

Report (11 players)

Eric Cole

Things To Know

- Grew up playing and practicing at Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club & Lodge, and lives roughly 30 minutes away from PGA National Resort in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, giving extra meaning to both the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard and Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches.
- Received the 2023 Arnold Palmer Award, which is awarded annually to the PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year. The award, voted on by PGA TOUR members, comes after a season in which he recorded two runner-up finishes. He was also the only rookie who qualified for the 2023 BMW Championship (the second leg of the 2023 FedExCup Playoffs).
- Earned his first PGA TOUR card via the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Finals. Originally turned professional in 2009 but played predominantly on mini-tours until earning Korn Ferry Tour membership for the first time ahead of the 2017 season. Struggled on the Korn Ferry Tour and would not return there until the 2020-21 season, which saw him finish No. 100 in the standings and return to Q-School. Cole posted five top-10s in his 24 Korn Ferry Tour starts in 2022; he had one top-10 in his previous 41 Korn Ferry Tour starts.
- Of earning his first PGA TOUR card in 2022, roughly 13 years after turning professional, Cole acknowledges it was a "long, hard road" to reach the TOUR, but he is proud of the fact he stayed the course and persevered.
- While managing a back injury in early 2019, Eric spent a couple months giving lessons at Abacoa Golf Club in Jupiter, Florida. Near the end of 2019, Eric earned conditional membership for the 2020-21 Korn Ferry Tour season via Q-School.

Background

- Eric calls his mom "a superhero" for traveling the professional golf circuit with young children and playing at a high level. Eric has fond childhood memories of life on the road with his mom.
- Played collegiately at Nova Southeastern University for two seasons (2006-08). At the end of the 2006-07 season, Cole and teammate Greg O'Mahony earned the program's first NCAA Division II All-America Honorable Mentions (it was previously an NAIA program). Cole was also named the 2007 Sunshine State Conference Freshman of the Year and finished runner-up at the 2007 SSC Championship as he led the Sharks to a team title.
- During his sophomore season at Nova Southeastern, Cole's body ached and he lost a significant amount of weight, eventually dropping all the way down to 117 pounds. Went to the ER and was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes and Addison's Disease -- an adrenal insufficiency condition. Cole wears an insulin pump and a blood glucose monitor. Typically carries sugar-free protein bars (to eat when his blood sugar is stable) and Sour Patch Kids and Starburst (for when his blood sugar dips) in his bag for mid-round snacks. Takes medication in the morning to treat Addison's.

Family

- Eric and his wife, Stephanie, wed on December 9, 2023 in the Florida Keys. Won the Minor League Golf Tour Championship at Abacoa Golf Club in Jupiter, Florida, on Wednesday, December 6 before heading down to the Keys on Thursday. Proposed to Stephanie Williams during a practice round at the 2023 AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am.
- Son of two professional golfers: Bobby Cole and Laura Baugh (since divorced). Bobby continues to work with Eric on the technical and mechanical aspects of his swing, while Laura works with Eric on mental and game management aspects.
- Father, Bobby Cole, a native of South Africa, won the 1977 Buick Open on the PGA TOUR, in addition to becoming the youngest winner of The Amateur Championship as an 18-year-old in 1966; he has been the Lead Master Instructor at the Jim McLean Golf School in Doral, Florida for nearly two decades.
- Mother, Laura Baugh, was the 1973 LPGA Rookie of the Year and finished with 70 top-10s across a 25-year LPGA career. She also won the 1971 U.S. Women's Amateur as a 16-year-old, making her the youngest winner in history at the time. She eventually worked at Sawgrass Country Club for four years as a teaching professional before establishing her own golf school in St. Augustine, Florida.
- Eric has six siblings, and he is the second-oldest of the group of seven. Lost one of his younger brothers, Michael, in May 2022.
- Eric's grandfather on his mother's side, Hale Baugh, competed in the modern pentathlon (fencing, freestyle swimming, equestrian show jumping, shooting, cross country running) at the 1948 Olympics in London. Hale was also an excellent amateur golfer.

Charity

- Skipped the 2023 Rocket Classic to instead play the Frank B. Fuhrer Invitational, which he won by nine shots. Donated his entire first-place prize of \$20,000 back to the Fuhrer family to be used for a golf-related charity. "It's something that fits the theme of what Mr. Fuhrer did with his life as far as generosity and charitable giving," Cole said. "It's not really about the money for me. It's about being here." Tournament founder Frank Fuhrer Jr., gave Cole a spot in the field 12 years ago when he was a struggling mini-tour player. His flight to the event from Hartford, Connecticut (site of the previous week's Travelers Championship) was canceled on Sunday night, so Cole drove 7.5 hours from there to Pittsburgh for the Fuhrer Invitational.

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- As a teenager, developed a close friendship with Sam Saunders, grandson of Arnold Palmer, through playing at Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club & Lodge. Cole and Saunders frequently played with PGA TOUR winners Robert Damron, Lee Janzen, and Dicky Pride. Cole said of playing with the TOUR pros, "They helped our games develop faster than other juniors. We went to the range with a plan, practiced wedges more than other juniors and had pre-shot routines before the other kids did."

Ryan Gerard

Things To Know

- In a February 2026 interview on The Smylie Show, revealed he does not have a kitchen table in his Jupiter, Florida townhouse because his dining room has multiple putting mats on the floor, as well as three TVs mounted on the wall (mostly for watching sports). Gerard also revealed he would also be installing a Full Swing "Virtual Green" in the near future.
- Clinched a spot in the top 50 of the final Official World Golf Ranking of 2025 -- and thus secured an exemption for the 2026 Masters Tournament (will be his first appearance) -- with a runner-up finish (in a playoff) at the 2025 AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open (concluded December 21st), where he was one of only five Americans in the field. Gerard entered the tournament -- which is co-sanctioned by the DP World Tour and Sunshine Tour -- at No. 57 in the OWGR and rose to No. 46. Mauritius is an island in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar. Gerard initially looked at playing one of the two DP World Tour events in South Africa in December, but neither was an option since he needed to attend the wedding of longtime friend and fellow PGA TOUR winner Ben Griffin (December 6). The trip consisted of an overnight flight from Miami to Rome, where he had a layover of nearly eight hours and had enough time to tour the Colosseum and visit some ruins, followed by a 12-hour flight to Mauritius.
- Earned his first PGA TOUR title at the 2025 Barracuda Championship. Gerard said of his victory, "It's just a culmination of a lifetime of work. I can't tell you how many hours I've spent hitting golf balls dreaming of winning on the PGA TOUR." Played the Genesis Scottish Open the week prior and arrived in California around 2:30 a.m. Tuesday as the second alternate for the 2025 Open Championship. A text exchange with fellow University of North Carolina alum and PGA TOUR winner Ben Griffin convinced him to stay in the U.S. for the Barracuda Championship. Gerard said in an interview following the third round, "There was some conversations as to whether we should fly back and try and wait (it) out. I love playing golf, so I figured I might as well play this week. It was a tough (decision), because if I skipped going and missed out on a major, would've been a kick in the pants for sure. I'm glad we made the right decision."
- Although the Wyndham Championship was closer to his family's home in Raleigh, North Carolina, the PGA TOUR event he most frequently attended and considers his "home" TOUR event is the Truist Championship at Quail Hollow. The first PGA TOUR event Gerard attended was the 2007 Truist Championship, and he remembered following Tiger Woods (eventual winner) and Vijay Singh in the final groups. Gerard was also in attendance for the 2011 Wyndham Championship, which was won by fellow Raleigh native Webb Simpson.
- Enjoyed playing "Impossible Chipping Contests" with his friends -- a group which included the late Grayson Murray (two-time PGA TOUR winner), as well as fellow professionals Doc Redman and Carter Jenkins -- at Wildwood Green Golf Club in his hometown of Raleigh, North Carolina. They would intentionally give each other the worst lies possible and see who could get the ball closest to the pin. Gerard's family moved into a home near the 15th hole at Wildwood Green Golf Club around the time Ryan was five years old.
- Returned to the PGA TOUR in 2025 following a top 30 finish (No. 12) on the 2024 Korn Ferry Tour Points List. Graduated to the PGA TOUR via the Korn Ferry Tour for the first time, doing so off the strength of his first Korn Ferry Tour title at the 2024 BMW Charity Pro-Am just outside Greenville, South Carolina.
- Earned Special Temporary Membership on the PGA TOUR amid the 2022-23 season. Open qualified for the 2023 Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches, gaining entry to the event via a 5-for-3 playoff Tuesday morning. Finished solo fourth that week at PGA National Resort and

followed it with a T11 at the Puerto Rico Open a week later. Secured Special Temporary Membership after the 2023 Valero Texas Open.

- Played five seasons at University of North Carolina (2017-22), winning once individually and garnering 2022 All-America Second Team and All-Atlantic Coast Conference honors. Also broke Ben Griffin's program record for career scoring average, finishing with a mark of 71.65 (this record has since been broken multiple times).

Background

- Relocated to Jupiter, Florida at the end of 2022.
- Received his first set of golf clubs at age 2. Parents said he tried to sneak out of the house whenever he could to hit balls in his yard. Gerard also noted, "I apparently just loved golf. I was told that as a little kid, I would take shovels and rakes I found at daycare and swing them around like golf clubs. I always got in trouble for doing it, because I nearly took the heads off other kids. Anything that could be turned into a ball or a club was fair game for me."
- Remembered sneaking out of his room after his bedtime as a youngster to watch the conclusion of the 2012 U.S. Open, which was won by Webb Simpson at The Olympic Club. Ryan and Webb -- both Raleigh natives -- played a couple practice rounds together on TOUR in 2023.
- He was passionate about playing both basketball and baseball growing up, but his interest in baseball harmed his golf swing. He said he imitated the golf swing too closely in the batter's box, leading to "too many strikeouts."
- Graduated from Ravenscroft School in his childhood hometown of Raleigh, North Carolina. Notable alums of Ravenscroft School include actor Michael C. Hall (Class of 1989), best known for his award-winning performance in the television series Dexter, and former NFL safety Antwan Harris (Class of 1996), who won three Super Bowls with the New England Patriots.
- Junior golf victories included the AJGA's 2015 Polo Golf Junior Classic, a match play tournament contested at PGA National Resort in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida - which hosts the PGA TOUR's Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches. Gerard defeated fellow Korn Ferry Tour graduate Norman Xiong in the semifinals, and fellow professional Cooper Dossey in the championship match. Other past champions of the event include Stewart Cink (1989), Tiger Woods (1991), Trevor Immelman (1995), Brian Harman (2003), Cameron Young (2013), Akshay Bhatia (2018), and Nick Dunlap (2021).
- Named a 2016 AJGA Rolex Junior All-America First Team selection alongside fellow Korn Ferry Tour graduates Ricky Castillo, Noah Goodwin, John Pak, and Norman Xiong.
- Majored in economics and minored in geography at University of North Carolina.

