

American Century Championship

Wednesday, July 8, 2026

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

Gary Quinn

Cody Bass

Rick Luchinsky

Jerry Bindel

Kevin Millar

Derek Lowe

John Smoltz

Press Conference

Wakefield Foundation Announcement

PHIL WEIDINGER: Today is one of celebration: For this beautiful new facility for SLT residents and visitors.

It's also a day to celebrate the memory of a good friend and man, Tim Wakefield, Boston Red Sox pitcher for 17 years and a member of the 2004 and 2007 World Series Champions.

It's a day to recognize contributions made in his name toward the batting cages and pitching machine with this special Boston Red Sox jersey dedication, and the promise of ongoing annual donations.

Today, you'll hear from the mayor about what this building represents to the community. Representatives of NBC and ACI will tell you what this community has meant to the tournament for 37 years and counting, and from the celebrities, what Tim Wakefield meant to them with personal memories and stories.

Following that, a presentation of the Key to the City.

And for all the young ball players in the audience and those of you who are young-at-heart, following the comments we'll have our celebrity baseball stars throw a few pitches and take a few swings in the batting cage, sign some autographs and then you get your chance to take a few



cuts for four hours, from 4 to 8pm.

First, let's acknowledge the folks here on the stage. This is definitely an All-Star lineup:

The mayor of SLT, Cody Bass;

·Jerry Bindel, SLT Parks Foundation Board Chair.

·From NBC Sports, Gary Quinn, Vice President, Programming and General Manager, Owned Properties

·From AC Investments, Rick Luchinsky, Senior VP, Head of Personal Financial Solutions & Marketing.

Our celebrities: Kevin Millar, Derek Lowe who were teammates with Tim Wakefield; and good friend and Hall of Fame pitcher with the Atlanta Braves, John Smoltz.

CODY BASS: Welcome to our incredible new recreation center. Looking around this facility, I see the future of South Lake Tahoe, a place where our youth will go, our families will gather and our communities will grow and retire.

This is a commitment that was brought to our voters in 2015, I believe it was 2014, which brought the reality of us to fund this incredible recreation center. It's really shown to be here for the last four or five months a true keystone for our health and wellness for our community, for our youth and for our seniors, and really there's something here for everybody.

I can't tell you how much I'm so grateful for the commitment of this tournament. Every summer, our town lights up with a special kind of energy. For more than three decades, American Century Championship has brought the world's eyes to our shores, but it has always brought us something much deeper than celebrity stoplights. It has brought us true partners who care about the heartbeat of this town.

When we lose someone who felt like a foundational part of the summer energy, it hurts. Tim Wakefield wasn't just a



... when all is said, we're done.®

legendary Boston Red Sox icon, he was a champion of charity a man who always had time for a fan, a smile for a child and a deep quiet generosity that defined who he was off the diamond.

Though Tim is no longer with us, his spirit is officially permanently felt in the fabric of South Lake Tahoe. Thanks to the deeply generous donation made the Tim Wakefield Foundation, NBC Sports and American Century golf tournament, the new recreational center is now home to state-of-the-art batting cages. Generations can come here and maybe some future major leaguers, just kids looking for a safe place to play after school will stop by one of these cages. They will have practiced, they will practice their swings on the banner of a man who embodied sportsmanship, resilience and kindness.

This kind of legacy doesn't happen by accident. It happens because organizations like NBC and the tournament leadership don't just unselfishly follow as a beautiful backdrop.

JERRY BINDEL: On behalf of the South Lake Tahoe Parks Foundation and Parks and Recreation Commission, welcome and thank you all for being here.

When this recreation center opened a few months ago, we celebrated what it would become for our community.

Today, we have the opportunity to celebrate another chapter in the story, one made possible through generosity, partnership, and shared commitment to the young people of South Lake Tahoe and to the recreation in our community.

I would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to American Century Championship, NBC Sports for their continued commitment to South Lake Tahoe.

Year after year, this tournament's impact extends far beyond championship. Helping create opportunities that strengthen our community and enrich the lives of local families.

We also want to recognize Caesars Entertainment and Visit Lake Tahoe for their generous support of our partnership of this project. Their investments reflect a shared belief in recreation, youth sports and the importance of creating places where our community can thrive.

Together these organizations have helped create something that generations of young athletes will enjoy.

We're sincerely grateful for their generosity. Today's

celebration is made even more meaningful as we dedicate a jersey in memory of Tim Wakefield. It is an honor for the South Lake Tahoe Parks Foundation to be a part of this tribute, and we're proud that his memory will have a permanent place within this recreation center.

We know others who knew Tim personally will be sharing more stories about his legacy, and we're just grateful to join them in recognizing this special moment.

Every child who steps into these batting cages will benefit from the generosity represented here today. On behalf of the parks foundation and the commission, thank you for believing in our community and for investing in our future.

CODY BASS: To accept this donation, it represents the incredible trifecta of generosity. We're joined today by a long time friend of the Lake Tahoe community.

