

The American Express

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La Quinta, California, USA

PGA WEST Pete Dye Stadium Course

Blades Brown

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Blades Brown to the interview room here The American Express. Blades, thank you for your time. We'll open it up for questions shortly, but Blades, making your first start on TOUR as a professional this week. How are you feeling heading into your first round on Thursday?

BLADES BROWN: I'm so pumped. When I was playing Myrtle Beach Classic for my first event I cannot put into words how I was feeling on that first tee, and ever since then I've been itching to get back out there, so I'm really pumped to be able to play the The American Express this week.

THE MODERATOR: You obviously had a very established successful amateur career. What went into your decision to turn pro and why was that the right decision for you to make right now?

BLADES BROWN: Yeah, there were a lot of trade-offs in every decision that we make, and for me turning professional was a very difficult decision, but it was the best decision that I believe was for me. When someone comes up to you and says, Hey, do you want to play on the PGA TOUR? I'm like, Yeah, a hundred percent, let's do it. So it was a very difficult decision, but I believe I made the right decision.

THE MODERATOR: Nick Dunlap was just in here and he obviously won here last year as an amateur, does that give you any confidence going into this week about Nick's success, and his success on the TOUR, and if there's a path for you there, and that you can succeed right off the bat on TOUR?

BLADES BROWN: Absolutely, yeah. Nick has been a huge inspiration for me ever since, because I was watching that live on TV when he made that 6-footer on the 18th green, and it just gave me so much inspiration to know that somebody else similar to my age is able to do that. And then it raises the question, what if I can do that. So it was so cool to be able to watch an amateur win The American Express last year.



THE MODERATOR: We were just talking about what you've been doing to stay loose this week, and we were talking about your ping pong game. Compared to your golf game, how does that shape up?

BLADES BROWN: Oh, man, I would say, I love ping pong, so if anybody wants to play ping pong, I'm totally down to play, just let me know.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions now.

Q. You ever been to the desert here before?

BLADES BROWN: This is my first time.

Q. First time. We're sorry about the weather. (Laughing). That being said, I mean, this is kind of an interesting tournament to start with, because it's not a golf course, it's three golf courses you have to learn. What's your week been like so far?

BLADES BROWN: So, we got here about four days ago, just because, I mean, three golf courses, that's a lot of golf course knowledge that you need to know. So got here four days ago, and as I was flying in I saw the golf courses and pickleball courts and I'm like, this is my place right here. So it was awesome. All three golf courses are in phenomenal shape. I was telling my coach, Graham Benson, I said, Man, if we could just copy and paste all three of these golf courses back in Nashville, Tennessee -- which it's 28 degrees and snowing there right now, so -- but I'm so excited to be able to play these pure golf courses this week.

Q. Have you seen all three golf courses?

BLADES BROWN: I have, yes, sir.

Q. What are your thoughts on -- because they're different golf courses. Obviously, the Stadium's a little bit different than La Quinta -- and you start at La Quinta, right?

BLADES BROWN: I do.

Q. Old-school golf course. 60s are available out there.



BLADES BROWN: Absolutely.

Q. Nick was just in here and was saying that when he was here last year he wanted to make the cut. What is a successful week for Blades Brown look like this week?

BLADES BROWN: Well, I'm just thankful and grateful. To be here competing as a 17 year old is awesome, like that has been a goal of mine for forever. To be able to play -- Pat McCabe, the tournament director, he's been awesome. When I first got here, he said, Hey, let me know what you need, send me a text. And, I mean, it's hard to not have fun playing on the PGA TOUR. Whenever you get to play courses like La Quinta, which is soft and, I mean, you got to go low this week, you got to make a few putts. But then you can also play the Stadium Course which, rock hard greens, concrete greens some would say, I'm really looking forward to playing this week.

Q. Can you give us some insight into the decision to go pro? You see Nick win last year, I don't know if, I don't know what your aspirations were immediately when you see him do that, but then you play Myrtle Beach. How, I guess, how seriously were you considering going pro before Myrtle Beach, and then you have that experience there, you make the cut, how much of an impetus was that to kind of moving forward on the pro side?