Family

- Father, Robert (also goes by Bob), played collegiately at Florida Atlantic University and professionally in the 1980s. One of Robert's college teammates was Joseph Vogel, father of Korn Ferry Tour winner T.J. Vogel.
- In 2009, Robert co-founded the Tarheel Golf Foundation, a non-profit organization which operated the Tarheel Junior Golf Tour (for middle school and high school players) and Tarheel Future Stars Series (for elementary school players). Robert co-founded the non-profit with Eric Murray, father of two-time PGA TOUR winner Grayson Murray (who tragically passed away in 2024). Robert said of establishing the Tarheel Golf Foundation, "Basically there was nothing (in Wake County) for kids who were competing and wanted some acknowledgement of where they stood against other players in the state and region." The foundation had more

than 1,000 members by its second season. Robert is no longer involved with the Tarheel Golf Foundation, which sold to Drip Golf and was rebranded as what is now the Tarheel Junior Golf Tour in 2022.

- Mother, Judy.
- The Gerards are a dog-loving family. Judy named one of their dogs Stevie in honor of Steve Stricker, her second-favorite golfer (behind Ryan, of course) because both went to University of Illinois. They also have a Cavapoo puppy named Brookline, a nod to The Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts, where Ryan made his PGA TOUR debut at the 2022 U.S. Open.

Interests/Hobbies/Quirks

- Music. Knows how to play the piano and played violin for 14 years; he previously played in an orchestra and a quartet. Also enjoys listening to hip hop.
- In high school, was president of the badminton club and a member of the chess club. Still enjoys playing chess today. Used to play a lot of online chess, but eventually got frustrated after reaching a relatively high level of competition; he estimated he was a "2 or 3 handicap" in golf terms.
- Devoted fan of the Carolina Panthers (NFL football) and the New York Yankees (MLB baseball).
- Enjoys cooking when at home.

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- Good friends with fellow University of North Carolina alum Ben Griffin. Gerard grew up playing junior golf against Griffin, and the two lived in the same apartment complex during Griffin's hiatus from golf in 2021. The two also spent a lot of time together when Gerard was a PGA TOUR rookie with Special Temporary Membership in 2023.
- Met fellow University of North Carolina alum Michael Jordan. Jordan gifted him a pair of golf shoes, which he keeps in a case.
- Former University of North Carolina men's basketball coach Roy Williams has been an influential figure in his career. Gerard said Williams helped him find competitiveness through happiness and positivity.

Other

- Used to play custom golf balls numbered 19 because he wanted to win more majors than Jack Nicklaus.

Mac Meissner

Things To Know

- Last name pronunciation: MIZE-nurr
- Earned PGA TOUR membership for the first time via the 2023 Korn Ferry Tour season, which awarded TOUR membership to the top 30 players on its Points List. Meissner finished No. 20 off the strength of three top-10s, including a T3 at the season-ending Korn Ferry Tour Championship, which took him from No. 35 to No. 20 on the final 2023 Korn Ferry Tour Points List.
- Carded the eighth sub-60 round in Korn Ferry Tour history with a 12-under 59 in the second round of the 2023 LECOM Suncoast Classic at Lakewood National Golf Club in Lakewood Ranch, Florida. Meissner closed his round (which began on the back nine) with a birdie-eagle finish to post the 59.
- Previously finished No. 46 on the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Points List as a rookie, which earned him fully exempt status for the 2023 season.
- Finished No. 8 in the inaugural PGA TOUR University Class of 2021 after four seasons at Southern Methodist University (2017-21); his performance benefits included Forme Tour membership for the remainder of the 2021 season. Meissner won his third start on the circuit and finished No. 5 on its Order of Merit to earn Korn Ferry Tour membership for 2022. [NOTE: the Forme Tour was played for one season in place of PGA TOUR Canada, which had its 2020 and 2021 seasons canceled amid the COVID-19 pandemic.]

Background

- Born in Charleston, South Carolina but eventually graduated from Alamo Heights High School in San Antonio, Texas. Currently resides in Dallas, where he attended Southern Methodist University.
- Played four seasons at Southern Methodist University (2017-21), winning twice individually, earning two All-America honors (third-team in 2019, second-team in 2020), and garnering the 2018-19 American Athletic Conference Golfer of the Year award. Meissner's two wins included medalist honors at the 2019 American Athletic Conference Championship.
- Recipient of the 2021 Byron Nelson Award, which is presented annually to a graduating senior for the combination of performance, academics, character, integrity, and citizenship. The award granted him an exemption for the 2022 CJ CUP at Byron Nelson, where he missed the cut in what was his first PGA TOUR start as a professional.
- Represented the United States at the 2021 Walker Cup; he began the week as the first alternate but saw action in the first foursomes session, winning a point alongside Ricky Castillo.
- Won the 2020 Southern Amateur Championship at Maridoe Golf Club in Carrollton, Texas, closing with a final-round 66 and winning in a playoff.
- Finished third at the 2018 Texas Amateur; he finished six strokes behind the champion, his older brother Mitchell Meissner. Mac notably finished ahead of fellow PGA TOUR rookies Chandler Phillips (T5), Pierceson Coody (T8), and Parker Coody (T12).

Family

- Older brother (by three years), Mitchell, played golf at Rice University and continues to play professionally. Mitchell notably finished No. 1 on the 2021-22 PGA TOUR Latinoamerica

Order of Merit. Mitchell is set to have conditional status for the 2024 Korn Ferry Tour season.

- An uncle, Todd Haney, was an infielder who played college baseball at University of Texas and played professionally from 1992 through 1998 for the Montreal Expos, Chicago Cubs, and New York Mets. In 2019, Haney became head coach of the Victoria (British Columbia) HarbourCats, a member of the West Coast League, which is a premier summer collegiate baseball league.
- Wife, Kennedy, played golf at SMU and currently works for the Payne Stewart Foundation.

Charity

- Would like to start a foundation which encourages less-opportune children to get into golf in his hometown of San Antonio, Texas.
- Volunteered at Brother Bill's Helping Hand, Watermark Church, and the College Golf Fellowship through the years.
- While in high school, earned the President's Volunteer Service Award, which requires upwards of 100 hours of community service. The award is bestowed by the President of the United States and was established to honor volunteers who give hundreds of hours per year helping others through the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. The award can be granted to individuals, families, and organizations located throughout the United States.

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- Teammates on the United States team at the 2021 Walker Cup included Korn Ferry Tour winner Ricky Castillo, fellow PGA TOUR rookie Pierceson Coody, as well as TOUR members Austin Eckroat and Davis Thompson.

J.J. Spaun

Things To Know

- Earned his third PGA TOUR title at the 2026 Valero Texas Open; he previously earned his first TOUR win at the event in 2022, making him the 11th multi-time winner of the Valero Texas Open. Noted after the win, "I've put way too much pressure on myself that I needed to be the (No. 6) player in the world... that's an uncomfortable position for me because I've never been there, but it was more of the complete opposite mindset I had (in 2025), where last year I kind of accepted playing with nothing to lose. (In 2026) I felt like I needed to be this perfect golfer, I needed to validate whatever I did last year. It just put so much expectation on myself that I couldn't handle it. I was spiraling every week... next thing you know, my whole game was a mess. I think the biggest lesson for me this week was learning I don't have to be perfect to win golf tournaments."
- Received an autographed skateboard from Tony Hawk in the weeks following his victory at the 2025 U.S. Open. Also received congratulatory messages from comedian George Lopez and professional baseball player Mookie Betts, among many others, following the U.S. Open victory.
- Earned his second PGA TOUR title at the 2025 U.S. Open at Oakmont Country Club, sinking a 64-foot, 5-inch birdie putt on the 72nd hole of regulation to clinch a two-stroke victory. Became the first player since Webb Simpson (2012) to win the U.S. Open in his second start at the event (previously missed cut at 2021 U.S. Open, contested at Torrey Pines). Spaun bogeyed five of his first six holes in the final round, then (after a mid-round suspension of play due to inclement weather) rallied to victory with a 3-under 32 on the back nine.
- Three days after his victory at the 2025 U.S. Open, told media members at a Travelers Championship press conference his golf career embodied a Confucius quote. The quote Spaun referenced is: "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but rising every time we fall."
- Following a missed cut at the 2024 RBC Canadian Open in early June, stood No. 183 in the FedExCup. With the potential of losing PGA TOUR status looming, Spaun adopted a more thankful mentality with regards to his career, which he expanded on following his victory at the 2025 U.S. Open. "I just started saying... I'm just happy to have the career I've had. That kind of took a lot of pressure off my back as far as expectations on the golf course." Spaun later drew inspiration from the 2004 movie Wimbledon, which he watched on an international flight in December 2024. Spaun said of the movie, "It was this... not washed up but like older tennis player and he's thinking of quitting, he wants to retire at Wimbledon, and he wins Wimbledon. And it kind of resonated with me... you can't give up yet. I was watching it and was like, 'Maybe that can be me.'"
- Spaun was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes at the end of 2018 after unexplained weight loss and fatigue impacted him throughout the year. After nearly three years of exercising and adjusting his diet, Spaun still felt lethargic and kept losing weight (by that point he had lost nearly 50 pounds), which led him to a specialist. In February 2021, Spaun learned he was misdiagnosed, as he was actually type 1, late onset. Spaun said, "When I got re-diagnosed -- and diagnosed correctly -- it gave me new life. I started to feel better, started to keep weight on, get muscle mass back." Spaun is approved by the TOUR to wear a Libre blood-sugar monitor and check his levels while competing. If his blood sugar is low, he can faint. If it gets too high, his vision starts to blur.

Background

- Grew up playing Arroyo Seco Golf Course, a par-3 course in South Pasadena, California.

