

# U.S. Adaptive Open

Monday, July 18, 2022

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

Pinehurst Resort & C.C. (Course No. 6)

## Eli Villanueva

### Quick Quotes

#### Q. What would you say about your first Adaptive Open experience?

ELI VILLANUEVA: Unbelievable. The experience was great, the fans, the volunteers and all that stuff. I could have played a little bit better, but I'll take what I did today. I had a couple mistakes but hung in there, I think, middle of the pack right now. But the whole experience was just amazing. Hopefully it will inspire more people, more adaptive golfers to start playing.

#### Q. Sounds like you've been a little tough on your game today, but what did you like from your round today?

ELI VILLANUEVA: Off the tee for the most part I hit it -- I put it in play. I had a couple swings, a couple holes -- I didn't make big numbers today, just too many bogeys, a couple too many bogeys. But I'll take it, 78. To break 80 at this venue, at a U.S. Open, I'll take it. It's good for me.

#### Q. Being able to share the course today with so many inspiring athletes, so many inspiring players, what does that mean to you and what do you hope that does for the adaptive community in the future?

ELI VILLANUEVA: To be in the first Adaptive U.S. Open, you only have one chance, right? I'm so grateful to be in this field, first of all, and then hopefully it'll inspire a lot of people with impairments to start playing golf or not even just golf, any sport that they're interested in. Hopefully this is the start of more big stuff to come.

British, I guess. Augusta maybe? We can all dream, right? It started here so it can only go forward in my opinion.

#### Q. Would you sort of tell me your military background and how you got to the Fort Bragg area?

ELI VILLANUEVA: Okay, so if you want to go way back, I was born in the Philippines. Migrated to Hawai'i when I was 13, went to school in Hawai'i. I went to high school,



and then after high school I joined the military. That got me here to Fort Bragg, went through jump school in Fort Bragg and I stayed on at Fort Bragg for the most part of my 22 years of my career.

I was stationed to Korea for a year, a year and a half in Panama. That was during the Panama invasion, I guess. Then deployed to Afghanistan once Iraq three times. I've been here retired from the Army in '07, still working on Fort Bragg, still working for the Army, I guess, and I'm here, and it's just crazy. I can't believe I'm here.

#### Q. With your disability, was that from combat?

ELI VILLANUEVA: No, it was during my time in the military, just broke my radial head of my left arm. I'm left hand dominant, so I did everything with my left hand until I broke it, and from that point on -- this is way before golf. So I learned to adjust from that, doing everyday chores and everyday things, and picked up golf way later, and I learned to play golf with the impairment. I guess for myself this is all I know. I don't know how to play with a regular arm, I guess.

#### Q. Obviously you learned something new through your injury; obviously a lot of soldiers might look up to you, someone who's going through an injury -- I know a lot of stuff -- not all injuries are physical in the military. How do you see yourself as one of those guys that can be an inspiration?

ELI VILLANUEVA: Just don't give up. For me the hardest thing was acceptance. What was hard is man, I can't do this, I can't do that. I was pretty active. I played basketball growing up until I broke it. Then I still tried to play even afterwards. It is what it was. I got hurt, and once I accepted it, it was, hey, this is what I've got, I've got to deal with it, and never give up and just work hard at everything you do. Just keep going.

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