BLADES BROWN: It was awesome to know that I was working on the right things, to be able to know that I could compete on the PGA TOUR. And that's something I love to do, I love to compete. It's been a dream of mine for forever to be able to play on the PGA TOUR, and when that decision came across on the table, I said, you know, Let's not make the decision just yet, but let's keep it in the back of our heads. Then it was just, it was a decision that my family and I didn't take lightly. There's so many great organization, colleges, that are around, like Alabama, Tennessee, I mean, I could go on for forever. And was it a decision that I wanted to go to college, yeah, I wanted to go to college, but it was the best decision for me to go on the PGA TOUR because, one, I want to get better. I feel like you're put in a position out here where you have to get better. Playing against people such as Xander Schauffele, Scottie Scheffler, I mean you learn from the best. I feel like that's life, you learn each and every day. I'm probably not going to be going to school in college, but I am going to be going to school on the PGA TOUR, so that sounds pretty good to me.

Q. Who was the most convincing voice for you, besides your own internal voice? Was there, your

parents are obviously hugely involved in this decision, but was there one or two most convincing voices in this?

BLADES BROWN: Yeah, so my family at SPORTFIVE, they have been an awesome family to have around me. They have been supporting me through this entire thing, and they were giving me the right information. And so, with a lot of long decisions with my family, we ended up that this is the right decision for me.

Q. Was there like a meeting where you guys all finally decided to do this?

BLADES BROWN: Yeah, I mean, this was my decision. I mean, you're telling me I get to play on the PGA TOUR against the best players in the world on the best venues? I mean, that's just, that's awesome and that's something that I couldn't pass up.

Q. Not to quibble too much, but when you say, you're telling me, I'm playing on the PGA TOUR, you actually have to earn your right to play on the PGA TOUR, you get to play in these sponsor events, right?

BLADES BROWN: Yes.

Q. So how do you approach that part of it, that, you know, it's not like you were drafted by the NFL, you've got to earn your place?

BLADES BROWN: Yeah, well, this is going to be a process, and processes there are hills and valleys. And I'm lucky enough to where I have an awesome team around me supporting me, and I'm just super excited to go through this journey along with them. Whatever happens is going to happen.

Q. At this point you're limited in the number of events that you can play out here. I don't know if you've got a schedule laid out quite yet, but you can, this is a path for some people to get to the TOUR. Was that part of the thinking too, was that this is a better path than other alternatives later in the fall?

BLADES BROWN: Well, I mean, I'm just excited to go along in this journey with my team. I wouldn't be here if I didn't think I could compete. And I love to compete, and lucky for me I've got awesome people around me, whether it's SPORTFIVE or my coach or my family. It's been a dream of mine for as long as I can remember to be out here and compete, so I'm just excited to be here.

Q. What do you think is the strength of your game at this point as you expose it to the PGA TOUR?

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BLADES BROWN: What's the strength of my game? Well, like I said earlier, Nick Dunlap, he shot 30-under par, 29-under par last year? So you better learn to make a few putts out here, so I would probably say putting is my strength.

Q. Then you will like La Quinta.

BLADES BROWN: Yes, sir.

Q. Because those are great greens over there. What do you work on on your game at this point that you feel like, Okay, if I'm going to be out here I'm going to have to get better doing this or that?

BLADES BROWN: Well, I try to simplify things when it comes to golf and/or just in life, and I mean, golf you got to make it simple: Hit the fairway, hit the green and try to make a few putts. You got to learn to, or I'm working on trying to control the controllables. I can't help if somebody some guy shoots 10-under par four days in a row, but the only thing I can control is my attitude and whether I react or not after a shot. So I'm just focused on controlling the controllables this week.

Q. You mentioned a couple of colleges, I'm sure there have been colleges buzzing around you for some time now. Had you given college a strong thought, or where you might go at some point, or was it always like, Well, we're going to go this way, and if that's a fall back situation?

BLADES BROWN: Absolutely. Every college in the USA is awesome. I was fortunate enough to meet phenomenal coaches, phenomenal players, and those are relationships that I believe are going to last a lifetime. At the end of the day, this was the decision that I believe was right for me. And it was a lot of fun going on some of the visits. Actually, funny enough, my official visit for Vanderbilt was the Vanderbilt/Alabama game, so that was incredible being able to be up there and watch history.