- Attended San Dimas High School in San Dimas, California, the same high school that Bill and Ted attended in the movie "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure."
- Played four seasons at San Diego State University (2008-12), where he was credited with five collegiate wins, earned two All-America honors, and was named the 2012 Mountain West Conference Golfer of the Year.
- While at San Diego State University, the men's golf team annually worked at the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines, with team members cleaning shoes of the TOUR pros in the locker room to raise money for the program. Spaun recalled, "It was good memories to go from cleaning shoes to now playing in the tournament."
- Spaun detailed his journey to professional golf throughout the week of his runner-up finish at the 2025 PLAYERS Championship, saying, "I didn't have the pedigree of a junior golfer growing up. I wasn't raised or groomed to be a professional golfer. I walked on to a California state school (San Diego State University). I kind of blossomed as I took on this journey... I didn't know what my ceiling was. If you were to say before I turned pro, 'Hey, you're going to win a PGA TOUR event and you're going to play nine, 10 years out there, you're going to make some good money, and you're going to have fun doing it,' that would be a great accomplishment in my terms."
- Turned professional in 2012 and spent his first three professional seasons on PGA TOUR Canada (2013-15), eventually finishing atop the 2015 Order of Merit for a promotion to the Korn Ferry Tour. Spaun needed only one season on the Korn Ferry Tour to earn PGA TOUR membership, as he finished in the top five of the 2016 Korn Ferry Tour standings to earn his TOUR card.
- After a No. 174 finish in the 2020-21 FedExCup standings, regained PGA TOUR membership for the 2022 season via the 2021 Korn Ferry Tour Finals (a system which, from 2013-22, awarded a second set of 25 PGA TOUR cards through a season-ending series of three or four events featuring the top 75 players from the Korn Ferry Tour Points List and Nos. 126-200 from the FedExCup standings). Spaun regained his TOUR card with a T2 finish at the Albertsons Boise Open (the first of three Finals events that year) in August 2021, and earned his first PGA TOUR title less than six months later at the 2022 Valero Texas Open.

Family

- He and wife, Melody have two daughters, Emerson Lili (November 2020) and Violet (June 2023).
- According to J.J., his mother's side of the family is predominantly half Filipino and half Mexican.
- Mother, Dollie. Father, John.
- When Dollie was pregnant with J.J., she asked her doctors if she could still play golf. They approved, so Dollie got her exercise playing rounds at Arroyo Seco, a par-3 course in South Pasadena, California. She played until she was eight months pregnant. Dollie says, "People would always tell me that my son was going to be a golfer when he grew up." Dollie also recounted, "(J.J.) used to watch TV as a little kid and he'd tell me, 'Mom, I don't want to watch cartoons. I want to watch Golf Channel.'"
- As a baby, J.J. would watch from his stroller as his father, John, hit range balls. When J.J. was old enough to walk, he'd go into the family's garage and hit whatever he could into a hitting net (balls, tees, even sockets from the toolbox) John had hung up. Following his victory at the 2025 U.S. Open (on Father's Day), J.J. said, "My dad introduced me to the game and always supported me every step of the way. What better gift to give him than being able to win the U.S. Open." John was on site and following J.J. the entire week at Oakmont.

Interests/Hobbies/Quirks

- Huge Los Angeles Dodgers (MLB baseball) fan. He played with Mookie Betts at the 2022 AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am.
- Grew up skateboarding and dreamt of becoming the next great skateboarder, with his icons being Tony Hawk, Andrew Reynolds, and Erik Ellington. Around the time he was five years old, a skating accident led to Spaun to rethink his dream. Spaun recalled, "I kind of went right under this car (reversing down a driveway) and literally was sitting under it. The lady thought she ran over a cat. Everyone is screaming, dad pulls me out, I have all this grease and oil all over me. That freaked me out. I definitely had scar tissue on what I was trying to accomplish skateboarding." Spaun continued to skateboard and, in April 2020, he landed a backside flip and posted the video to his social media channels, explaining it was "at least 15 years since I've landed one of those." Although he will occasionally "cruise around the neighborhood" on his longboard, Spaun essentially gave up skateboarding in his early 30s, saying, "Falling now is like falling off a 10-story building."
- Plays the guitar and has an interest in music. Can play Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" on the guitar. Previously used custom Led Zeppelin headcovers early in his professional career.
- Previously a season-pass holder for Disneyland. His trips to Magic Kingdom typically began with a ride on the Pirates of the Caribbean attraction.
- He had a practice putting and chipping green installed in his backyard.

Charity

- Finished second in the 2018 RSM Birdies Fore Love competition, allowing him to donate the \$150,000 prize to charity. He selected Los Angeles United Way to support Disaster Relief and Creating Pathways out of Poverty Funds.
- At the 2020 Travelers Championship, won The Umbrella at 15 1/2 (15 and a half) Challenge. The annual closest to the pin contest awards a \$10,000 charitable contribution to a charity of the winner's choosing. Spaun chose Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (now known as Breakthrough T1D), which, according to its website, aims to "lead the way to more effective solutions by connecting the brightest minds to advance treatments, influence policy, and improve access to care." Upon learning of Spaun's choice for the donation, Andy Bessette (at the time an Executive Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer for Travelers) introduced himself and told Spaun his son had been diagnosed as Type 1 before college. This led Bessette and his wife, Cherrie, to match Spaun's donation to what is now known as Breakthrough T1D.

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- Friendly with fellow multi-time PGA TOUR winner Max Homa, as the two are both members at Whisper Rock Golf Club in Scottsdale, Arizona.
- Played the 2016 Genesis Invitational as the recipient of the Charlie Sifford Memorial Exemption.

Alex Smalley

Things To Know

- Member at Sedgefield Country Club in Greensboro, North Carolina, host of the Wyndham Championship. Finished T29 at the 2021 Wyndham Championship competing on a sponsor exemption, securing a spot in Korn Ferry Tour Finals, and earned his PGA TOUR card for the 2021-22 season through KFT Finals.
- Member of the United States team at the 2019 Walker Cup, helping lead the U.S. to victory with a 3-1 record. Teamed with fellow PGA TOUR member Brandon Wu to win both Foursomes matches. Other teammates at the 2019 Walker Cup included PGA TOUR member Akshay Bhatia.
- Graduated from Duke in 2019 with a degree in Environmental Science. Named the 2019 Atlantic Coast Conference Scholar Athlete of the Year. Graduated as Duke's career scoring leader with a four-year stroke average of 71.32.

Background

- Was a four-year letterman at Duke. In 2019, represented the U.S. at the Walker Cup, becoming the second Blue Devil in history to play in the tournament (Dick Siderowf: 1969, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979).
- Made history at Duke, holding school records at the time of his graduation for lowest career scoring average, lowest single-season scoring average, most top-five finishes and most sub-70 rounds.
- Won the Sunnehanna Amateur (Johnstown, Pennsylvania) in back-to-back years (2018 and 2019), becoming the first player to do so since Rickie Fowler (2007 and 2008). His 2019 win was a five-shot win over PGA TOUR University alum Garrett Reband. He won in 2018, beating another University of Oklahoma product Quade Cummins.
- Was the 2019 ACC Scholar Athlete of the Year. Carried a 3.6 GPA during his four years, graduating in Environmental Science that same year.
- Was medalist at the 2016 U.S. Amateur at Oakland Hills, defeating Dawson Armstrong and Gavin Hall. His 7-under 133 in stroke play tied him at the time for the second-lowest 36-hole medal-play score in U.S. Amateur history (132 by Hank Kim in 1994, Gregor Main in 2011, Bobby Wyatt in 2012 and Wilson Furr (2020). In match play, lost to Dylan Meyer in the round of 32.
- Was born in Rochester, New York, where his father was attending the University of Rochester. Grew up in Wake Forest, North Carolina, attending Wake Forest High School.

Family

- Parents are his father, Terry, and mother, Maria. Both have caddied for their son. Has one sister, Katie. Maternal grandparents, Mike and Ruby Lyons, are big supporters who often travel to watch him play.
- Terry is a research assistant professor at Wake Forest University School of Medicine. He earned his bachelor's from West Liberty State, his master's from Wake Forest and his Ph.D from the University of Rochester.
- Terry worked as a scientist in the private pharmaceutical industry until turning to education. He is an organic/medicinal chemist. His background includes synthetic organic chemistry and medicinal chemistry.
- Maria received her Ph.D from Duke in 1995.

Interests/Hobbies/Quirks

- Likes classic rock and roll and loves to go to Disney World.

Charity

- With the winnings of The Challenge at the 2022 Travelers Championship, chose Duke Children's Hospital-Birdies for Babies as the recipient of the \$10,000 donation.
- Became the second official ambassador for First Tee (first: Austin Smotherman).

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- Among former Duke players playing on PGA TOUR-affiliated Tours, including Ryan Blaum, Adam Long, Wes Roach and Kevin Streelman.

Other

- At the LOCALiQ Series event at Callaway Gardens Resort in Georgia in the summer of 2020, shot a second-round (54-hole event) 60, setting an 18-hole record on that circuit. Made seven consecutive birdies at one point (Nos. 15-3), including a 7-footer at his closing hole, No. 9, to secure the 60.
- Grew up playing Heritage Golf Course in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Shot a 60 there during the junior club championship, but he called the 60 he shot in the 2020 LOCALiQ Series' tournament a better round of golf because it was a course with which he was unfamiliar and he made nothing but birdies as opposed to two eagles when he was a junior.

