

# American Century Championship

Saturday, July 15, 2023

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

## Gary Quinn

## Terri Upshaw

## Richard Salazar

## Nancy Harrison

### Press Conference

Gene Upshaw Award Scholarship Award

THE MODERATOR: This presentation has been one of the highlights of the week, quite frankly, over the years. We've always enjoyed this. This is where the tournament is able to assist a deserving student with their ongoing educational journey.

In past years, it was presented to a student from the local high school. This year we've pivoted to the Lake Tahoe Community College. You'll learn about them as well.

We'll have background and personal stories today. Before we do that, I'd like to introduce our guests: Gary Quinn, who is the NBC Vice President Programming and Owned Partnerships; Terri Upshaw; Nancy Harrison from Lake Tahoe Community College, Executive Director of Foundation and College Partnerships; Diane Lewis; and Richard Salazar, the 2023 Gene Upshaw Scholarship Award Winner.

Gary, a brief overview.

GARY QUINN: This is my favorite moment of a very hectic week too because I get to re-engage with Terri once a year. She's obviously very special to my heart, as her husband was.

I started here, I can't believe it, 28 years ago as an intern. I was two months on the job. I came to this event at my boss' request to help out.

For whatever reason, Gene just took me under his wing. I guess he thought I had some potential. And as time went on and they gave me more autonomy to manage the event,



he really became a mentor to me. I couldn't figure out. I was like, why is this Hall of Fame football player, head of the NFL Players Association paying attention to me? There's still no reason for it, but he did over all the time we were together.

I would always look forward so much to seeing him. It was important to him that the event grow and succeed because he was from this area and had a home in this area and just loved it. He wanted this event to succeed, and he was a big part of the success of it. He also was such a great mentor and relationship builder with all the players and athletes that would play in the event.

So he was a really key reason as to why this event's 34 years old and at the beginning stages of it was really helpful and instrumental and why we're standing here today. When he passed, obviously I was devastated when I heard the news, but the first thought was, we have to make sure that we continue his legacy attached to this event and let people know that do receive the award do research on what Gene was all about; that he was a Hall of Fame player on the field, but even a bigger Hall of Famer off the field. And just how much he meant to me and how much Terri means to me, that his name would carry on for as long as this event is here.

I think he would be very proud that Richard's name is going to be attached to his name now.

**Q. Terri, talk about the award, what it's meant to you over the years and a little bit about Gene.**

TERRI UPSHAW: Thank you for those kind words. You just said don't make me cry, and I get emotional after 15 years.

This is always a really special event. Gene loved this place. He loved Tahoe. This was his get-away. It was his place to sort of reconnect with family, with nature, with himself and just sort of regroup before the season would begin.

When this event started, he met Gary, and for whatever reason, there was a connection. Gene wanted this to



succeed. Gene was always about succeeding, trying hard, commitment, commitment to excellence.

I think a lot of that goes back to his Raider days and childhood, even before the Raiders, but the commitment to excellence, giving back, wanting to help people, wanting to mentor.

He just had a commitment to pretty much everything he did, the players, what he did for the players and the union and to work towards a better game all around for fans, for the players, owners, that everybody gets along, everybody works together.

So this scholarship really is about Gene and his legacy and his commitment to helping those who need an opportunity, who he feels like, you know, I got your back, I'm going to do everything I can to help you. And that was who Gene was.

**Q. Nancy, give some background on the Lake Tahoe Community College, and also why the organization highly recommended this scholarship for Richard.**

NANCY HARRISON: Sure. So as the director of the foundation, I am very fortunate to work with philanthropic individuals and organizations who value education and want to help students who want to continue their education. Sometimes money is a barrier.

When you visit Lake Tahoe, you will meet our students. They are parking cars. They're serving your meals. They're welcoming you and checking you into your hotel.

So they're working out in the community. Many of our students, like Richard, are the first in their families to attend college. They are working part time or even full time while they're earning their degree.

This spring, just a couple of weeks ago, we had 276 students graduate with their associate's degree, and many of them want to continue on to earn their bachelor's degree.

Richard wants to be a teacher. Many of our students want to go on and earn a bachelor's degree and become teachers, nurses, firefighters, professional foresters. We now have a forestry program.

For a lot of these students, tuition is a barrier and time they need to work and they need to support themselves and their families. These scholarships are so important.

I received a call in the fall from Carol Chaplin, the CEO of the LTVA asking if we wanted the \$5,000 Gene Upshaw

Memorial Scholarship. I said absolutely. That was a fabulous, very exciting phone call.

This year, our students are receiving \$276,000 in scholarships to continue their education, especially students like Richard who are going on to a four-year school to earn their bachelor's degree, the costs are a lot higher for them.

