



Notah Begay III is remarkable for many reasons. He is one of the few golfers to ever shoot 59 in a professional golf tournament. A former roommate and teammate of Tiger Woods, Begay was a three-time All-American at Stanford University, where he earned a degree in Economics. Perhaps he is best known as the first full-blooded Native American golfer to play on the PGA Tour. His promising career, which included four wins in his first two seasons, was cut short by back problems.



Teaching takes on many different forms

Notah Begay Promotes Better Health to Native American Kids

BY RANDY SCHULTZ, JUNIOR GOLF

Today, Begay serves as a popular golf analyst for NBC Sports and the Golf Channel and devotes much of his time to his Notah Begay III Foundation (NB3F). The foundation educates and assists Native American youths in the fight against obesity and type-2 diabetes, common health issues within the tribal communities. In the 12 years since it was formed, the foundation has raised \$7 million and handed out \$3 million in grants, benefiting at least 50 different Native American tribes in 14 states.

We had the pleasure of speaking with Notah Begay recently, about his foundation, golf within the Native American community and even about new courses being developed on tribal lands.



Native American kids learn the golfing fundamentals



Foundation instructors help to make the game fun



JG: Aren't Sewailo and Casino Del Sol among several golf ventures that you and your partners have initiated in the tribal communities?

Begay: Yes, we've partnered with various tribes and advised them on how to allocate their resources to maximize their return, often designing a golf project that works in concert with their casino, hotel or other properties. So far, we have developed three, including Sewailo, as well as Firekeeper, just north of Topeka, Kansas, and Sequoia National in Cherokee, North Carolina. The goal is to make sure that any course we design and build will help to drive solid business on their lands.

JG: Are there any promising young Native American golfers that we might see someday soon on the Tour?

Begay: I think you will see more of them as golf becomes more familiar and accessible to young Native Americans. We have created summer and fall golf programs for them that teach golf skills as well as promote leadership and nutrition. But I think one young Native American to keep your eye on is Gabby Barker, a Shoshone-Paiute from Idaho who is a golf star at Texas Tech. You might very well see Gabby on the LPGA Tour at some point.

JG: What's ahead for you in the future?

Begay: I'm very excited about this year's TV tournament schedule for NBC and the Golf Channel. The broadcasts just keep getting stronger, so I'm proud to be part of that. And, of course, I will continue to grow the foundation with all the things we've been doing...golf tournaments, fitness days, conferences, clinics and more. We have so many wonderful people and organizations involved and our unified goal is to eliminate obesity and type-2 diabetes among young Native Americans, to give them the opportunity to be active, healthy and happy.

JG: How does NB3F raise funds to assist the battle against childhood obesity and diabetes?

Begay: Our foundation stages various events, such as the NB3 Invitational, the New Mexico Grande Slam, NB3FIT Day, our national cross-country race and other special initiatives. We use the funds to help create awareness of the health issues among Native American youth and to develop programs that keep the kids active and strong. Funds are also used to conduct research and collect valuable data about the specific health challenges we are addressing.

JG: What is the overriding message of the foundation?

Begay: I think it is to show kids in the tribal communities what a positive impact sports can make on a young person's life. Whether it is golf, soccer, whatever, young people not only benefit from a health standpoint, but they also learn discipline, pride and the importance of setting goals.

Subscribe today at juniorgolfmag.net

JG: What is the Native Strong program?

Begay: One of the elements of our foundation, Native Strong is a national program that provides grants, technical assistance, research and advocacy for our cause. Native Strong works in cooperation with a network of other organizations and national partners in helping to get important health information out to the tribal communities.

JG: Tell us a little bit about the NB3 Invitational.

Begay: Held this past year at Tucson's Sewailo Golf Club in the Casino Del Sol Resort, it's a 36-hole, 4-person team championship that's open to all amateur golfers with a handicap of 24 or less. It's a very popular event featuring VIP functions and excellent accommodations, with funds raised for the foundation's various programs.

March 2017 | 19