Russell Henley

Things To Know

- Earned his fifth PGA TOUR title (and first since 2022) at the 2025 Arnold Palmer Invitational, where he earned a one-stroke victory over Collin Morikawa. In the final round, notably made a chip-in eagle at the par-5 16th of Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club and Lodge. Following the win, moved into the top 10 of the Official World Golf Ranking for the first time in his career. Said of being in the top 10 of the OWGR, "I don't really feel like a top-10 player. The rankings would tell you that, but I have so much respect for so many players out here who are all so talented... it's hard for me to comprehend that."
- Made his Presidents Cup debut in 2024; he was a captain's pick, and he was emotional upon receiving the call from United States captain Jim Furyk both because he lost his father earlier in the year, and because he developed a friendship with Furyk over the years, with Henley going as far as to say he modeled his game after Furyk.
- Won two of the final five events of the 2012 Korn Ferry Tour season (one of which was the Winn-Dixie Jacksonville Open on the TPC Sawgrass Dye's Valley Course) to finish No. 3 in the standings and earn PGA TOUR membership for the first time. Roughly two months after he earned his PGA TOUR card, won his first TOUR start as a member at the 2013 Sony Open in Hawaii. Said after his first TOUR title, "That's the most nervous I've ever been. I couldn't feel my legs or my arms. They were just numb and just moving fast, and I felt like I couldn't control them." Henley added of his time on the Korn Ferry Tour, "I feel like I picked up right where I left off with the (Korn Ferry Tour) season and carried over my confidence. Not everybody needs the experience before they get out here (on TOUR), but for me it's probably the best thing for my golf game I've ever had to do. The start of last year (2012) was some of the worst golf I've played in a while, but it was probably some of the best things that happened to me. I definitely took a lot from that."
- In the final month of his senior season at University of Georgia (May 2011), won the 2011 Stadion Classic at UGA, a Korn Ferry Tour event played annually from 2006 through 2013. Followed Daniel Summerhays (2007 Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship) as the second amateur winner in Korn Ferry Tour history, and followed Chris Couch (2001 Florida Classic) and Kevin Stadler (2004 Lake Erie Charity Classic) as the third sponsor exemption to win a Korn Ferry Tour event. Henley earned the sponsor exemption as Georgia's scoring average leader at the time it was awarded. After the victory, Henley elected to remain an amateur for the rest of 2011, though he eventually accepted Korn Ferry Tour membership for the 2012 season. Ironically, Harris English, who was in the same class as Henley at Georgia, won the 2011 Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship in July, played the remainder of the 2011 season on the Korn Ferry Tour, and earned PGA TOUR membership for the 2012 season through what is now known as PGA TOUR Q-School presented by Korn Ferry.
- Following his win at the 2011 Stadion Classic at UGA, remained an amateur despite the fact he could turn professional and accept Korn Ferry Tour membership for the remainder of the 2011 season. At the time, maintained his amateur status with a goal of representing the United States at the 2011 Walker Cup -- a goal he ultimately achieved. Henley added, "They talk about how much money you can make playing pro golf, but I have never played golf to win money." In 2025, reflected back on the decision in an interview with Smylie Kaufman, saying, "I just didn't feel like I was ready. I knew I could win, but I didn't feel I had a team or anything. I also really wanted to play the Walker Cup. That was really important to me at the time, and I'm really glad I stayed amateur for that."
- Self-taught, Henley has played guitar since he was eight years old. His best friend and brother-in-law (they married sisters -- in fact, Russell and Teil met at the wedding of Teil's

sister, and the couples are now neighbors in Columbus, Georgia) always seemed to be in a band, and Henley loved music, too, particularly newer country music and anything from the '90s. Through PGA TOUR opportunities, has played onstage with O.A.R. (2015 Genesis Invitational), Keith Urban (2015 CVS Health Charity Classic), and Darius Rucker (2014 RSM Classic). Henley also said PGA TOUR winners Jason Gore (now the TOUR's Chief Player Officer) and Kevin Streelman are also talented guitar players, and he noted Gore has an impressive collection of guitars.

Background

- In 2018, with their second child on the way, the Henleys moved from Charleston, South Carolina to Columbus, Georgia -- which is where Russell's wife, Teil (pronounced TEEL), grew up. When not on TOUR, typically plays and practices at either Green Island Country Club or Country Club of Columbus; he occasionally drives to Auburn University (roughly 40 miles from their home) and utilizes their practice facilities with former PGA TOUR player and Auburn alum Blayne Barber.
- Born and raised in Macon, Georgia, where he prepped at Stratford Academy. Competing in the Georgia Independent Athletic Association (GIAA -- separate from the Georgia High School Association), won three Class AAA individual state titles (2004, 2005, 2006) and led Stratford Academy to two team state titles (2004, 2005). Henley was inducted into the Stratford Academy Athletic Hall of Fame in 2017.
- Also played point guard for the Stratford Academy basketball team. Until the end of Henley's high school career, he typically only played golf "five or six times" during basketball season -- which usually ran from October through February.
- Played mostly local and regional tournaments as a junior, eschewing the vast majority of AJGA and other national events. Henley prioritized golf courses he wanted to play and, more importantly, "I always liked going to tournaments and having someone there that I actually knew and could hang out with... and I know that if I went to like Utah in the middle of the summer that I probably wouldn't know anybody, so I just don't think it would have been that fun of an experience for me."
- College golf recruitment picked up after he reached the Round of 16 at the 2005 U.S. Junior Amateur Championship, where he fell to eventual champion Kevin Tway. Knew from the beginning he wanted to play for Georgia, though, so it was not a difficult process or decision.
- Won the 2006 Georgia Junior Championship at The Landings Golf and Athletic Club -- which now hosts the Korn Ferry Tour's Club Car Championship -- in Savannah, Georgia. Other champions of the event include Brian Harman (2002, 2003) and Greyson Sigg (2011).
- Two-time winner of the Georgia Amateur Championship, which traces its history back to 1916, when 14-year-old Bobby Jones won the inaugural title. Henley won the 2008 title at Idle Hour Club in his longtime hometown of Macon, and successfully defended his title in 2009 at Country Club of Columbus. Henley's college teammate and fellow future multi-time PGA TOUR winner Harris English won the 2007 title and finished runner-up to Henley in 2008. Other notable past champions of the Georgia Amateur Championship include Tommy Aaron (1957, 1960) and Brian Harman (2005).
- Played four seasons at University of Georgia (2007-11), where he earned eight individual victories, breaking Chris Kirk's school record of seven career wins. Notably earned individual medalist honors at the 2010 Southeastern Conference Championship, becoming Georgia's first conference champion since Brendon Todd in 2004, and was named the 2010 SEC Player of the Year, becoming the fifth Georgia player to earn the award and the first since Chris Kirk in 2006. Also garnered a 2010 All-America First Team selection, All-America Second Team honors in 2008 and 2009, along with All-SEC First Team laurels in 2009 and 2010. Graduated in 2011 with a degree in Consumer Economics.

- Won the 2010 Fred Haskins Award, one of the three national player of the year awards in college golf, after his junior season at University of Georgia. Notable recipients of the award include Ben Crenshaw (1971-73), Curtis Strange (1974), Jay Haas (1975), Phil Mickelson (1990-92), David Duval (1993), Justin Leonard (1994), Stewart Cink (1995), Tiger Woods (1996), Luke Donald (1999), Patrick Cantlay (2011), and Justin Thomas (2012).

Family

- Russell and his wife, Teil (pronounced TEEL), have three children -- a son, Robert (2018), and two daughters, Ruth (2019) and Jane (2022).
- Wife, Teil Duncan Henley, went to Auburn University and is an accomplished contemporary artist whose paintings and prints are sold all over the world through her personal brand -- Teil Paintings and Patterns; she paints out of a studio in their backyard in Columbus, Georgia. Additionally, Teil published a book -- "The Color Teil: Life, Work, and Inspiration" -- in 2019 which showcased more than 300 of her works, and served as the illustrator of "Ordinary Love", a children's picture book published in 2020.
- For special occasions Teil usually asks Russell to get her a new piece of art to display in their home. Teil's art collection includes large-scale abstracts, moody still lifes, cheerful florals, and loose figure studies.
- Father, Chapin, passed away in July 2024 at the age of 85. Chapin was a distinguished OBGYN who earned his undergraduate degree from Vanderbilt University, followed by seminary at Emory University, and medical school at University of Florida. Chapin notably founded the Macon Volunteer Clinic, where he offered free healthcare to the working uninsured of Macon-Bibb County -- and later expanded to include upwards of 15 counties. Chapin was also known to volunteer for organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together.
- Mother, Sally.
- Older brother, Adam, owns Henley Land Brokerage; he earned a bachelor's degree in political science from University of Georgia in 1999. Adam focuses on rural farmland and timberland brokerage in Georgia. Adam, who was a talented high school baseball player at Stratford Academy in the family's longtime hometown of Macon, Georgia, caddied for Russell throughout his 2012 season on the Korn Ferry Tour (he won twice and earned PGA TOUR membership for the 2012-13 season).

Interests/Hobbies/Quirks

- Fan of Georgia football. Notably watched the 2022 College Football Playoff National Championship (Georgia defeated Alabama, 33-18) with fellow Georgia players on Monday of the 2022 Sony Open in Hawaii. All 10 Georgia players in the field would go on to make the cut, with Henley finishing runner-up to Hideki Matsuyama in a one-hole playoff.

Charity

- Supports Truth Spring -- a faith-based nonprofit organization in Columbus, Georgia. Truth Spring has an academy, trade school, and housing initiative. According to its website, Truth Spring's mission is to "develop and strengthen the North Highland community with Christ-centered projects and strategies."
- Established an annual AJGA event -- Russell Henley Junior Championship -- at Green Island Country Club in Columbus, Georgia in 2025.

- Since 2015, has hosted the Five Star Kevin Brown and Russell Henley Celebrity Classic in his longtime hometown of Macon, Georgia each September. The event was established in 1989 as a three day pro-celebrity tennis tournament, and golf was added in 1992 after professional baseball player Kevin Brown began playing. The event, which is now played across three golf courses and features a sporting clay competition, raises money for the Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia, Macon Volunteer Clinic, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- College teammates at University of Georgia included PGA TOUR winners Harris English (four seasons -- 2007-11), Brian Harman (two seasons -- 2007-09), Keith Mitchell (2010-11 season), Patrick Reed (2008-09 season), and Hudson Swafford (three seasons -- 2007-10).
- Qualified for match play at the 2011 U.S. Amateur Championship at Erin Hills, where he fell to eventual runner-up Patrick Cantlay in the Round of 32.
- Represented the United States at the 2011 Walker Cup; his teammates included Patrick Cantlay, Harris English, Patrick Rodgers, and Jordan Spieth.
- Represented the United States at the 2010 and 2011 Palmer Cups, with the 2010 edition of the event being contested at Royal Portrush Golf Club. Patrick Cantlay was another notable member of the 2011 Palmer Cup team.
- Represented the United States at the 2007 Toyota Junior Golf World Cup in Japan; his teammates included future PGA TOUR winner Andrew Putnam.

Other

- Shared low amateur honors with Scott Langley (both finished T16) at the 2010 U.S. Open, contested at Pebble Beach Golf Links.

Hideki Matsuyama

Things To Know

- Claimed his 11th PGA TOUR title at the 2025 Sentry. Recorded the lowest score in relation to par since the start of the 1983 season (35-under par) and set new tournament scoring record with 257 total.
- The 2022 Sony Open in Hawaii marked his eighth PGA TOUR title, tying K.J. Choi for most wins by an Asian-born player. Matsuyama usurped Choi with his victory at the 2024 Genesis Invitational, which marked his ninth PGA TOUR win.
- Following his bronze medal-winning performance at the 2024 Paris Olympics, made his sixth consecutive appearance for the International Team at the 2024 Presidents Cup in Montreal, Canada.
- In April 2021, became the first Japanese player to win a men's major championship when he won the Masters Tournament.
- Following his victory at the 2021 Masters, Matsuyama was the recipient of the Prime Minister's Award; he received the Certificate of Commendation from Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga. Inscribed on the Certificate of Commendation include the following text: We hereby honor you and your achievement that has greatly contributed to the promotion of sports in Japan, conveys the importance of perseverance to our people, and provides dreams and hopes that are truly remarkable.
- Turned professional in 2013 and was the first rookie to lead the Japan Golf Tour money list, as he won four times on the circuit in 2013. Prior to his rookie season on the Japan Golf Tour, won on the circuit as an amateur in 2011.
- Was a student at Tohoku Fukushi University in Sendai, Japan when the city was devastated by an earthquake and tsunami in March 2011, but was in Australia training at the time. Returned to find his dorm room destroyed and struggled to find food. A few weeks later, made his debut at the Masters having won the Asian Amateur. He was the first Japanese amateur golfer to play in the Masters.

Background

- Born: February 25, 1992 in Matsuyama, Ehime, Japan
- Was introduced to golf at age 4 by his father, Mikio. His father took him to the driving range with him one day and Hideki told him "I want to hit a ball too." Mikio cut down a secondhand 9-iron and gave it to Hideki, but it was still too long for a 4-year-old boy, so Mikio had to teach Hideki how to stand steadily over the ball and help him with his posture.
- First broke 100 when he was in 2nd grade competing in the first tournament he ever played in, the "Shikoku Junior."
- When Hideki was in 4th grade, his father qualified to play in the Chushikoku Open and asked for permission to have Hideki be his caddie. Mikio wanted to show his son the "strong play" of good players up close, but even more important than showing him their swings, he wanted him to see firsthand how they handled the mental part of the game. Mikio saw this as "mental training" for Hideki. After being advised by Coach Akio Takahashi of Meitoku Gijuku Jr./Sr. high school in Kochi prefecture, Hideki transferred there in search of a better golf environment.
- College: Tohoku Fukushi University in Sendai, alma mater of fellow professionals Hiroshi Iwata and Yusaku Miyazato. Hideki planned on turning pro right after high school, but as a senior in high school (after losing in the third round of the Japan Amateur Championship) Coach Abe from Tohoku University came to his home in Ehime and told him he could become

a mediocre pro now if he wanted to, but if he really wanted to have an active career as a pro, he needed to practice more first. That's when he decided to attend college and play for Coach Abe.

- Hideki's family wasn't wealthy, and they would rarely be able to go to the range. But because Hideki was so captivated with golf, his father decided that he himself would try and become a better golfer in order to help teach Hideki how to play better. He would practice in local competitions and eventually joined a club and would go there often, always taking Hideki with him. Hideki would sit and practice his approach shots while he waited for his dad to finish. This gave Hideki the chance to polish his short game. Consequently, Hideki's favorite club growing up was his sand wedge. "When I was a junior I was always small and couldn't hit the ball very far, but I loved hitting onto the practice greens and approach greens with my sand wedge. I always had my sand wedge. Ironically, now it's one of my worst clubs (laughs)." Mikio's practice eventually paid off and he was able to qualify for the Japan Amateur Championship at the age of 52.
- Growing up, if someone gave him a toy to play with, he would immediately get bored with it and just give it away to a friend. But for some reason, even as a kid that never obsessed over anything, he never got tired of golf. "My memory is a bit rusty, but I remember when I was just starting out I'd hit like 1,300 balls a day. I have no idea why I thought that was even fun. But I guess because I had no idea then maybe why I am still doing the same thing now."

Family

- Married his college sweetheart Mei in January 2017 and welcomed a baby girl Kanna in July of that year.
- When questioned about his personal life during the 2017 PGA Championship, he had this to say: "No one really asked me if I was married, so I didn't have to answer that question. But I felt that after the PGA would be a good time, because our baby is born and I thought that would be a good time to let everyone know."

Interests/Hobbies/Quirks

- He enjoys watching baseball, especially Japanese players. Admires baseball players: Yu Darvish, Shohei Ohtani, Kenta Maeda.
- Likes playing catch (baseball) and table tennis during his free time.
- Brings a rice cooker wherever he goes, so he always has rice balls and bananas in his bag. His now former caddy (Daisuke Shindo) introduced him to beef jerky, which he now really likes a lot as well. The one food he brings with him back from Japan is "Urugi" soy sauce. It's brewed in Ehime near his grandparents' home (about an hour away from his parents' house). Whenever he would go and visit his grandparents he always knew they were getting close when he could smell the aroma of the soy sauce being made nearby.
- When he goes home to Japan, he likes to fish. "I caught a 12-pound Hamachi (yellowtail) when I was 10 years old. Twelve pounds isn't that big, but it is for a 10-year-old. It's my fondest memory of fishing with my grandparents. I might have had bigger ones after that, but that is one I'll never forget."
- He started using an interlock grip during his junior year in high school. He also used interlock when he was younger but then switched to overlap. He eventually returned to interlock on his own because he felt overlapping was making him turn the ball over too much.
- Known to use Srixon balls marked with the number 78. He uses the number 78 because it was his player registration number when he won the 2021 Masters.

- He wears five-toe socks during his competition rounds, while training and during other athletic activities. In the past, with normal socks, there have been times when his toenails have cut into his skin causing him to bleed.
- Big foodie and loves Sake.
- Interested in photography.

Charity

- "Matsuyama Foundation" For Tohoku earthquake support. Launched prior to the 2013 President's Cup. 1 birdie = 10,000JPN (~\$100); 1 eagle = 20,000JPN (~\$200) Also donated his President's Cup participation fee (\$150k) to earthquake relief

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- After former caddie Daisuke Shindo retired from full time caddying in 2018, Hideki's good friend and college teammate Shota Hayafuji began looping for him during the 2019 season. The two have known each other since junior high school in Japan and attended the same high school and college. Shota himself went viral after famously grabbing the pin flag on 18, removing his hat and bowing to Augusta National in a show of respect. My heart was full of gratitude and it was the natural thing for me to bow and show respect to the Masters," Hayafuji said through interpreter Bob Turner. "I was saying 'Thank you very much!' I bowed to the course mainly because I was thankful. I wasn't thinking about doing it and it just happened -- like an instinct," he said.

Other

- Represents Boston Common Golf alongside teammates Rory McIlroy, Keegan Bradley and Adam Scott in TGL presented by SoFi, a primetime golf league in partnership with the PGA TOUR which launched in January 2025 on ESPN. The new golf league was created by TMRW Sports whose co-founders include Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy, and fuses advanced technology, innovation and live action for ESPN's primetime television audience. Boston Common Golf is owned by John Henry, Tom Werner, Mike Gordon and Fenway Sports Group.
- Finished T4 at the 2020 Olympic Games (July-August 2021) in his home country of Japan. Did not compete in 2016 in Rio. Claimed the bronze medal at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Nico Echavarria

Things To Know

- First name is Nicolas, but commonly referred to as Nico. Last name is etch-uh-vuh-REE-uh
- Represented Colombia at the 2024 Olympic Men's Golf Competition in Paris. Following the Olympics, changed his phone background to the International Team logo, embodying his desire to compete in his first Presidents Cup.
- Earned his third PGA TOUR title at the 2026 Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches, saying after the victory he and his wife, Claudia, would be getting a dog -- specifically a Bernedoodle. Also spent tournament week at the home of fellow Colombian Camilo Villegas, who won the event in 2010.
- Relocated from Jacksonville, Florida to Palm Beach County in spring 2026. Nico and his wife, Claudia, moved to be closer to her parents, as the couple intend on raising a family together. Nico plays and practices at The Bear's Club in Jupiter, Florida.
- Won the 2024 Baycurrent Classic in Japan for his second PGA TOUR title. The victory came 10 years after Echavarria represented Colombia at the 2014 World Amateur Team Championship in Japan.
- Won his first PGA TOUR event, the 2023 Puerto Rico Open, by two strokes. It was just his 11th PGA TOUR start, and he was the first rookie winner of the 2022-23 season. The victory earned him an exemption for the 2023 PLAYERS Championship in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, where he lives and had always longed to compete.
- Earned his first PGA TOUR card via the 2022 Korn Ferry Tour Finals, solidifying it with a top-five finish at the season-ending Korn Ferry Tour Championship.
- Played two full seasons on PGA TOUR Latinoamérica, earning his Korn Ferry Tour card after finishing second in 2018 after an outstanding season saw him card his first two professional victories in a three-week stretch. He ultimately finished second to Harry Higgs after finishing T45 at the Shell Championship, losing the No. 1 position by a mere \$64.
- Born and raised in Medellin, Colombia. Says, "Colombia is minimal in golf compared to soccer, but we are trying our best to represent our country in this world." With his victory at the 2023 Puerto Rico Open, followed Sebastian Munoz and Camilo Villegas as the third Colombian to win on the PGA TOUR.

Background

- Echavarria says his father and grandfather are the reasons he "plays this beautiful sport," as they started taking him to the golf course when he was just two years old. He has said that he wishes that his grandfather could watch him play now.
- Finished T3 at the 2011 Junior World Championships (Boys 15-17 Division) at Torrey Pines; the individual medalist was Beau Hossler.
- Reached the semifinals of consecutive U.S. Junior Amateur Championships in 2011 and 2012.
- Attended IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida prior to playing collegiately at University of Arkansas.
- Played four seasons at University of Arkansas (2012-16), where he won once individually and graduated with a degree in international relations. Nico says he lived some of the best years of his life while playing at Arkansas.

Family

- Parents are Emilio and Ana Maria Echavarria.

- Has two older brothers, Miguel and Andres, both of which played collegiately. Miguel played at the University of Michigan. Andres played at the University of Florida and made over 100 starts in PGA TOUR-sanctioned events, primarily on PGA TOUR Latinoamerica and the Korn Ferry Tour after turning professional in 2011. The brothers are very competitive with each other.
- Mother has always joked that all three of her sons, Miguel, Andres and Nico, when first learning how to stand and walk, used golf clubs to steady themselves as the boys got on their feet.
- Andres and Nico became the first brothers to both win a PGA TOUR Latinoamerica tournament.

Interests/Hobbies/Quirks

- Interests include: good wine, "almost every sport", movies and TV shows.
- Outside of golf, Echavarria also enjoys playing in tennis and ping pong. He describes himself as very competitive and would like to play against other golfers in a tennis or ping pong tournament.
- One of the things on his bucket list is skydiving.
- Michael Phelps is his favorite athlete outside of golf. Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy are his favorite golfers.