Mr. Gary Quinn, through your leadership at NBC Sports, you broadcast Tahoe to millions worldwide to consistently ensure that this tournament pours its heart back into our local community. So on behalf of the city council, our local families and the future graduates who will use these cages to chase their dreams, it is my absolute honor to present the key to the city of South Lake Tahoe, Mr. Gary Quinn.

(Applause)

GARY QUINN: This does not go to me, it goes to our family of celebrities, these brothers that are up here on the stage with me, our partners here for the last 28 years, and this community. They made it all possible.

Made-for-television golf events aren't supposed to last 37 years. We've created something together now that is going to transcend the generations. That's pretty special.

To give you a little bit of history how this all came to be, I think you guys know about the Gene Upshaw Award that we came up with. Gene was a dear friend and a great member of the American Century family that passed in 2010. We put together a scholarship where we're able to give a deserving student a \$10,000 scholarship every year.

So when Tim, and Stacy passed in 2023, early 2024, obviously way too soon for all of us, they were like brothers and sisters to us, and they meant so much to our family here at the event. Tim played at the event for over a decade.

I called up Phil and I said, what's the best way for us to tangibly honor Tim and Stacy's memory, and he said, well, you know constructing this community center, let me talk to Carol Chaplin, see if there's something we can put it



towards.

She came back and said, we think that this would be a great way, they're going to build this in the gymnasium, have batting cages and stuff, and we can put Tim and Stacy's name on it.

That's how it all came to be. We're obviously so grateful for the opportunity to give back. This community means everything to us. One thing that's really special that I hope happens every year, that's why it's a perpetual gift every year, is that the players sitting in the audience, they can come and look up at that jersey and say who was Tim Wakefield, they may not have seen him play, to be able to look him up, see what a special man he and his wife were and how philanthropic they were. They represented the best in all of us, and they were just truly valuable members of our family that are missed dearly.

I can't thank you enough, the leadership of the town. We're going to be here for many years to come. This is probably the most meaningful and rewarding part of my career, and I'll do everything I can with our partners at the American Century and the help of the community to keep this here for as long as we can.

RICK LUCHINSKY: It's an honor to be here representing our partner American Century Investments, and truly an honor to celebrate Tim and Stacy Wakefield's legacy, their legacy of kindness and service to so many.

As long-time members of American Century Investments championships family, Tim and Stacy touched countless people. Through their generosity and passion and care for others, they will be remembered for a very long time.

At American Century Investments, we've been proud sponsors of this event for now 28 years. It's truly exciting. And it's because this is more than just a golf tournament. This is about helping communities, bringing people together and ultimately making an impact on so many in the community. So we're proud to help fund this and certainly look forward to watching it grow and being a part of this community for a very long time.

THE MODERATOR: We'll have some of our special guests and celebrities talk about their favorite memories.

Kevin Millar.

KEVIN MILLAR: This is an awesome thing. Obviously Tim was a great friend, a great teammate, a great person. And people don't understand, and they forget, he came up in pro ball trying to be a position player. He was a first baseman, trying to hit. He realized how hard hitting was,

they advantage that they have, these pitchers, which is a little bit cheating, five pitches, knows what's coming. Especially a guy named (inaudible), Hall of Fame, decides to be a closer. He did that great.

Also so very unbelievable people. Tim Wakefield started as a first baseman. That's where our bond started. We talk hitting a lot. Most pitchers you don't talk, right, you're kind of going to give away your secret.

Tim had to reconstruct his career and develop a knuckleball. Now, I know some guys have the ability to throw a knuckleball, playing catch with dad or playing catch with their kids. I never could throw a knuckleball. I had him try to teach me to throw a knuckleball. The best part about it was I always wanted to play catch with Tim just to see if I could catch the knuckleball.

There's times that, you're a major league player, and I played first base. I wasn't a great first baseman anyway, but I had a tough time even putting the glove on the knuckleball.

He had the ability to basically stop being a position player. That was hard. He wasn't going to make it. Learn how to throw a pitch that was 65, 75 miles max. His fast ball was about 77, maybe 80, that he would sneak by you that looked 95. But he dominated this league, Major League Baseball, the highest league in the world, with basically one pitch, and it was 65 to 68 miles an hour.

He dominated the New York Yankees for 15-plus years, whatever he played, exactly. And the ability to do that at a level where everybody was, you know, 95 miles an hour, at some point, if you have that, unless you're Derek Lowe. Derek the only guy that can throw 84 miles an hour with a sinker dominating baseball.

But Tim Wakefield had that ability. That's hard to do if you think about it. He's facing sluggers, the Yankees lineups back then. When I was trying to bring this for Derek Jeter and Jason Johnson, Matt Suhey and Gary Sheffield. It didn't stop.

