

Cognizant Classic

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Champion Course

Todd Fleming

Ken Kennerly

Luke Babineau

Tim Rosaforte Distinguished Journalist Award

TODD FLEMING: Good afternoon, everybody. I appreciate everybody being here. I certainly want to welcome everybody to the 2025 Cognizant Classic in the Palm Beaches. I'm Todd Fleming, the executive director for your tournament here, also the vice president for the PGA TOUR. We're here for a wonderful opportunity today and a wonderful moment to honor two giants in their industry.

We all know that the transition of the tournament happened over the last 12 months, and a lot of things have changed, ultimately, outside of the golf course. But I made a commitment to this committee and those that have stood this tournament up for quite some time that the award that we're about to distribute today was something that would never change. It's one of the most meaningful things that this committee has done amongst a lot of things that they've done to grow this tournament to the stature that it is, and I'm just honored that you guys allowed me the opportunity to be a part of this.

With that, I've spent almost 30 years in the sports industry, and I've got -- I played college basketball, as well, so I have a real deep appreciation for the written word and journalism. I was the guy that would wake up on a Saturday morning and hustle to get the paper to see if your name was in it. A lot of times I only scored two points so I wasn't in it a lot.

But I do have an appreciation for what these two gentlemen did. Obviously Tim and his family, appreciate you being here. Although I did not know him, he certainly served as the voice that I recognized come on weekends each and every time that I turned on the TV or that there was golf or sports being talked about. I appreciate you giving me the honor to be a part of this with your family.

Likewise, I did not get a chance to meet Jeff, but those in



the room that I've had a chance to talk to as I prepared obviously to try to kick things off here, he was a mentor -- that's a common theme that keeps coming up is that he mentored anybody, a lot of people in this room, certainly the PGA TOUR professionals that are in the back, that are in the media world, spoke very, very highly of how he would always just wrap his arm around you, coach you up, and ultimately give you a pep talk to make sure that you stayed on your way.

Again, for all of you, I really appreciate the fact that I get to be here today for the Tim Rosaforte Distinguished Journalist Award.

Let me bring a gentleman to the stage that we all know. This gentleman is a giant in this community, along with the committee, but please welcome Ken Kennerly to the stage.

KEN KENNERLY: Todd, thank you, buddy. Appreciate the nice comments. It's great to be here with everyone.

I know you're not running out, but I've got to credit you and the team. You guys have done a great year. I know it's been challenging at times whenever there's transition, but I hear from the community how much you're out there, how much you're engaged with sponsors and fans and all that, and please know that Children's Healthcare Charity executive committee is here to help you along the way, and that's to the entire TOUR but especially to you, and thank you. That came from somebody this morning just complimenting you on what you've done. So well done.

Welcome. I'm honored to be able to say a few things today. First of all, welcome to the Tim Rosaforte Media Center. As Todd said, this will be here in perpetuity, which is awesome. This is the fifth annual Tim Rosaforte Distinguished Journalist Award presentation, and we're just so thrilled that each and every year that we can recognize a leader in journalism, in golf journalism, in sports journalism, and remember our great friend Rosie, as we call him. It's great to be here.

Created in 2021, Tim was still with us. As many of you know, the award was created obviously to put an icon front and center here at the tournament. Obviously the Honda Classic at the time, now the Cognizant Classic, and special



shout out to Cognizant for coming back because it's great to have the PGA TOUR in Palm Beach County, and without Cognizant we certainly wouldn't be here today.

Again, it's just a way to recognize a great man. Tim was simply the best. For those of you that knew him, you knew he was the best. He was one of the most recognized golf writers on the planet, and this award was really created to remember Tim Rosaforte in perpetuity.

As I said, we presented Tim with the award in to 2021. The other recipients of the award, 2022, Larry Dorman. Larry wrote for the New York Times before going to Callaway, phenomenal writer, for those of you that remember Larry Dorman. He came, he was broken up in his speech, as well.

'23, Randall Mell. Many of you know Randall Mell, another icon in the golf journalism world.

Then last year our very own Craig Dolch. Craig, a local, he still writes for the Palm Beach Post. Craig has been a phenomenal supporter of not only Rosie but the Rosie committee, and honestly, you and Joe Steranka helped me and others kick this off and to really bring this to fruition, and Craig, you were a great winner last year, and it's just great to have you.

Before we talk a little bit about Babs, I want to recognize people in attendance. Obviously let's start with the Rosaforte family. Genevieve, Tim's great wife and widow, is with us and has been with us each and every year, and of course one of Tim's two great daughters, Molly Rosaforte, is here, as well. Great to have you here. I'm sorry Jenna is not here but I know she's here in spirit as this is obviously one of our favorites.

Quickly, the Rosie committee. I referenced Craig Dolch, our 2024 recipient. Jack Drew is here, Shinnecock; Joe Steranka, the former CEO of the PGA of America is on our committee; of course Genevieve and the family; Carl Mistretta, First Tee, the executive director of the First Tee; Kevin Murphy I see here from McArthur; Julius Mason, PGA of America, he could not be with us today but he is on our committee; Eric Veilleux from the Bear's Club is also on our committee; John Domenico is here, one of our past presidents of Children's Healthcare Charity and formerly the Honda Classic; Joe Russo, who's our current president, he could not make it today, but Joe is on our committee, along with Andrew George, who honestly is one of the great all-time executive directors of this tournament for many, many years; and Ed McEnroe, who also was here from the beginning when we took over this event.