Charity

- Partnered with the American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) to host the Nico Open in Colombia in May 2023, as part of the AJGA International Pathway Series. The new series will continue the AJGA's effort to provide college golf scholarship exposure, by bringing events closer to the junior circuit's international membership. The inaugural Nico Open marked the first AJGA event conducted in South America and was played at Club Campestre Medellin in Medellin, Colombia.

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- Remembers watching Camilo Villegas win on TOUR for the first time (and as the first Colombian to win). Nico was 14 years old at that time and says that win inspired him to be a professional golfer. The night before Nico's first PGA TOUR win at the 2023 Puerto Rico Open, Camilo left him a voicemail reminding him that his moment will come. Camilo then waited for him on the 18th hole to cheer him on.

Other

- An early golf memory is watching Tiger Woods play at The Open Championship in 2010.

Mackenzie Hughes

Things To Know

- Mackenzie was selected to the 2024 Presidents Cup International Team captained by fellow Canadian Mike Weir. Hughes joined fellow Canadians Corey Connors and Taylor Pendrith (both captain's picks) on the International Team. The 2024 playing at The Royal Montreal Golf Club was Hughes' Presidents Cup debut, and Hughes said of the experience, "Being on the International Team was the highlight of my career. It was magical. I knew it would be, and it lived up to all the hype and more." Hughes provided one of the highlights of the week, as he chugged a beer on the first tee and riled up the home crowd prior to the start of the first day's matches.
- The Canadian trio of Hughes, Corey Connors, and Taylor Pendrith were inducted into the Kent State Athletics Hall of Fame (also known as the Varsity K Hall of Fame) in 2021. Other notable members of the Varsity K Hall of Fame include 2003 Open Championship winner Ben Curtis (inducted in 2006), former NFL wide receiver Julian Edelman (inducted 2015), four-time All-Pro First Team tight end Antonio Gates (inducted as a basketball player in 2010), and legendary football coaches Lou Holtz (inducted 1990) and Nick Saban (inducted 2015).
- Represented Canada at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (played in 2021) alongside childhood friend and fellow multi-time PGA TOUR winner Corey Connors.
- Was the first player to earn victories on PGA TOUR Canada (2013 Cape Breton Celtic Classic), Korn Ferry Tour (2016 Price Cutter Charity Championship), and PGA TOUR (2016 RSM Classic).
- Motto he lives by: "Success is never owned. It is rented, and the rent is due every day."
- Resides in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he is a member of Quail Hollow Club. Moved to Charlotte in 2012 after his wife, Jenna, was offered a job there. Now with three kids, Mackenzie and Jenna believe the city of Charlotte is the perfect place to raise a family, and the couple see themselves living there for many years to come.

Background

- Born in Dundas, Ontario, Canada. Dundas is a community in Hamilton, Ontario nicknamed Valley Town, as it is nestled in a valley surrounded by the Niagara Escarpment along Lake Ontario.
- Got his start in golf at seven, when his parents brought him along to the driving range at Dundas Valley Golf and Curling Club (Stanley Thompson-designed course) instead of hiring a babysitter. In 2017, the par-3 course at Dundas Valley was renamed the 'Mackenzie Hughes Par 3' as a homage to the place where it all began for Hughes. (Photo of 1st tee sign available in Catalyst files)
- Won back-to-back Canadian Amateur Championships in 2011 and 2012. Notably earned the victories over future PGA TOUR winners Corey Connors (T3 in 2011, 4th in 2012) and Taylor Pendrith (T20 in 2011, T5 in 2012).
- Played four seasons at Kent State University (2008-12), where he earned three collegiate victories and finished with a career scoring average of 73.67. Hughes was a three-time All-Mid-American Conference First Team selection (2010-12), as well as the 2009 MAC Freshman of the Year, and helped Kent State win four consecutive MAC Championships (2009-12) during his time with the program.
- Alongside teammates and fellow Canadians Corey Connors and Taylor Pendrith, Hughes helped Kent State qualify for the 2012 NCAA Championship at Riviera Country Club, where they defeated Florida State University (led by Daniel Berger and Brooks Koepka) in a playoff

to earn the eighth and final spot in match play. Kent State fell to the Justin Thomas-led Alabama Crimson Tide in match play. Other notables in the 2012 NCAA Championship field were Patrick Cantlay (T4), Thomas (T7), Max Homa (T9), Keith Mitchell (T9), and Patrick Rodgers (T9). Hughes was teammates with Conners and Pendrith for his final two seasons at Kent State (2010-11 / 2011-12 seasons), as Conners' and Pendrith's time with the program both spanned 2010-14.

- Represented Canada at the 2012 World Amateur Team Championship (Eisenhower Trophy) with Corey Conners and Albin Choi. Canada finished T6, while a United States team featuring Justin Thomas won the title.

Family

- Married to wife Jenna (2016) and has three children: sons Kenton Robert (2017) and Cohen Alan (2020), and a daughter, Ellie Mae (2022); Kenton is named in part as tribute to Kent State, where Mackenzie and Jenna met. According to Jenna, "Mac is an amazing father and nothing brings him more joy than playing with his kids or watching their sporting events."
- Jenna and Mackenzie met in an extra-credit project during their freshman year at Kent State. Jenna is originally from upstate New York. According to good friend Corey Conners, Hughes "spent a long time convincing Jenna to go out with him at Kent State."
- In January 2026, Jenna was announced as the recipient of the Barbara Nicklaus Award, presented annually by the PGA TOUR Wives Association to "a highly effective member of the Association whose leadership, dedication and philanthropic impact exemplify the values on which the organization was founded." Jenna joined the PGA TOUR Wives Association Board of Directors in 2021 and served as Vice President of Partnerships and Special Events until 2024, at which time she transitioned to Vice President of Fundraising.
- Jenna and family try to travel with Mackenzie on TOUR as often as they can. Jenna, Kenton and Cohen were on-site to see his second PGA TOUR win at the 2022 Sanderson Farms Championship. Hughes says, "It's nice having them on the road with me, which I know eventually won't always happen. There are many families out there that also travel and have kids similar ages that we'll hang out and do fun things with. We also have a daycare on the road for our kids. These teachers travel with the TOUR and help kids learn and discover things from a young age. The environment for families is great."
- Mother, Sandra, is a vascular access nurse in Ontario, Canada; she worked on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic, and Mackenzie calls his mom his "biggest supporter."
- Also counts his in-laws (Jenna's parents Alan and Karen) as an integral part of his support system.

Interests/Hobbies/Quirks

- Grew up a loyal Toronto sports fan, supporting the Maple Leafs (NHL hockey), Raptors (NBA basketball), and Blue Jays (MLB baseball). Adopted the Carolina Panthers (NFL) as his football team after moving to Charlotte, and roots for his wife's hometown NFL team, the Buffalo Bills.
- Will not eat anything chocolate.
- Avid scrap pickleball player.

Charity

- Mackenzie and wife Jenna created the Mackenzie Hughes Family Foundation in 2023. The mission of the foundation is to make a positive difference for children and families through financial assistance, community experiences and creating lifelong memories.

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- Helen Ross wrote a great piece on the friendship between Mackenzie Hughes and Corey Conners, which has endured nearly two decades. The two grew up 75 miles from each other, idolizing Mike Weir (and Tiger Woods, of course). They were members of the Canadian National Team, college teammates at Kent State, represented Canada at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (played in 2021), and were in each other's weddings. The story is full of great quotes from the two of them and photos from their friendship, as well as a painting of the two of them as children that Conners' grandmother had commissioned. Hughes said, "For two kids that grew up and trained together and came from small towns in Ontario, to both be finding some pretty good success on the PGA TOUR and to do it together is really quite extraordinary. But that's why you dream big, and you work hard."
- Served as a standard bearer in Mike Weir's group at the 2004 RBC Canadian Open, which was roughly a year and a half after Weir's historic victory at the 2003 Masters Tournament (Weir became Canada's first Masters champion).
- Had "goosebumps and shivers" the first time he played with Tiger Woods, which was during the third round of the 2018 PLAYERS Championship, and ended up shooting his best round of the season. He had the chance to meet Woods about two months earlier at the Arnold Palmer Invitational, as Woods was sitting five feet away from Hughes in the locker room, but he couldn't muster up the courage to walk over and say hello.
- Friends with former NFL quarterback Alex Smith. The two met during 2018 AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am.
- Played under legendary head coach Herb Page for all four seasons at Kent State University (2008-12). A native of Markham, Ontario, Page became the first coach inducted into the "Builder" category of the Canadian Golf Hall of Fame, with his induction taking place during RBC Hall of Fame Day at the 2019 RBC Canadian Open. Page served as head coach for the Kent State men's golf program for 42 seasons (fall of 1977 through summer 2019) and was instrumental in the launch of the women's golf program, which played its first season in 1998-99 (Page served one season as head coach in 2012-13). Page's teams were frequently stocked with Canadians, including Hughes (2008-12) and fellow future PGA TOUR winners Corey Conners (2010-14) and Taylor Pendrith (2010-14). Another notable player in Page's tenure at Kent State was Ben Curtis (1996-2000), who won the 2003 Open Championship en route to 2003 PGA TOUR Rookie of the Year honors. Under Page, the men's program won 23 Mid-American Conference Championships and made 17 NCAA Championship appearances.
- Prior to his coaching career, Page was a three-sport athlete at Kent State, earning eight varsity letters (four in golf, two in football, two in ice hockey) from 1970 through 1974. In football, Page was a placekicker for two famed Kent State teams -- the 1972 squad which won the program's first (and still the only) MAC Championship, and the 1973 team which won nine games (a school record until 2012). Page's teammates on the 1972 team included defensive back and future coaching icon Nick Saban, as well as Pro Football Hall of Fame linebacker Jack Lambert. Page was inducted into the Kent State Athletics Hall of Fame (also known as the Varsity K Hall of Fame) as a student-athlete in 1985, and again as a coach in 2019. Saban joined Page in the Varsity K Hall of Fame in 2015.

