

Biltmore Championship

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Asheville, North Carolina, USA

The Cliffs at Walnut Cove

Brendan Valdes

Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: Brendan Valdes joins us here at the Biltmore Championship Asheville. Brendan, welcome. If we can get some comment on being here this week as a sponsor's exemption.

BRENDAN VALDES: Yeah, I'm so excited. I mean, being out here, this venue is absolutely beautiful. And having a sponsor invite, I mean, to me it feels like there is some people out here that have a little bit of confidence in me, and honestly it means the world to have people backing you like that.

Q. Yeah, you'll be making your sixth overall start on the PGA TOUR. You made your last three cuts dating back to 2025. Just talk a little bit about those events and how it's prepared you now hopefully for this week?

BRENDAN VALDES: Yeah, the John Deere was my first PGA TOUR event, because the ones before that were U.S. Opens I believe.

So I had a really nice week there. Made the cut I think on the number, and then had a solid weekend; ended up playing pretty well.

It's a lot more focus on hitting your driver straight. I mean, the rough out in these events are way more penalizing than really any other events I've ever played in.

The 3M was good. I had a really nice first day and I felt like I was in contention for a decent bit of it. So it was nice to have the jitters coming down.

And then the RSM I had another made cut, which was nice. Not my greatest weekend, but, again, making those cuts really does give you confidence that you can compete.

Q. We've all been interested in your health. Looks things like thing are going well. If you talk a little bit about that and the journey you've been on.

BRENDAN VALDES: Yeah, January 1st I went into the

hospital and found out that I had a nine centimeter tumor right in the middle of my chest. I had to take off the next six, six and a half months, something like that.

It was a long process and not a very fun one, but now that I'm back, feel like I put in quite a bit of work and a lot of time and effort to really try and get back to where I was.

Now that I feel like I am back and I see all the guys out here, I feel like I'll be able to go out there and compete. I mean, it was a lot of work, a lot of time and effort to try and get back what I lost of course during the whole process.

Feel like I'm ready to compete.

Q. Speaking of what you lost, did you lose weight? Have to regain strength and all that? How difficult was that?

BRENDAN VALDES: Yeah. I actually gained about 30 points during the process. None of it was muscle. That's for sure.

No, it's been a lot of work on trying to get back the stamina that I once had. Just being out there walking 18 used to not feel like much of anything. I'm a younger guy. As soon as I came back, especially during the process, it was tough for me to walk to the mailbox. It's taken a few months to get back to the point in time where I feel like I'm able to walk 18 holes and not be winded at all.

So it's been a lot of work doing that, a lot of going out and running some, doing a lot of training. But I would say the stamina process is the big part. And, I mean, in golf personally I believe of course strength helps, especially wrist strength. I feel like that's pretty big, especially in rough like this.

But it's more like the speed and the torque for me is another thing that I lost; trying to get back a lot of that mobility. So, again, it's been a lot of training the last few months just to try to get back to where I was.

Q. I would assume golf becomes immediately secondary. Were you totally blindsided when you found out?

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BRENDAN VALDES: Absolutely. Yeah, I mean, I was completely blindsided. I mean, of course I felt good of course. It was just I had a lung infection. That's the only reason I went in, just because I had a regular ole sickness.

We never would've found it without that and it might have been too late at that point in time, so I truthfully got a little bit lucky that we found it as early as we did.

It was a complete and total surprise. I had no idea. Just two weeks before I played the final stage of Q-School and felt fine. Couple weeks before that played the RSM. I didn't think anything was wrong. I was playing golf and I wasn't playing bad.

It came out of nowhere. I will say, yeah, golf definitely went secondary at that point. Try and make sure I can get through it, try and make sure I was able to play golf again. As soon as I was able to do that and figure out that I would do that, then every once in a while if I felt good enough in between treatments I might be able to stand up and putt for 20, 30 minutes, do some stuff like that.

Yeah, but golf was definitely secondary.

Q. How long were you away from playing or practicing at all?

BRENDAN VALDES: Yeah, I would say I didn't practice really almost at all from very beginning of January all the way through middle of June. I would say the only club I touched was a putter to putt inside my house and maybe a lob wedge to hit a couple chips every once in a while.

That was about it. So it's been a quick turnaround. Feel like I'm ready.

Q. You've been involved previously with a fundraiser for illness. Tell me a little bit about where that came from and what it's meant to you and finding yourself in an unexpected spot.

BRENDAN VALDES: Yeah, so my sister, who I've been very close with my whole life, she was on the water polo and swim team, and there was a guy on the water polo and swim team named Ian Supra who ended up getting cancer and sadly he passed away, so they made a memorial foundation in his name and honor.

Since I've been a part of that whole process, I felt that it made sense for me to try and use the a little bit of platform I had to try and help kids that were in that same scenario.

So what we do is for the past five years we've ran a charity golf event, and all of the proceeds go to basically granting

kids experiences. So like if someone wants to go to Universal or Disney if they're having a tough time and want to get away, we kind of help them do that.

Just try and help them -- give them a few days of having a fun time, because it's not a fun process.

Q. Golf-wise, when you get here, do you feel like your old self? Are you sharp? What are your expectations?

BRENDAN VALDES: I mean, I feel like I'm sharp, you know. I definitely wouldn't want to take a sponsor invite spot if I didn't feel like I could compete.

But, yeah, I mean, the expectations are just to go out and have fun. I mean, of course I'm always going to try and win. I'm never going play an event that I don't feel like I have the ability to.

But I'm just going to say confident and committed and just go out there and have fun. That's the expectation.

Q. If this is sort of a high point in this whole journey, what was the hardest, the lowest point of?

BRENDAN VALDES: Oh, I will say -- I mean, there was a few. Finding out, being in the room with my fiancé and my mom. My fiancé, we just got engaged, and being in the room finding out about that, it was definitely not the highlight of my life.

And then I would say during the whole process I had like some complications at a few points in time. As I said, I had a lung infection, and they I guess didn't give me antibiotics back for it when I first found out in Orlando.

That turned into a collapsed lung, pneumonia, and hole in my lung, and that was while I was doing chemo. That was probably one of the low points as well as I guess another point in time I had mouth sores to the point where I couldn't open my mouth or drink water or eat food, so I had to go back in the hospital for about another week for them to hook me up.

I would say both of those points in time were the low. Now I guess back out here and I don't have to think about that stuff. We can focus on the golf.

Q. Glad you're feeling better.

BRENDAN VALDES: Yeah.

Q. College teammates with Jackson. Have you been following his success?

BRENDAN VALDES: Absolutely.

Q. Talk a little bit about what he was like as a teammate and the camaraderie between you guys.

BRENDAN VALDES: Yeah, no, we've been good friends for a while now. We both moved down to the Jupiter area about the same time, and it was -- I will say it was fun having him on the team. It was not fun competing against him. He's really good, man.

I mean, he won all the time and he pushed me to be better. So having him on the team, I mean, it really gave you confidence that no matter we played, no matter what team we were going to play against, I felt good we were going to win because we had him as well as quite a few other really good players on team.

Yeah, I did follow him throughout the whole season. I was hitting him up the whole time. When he won the 3M, I mean, that was so much fun. I wish I could have gone out and watched, but it was absolutely amazing to see him go out there and really duel it out with Scottie and come out on top.

I mean, incredibly impressive against the best player of my generation.

THE MODERATOR: Brendan, we appreciate your time.

BRENDAN VALDES: Thanks.

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