Think about throwing 65 miles an hour, you're on that mound, 60 feet six inches, you're on that mound, there's no screens. There's no helmet. He's dominating at a high level and that pitcher was Tim Wakefield. He was a veteran. And I didn't even realize -- I saw where he basically dealt with kids off the field, autographs, but there's a whole lot of stuff. He's never said nothing. The foundations that he did. He cared about people. He was there if you needed him. He was an amazing human being leave us. But this was a factual thing. This was his favorite week, just like our favorite week, love this time of



the year. Always say we will miss a child's birth if you get the invitation. And Phil knows, if you're going to miss anything to be out here.

But this is our special week as a group, because as you kind of grow, people are living in different places and you have kids and so you get to meet up on these weeks, because I'll never forget it because it was the last year we sat out and rarely do we sit and watch from -- basically I think we had some beers, we're watching the last groups come through, and we actually watched an event in our full golf uniform from 8:00 a.m. that morning, and we rolled in and we sat there and there was just a group of guys, locals, we sat and talked. And you just share stories.

But this is an awesome thing, and his legacy will live on forever. It's who he was. There was no fakeness. And he's sadly missed, we know that, but him and his wife Stacy were amazing for that, being amazing people.

DEREK LOWE: My rookie year, 1997, Tim Wakefield took me under his wing teaching me how to be professional on and off the field.

In baseball, you had a throwing partner who you throw with every single day. As a rookie, who do I get stuck with? Tim Wakefield. And he would try to hurt you as much as possible. He had an amazing game, aiming whatever part of your body. Halfway through the season, I'm playing, and I ended up going against the wall. It's a true story.

To kind of sum up what Tim Wakefield was as a teammate. So far we are down 2-0 to the New York Yankees. We are not playing well in game three. At the time my job was to be the long reliever. So I was supposed to come in. Tim was supposed to start game four. We're in the bullpen. Tim says I'm coming in. I said, Tim, you're not coming in. This is my job. Tim said no, I'm going to come in and allow you to start game four. And that kind of sums him up as an individual.

My greatest moment golf-wise was last year here, Kevin and I and Tim got to play in a group, and his daughter, Bri, was his caddie. To see how proud he was having her with him the whole time. We never wanted the round to end. You could see it was pretty emotional. We're going to miss him. This is a great legacy for him.

JOHN SMOLTZ: Unlike Kevin and Derek, I didn't get the luxury of being a teammate a long time with him. But I did get a chance to be a teammate in the latter part, which ended up being the last year of my career.

I came over to Boston after surgery, and just trying to get back out on the field. So we shared a common bond. That

common bond was we're the two oldest guys on the team. So every time we saw each other, he would say, hey, old man. I'd say, old man, how are you doing? And I competed against him way longer than these two guys did because Tim played 19, me playing 21 years, didn't like playing against Tim Wakefield, because as Kevin said, he was hard to hit.

In 1992, we probably would have lost to the Pirates had they brought Tim Wakefield back, because he beat us twice.

I pitched game seven against Drabek. If they would have brought Wakefield back, we couldn't hit him. He had a special talent and he had a special demeanor about him. But being an Atlanta Brave my whole life, going over to the Boston Red Sox, it was an out-of-body experience for me.

I didn't know -- I mean, obviously I know about the Boston Red Sox, I competed against them, but I didn't know their spring training side. I didn't know a lot of things. I leaned on Tim for a lot of the nuances that I was very familiar with in Atlanta, very uncomfortable with Boston.

But I can truly say it was a great experience, because as two old guys, being around a much younger team and a team that's built with characters, we'd just roll our eyes a lot on what we saw and how they went about their business.

But the funny thing about Tim is he loved golf and I loved golf more than anybody. So when I got to spring training, I said where do you play golf? He said we play golf over here at this golf course. I said, what do you do for golf, what's your wagers, what's your competition? He said, we play for shirts. So the loser has to buy the guy a shirt in the pro shop.

I said awesome. That sounds great. After winning eight straight shirts off of Tim Wakefield, I said if I would have known this deal, I never would have packed clothes. You can imagine he didn't like that too well. But we shared a lot of those times, even though it was only two months.

Getting a chance to see him here at Tahoe was always a treat because Tahoe, for me, and for everybody up here, it's the greatest place on earth, the greatest time of year, with the greatest cause.

Like you've heard up here, I've told all five of my daughters, do not get married in July and do not have a baby in July. I will not be there. And unfortunately, the only time I did have to miss this was the little thing in Cooperstown that I almost missed because I wanted to be here.



But Tim's heart, getting to know him and getting to know the man he was off the field -- because that is so important to us -- this community was super important. His family was super important. And as curmudgeon and as old and as grumpy as he could be, maybe, in a locker room, he was the complete opposite when he stepped into a situation to help or for a cause or for his foundation. That's why we hit it off so quickly even though we were teammates for a short time.

We did lose him way too soon, but this is an awesome opportunity to carry on his legacy, and many young and older people that will be using this facility will get to know about Tim Wakefield and will never forget him.