

NBC's Lake Tahoe celebrity golf coverage a whirlwind of controlled chaos off-camera



Producer Tom Randolph, center, controls NBC's coverage of the American Century Championship. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Watch the American Century Championship on television and it's like the coverage is choreographed. Watch it from the control room and one wonders how the end product is so smooth.

“Sunday it will be even more hectic. People will be screaming and yelling. But people say they know what they have to listen to,” Gary Quinn, vice president of programming for NBC, told *Lake Tahoe News* as he watched Friday's tournament from the control trailer.

So many of these men and women have been working together for years that there is a rhythm even though to the outsider it looks and sounds a bit chaotic.

One wall is covered with video monitors and each monitor has more than one video feed.

Producer Tom Randolph is at the center of the action.



The camera on 18 provides aerial views.

“He is the storyteller,” explains Quinn. “The talent follows his direction.”

Randolph picks which camera will be shown to viewers, gives a bit of introduction to Bob Papa, who then tells viewers what they are seeing. It’s not exactly like “Broadcast News”, but witnessing the control room conjures up that movie.

The talent, as the broadcasters are called, have plenty of support staff as they deliver the telecast from hole 18.

Two people are walking the grounds. Interviews are being conducted at the end of some holes. Chad Pfeifer, the Iraqi war vet who has a prosthetic leg, talks about how nervous he is. He finished the day in first place.

Spotters on each hole report back to Assistant Producer Jeff Jastrow about what is going on, who is coming up and if the action is worth showing the world.

“There is constant contact with each hole,” Quinn says.

Electronic scoring keeps the control room up-to-date in real time.

A camera on hole 18 is like having a blimp in place as it provides aerial coverage. Hole 16 has a tower. Cameras are on each hole, though most are on the back nine. Concentrated coverage is on holes 17 (the party-boat scene) and 18.

One person is in contact with New York. She counts down when it's time to go to commercial as well as when they are live.

The technical director says when various promos for the key sponsors – American Century, Korbel and Harrah's – need to be inserted into the coverage. A spot showing Harrah's hotel rooms and the casino floor pops up on the center screen.



NBC needs a compound of trailers to deliver three days of ACC coverage.

Rolling out of that segment Papa adlibs, talking about that night's Carrie Underwood concert at Harveys, before going into the golf action.

It takes 106 people and 22 cameras to deliver the nine hours of coverage during the three-day tournament at Edgewood Tahoe. It will be live from noon-3pm today and Sunday.

NBC hauls multiple trailers all over the country for its coverage of various sporting events. They are parked at the end of the driving range. Last week they were in Oklahoma last for the U.S. Senior Open. They are the same ones used Sunday nights for NFL games.