

sports

Begay makes a big hit

CHOUTEAU — Notah Begay III brought his clubs to town Monday.

Not to play golf.
But to talk golf.

He used his clubs as props, his golf bag as a bag of tricks.

He charmed some 150 wide-eyed youngsters, not to mention their two dozen adult chaperones, at the Boys and Girls Club of Green Country facility in Chouteau.

He was witty and engaging. Delightful and entertaining.

He signed autographs. Posed for pictures.
He was generous with his time.

He shook hands. Held babies on his lap.
He was a PGA Tour millionaire with a down-home persona.

He worked the room like a politician.

He was in town to talk about exercise.

He led the assembled youngsters on a short walk to promote his "Walk With Notah" program.

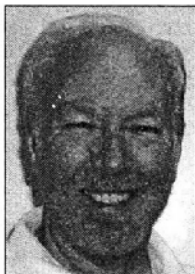
He was the Pied Piper. The Candy Man. The rock star cometh.

The Salina chapter of the Boys and Girls Club of Green Country presented Begay with a key to their heart.

From the ovations he generated, from the steady gaze of attention focused on him by mesmerized youngsters, he obviously received more than a single key of love.

"This is incredible," said Maggie Gurley, Director of Operations for the Pryor-based Boys and Girls Club of Green Country.

"Our kids are always looking for role models. And



SPORTING
Times

Terrell Lester
Sports Editor

they don't come as easily as they used to." Notah Begay III filled that role Monday. Easily.

He talked about the benefits of exercise for young people.

As he talked, he pattered around with a few tricks with a golf ball and an iron or two from his golf bag.

He was relaxed and informal.

He fielded questions with the ease of sinking a two-foot putt.

He talked casually about his Native American childhood and wanting to play a country-club sport.

He drove home point after point about desire and dedication and honesty with the same smooth delivery that he uses off the tee. He was straight and accurate.

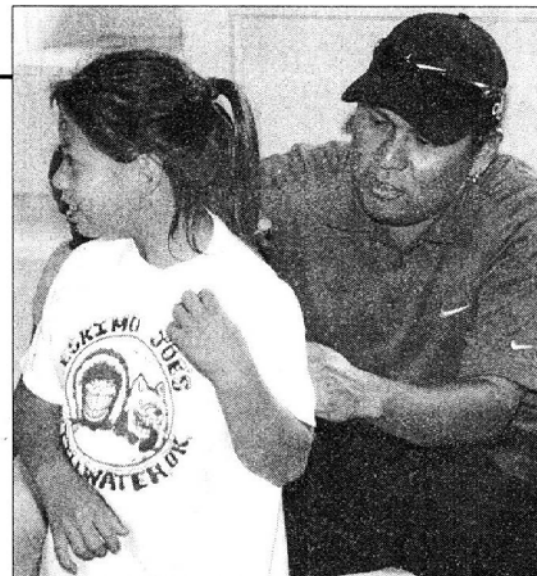
"For someone like Notah Begay to take an entire day out of his schedule, he is playing in a tournament Tuesday in Phoenix, is special," Mrs. Gurley said.

"This is a day of rest that he is giving to our kids. To me, someone's time is much more precious than a check."

Begay, the only Native American on the PGA Tour, became a professional golfer a year before Ron and Maggie Gurley opened the Boys and Girls Club of Pryor. That was January 1997.

Since then, the Gurleys have expanded into Adair County and have nine clubs that service some 2,000 or so youngsters ranging from 8 to 18.

While Begay was giving of his time, Nancy Oosahwe



Byron Beers / The Daily Times

Notah Begay III spent a lot of time Monday signing autographs for youngsters.

was giving of her talents. She is a sponsor of the Bell chapter near Stilwell in Adair County. She presented Begay with a colorfully beaded golf club.

An artist whose Native American beadwork is a popular memento at pow-wows and similar gatherings, Mrs. Oosahwe challenged herself to come up with a present for Begay that would be memorable.

She succeeded.

Begay caressed the beaded iron, held it up for all to see, and eventually placed it in his bag along with the tools of his trade.

He brought his clubs to town.

He left with one more.

And, a lot of thrilled youngsters who had the rare opportunity to take a Walk With Notah.