Last but not least, certainly as I call them, the Babs family.

It's great to have you here. I know Todd said many great things. He unfortunately had not met Babs, but for those of us who had met your husband, Jane, he was obviously an icon. We were chatting in the hallway, I think I met Babs maybe 28, 30 years ago. I got in this business in '87, and how do you not like Babs. How do you not like that friendly face and the big smile. It never changed. Never changed. Son Luke Babineau is here and you'll hear from Luke in a little bit. Luke, we're so sorry about your pops. It's just terrible.

Keith Bisgounas is here, Jane's son, as well, and Jane's sister, Sally Quinlan. Great story, Sally won on the LPGA Tour in 1984. It's great to have you here.

I know you're Jane's sister and you've been a good shoulder for her and the family. I know that. I know how much Babs meant to you, as well.

Let's talk a little bit about Babs. Babs' career, there's been a lot written about Babs over the years. As I said, the smile is infectious. You'll see the great painting in the back there with the Folds of Honor logo. Just a special, special time for Babs.

We lost him way too early. He was one of the nicest people in the golf business, one of the nicest people I've ever had the opportunity to meet. He passed away, as I said, way too early, December 9th of last year. 25 years as a golf writer, a great golf writer.

He started his career with the Orlando Sentinel, finished up with Golfweek magazine before becoming a freelance writer in 2017, where he wrote for I don't even know how many magazines but just about every magazine I'm sure as a freelance because they were honored to have his work.

Babs was also the president of the Golf Writers Association of America in 2015 to '17. That is the leading golf writers association in the world. They honor great writers each and every year at the Masters. It's great to see Rex and Doug and other great writers here, as well.

As I kind of close up here a little bit, I've got to pull a little bit from Craig's article this morning. For those of you that did not see it, I highly recommend you take a great read, and we're happy to furnish it to you, as well.

As Craig so accurately and genuinely just compared the two, Rosie and Babs, I'm just going to read a couple sentences from his article this morning. I'm going to shorten it here. Babs and Rosie fit together like an interlocking grim. Both were large men who were more powerful with their fingers, who grew up in the northeast

before moving to Florida to become journalists. Both took their first job at a small daily newspaper, learning their craft before departing for larger golf centric magazines where they became major golf figures in the sport.

Both became among the elite of their profession, winning awards with their skill and their compassion, earning the trust of the world's best golfers while adding their own gentle touch to the sport. Both had catchy nicknames, as I said, Rosie and Babs. Sounds like a comedy show. You had Jack and Arnie, you've got Rory and Tiger, and you've got Rosie and Babs, as they were affectionately known.

Jim McCabe, longtime Boston Globe writer, obviously loved Babs, had many comments, but a couple that popped out in Craig's article, I'm sure Babs is humbled to get the Rosie journalism award, but knowing him, he would simply say, not me, someone else should get it.

Babineau and Rosaforte were major players during the golden era of golf journalism of the '90s and 2000s, when newspapers and magazines were flush with money. Remember those days, guys? Were flush with money, and Tiger Woods gave them plenty to write about.

Alex Miceli, great writer, continue or went on, Even though they were both great friends, there was a friendly rivalry between them because they were both hard-nosed newspaper guys. This was back when there were a lot of people, a lot of journalists at these events. Jeff had always had great respect for Rosie, kind ever like the great respect the European players had for Seve Ballesteros.

It goes on and on, Jeff Rude, other great writers. I referenced Doug and Rex here today.

Rosie and Babs are joined at the hip once again, as we present the 2025 Tim Rosaforte Distinguished Journalist Award to the Babineau family in memory of golf's great friend, our friend, Babs.

I'd like to invite up to say a few words about his dad, Luke. We're going to present him with the perpetual plaque, and then after Luke finishes up we're going to call up the family and have photos with the family.

LUKE BABINEAU: The Babineau family would like to thank the Rosaforte family, Ken Kennerly, the Cognizant Classic and all those involved with the Tim Rosaforte Distinguished Journalist Award. I know my dad would be so incredibly honored to be the recipient of such a prestigious us award honoring one of his dear friends and colleagues, Rosie.

My father Jeff, whom many of you knew as "Babs," loved

the game of golf. He held deep respect for his colleagues in the field of journalism. For more than 20 years, he had the honor of covering the PGA, LPGA and Senior Tour with incredible humility. He was viewed as a mentor to so many, myself included.

He was truly a gentle giant with a heart full of kindness and a spirit that was as soft as it was generous. He was one of a kind. He was always friendly, approachable, and had a remarkable ability to bring a smile to anyone's face.

My father's influence wasn't just in the big moments but in the everyday acts of kindness and the respect he showed others and in the way he gave without expecting anything in return.

Media centers will not be the same without you, Dad. I love you so much. I miss you so much. There's not a day that goes by when you're not on my mind. I will continue to live the rest of my life trying to make you proud.

Thank you.

KEN KENNERLY: Thank you, Luke. Words, obviously, from the heart. We're going to invite up the family for some photos with both the perpetual plaque and the plaque that you all will take home with you.

Again, to the writers in the room, thank you all for your support, for your love for Babs, for your support of this great family, for the support of the great Rosaforte family.

Tom D'Angelo, I missed you a second ago. You're a phenomenal writer, as well, in our great community, and we thank you for everything you do.

With that, I'm going to move the podium. We're going to pull up the two plaques and have some photos.

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