Richard is receiving a second scholarship from a private foundation. He'll receive 8,000 in support for him to continue his education.

He's one of 276 students that graduated. 40 of our graduate students are with Richard in the Rising Scholar program that they're involved with the justice system. Wherever they are, they can remotely earn their degree.

It's our goal to provide support services and partner with individuals and organizations to make sure these students can continue and earn their degree and continue on and be a part of our communities, as are teachers and nurses.

We had 140 students apply for scholarships this year. And for the Gene Upshaw Scholarship, they were asked an essay question and they were asked how would you continue Gene's legacy.

It's kind of amazing, it was a small number of students answered the question accurately and appropriately, and of those that did, Richard had the best, most spot-on answer of how he wants to continue become a teacher, mentor kids and help them make the right choices.

We're so excited. We're so grateful that you are honoring Gene's legacy with this scholarship.

The partnership with Lake Tahoe Community College and the awareness it brings to the community and the needs in education. We volunteer as an organization and staff a snack bar at the tournament and that raises money for the college for programs.

So we appreciate the commitment of giving back to the community at the tournament. We really appreciate that and the support for our students like Richard. So thank you.

**Q. Richard, congratulations on the award. Through this \$5,000 scholarship process, you've learned a lot about Gene Upshaw -- as Nancy mentioned -- it was one of the questions. You probably answered it the best. That's what we saw when we checked things out, too. What does winning this award mean to you, and how do you think those examples that Gene put forth**



**are going to help you as you move on through your career in your life?**

RICHARD SALAZAR: Winning this award, it's an honor. I feel blessed. Seeing what Gene did, on the field, off the field, to help others, he saw the struggle. He saw what it was to face these difficulties, and he built a bridge to help players come across, make it less difficult, make the game more fun, make it more safe, make it more fair.

Not just that, he continued after helping out the players. Now we have -- now with the scholarship that I won, and it's helping me with my life. And I've had a pretty difficult life.

I was incarcerated real young. I was 16. I did 17 years. So I spent more time in jail than I've spent out here. I've had to get readjusted. But about three years ago, I went to High Desert, in Lake Tahoe. They gave me an opportunity to get into college, to change my life.

It was just a choice. It was, do I continue with the nonsense? Or do I want a better life? Do I want to live and die in prison? Or do I want to come out and become a better person?

Through that opportunity, I have earned my associate's. I wrote an essay, and I'm like, wow, I won. I see the potential, like the hope, and I'm like, I can do this. I'm hoping I can show other people you guys can do this.

I'll tell you right now, I work six days a week, 10, 12 hours a day, it's not easy at all, but it's doable, and it's something that, once I get stable, once I get my bachelor's -- even if I don't get my bachelor's -- if I can help out kids or even people that need help, I'm going to help them because I was given an opportunity. I was given a second chance at life.

**Q. You mentioned, when we talked prior to the presentation, that one of the things you really want to do is help kids. You just mentioned it there. What are you trying to teach them? What do you want them to see?**

RICHARD SALAZAR: I want them to see there's options. There's more than just that life. There's an education. There's Lake Tahoe. I'm literally at the lake. There's speed boats. There's more than just street gangs and homies and drinking and all that. You can actually have a life and you just have to work at it.

Me, I've been working ever since I came out here, but now that I'm giving these opportunities, got this scholarship, I'm going to continue going to school.

Like you were mentored, I hope to mentor others and pay it forward. That way, hopefully over time, we could start ending that cycle, stop the cycle of these gangs, this nonsense, all that, and build a better community, not just here but in California, not just in California, so it could spread.

**Q. Richard, what is next for you? What's the next step?**

RICHARD SALAZAR: I just registered to go to Cal State San Bernardino. I'm going to start my bachelor's program. Hopefully August 9th. I'm just jumping into it. I don't want to lose my momentum. That's my next step.

**Q. Richard, I think there's nothing more honorable and respectable than someone who has come from so little and has turned their life around. I want you to know that. Second, I'm just curious, do you see yourself as an inspiration to young people?**

RICHARD SALAZAR: I hope I do. That's why I'm continuing to work hard because it's really easy to be tempted to do bad things.

Once I came out, old friends, old acquaintances, they were like, hey, come kick it; you're a legend. I'm like, why am I a legend? Because the things you were doing in jail. I was there because I didn't have options. But like, I'm good; I gave away 17 years of my life for you guys. Now I want to live my life; I have no connection to you guys no more. Like, leave me alone. I'll leave you guys alone.

It's not easy to walk away because that's pretty much all I knew. But now I want to show kids, I want to show people, hey, it's doable. It's difficult, but it's doable.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports