

U.S. Adaptive Open

Monday, July 10, 2023

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

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

Eliseo Villanueva

Quick Quotes

THE MODERATOR: Eli Villanueva, 9-over today in the first round. Can you walk us through your round a little bit, how everything went today.

ELI VILLANUEVA: Front nine was better than back nine. Got off track on the first three holes on the back and kind of had a string of pars on the back nine and bogeyed 18. Got it back. I could have gotten real bad real quick, but I stuck in there.

81 is not a bad score. It's not great, but it's not bad.

Q. Can you maybe just talk us through some of the emotions of hitting the first tee shot?

ELI VILLANUEVA: Well, first of all, playing with Amy was awesome. She's awesome. She had a lot of fans with her. She's actually a real good golfer, real good swings.

As far as my round, hit the ball decent off the tee. Missed a couple of greens, but on the back nine, 10, 11 and 12, I kind of started bogey, double, double there, and then I got it back on the rest of the way.

Q. Talk about what kind of nerves or feelings you were feeling on that first tee. Obviously there was a bigger crowd.

ELI VILLANUEVA: First tee, first tee shot of the day, cameras on, there was a little nerves, a little nerve-racking. Hit a decent shot. Hit a bad second shot, but I ended up paring the hole. Played okay on the front nine. Had three bogeys on the front nine.

We had a real good group with Amy and Brandon and Mike, real good people, good golfers.

Q. Last year what did you experience, and what did it mean to come back here and be playing this again?

ELI VILLANUEVA: I'm grateful to be here, first of all. Grateful and honored to be here, just to be here and competing and seeing all these awesome golfers.



I thought it would be easier this year because I was here last year, but it's still a tournament. You're still playing golf, and you're still playing in front of all these people.

It's not as easy as I thought it was going to be, because I've been here, but no, it's still nerve-racking. You're still trying to control your emotions and all that stuff.

Q. We talked about this last year, but what is that sense of pride for you, being a local guy from Fayetteville, coming here to play once again at Pinehurst?

ELI VILLANUEVA: Well, grateful for the Moore county and Pinehurst and Southern Pines locals. I feel like I'm local here because everybody said, hey, good luck today, and they know I'm from Fayetteville, about 45 minutes away from here.

Kevin, the No. 6 community president, he's welcomed me, and he brought me over here a couple times and just grateful for the locals here. I feel like a local here.

Q. You had played it since last summer; what was that like coming back, and what were those feelings playing without the tents and everything else set up?

ELI VILLANUEVA: We were just playing with -- we were buddies kind of deal. I was feeling good actually coming to here. I came and played, I think, I shot like 2-over a couple times coming here from the blue tees, but when the cameras are on and the nerves are there, it's a little tougher to play against or score.

Q. It's not very often that you have the opportunity to literally begin the entire tournament with that very first tee shot. What does a moment like that mean to you?

ELI VILLANUEVA: So we were talking about that because we saw the tee sheets last night with my family, and I was like, hey, I get to hit the first tee shot on No. 1 on the first day. I was a little nervous. I can't lie. I thought it was going to be okay, but when I got to the tee box, it was like, oh, okay. We've got to hit a good one here.

I hit a decent one. It wasn't perfect, but it was okay.



Q. This tournament as a whole, what does it mean to you to be able to participate in something like this?

ELI VILLANUEVA: It means a lot. It's a U.S. Open. Adaptive Open, but it's a U.S. Open event, USGA championship.

I think for a lot of golfers, I think it's a dream just to play in a USGA championship, and I'm so grateful to be here and play.

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