Michael Brennan

Things To Know

- Earned his first PGA TOUR title at the 2025 Bank of Utah Championship, where he won as a sponsor exemption in his third career TOUR start and first TOUR start as a professional. At the time, was the seventh player since 1970 to earn his first PGA TOUR win within his first three career starts, following a group of players which included Seve Ballesteros (1978 Wyndham Championship), Russell Henley (2013 Sony Open in Hawaii), and Matt McCarty (2024 Bank of Utah Championship). Prior to the career-altering win, Brennan was in line to play the 2026 Korn Ferry Tour season with fully exempt status as the No. 1 finisher from the 2025 PGA TOUR Americas Points List.
- In his first full season as a professional, finished No. 1 on the 2025 PGA TOUR Americas Points List off the strength of three victories and nine additional top-10s. Brennan's three victories all came in a span of four starts in August and September. Prior to the first of his three wins, Brennan stood No. 418 in the Official World Golf Ranking. Upon conclusion of the season-ending 2025 Fortinet Cup Championship in late September, Brennan rose to No. 107 in the OWGR.
- Although Brennan finished No. 18 on the 2024 PGA TOUR Americas Points List as a rookie with five top-10s in 10 starts; he lost a five-stroke lead in the final seven holes of the season-ending 2024 Fortinet Cup Championship, where a victory would have moved him into the top 10 of the PGA TOUR Americas Points List and secured him Korn Ferry Tour membership for the 2025 season. In a three-hole stretch (Nos. 12-14) in the final round at TPC Toronto, Brennan made (in succession) a bogey, double bogey, and quadruple bogey. Brennan said the final round ate at him for a month, though he now refers to it as one of the most important learning experiences of his career, noting the collapse taught him how to handle the pressure of a lead.
- Michael returned to TPC Toronto nearly a year later for the 2025 Osprey Valley Open, where he got the chance to play the same hole that he quadruple bogeyed at the 2024 Fortinet Cup Championship. Although the Osprey Valley Open was played at TPC Toronto's Heathlands Course, Michael participated in a content shoot at the North Course to replay the par-3 14th.
- Finished No. 12 in the 2024 PGA TOUR University Ranking after four seasons at Wake Forest University (2020-24), where he earned eight individual victories, highlighted by back-to-back wins at the 2023 and 2024 Atlantic Coast Conference Championships. Brennan's collegiate victories included the 2021 Wake Forest Invitational contested at Pinehurst No. 2. Brennan's eight wins were tied with 17-time PGA TOUR winner Curtis Strange for third in program history, only behind three-time PGA TOUR winner Gary Hallberg (nine) and 2011 FedExCup champion Bill Haas (10). Performance benefits for Brennan's finish in the PGA TOUR University Class of 2024 included PGA TOUR Americas membership.

Background

- Began playing golf at four years old at River Creek Club in his longtime hometown of Leesburg, Virginia, which is roughly 40 miles northwest of Washington, D.C. His father, Michael, played amateur golf throughout his adult years and was known to bring his son to the range in a stroller.
- Says of River Creek Club, "Really, really fond memories playing with my family, brother, and a bunch of friends out there. It's a very calming and peaceful place to me. When I try to imagine hitting shots, just a 7-iron I would hit at River Creek, makes me feel a little bit better out on the golf course."

- Played multiple sports growing up - basketball, football, lacrosse, soccer - before committing fully to golf, as he didn't want to specialize in one sport too early. Basketball was perhaps Brennan's favorite of the other sports; he was a shooting guard.
- Attended The Academies of Loudoun, a STEM-focused high school which he had to test into during middle school. The Academies of Loudoun is comprised of three schools on one campus: Monroe Advanced Technical Academy, Academy of Engineering and Technology, and Academy of Science. Michael loved math and science, so he studied engineering at the Academy of Engineering and Technology. Played his high school golf at nearby Tuscarora High School in his longtime hometown of Leesburg, Virginia.
- For his "sophomore year project" at The Academies of Loudoun, worked on a theoretical project focused on improving scoliosis treatment, specifically the brace-fitting process, which is a time-consuming process for patients. Brennan and his team developed the concept of a compression-fitting shirt with sensors to calculate body alignment, earning second place in the academy's competition based on feasibility and creativity.
- Hoped to continue studying engineering in college, but realized throughout the recruiting process the demands of college golf would conflict with such a rigorous major, so he shifted his focus to economics upon enrolling at Wake Forest University.
- Won three consecutive Middle Atlantic Amateur Championships (2017, 2018, 2019). Past champions of the event include PGA TOUR winner Billy Hurley III (2004), 21-time TOUR winner Davis Love III (1984), eight-time TOUR winner Fred Funk (1979), and former PGA TOUR commissioner Deane Beman (1962, 1963).
- Won the 2019 Virginia State Golf Association Amateur Championship. Past champions of the event include 21-time PGA TOUR winner Lanny Wadkins (1970), 17-time TOUR winner Curtis Strange (1974, 1975), three-time TOUR winner John Rollins (1997), and TOUR winner Billy Hurley III (2004, 2005).
- Totaled a 71.46 career scoring average across his four seasons at Wake Forest University (2020-24), which, upon exhaustion of his eligibility, ranked fourth in program history in records dating back to 1981. Brennan's average only trailed Alex Fitzpatrick (70.94 from 2018-22), 2011 FedExCup champion Bill Haas (70.87 from 2000-04), and PGA TOUR winner Will Zalatoris (70.44 from 2015-18).
- Cited the team title at the 2022 Atlantic Coast Conference Championship as the proudest and most exciting moment of his collegiate career. It marked Wake Forest's first conference title since 1989.

Family

- Parents are Michael and Shannon Brennan. Prior to their retirements, Michael worked as an air traffic controller for the FAA, while Shannon was a property manager for AvalonBay, a multifamily real estate investment trust.
- Shannon played volleyball in high school and got into the game of golf when she met her husband, Michael. Roughly 12 years after retiring and leaving the real estate industry, Shannon earned an expert rules certification from the USGA and became a volunteer on the Middle Atlantic Golf Association Rules Committee. Shannon, who scored over 90 on her rules exam, has served as a rules official for collegiate and amateur tournaments in the region.
- Michael (son) remembers Shannon studying for her exams by constantly quizzing the family with different rules scenarios. Michael smiles as he recalls how most of them were "super obscure ruling situations."
- Younger brother, Sean, is both Michael's best friend and biggest inspiration. Sean was born with an underdeveloped right femur. Though not genetic, the condition has required more than five major procedures and numerous surgeries, often involving year-long recovery processes. Despite the challenges, Sean has maintained an incredibly positive attitude, never

sought special treatment, and served as a constant source of inspiration to those around him. Michael often says he tries to be more like Sean, whose resilience and spirit continue to motivate him on and off the golf course.

- Sean is a senior at the University of Kentucky (Class of 2026) and is majoring in finance.

Interests/Hobbies/Quirks

- Outside of golf, got into tennis in 2025, as many of his hometown friends picked up the game. Says of getting into tennis, "They think it's a little ridiculous, but I went out and get tennis lessons from a tennis pro because I don't like being average at it." Says Carlos Alcaraz is his favorite tennis player.
- Hardly ever read for leisure in high school or college, but one of his professors and close friends, Michael Sloan, encouraged Brennan to pick up books for many years. Brennan and Sloan grew close through their shared love of golf and Sloan's Greek mythology course, which was quite memorable for Brennan. In 2025, Brennan created a Goodreads account to track his reading history and identify what he wants to read next. Two of Brennan's favorite books - "Island of the World" and "The Lighthouse" - were written by Michael O'Brien, and he hopes to read all of O'Brien's books.
- Fan of the Washington, D.C. sports teams, with his favorites being the Commanders (NFL football) and Nationals (MLB baseball).
- Active on Letterboxd, a social media platform used by movie fans to rate movies, share reviews, and create both rankings and watchlists. In college, Brennan and his friends and teammates got together weekly to watch movies, and they managed an Excel spreadsheet to select movies for the group to watch.

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- Had an NIL partnership with Tom Brady's clothing brand (BRADY) -- which later became part of NOBULL -- during his college career at Wake Forest. Brennan and University of Texas golf star Cole Hammer were both featured in a 2022 video with Brady announcing the brand's launch of its golf-specific apparel. Brennan got to do the shoot with Brady and meet the seven-time Super Bowl champion.
- With Wake Forest University men's golf head coach Jerry Haas as his caddie, Brennan played alongside PGA TOUR winner and fellow Wake Forest alum Will Zalatoris as he won the 2022 Genesis Invitational Collegiate Showcase at The Riviera Country Club, which earned him an exemption for the PGA TOUR's 2022 Genesis Invitational. Brennan played a practice round with Rory McIlroy and took a picture with his favorite golfer, Tiger Woods.
- Teammates at Wake Forest included Alex Fitzpatrick, younger brother of multi-time PGA TOUR winner Matt Fitzpatrick.
- Represented the United States at the 2022 Arnold Palmer Cup; his teammates included Johnny Keefer, Gordon Sargent, and Michael Thorbjornsen.
- Spent his formative years under the tutelage of Adam Harrell, a PGA of America professional who (as of January 2026) now works out of the 1757 Golf Club and Academy in Dulles, Virginia. Brennan took his first lesson with Harrell in 2014 (when he was 12 years old) and the two worked together for many years thereafter.

Other

- Cites The Genesis Invitational as "his" PGA TOUR event given it is where he made his first TOUR start in 2022 (as the winner of The Genesis Invitational Collegiate Showcase), and the fact Riviera is among his favorite golf courses.

Michael Thorbjornsen

Things To Know

- Pronunciation: THOR-be-orn-son
- Finished No. 1 in the 2024 PGA TOUR University Ranking after four seasons at Stanford University (2021-24), following Texas Tech University's Ludvig Aberg (2023) as the second player in history to earn PGA TOUR membership via a No. 1 finish in PGA TOUR University. Thorbjornsen's No. 1 finish earned him TOUR membership for the remainder of the 2024 season and 2025 season.
- Has used a 10-finger grip nearly his entire career; he tried overlap, but it made him feel like he had "no control over the club," and when he tried interlock it hurt his knuckles.
- Earned the nickname of "Thunder Cub" while at IMG Academy; the coach there told Michael his last name translated to "Son of a Thunder Bear" and the nickname stuck. If you broke Thorbjornsen into individual parts and translated from Old Norse / Icelandic into modern Danish / Norwegian / Swedish, the meaning of Thor is thunder (from the name Thor, the hammer-wielding god in Norse mythology), the meaning of bjorn is bear, and sen translates to son.
- Moved to Jacksonville, Florida in the second half of 2024. He and close friend and former college teammate Karl Vilips moved into the same residential complex and are upstairs-downstairs neighbors.
- Growing up in Wellesley, Massachusetts, would hone his fundamentals and swing mechanics during the winter (just hitting into a net to focus on form, not ball flight), and play as much golf as possible in the spring and summer.
- Made the cut at the 2019 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links at 17 years, 8 months, 29 days of age, becoming the second-youngest player to make the cut at a U.S. Open since World War II. At the time, the only other player under the age of 18 to make the cut at a U.S. Open since World War II was Beau Hossler (17 years, 3 months) in 2012. Thorbjornsen earned an exemption for the 2019 U.S. Open via his victory at the 2018 U.S. Junior Amateur Championship at Baltusrol Golf Club, where he defeated Akshay Bhatia in the championship match. Thorbjornsen also qualified for the 2022 and 2023 U.S. Opens while still an amateur.
- Longtime Stanford men's golf head coach Conrad Ray, who coached PGA TOUR players Joseph Bramlett, Maverick McNealy, Patrick Rodgers, and Brandon Wu across more than 20 years at his alma mater, says of Thorbjornsen's driving prowess and athleticism, "He's an unbelievable athlete. He's not the longest player I've ever coached, but he's the highest combination of both length and accuracy. And that's special. You have to have some innate talent to do that at high speed. To me, that's his biggest strength. When he's on it, and he's driving it, there's not many guys that can drive it better than him that have ever played, and I don't say that lightly."

