



Andre Iguodala

For most athletes, winning a championship means a dream come true.

For the Golden State Warriors forward **Andre Iguodala**, it meant fulfilling two dreams.

"We're going to Augusta," the jubilant Iguodala shouted while standing on the court moments after vanquishing LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers in this summer's NBA Finals.

Fellow golfer and head coach Steve Kerr had promised Iguodala a round at the home of The Masters if the Warriors won the title.

While that round will happen at some point this NBA season (Augusta is closed all summer), the golf-obsessed Iguodala still packed in plenty of rounds. He even played every day of his honeymoon.

The new NCGA member and reigning NBA Finals MVP became an avid golfer ever since joining the Warriors in 2013. He was excited to share that new love with us.

— Scott Seward

You became the first player to win the Finals MVP award without starting a regular season game. How cool is it to make that kind of history? It was pretty cool, but I don't look at it that way. I look at it as doing what I need to do to help the team win. Most people would think that was the highlight (winning the MVP award), but winning the championship trophy was the big thing. The MVP award was icing on the cake for me. I don't think about that too much. Knowing how hard it is to win the championship, and being part of the team that came together and won that was it for me.

Winning the championship trophy was the big thing. The MVP award was icing on the cake for me.

That's what I really wanted and am most happy about.

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Was it difficult to adjust to coming off the bench when you have been a starter your entire career? No, not really. People talk about that a lot, and there is an adjustment to be made to your approach and your attitude, and coming into the game with the right mindset, and that's what I try to do. There is an adjustment because you are out of rhythm a little bit. Just like anything in life, when there's a major change being made, you start adjusting to it.

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You made a tremendous impact guarding LeBron James in the 2015 Finals. What was your approach? Is it the ultimate compliment to be trusted to guard him? Somebody's got to guard him. We threw a bunch of different looks at him. It's about meeting the challenge. He's a great player, and if you are a competi-

tor, and you know your scouting report and you know you're going against the best, you're just competing and trying to force your will on that other team. When you've got a team sport like basketball with 10 guys on the court at the same time, and guys ready to come in and help you off the bench, you've got to do it collectively. That was our whole thought process.

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Who is the toughest player to guard in the NBA? For me there are a few guys. LeBron is a tough guy to guard, but I have some problems with a few other guys. Carmelo Anthony has always been a great challenge for me. I like competing with him. He's really strong, he's a great shooter, he has a great first step and he'll punish you on the blocks. Kobe Bryant is another guy. Some other guys like Kawhi Leonard, James Harden and

Paul George, there are a lot of guys in this league who can play. LeBron is the best right now. He's been holding the torch for a while, but there are some other guys right there with him. There's not a big gap there.

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What about the Warriors made you want to join them as a free agent in 2013?

There were a number of teams that were available to me, and it was one of the better options. We just won a championship, so it looks like I made the right choice! That was the No. 1 thing. Other than that, the area was perfect. It's the perfect blend of basketball and business. There are so many things going on in Silicon Valley, and my interest in technology was starting to peak around that time, so everything matched really well. And then once I got here and I saw how it was, it's been a really great fit for me and my family.



Iguodala received 7 of the 11 Finals MVP votes, largely for his defense on LeBron James.

Being on a golf course can put everything back in perspective. You can be down, but you're not out of it.

What's your best tip to aspiring basketball players to improve their defense? You've got to learn to enjoy pain. I call it good pain. You train your legs to sit down in a defensive position for minutes at a time.

It's all in your feet, just moving your feet. Keeping your eyes on your defender, not watching the ball. You learn how to be a solid defender, where you're not so concerned about getting steals or blocks, just working hard to keep your man from getting to his position. All of that stuff comes with it.

That means pain. There's no glory in being a defender like there is in being a scorer or a shooter. I watched great defenders like Scottie Pippen growing up. Learning how to defend guys like he did helped me a lot.

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You played golf as a team during the playoffs, even with your season on the line in the Western Conference semifinals against Memphis. How does golf help the Warriors? Being on a golf course can put everything back in perspective. You can be down, but you're not out of it.

We started to play golf and you realize, when it's not going the way you want it to, how to keep yourself composed and not let your emotions get too high or too low while you are playing. The game will humble you. That will show on the court. In the game of basketball, you can be up or you can be down. If you're down, it can turn around with the snap of a finger.

