AMATEUR JACKSON FUNKHOUSER WINS 2026 NEW MEXICO OPEN AS TOURNAMENT DRAWS GLOBAL ATTENTION

Funkhouser sets course record, wins by seven as Begay, Burr and AI commentator Duff Foreman host live coverage, helping drive media reach to 850M.



Jackson Funkhouser (right) holds the championship trophy after winning the 2026 New Mexico Open at Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort presented by New Mexico True in Elephant Butte, New Mexico, on Sept. 16, 2026. The New Mexico State junior and amateur cha

ELEPHANT BUTTE, NM, UNITED STATES, September 18, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Jackson Funkhouser won the 2026 New Mexico Open at Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort presented by New Mexico True on Wednesday, Sept. 16, finishing at 23-under 193 and seven shots clear of the field. The amateur shot rounds of 65, 61 and 67, setting a course record with an 11-under 61 Tuesday, Sept.15, before closing with a 5-under 67. The victory came one year after Funkhouser missed the cut at the 2025 New Mexico Open.

Ryan Sullivan of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, finished second at 16-under 200 after rounds of 67, 66 and 67. As the highest-finishing professional, Sullivan earned the $30,000 first-place professional payout.

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>
> *Cory Armstrong*

"This was a landmark year for the New Mexico Open," said Cory Armstrong, executive director of the Sun Country Section of the PGA of America. "A record purse, outstanding field, course-record golf and live coverage made this a championship to remember. Raising $11,000 for the Sun Country Golf Foundation made it even more meaningful."

The 72nd playing of the New Mexico Open brought 140 professionals and amateurs to Elephant Butte, including three PGA TOUR champions who have combined for 10 PGA TOUR victories and players with experience on the Korn Ferry Tour and other professional tours in the United States and internationally. The championship featured a record $141,000 professional purse, with $30,000 awarded to the highest-finishing professional.



Ryan Sullivan (center) receives the $30,000 top professional prize after posting the lowest score among all professionals at the 2026 New Mexico Open at Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort presented by New Mexico True in Elephant Butte, New Mexico, on Sept.

The New Mexico Open produced nine hours of live coverage over three days on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, with connected TV coverage on KRQE NOW in Albuquerque and KTSM+ in El Paso. Notah Begay III, a four-time PGA TOUR winner, NBC Sports and Golf Channel analyst and 2026 PGA TOUR Payne Stewart Award recipient, hosted with veteran national sports broadcaster Ryan Burr. They were joined by Duff Foreman, the first known autonomous AI golf commentator to co-host a professional golf broadcast, providing real-time player information, statistics, scoring updates and course analysis.


Notah Begay III (left) and Ryan Burr host live coverage of the 2026 New Mexico Open at Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort presented by New Mexico True in Elephant Butte, New Mexico. Begay and Burr hosted nine hours of live coverage over three days on YouTu

“The world of golf discovered both a rising talent in the game and a new broadcast voice,” Begay said. “Jackson Funkhouser set a new scoring record, playing flawless golf over the final 36 holes, while Duff Foreman added valuable metrics and information to an entertaining broadcast.”

The championship also produced daily television news feeds featuring tournament highlights, interviews and broadcast footage for distribution to more than 80 television news stations, along with print, online, golf and other sports media in key markets.

Preliminary media monitoring for the 2026 New Mexico Open, according to Meltwater, recorded 1,420 media mentions with a potential audience reach of 850 million from July 1 through Sept. 16. Meltwater also estimated the coverage at $7.87 million in advertising value equivalency. Actual media impressions are not yet available. The 850 million figure represents potential reach, not actual impressions or views.

The 2026 championship also marked the largest sponsorship effort in the New Mexico Open's 72-year history, led by New Mexico True as presenting sponsor. New Mexico True committed $50,000 to the championship, helping support the increased purse, live coverage and free spectator admission.

"New Mexico True is proud to celebrate an incredible year for the New Mexico Open," said Lancing Adams, acting cabinet secretary of the New Mexico Tourism Department. "This event showcased world-class athletic talent along with the stunning natural beauty and hospitality that make our state such a unique place to visit. Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort and the community of Elephant Butte demonstrated exactly why New Mexico continues to rise as a premier destination for sports tourism and championship-level golf."

"Congratulations not only to Jackson Funkhouser for his 'record setting' performance, but to the entirety of the Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort Team, ownership, and sponsors/supporters such as New Mexico True and everyone involved in what was a 'record setting' New Mexico Open," said Kris Strauss, executive vice president of global sales and marketing for Troon. "It truly was the best State Open I have witnessed on many fronts...from the field, the stellar play, the great destination, the broadcast and so much more."

"What happened here this week is part of a much bigger vision for Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort and Sierra County," said James Prendamano, CEO of PreReal Investments and co-owner of Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort. "We're building the resort into a leading Southwest destination that draws visitors year-round. The New Mexico Open is bringing national attention to this community, and our goal is to turn that attention into visitors, investment, jobs and sustained economic growth for Sierra County."

About the New Mexico Open
The New Mexico Open is New Mexico's premier state golf championship, bringing together many of the Southwest's top professional and amateur golfers to compete in a 54-hole stroke-play tournament for one of the region's largest purses. Organized by the Sun Country Section of the PGA of America, the championship has been played annually since 1954. Since 2025, the tournament has been hosted at Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort under a multi-year agreement. www.suncountrygolf.com/newmexicoopen/

About Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort
Turtleback Mountain Golf & Resort, home of the New Mexico Open, is a premier golf, residential

and resort community located in Elephant Butte, New Mexico, just minutes from Elephant Butte Lake. The property features an 18-hole championship golf course, residential neighborhoods, planned resort amenities, and a growing calendar of golf, lifestyle, and community events. www.turtlebackmountaingolfandresort.com/.

About New Mexico True
New Mexico True is the official tourism brand of the New Mexico Department of Tourism, created to promote the state as a premier travel destination for visitors seeking authentic experiences, outdoor adventure, rich culture and warm hospitality. Built around the promise of "Adventure Steeped in Culture," New Mexico True showcases the people, landscapes, traditions, communities and experiences that make New Mexico the Land of Enchantment. www.newmexico.org .

About Troon
Headquartered in Scottsdale, Ariz., Troon is the world's largest golf and golf-related hospitality management company, providing services at locations in 45-plus states and 40-plus countries. www.Troon.com , www.TroonMagazine.com or connect with Troon on Facebook, X, and Instagram.

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