Q. You talk about your team. How many people are here with you this week?

BLADES BROWN: We got a lot. We got a lot of people.

Q. Obviously your parents would be here, but then just swing coaches?

BLADES BROWN: Swing coach Graham Benson, he's there in the back. Rob Bell, the guy on the right in the white jacket, he's pretty good at ping pong, we go at it pretty hard. Then just the rest of my family and all the

people that are supporting me are pretty much here.

Q. How long have you been with Graham?

BLADES BROWN: With Graham? I've been with him ever since I picked up a golf club.

Q. Wow. That's a long time to stay with one person. What's been the relationship with you guys?

BLADES BROWN: He, I mean, when I came into golf he made -- my dad was the main reason why I loved golf, but Graham, he made it fun. Every time I would go up to the range he would meet me with a smile. It's been so cool to be able to -- I recently just added Justin Parsons to my team -- and just to have both of their knowledge and their joy pouring into me day-in and day-out is awesome. Graham's about to have a kid in March, and so I get to be known as Uncle Bladsey, so it's just, it's so cool to be able to know people for that long and go through the journey with them.

Q. You have a really outgoing personality, which we enjoy, so far it's been, it's great to see you. Do you think that that's helps you just as far as -- I mean, not just the outgoing part, but you carry yourself with a confidence. Have you always done that, have you always been a kid who believed in himself, I guess?

BLADES BROWN: That's probably a question my dad would probably know the answer a little bit better. I just, I love talking to people. I love just -- like especially every person in here I know works super hard, and I don't take that for granted, so I really appreciate every person that is working this week.

Q. You mentioned seeing the pickleball courts from the plane. You mentioned ping pong, but pickleball guy too?

BLADES BROWN: When I was flying in, as soon as we hit the ground, I turned off my airplane mode on my phone, and I texted my mom, Mom, bring my pickleball stuff, we're playing this week. So it's, I'm really excited to get after it.

Q. You guys pretty competitive as a family?

BLADES BROWN: So, my mom, she played professional basketball in the WNBA, and so she's already a competitor. My dad is too, but my mom, she and I, we go at it hard in pickleball, so yeah.

Q. What are your handicaps in pickleball?

BLADES BROWN: Handicaps?



BLADES BROWN: I'm hoping so. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Blades, and best of luck this week.

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Q. If you compare to your mom.

BLADES BROWN: I mean, I definitely have -- the quickness that I have is a little bit faster than hers, but she, I mean, she's intimidating sometimes, I got to admit. Like, if I go up three or four points, all of a sudden she gets that look on her face and you're like, Uh oh, do I want to be sacrificing my relationship with my mom right now, or what are we doing here. So, but no, it's a lot of fun to go at it with her.

Q. I meant like index, like what would you be, what would your index be for a pickleball player?

BLADES BROWN: That's a great question. I don't know. To be honest with you, I don't know what my handicap would be. I would say even par or 0. I would say 0.0.

Q. And what would mom be?

BLADES BROWN: I would say my mom would be 0.1. I got her by just a little bit. But she's better at some things than I am, so I mean, yeah.

Q. Have you guys every walked off the court not talking to each other?

BLADES BROWN: Yes. (Laughing). That happens more with my sister, believe it or not. She, I mean, it either ends up we get in a shouting match -- and this is in basketball too -- but it's, I mean, it's like, we hug it out and do all that stuff after, but it's a lot of fun being able to compete with my family.

Q. So when you were a kid, your sister was obviously very good in basketball, but were you the brother who thought you were always better?

BLADES BROWN: So she thought that since I was this 4'-9" midget that she could just bulldoze me in every sport ever. Then once I started to get a little height and get taller, she had a humbling moment, I'll leave it at that.

Q. Dunk over her or what?

BLADES BROWN: Well, I'm not able to dunk yet. That's actually that's one of my goals this year is to be able to dunk. So my trainer, Winston Gordon, I've been telling him, Hey, man, by the end of this year, I got to be able to dunk a basketball, and he said, Okay. So that's one of my goals this year is to dunk a basketball.

Q. Are you going to get there?