We were in a situation against Memphis where we were down 2-1, and everyone thought throughout the season that our style of play wasn't made for the playoffs, or to win a championship. We were pretty much counted out. It's funny how the media works when things are going great versus when they are not going so well. In a short span of time you go from an all-time high to an all-time low.

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How many of your teammates play golf?

Steph is a great golfer. He can flat out play. He's a scratch guy. I came around a little late, a couple of years ago, trying to get it right. I started hanging with a few friends. Pete Myers, the assistant coach with the

Warriors my first year, I caught the bug from him. He showed me how to hit the ball.

Klay (Thompson) is a pretty good golfer. He doesn't get out there too much. Most natural shooters are really good golfers. They have the hand-eye coordination and they can transfer that to pretty much any sport.

Steve Kerr is really good. He's a shooter. And Jarron Collins, he was a big man when he played and an assistant coach now, he's a solid golfer, too. And we've got a few guys in our P.R. department. Dan Martinez can play. So we've got a handful of guys in the organization that love to play.

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What is your favorite course? I've got a few courses I like. Pasatiempo is a course I like a lot. I've played there a couple of times. You've got to use all of your clubs and hit different shots.

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Have you been down to Pebble Beach yet?

I have. Last time I was down there I played really well and shot a 90, and I tripled No. 16 and doubled No. 17. I was having a good round. I enjoy Pebble.



Iguodala playing No. 11 at Pacific Dunes



Iguodala pulls up for a jumper

You are a big fan of professional golf, even fantasy golf. Where does golf rank in your favorite sports, and why do you like watching it? Right now it's my favorite sport outside of basketball. I grew up loving track and field, and I like watching football. Right now I like watching golf. The TV's pretty much on Golf Channel unless my friends are around changing channels. I like watching The Golf Fix and Golf Central.

My fantasy team I do with some good friends from the Chicago area. We have a lot of fun with that.

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Do you have a favorite pro? That's a hard question. I've met a few of the guys and it's hard to pick a favorite. I was able to go to the Match Play at Harding Park. Rory (McIlroy) has that aura about him. He's on a mission. And he's a nice guy, so I like Rory.

I like a lot of guys. I like Dustin Johnson. I like (Jordan) Spieth of course, he's very humble. I was able to meet Jason Day. He was at a game in Cleveland during the Finals. Justin Thomas is a good friend now. We had dinner and connected. Ricky Barnes is an Arizona guy.

It's hard to say I have a favorite player. I like watching a lot of those guys play.

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Do you have a pro's swing in mind when you play? That's a good question because I'm trying to figure out how to hit the ball straight. I try to follow taller guys and watch their swings. I know Ian Poulter is a little taller; Henrik Stenson is a tall guy. Tiger is pretty tall. He's taller than Chris Paul. So I've always watched Tiger, even when I was younger and didn't know much about golf. Just him being an African-American golfer I watched him. I try to follow the taller guys.

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What did you like about golf when you started? Just watching Tiger a lot. That got me into golf at a young age. Just watching it. I never had clubs.

Once I got to the pros I had a set, but I had a huge driver and I kept

slicing it over and over. I had a few friends who played, but I never really practiced, and I didn't understand the mechanics of the swing.

Once I got to Golden State and started hanging with Pete Myers, he taught me how to hit a draw. Once I figured out how to hit a draw after slicing the ball every time I was on the course, that's what got me the bug. Then after you learn how to hit a draw, you figure out how to hit a cut, you learn how to work the course a little bit.

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You are a 16 handicap. How good can you get?

It's funny because I was like a 32 last year. I cut it in half. I broke 100 for the first time last year, and ever since I've been really trying to get my handicap down and do the little things right. Chipping and putting and getting off the tee.

If I can get off the tee, I can shoot a pretty low score. I'm trying to get to single digits. I figure, give me another year to a year and a half and I'll be single digits.

I'm grinding out there. I'm working every day.

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So you played every day over the summer?

My summer was busy so I wasn't able to play as much but I probably played more than any other NBA guy. For my wedding, we were there (in Mexico) for five days and I played four days. And on the honeymoon I played every day.

I played in my first tournament with a friend from Chicago and we did pretty well. I played at Pebble, Pasatiempo, Spyglass, Spanish—so I was getting around.

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Who's in your dream foursome? I know Steph answered that so of course Steph would have to be in it. Tiger Woods and probably Pete Myers. That would be a great round because Steph's just a great guy to be around and he has one of the best swing tempos I've ever seen. Tiger is a guy I grew up watching, and Pete Myers is there for comic relief. He'll make sure we're having fun out there. ☺