

# Barracuda Championship

Wednesday, July 13, 2022

Truckee, California, USA

Tahoe Mountain Club

## Austin Smotherman

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Austin Smotherman to the media center here at the Barracuda Championship. Making your tournament debut here, Loomis, California, native, as close as it gets to a hometown event. What's it like to be here for the week?

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: It's pretty special, driving roads that I've been coming up here since I was probably five, six years old with my family, going to Heavenly to go skiing in the winter and coming up to Zephyr Cove to go there for like 4th of July stuff when I was in high school.

Good memories, and then got married just down the street at Squaw Valley December of 2016, so drove past there on the way up, and I don't if we've been back only a handful of times since, so it's nice to be here.

**Q. Your connections with the area, Lake Tahoe or surrounding areas for vacations, any specific memories with those?**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Just family stuff. So many good times, hopping on bikes and just going around the lake, been on the water a few times skiing with the family. The water never seems to warm up. Might make it down there and jump in this week. But yeah, just a lot of family memories, and then obviously getting married in this part of the world, one of the most beautiful parts I can imagine.

**Q. Elevation here, is that something you're comfortable with playing?**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Yeah, I've always enjoyed playing at elevation. I've played well in Colorado on the Korn Ferry TOUR, and here I think the extra variable is kind of how hot we're going to have it this week. Sun is out, and that heat combined with the elevation is going to be kind of adding another element that we've got to kind of figure out as compared to the morning rounds with the cool weather. There's going to be definitely a difference in how far the ball is going.

**Q. Tournament debut here, but you've played here**

**before. Even if not you've been able to get some holes in between yesterday and today?**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Played here in high school. I don't remember the holes off the top of my mind, but I'm sure once I'm out there, some will come back to me. Fortunately my caddie was here last year so he's got a practice plan for us so we'll execute that today and tomorrow and be ready to go Thursday.

I mean, yeah, to be out here playing, first time here in the tournament setting is going to be a little bit different than just going around with my buddies in high school, that's for sure.

**Q. Going back to high school, was it a tournament? How well did you do? What was the specific event here?**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: It was just a little -- my buddy Tanner Huber, his family had a cabin here on the course. He was coming up, knew I loved golf, and he was like, hey, man, you want to bring your clubs and you can teach me a thing or two? So it was kind of a mini playing lesson and just having fun out here. Zero competitiveness besides just wanting to beat my friend, and then just enjoying the Tahoe air.

**Q. Your wife is here with you right now; what other family and friends and support do you expect to have following you this week?**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Lots that I know of and probably more that will surprise me on the ropes at some point Thursday or Friday and then over the weekend. For sure my mom and dad, my sister, her husband, and then my new niece -- I just met her for the first time yesterday, she's only a month old, and I think they're going to bring her up here, so that'll be fun. She's used to watch me on TV during all the ESPN Live stuff, and now to have her out here watching kind of in person is pretty cool.

I've got two high school buddies that are going to come up Thursday night and stay at the house we're in this week, and yeah, kind of the first time I'm able to do that on the road. It'll be fun.

**Q. Is that kind of a sense of pressure to perform well**

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**or kind of making it more comfortable, like a home event?**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: More comfortable. Obviously I want to play well every week. Having them here, I think I'll be more relaxed and they're not putting any extra pressure on me. If anything I'm putting more pressure on myself, and that's okay. That's what I live for. Getting those juices flowing on Sunday is what we're here to do.

**Q. How would you explain your style of game, for those who are looking to follow Austin Smotherman? What's your style?**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: I tend to make a lot of birdies. Been working on eliminating those bogeys. I'm really solid tee to green, so I get so many looks throughout the week that it's pretty exciting.

I'd say I'm not an uber aggressive player, but in certain situations, days that I feel like I have really good ball control, I'm able to maybe pull off a few more shots that people aren't really expecting, so you never know what you're going to get.

**Q. A different style here, Stableford format. Are you looking to be more aggressive or able to capitalize and make a lot of birdies?**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Yeah, and that's one thing taking from last week where it was definitely a shootout at the Barbasol with how many birdies were being made. I was T6 in birdies last week, just made too many bogeys. In this format that's the combo you would rather have coming into here when it's Stableford and a point system.