Background

- Born in Cleveland, Ohio and spent a little over four years there before the family moved to Massachusetts in 2006.
- Michael's mother, Sandra, once recalled how Michael hit 60 balls in a row at eight months old, saying, "We had a mat with a net in the house [and] a high ceiling. He took a golf club, put it underneath his right arm, and was just turning his torso and hitting the ball. He could barely walk." Michael recalls playing his first nine-hole round at age 2, and his fist tournament at age 5.

- At the U.S. Kids Golf Teen World Championship, annually contested at Pinehurst Resort & Country Club, won the Boys 10 Division in 2012, followed by the Boys 11 Division in 2013.
- Won the Boys 14-15 Division of the 2016 Drive, Chip and Putt National Finals at Augusta National Golf Club. There is a photo of Michael shaking Tom Watson's hand as he holds the trophy.
- Spent the first three years of high school at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida. Notable players considered IMG Academy alums include PGA TOUR winners Emiliano Grillo, Sean O'Hair, and C.T. Pan, along with DP World Tour winner Byeong Hun An.
- After three years at IMG Academy, returned to his hometown of Wellesley, Massachusetts and graduated from Wellesley High School in 2020; he played the fall 2019 season on the golf team and finished as the individual runner-up at the Division 1 State Championship (18-hole event), one stroke behind medalist Weston Jones. Thorbjornsen said of coming home for his senior year, "I just wanted to be back home with my friends... wanted to reconnect with them before we all went to college. My family as well. I just was homesick at that point."
- Chose to follow in the footsteps of his golf idol, Tiger Woods, and attend Stanford University. Said it was never really a doubt he would wind up at Stanford, as it was a dream of his to play there from an early age.
- In four seasons at Stanford, rose to as high as No. 2 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking, won three collegiate events -- including the 2023 Pac-12 Conference Championship -- and finished third in school history in career scoring average (70.40), only behind record holder Maverick McNealy (70.12) and Patrick Rodgers (70.31).
- Between his freshman and sophomore seasons at Stanford, enjoyed a strong summer of 2021 on the amateur circuit, winning both the 113th Massachusetts Amateur Championship and Western Amateur. Captured the Western Amateur title with a 4-and-3 victory over Gordon Sargent in the championship match.

Family

- Father, Thorbjorn Thorbjornsen (pronounced THOR-be-orn THOR-be-orn-son), is Norwegian.
- Thorbjorn discovered golf in his early teens through the early days of cable television in his hometown of Elverum, Norway. Although he had a desire to play, his hometown did not have a course nearby. When Thorbjorn was in his late 20s, a wildfire led to the clearing of a forest in Elverum, and the land was converted into a golf course. Thorbjorn had already moved away to Oslo by that time, but he would return to Elverum on the weekends and play the course. Thorbjorn became a scratch player, then gave up playing as Michael picked up the game in his youth, as Thorbjorn wanted to focus more on Michael's game and swing mechanics rather than his own play. Thorbjorn tried to return to golf later on, but he lost a lot of distance and did not enjoy the game as much, so he gave up playing altogether.
- Mother, Sandra, played golf at Ursuline College, which was an NAIA program (now NCAA Division II) in Pepper Pike, Ohio, less than 15 miles east of Cleveland. Michael guesses the first time he carded a lower score than his mother was around age 7; he still laughs whenever he remembers how frustrated she was the rest of the day.
- Has three younger sisters - twins Victoria and Michelle, followed by his youngest sister, Teresa.

Interests/Hobbies/Quirks

- Video games. Used to play a lot of Call of Duty with Stanford teammate Karl Vilips. Played a lot of PGA TOUR 2K with his Stanford teammates, and bought a Nintendo Switch for the team, which led to countless Mario Kart races.

- Music, specifically hip hop. Despite wearing a Lollapalooza bracelet en route to winning the 2021 Western Amateur, he did not attend the annual music festival in Chicago until after he won the tournament. He saw Young Thug perform live at Lollapalooza.
- Was a big fan of the movie *The Greatest Game Ever Played*, a biopic based on Francis Ouimet's victory at the 1913 U.S. Open, when he became the first amateur winner in its history. Having qualified for the 2022 U.S. Open at The Country Club, which also hosted Ouimet's historic win, Thorbjornsen and his caddie for the week, childhood friend Drew Cohen, hit the merchandise tent and bought matching t-shirts with a silhouette of Ouimet and his caddie, Eddie Lowery.

Inner Circle/Special Connections

- There is a photo of Rory McIlroy and Thorbjornsen standing together with their respective trophies at the 2023 Dubai Desert Classic. Thorbjornsen was the low amateur, while McIlroy won the title.
- Helped Stanford win Colonial Collegiate Invitational in October 2021 at Colonial Country Club, host of the PGA TOUR's Charles Schwab Challenge. Thorbjornsen finished two strokes clear of third, but finished six strokes behind individual medalist Michael Brennan of Wake Forest. The Cardinal took a team photo in front of the Hogan statue after their team victory.
- Says the most fun he ever had playing a tournament in his amateur career was the 2019 Junior Presidents Cup at Royal Melbourne Golf Club in Australia. Remembers the junior team being introduced on stage at a gala for the United States Presidents Cup team, which was captained by his golf idol and fellow Stanford alum Tiger Woods. The junior team captain was Justin Leonard.
- Childhood friend Drew Cohen notably caddied for Michael in his summer of 2021 victory at the Western Amateur, as well as the 2022 Travelers Championship, and 2022 U.S. Open at The Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts. The two became fast friends in middle school after their mothers coordinated a tee time for them at TPC Boston. They later spent their freshman year of high school together at IMG Academy. When Michael returned to Massachusetts after three years at IMG, he and Cohen played on the Wellesley High School golf team as seniors, and graduated together in 2020.
- Close with Karl Vilips, a former teammate, suitemate, and classmate at Stanford. Both were members of the PGA TOUR University Class of 2024, with Vilips finishing No. 10 to Thorbjornsen's No. 1. Vilips also caddied for Thorbjornsen at the 2020 U.S. Amateur Championship. The two met for the first time around age 7 or 8, and they became close as pre-teens even though their paths rarely crossed at junior events. They later attended prep academies roughly an hour apart in Florida, with Vilips at Saddlebrook Preparatory School north of Tampa, and Thorbjornsen at IMG Academy south of Tampa in Bradenton. They often practiced together the weekend leading into tournaments, with Thorbjornsen saying the competition motivated both of them.
- Vilips and Thorbjornsen also lived together with fellow Stanford teammate Barclay Brown. They had a fourth suitemate who was not an athlete; he and Thorbjornsen became close friends.
- Rose Zhang. The two won their respective divisions at the 2018 PING Invitational, an AJGA event at Karsten Creek Golf Club in Stillwater, Oklahoma. (There is a photo of the two holding a trophy together.) Thorbjornsen and Zhang later competed together at Stanford for two seasons (2021-22 / 2022-2023), and teamed up for two foursomes matches at the 2022 Arnold Palmer Cup (they went 1-1).
- Gordon Sargent. The two represented the United States together at the 2022 Arnold Palmer Cup and 2022 World Amateur Team Championship (Eisenhower Trophy), and Thorbjornsen defeated Sargent in the championship match of the 2021 Western Amateur.

- Akshay Bhatia. The two represented the United States at the 2018 Junior Ryder Cup, and Thorbjornsen defeated Bhatia in the championship match of the 2018 U.S. Junior Amateur Championship at Baltusrol Golf Club.
- With his victory at the 113th Massachusetts Amateur Championship in July 2021, joined a list of past champions highlighted by six-time winner Francis Ouimet (1913, 1914, 1915, 1919, 1922, 1925) and 1986 champion Fran Quinn.
- In his final two seasons at Stanford, teammates included Dean Greyserman, the younger brother of PGA TOUR member Max Greyserman.
- Played a practice round with two-time NBA champion and former NBA Sixth Man of the Year J.R. Smith at the 2022 Western Amateur. There is a photo of them.

Other

- Earned a spot on the U.S. Walker Cup Team for the 2023 Walker Cup at St. Andrews, but he never competed at the event; he withdrew from the team roughly a month prior to the event due to a back injury.
- While resting a back injury in summer 2023, had surgery on his left ankle, with doctors removing a loose bone and repairing a tendon. It took nearly two months for Thorbjornsen to reach the point where he could begin rehab for his back injury. For six weeks after surgery on his ankle, Thorbjornsen was in a back brace and walking boot with crutches; he also couldn't leave his bed the first two of those six weeks. After an additional two weeks with crutches (but no back brace), spent another two weeks in an ankle wrap / cast. Thorbjornsen says of it all, "I don't even like thinking about it. I was a mess."
- Hit the first tee shot at the 2022 U.S. Open at The Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts; his hometown of Wellesley, Massachusetts is less than 10 miles from The Country Club. Fellow Massachusettsan (or Bay Stater, depending on where you're from) Fran Quinn teed off first on the back nine. The two, along with Brandon Matthews, qualified together via an 8-for-3 playoff at Final Qualifying in New York. There is a photo of them together.
- PGA TOUR winner Chris Gotterup and Thorbjornsen were both sponsor exemptions at the 2022 Travelers Championship, where Thorbjornsen finished solo fourth for the first top-five finish by an amateur on TOUR since Braden Thornberry in 2017 (FedEx St. Jude Classic/T4).
- PGA TOUR winner Ludvig Aberg and 2022 U.S. Amateur winner Sam Bennett were both sponsor exemptions at the 2023 Travelers Championship, which Thorbjornsen played (missed cut) as a sponsor exemption for a second consecutive year. Thorbjornsen says he and Aberg are, "Friendly rivals... we definitely push each other."

