, because these people in Lake Tahoe are amazing. They come out here every year supporting us and giving us a lot of love.

Obviously American Century, they do a fabulous job. And then you've got NBC and those guys televising the event.

I'm not going to lie, it wasn't a lot of fun coming here -- well, it was fun coming here -- but it wasn't a lot of fun playing golf here for 20 years. But, you know, they raised a lot of

money for charity, and you get to play with people -- some of the celebrities are some of the nicest people in the world.

And then I get -- me and Larry are like twin brothers now. I play with Larry every year. Me and Nate, I got to spend some time with Nate. But you think about it, I get to play with those two guys who are amazing at what they do in their life. Normally I wouldn't get to play golf -- I get to play golf with some superstars for three days.

I have no idea who I'm playing with tomorrow, but it's going to be a household name. So that's what makes -- last year I played with Roger Clemens and Albert Pujols. And I went home and told all my friends. I said, man, I played with Roger Clemens and Albert Pujols, two of the greatest baseball players ever.

Like I say, I'm going to play with two other stars tomorrow. Whoever it's going to be, it's always special.

Q. Now what do you think about this wager that Caesars has put on you to finish 65.5 or higher or lower? How do you like that bet right now?

CHARLES BARKLEY: Well, last year was the first time I actually won money from my friends. This year, I got more friends here betting on me, and I don't want to let them down because I think the first two years I barely missed it, but I knew I was going to keep getting better.

I was a little surprised, since I think I came in 58th last year, I was a little surprised they still had it at 65. So like I say, I'm not going to be overconfident because I've got two more days to go. But I feel like, when I go on the golf course, I at least have -- listen, you guys saw when I played with one hand. You guys saw when I played left-handed.

I knew I was a great basketball player, but when I was standing over the golf ball with one hand and playing lefty, I said, did I ever have any athletic ability whatsoever?

I mean, because it was crazy playing up here like that.



Q. How does it feel, though, from a sense of accomplishment, after all the time and effort you've put in and the struggles that you put in?

CHARLES BARKLEY: It feels great. Listen, man, I'm not going to lie to you. It was humiliating and embarrassing to suck because I never sucked at anything in my life. It was not a lot of fun for me.

But, like I say, I was really happy with the way I played last year. That was my best finish ever. I was excited to get here, and I'm excited to get to that blackjack table tonight. (Laughter).

Tell you what, this place, I want to give a shout out to NBC because I got a connection with the people up here in Lake Tahoe because when we came up here -- I can't remember the last time when they had that fire.

Q. 2007.

CHARLES BARKLEY: 2007, and I asked NBC, I said, hey, you know, I don't think it's cool for us to come up here for shits and giggles and ignore that right up the street, all these people that lost their houses.

And NBC gave me the camera for the day and they did a really nice -- I said, listen, man, we're right up the street, we're playing golf, and I feel bad that we're here having fun and your people -- I will admit, it was one of the most devastating things I've ever seen in my life.

I'd never been into a fire zone like that before where hundreds of houses were all gone. It was so sad. And then I donated some money to them.

But they were so thankful that I took time. I said, no, we are up here to play golf and enjoy your beautiful city. I don't think it's cool to come here and do that.

I know that my thoughts are with the people down in Texas with all the flooding going on. Man, that is such a horrible situation. I want them to know that just thinking about them.

And also I saw up here, like, a couple of weeks ago, eight people drowned and two were in critical condition on this lake here. They said a storm came out of nowhere in seconds and these people were celebrating a birthday party up on the lake here. I saw eight drowned and two were in critical condition. I don't know what happened after that. But just let them thinking about, I wanted to acknowledge that while we were here because that sucks.

We come up here and enjoy -- I don't know what the hell

you got going on up here, this is my 30th year. It's hot as hell everywhere in the country except Lake Tahoe. I have no idea how y'all do this shit up here.

It's always 70 degrees here. I was in Phoenix the other day. It was 117 degrees. I was like holy s***. But I have no idea how every single year it's 70 degrees. And all the celebrities be, like, thank God we get a chance to get away from home for a week because it's always perfect here.