Yeah, I mean, a couple holes in the mix here and there. I know there's some drivable par-4s out here and with the ball going far, par-5s are going to be gettable. It's just going to be figuring out how far it's going and making some putts like usual.

**Q. First Tee of Sacramento kid. Kind of reflect back to where you were, where you are now and the impact it's had on you becoming a professional athlete.**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Yeah, pretty incredible. I'm fortunate to have grown up in the First Tee of Greater Sacramento since I was seven, eight years old until I went off to college. One of the stronger competitive programs and chapters in the country. I know we have two of us on TOUR right now, me and Cameron Champ that came from the First Tee of Sacramento. On top of that numerous other players that went off and played college golf.

But I mean, the most important thing is just the impact that I've seen week in and week out now, growing up in the chapter in Sacramento and then every week out here we have First Tee autograph signing, we have some First Tee clinic going on, and to see how much it's welcomed by the whole country and every week, whatever city we're in, it's only making positive change.

I'm fortunate to have reaped the benefits of the First Tee program, and I'm gracious to be able to give back.

**Q. What does it mean to be named an ambassador and the surprise at the AT&T Byron Nelson and be on the other side of helping --**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Yeah, I feel like I can bring a unique perspective to the First Tee and kind of maybe be a little bit of an inspiration to just what your golf aspirations -- you can aspire to be, whether it's on the PGA TOUR out here but also kind of what I envision me and my wife doing off the golf course, just continuing to play well and just lend a hand where I can.

It's pretty cool to see what these kids are doing. I met some kids at the John Deere that were there on a retreat that were incredible. One from Seattle that's got like 45 nonprofits joined together. His name was Austin, as well, so yeah, just so many inspirational stories from the First Tee. That's for sure.

**Q. Do you have any stories that stick out from when you were a First Tee kid?**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Yeah, definitely. I mean, hot summers in Sacramento, playing rounds and doing our life skills teaching before every tournament. When you're nine, ten, 11, 12, you kind of are being the ones taught the lessons, and then once you become a high schooler you're in there before each tournament teaching whether it's a lesson about leadership or a lesson about respect and figuring out a way how to relate that to golf and then life, and so that was our main focus before we went and played, which was kind of a nice way to get you in a good head space.

On top of that, the friendships that I've had from playing in the First Tee Open at Pebble Beach, still in touch with those -- we were just kids at the time, and here we are in our late 20s playing golf or working for Fortune 500 companies or still teaching at a local level. It's pretty cool to just see everybody's journey.

**Q. It's almost been a year since you've secured that PGA TOUR card. I would love to hear your reflection on your season on the PGA TOUR?**



AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: Yeah, the season has been a little bit of an up-and-down ride. I've had some high finishes, had some consistent -- made five, six cuts in a row, just kind of tend to have on the golf course a couple swings or decisions that have caused me to kind of stay in the middle of the pack. But I know if I keep putting myself there and eventually we'll learn from our mistakes and hopefully bring those 25th place finishes into top 10s and whatnot. I'm happy with where we are right now, happy the season is not over yet because we've still got some work to do, and yeah, make a push for the Playoffs.

**Q. Being a rookie on the PGA TOUR, was there anything that caught you off guard that you weren't expecting and that you've gotten to learn from this first year?**

AUSTIN SMOTHERMAN: I don't know, I feel like I had pretty good insight just from my connections with Harry and Kelly Kraft who are on Tour, former SMU Mustangs, as well. I was definitely expecting -- I don't know, I mean, it's not that much different. These guys are all good. It's just little things, scoring. My biggest thing is just making sure I don't compare my game to other guys that are out there and their processes that work for them and just figuring out what's most efficient for me time-wise.

I feel like that's been one of my biggest struggles is just maybe overpreparing. My best week of the year was at Torrey Pines and that week I played only nine holes before the tournament even started. It was one that just kind of -- I knew I needed to rest and listen to my body, and I finished 11th that week.

Figuring out how to get into that kind of belief system and knowing that that's possibly one way that might work for me to play some better golf is just kind of be efficient with my time, and short and sweet, be ready to go Thursday.

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