Q. Talk about the fans out here yesterday and today, just the fan support that you received and just the crowds in general today.

CHARLES BARKLEY: I was actually shocked on the fans yesterday because it was a pro-am because normally the big crowds come in on Friday. But the fans are always tremendous here.

When I got to the golf course yesterday, first thing I said to Billy, man, they've got big crowds already on Thursday. Like I say, we know they're going to be packed on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

But, man, the fans, they are tremendous. They're so supportive. So it's always fun to interact with them.

Q. You've shared this before, but share briefly what Stan Utley -- one, how much he's meant to you on your golf game -- but what are some of the lessons and the things that he instilled with you to improve your golf game to where it is now?

CHARLES BARKLEY: Well, when we first got together, he told me I was a wuss. I say, why do you say that. He said you're afraid to go on the golf course. And I said what do you mean?

He said we hit balls for four hours. He said, stop going to the range all the time. You need to see water. You need to trees. And I was, like, I didn't think I was a wuss but I was because I was scared to go to the golf course.

I go to the range and hit balls for hours, but there's no s*** on the range. You need to have trees. You need to have water so you can -- that's how you play golf. So that's the first thing he did.

So we would practice for an hour or so, but we play golf a lot. He said, "See those trees over there, I need you to trust your swing that you're not going to hit those trees. There's water over there." So that's the first thing he did.

The second thing he did, he said, "Stop trying to hit the ball like pro golfers or other people." He said, "You notice all

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

the golfers are little people." I can't call them midgets anymore because everybody is so f*** sensitive. All the golfers are like f*** 5'8", 5'9". He said, "You can't do what those little dudes do. You're 6'5" and fat." He said, "I'm going to teach you how to hit the golf ball." He says, "You can't swing like Tiger or Justin Thomas or Rory." He's right, all the dudes are little.

But he said, "You're a big dude. You've got to swing the club the way you can." So those were big adjustments he worked with me on.

Q. Have you ever had an eagle up here?

CHARLES BARKLEY: You mean the time I killed a duck?

Q. Eagle, not duck.

CHARLES BARKLEY: That's the closest I've come to a bird. When I killed a duck on the down for a par-3 -- I technically didn't kill him, the dude killed him.

I don't know if you all heard that story. About five years ago, on a par-4 down the hill, I snap-hooked my drive into a family of duck, geese, whatever you all call them.

When we got down there, it was on the ground. I clearly had broken his neck or something. The dude starts screaming, you gotta put it out of its misery. I'm like, "What the f*** are you talking about?" He said, "It's not going to make it." So these girls start screaming, "Don't do it, don't do it!"

And this caveman goes over and pops the duck's neck, throws it in the lake. It doesn't die. He dives in the lake and drowns it.

And I'm playing with Larry The Cable Guy and another comedian who had been cracking jokes nonstop the whole day. And when this happened, I said, "You all got anything?"

They are like, "No, we never seen no s*** like that before." So technically I didn't kill the geese, he killed the geese. I hurt him. So don't have PETA calling me. I don't even know the dude's name who drowned the duck.

No, I never had an eagle before. That was such a cool thing because I hit a good drive and a good shot. We couldn't see the green. And I knew I hit a good shot, and then I guess it spun and went in. But we couldn't see it because it's uphill. When they went crazy, it made my day. So to answer your question, no.

Q. Secondly, this isn't a question. I've been covering

this thing for a long time. How you play golf doesn't mean diddly to me. But it's great to see you playing well.

CHARLES BARKLEY: Thank you very much.

Q. Reminder, Charles was talking about the fire back in 2007. He generously contributed \$100,000 that first year. Took all the firemen and all the families out to dinner. Wrote another check the following year for \$90,000. And that's why there's a plaque out by that driving range. They gave a plaque out there that tells how much this community loves you. Thank you. Thank you.

CHARLES BARKLEY: Tell you what, them firemen and their families can drink. When I got that bill, I said, boy, y'all can drink. (Laughter).

But thank you all for another great year. It's going to be another fun 48 hours, but thank you.

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