

# USGA Media Conference

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USA

## Annika Sorenstam

Press Conference



**Q. When you hit that shot at the Women's Open, I think we all thought it was the end of your USGA career. Take us back to that moment when you knew you were playing in your final one and then the look of disbelief a bit on your face that it ended with that fairy-tale.**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It did, and I thought at that time, I've played my last USGA competition. It was certainly quite a way to finish because the way I started my USGA professional career was my win at the Broadmoor in 1995, Colorado Springs.

As you can imagine, the USGA has a special place in my heart, and it's fun to watch this video. It gives me goosebumps every time. The video didn't show that I missed the tee shot, so thank you for just showing the highlights. USGA has certainly been a highlight of my career.

**Q. Since then you've been focusing on being a mom, your foundation. I know that's very fulfilling for you. Talk a little bit about that.**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, it's been an interesting 13 years. I stepped away from 2008, as you mentioned, and the highlight is being a mother of two, and husband is here, too, so it's another highlight. I'm lucky, I have a good life. I can't believe it's been 13 years.

I never thought I would come back and play anything. Obviously golf is a big part of my life and always will be, but it was more about giving back to the Annika Foundation, to junior girls, just to say thank you really, because without golf I wouldn't be where I am today.

Nowadays we have several tournaments, and in particular with the college event we give out an award to the best collegiate female golfer and we have over 600 girls every year, and over 6,000 have become professionals, whether it's LPGA or Symetra Tour. So yeah, so the foundation is a big part, but also lucky to continue with my corporate partners. Maybe they knew something I didn't that I was going to continue to play.

But it's been great. I don't know where 13 years have gone, but I look at my kids, they're growing up, and time flies. I'm having a good time.

It's almost thanks to COVID that I started to practice a little bit more. What else can you do when you're not allowed to do much, right? So living in Florida, we were trying to be active. Kids would do virtual school and after that we just had to get out, get some fresh air; swimming, biking, pickleball and golf were some of the things that we did living in Florida, and our son is really into it. Our daughter plays a little bit. We'd go out as a family and play.

My son would say, let's go play, and I'd watch him, and I'd say, why not just bring my clubs, I might as well do something, so I started to hit a few shots and I started to hit the sweet spot again, and I was like, it's a little more fun when the ball goes where you're thinking or wishing it's going.

So yeah, the last 10 months or so I've been playing a little bit, and the last six -- actually maybe eight months really focusing, and turning 50 was certainly a big day, and I realized that maybe I should support this tournament that's been -- the USGA, like I said, I want to support it.

I want to thank you for putting this event on, and Mike Davis and the team, to give all us ladies a platform to continue to share our passions.

**Q. Like you mentioned, when you retired there weren't these opportunities for senior women to play competitively. Now there's more than one. But you did tee it up this year in an LPGA event to get prepared for this. Talk about that experience.**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I wasn't really planning on that, either. I don't know what's happening, but it's just one thing is just leading to another.

I did realize that 13 years is a long time. Certain things comes very natural, but other things coming back to the game is not natural anymore, and so I really have to kind of get rid of that dust and get rid of those cobwebs. But yeah, the tournament, LPGA was literally in our backyard. We live on the 16th hole of Lake Nona, and I got some questions from the members, from family, and I told my husband, I can't wake up in the morning and see LPGA tee



markers and not be part of it.

We decided to do it. Mike was on the bag. It was fun to have the kids and my parents walking around and other family members, and it was really cool. I didn't know what to expect, and especially because I mentor many of these young players I have from the foundation, all of a sudden I'm in the same event as them.

I ended up having quite a few practice rounds because the players said, why don't we play -- first of all, you know the golf course, and then number two, I want to talk to you, I want to talk about my game. And I'm thinking, well, sure, and we're out there talking about their game, and I'm thinking, I've got to focus on my game; I'm playing here, too.

It was interesting. So yeah, by the time the tournament came, I was all exhausted because I don't do this for a living. I play golf in a golf cart and we give three-footers. So it was a lot of walking and focusing

**Q. You made the cut so you played four days of competitive golf.**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I did, yeah. We were exhausted on Saturday, and we had two more days to go. But it was a good experience, fun to see the kids out there, and our son, he would go through the course with me every night. I'd just put him to bed and he would go, let's talk about your round, Mommy. And I thought, Can't we just go to bed? He would tell me exactly where to hit it, and on Saturday I didn't really have a good day. He was a little bit upset. I didn't hit it where he told me to hit it. I was like, It's not lack of trying, it's more just maybe lack of skill not hitting it there anymore.

**Q. We spoke with you recently down in Orlando and you mentioned that his love for the game has kind of changed your approach to it recently and kind of given you that love back, as well.**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, it's interesting because you know, when they were born and we thought golf is a great sport because my parents play, so we would be really trying to encourage them to play, but early on they really didn't want to, so we said, fine, whatever you want to do. And all of a sudden it changed 360 now. He's the one that's inspiring me.

No, it's great. It's a great family game, as all of you know, and just be out there and you can play with anybody, any age, any gender, and that's what I like about it.

**Q. What do days look like for you in terms of practice?**

**You certainly have other commitments with your foundation, your partners.**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, well, there's still only 24 hours in the day. I think I was sharing that earlier. I just added two or three more hours to my day, trying to work out and trying to practice maybe two hours a day when the kids are in school, but once it's 3:00 it's back to mama duties. So Mike and I, we will try and do -- try just to do as much as we can during the day.

Yeah, I spend an additional few hours, but it's fun. I'm out there, and obviously I want to try and be prepared and be ready as much as I can. But yeah, once the kids come back to school, then we're both drivers and then it's time for dinner, and it's wearing a lot of hats, which is different than when I played when it was just golf. Everything was golf. Everything was committed to the playing or the sponsors. Now it's a lot of different things.

**Q. I'm sure there were some first-tee jitters at the LPGA event, but flash forward a few weeks when you're back in a USGA competition. What are you looking forward to and what do you think that feeling is going to be like?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I'm sure I'll be quite nervous. We had a chance to play the golf course yesterday. It's a great place, great golf course. Congratulations.

It has a great feel, major championship feel. The fairways were a little more narrow than I'm used to. I was like, wow, this is how the USGA set up their courses. So no, it's going to be a treat. It really is, to play.

I look forward to seeing some of the older players now, the ones that I really haven't seen in a long time. Some of them I keep up with and some of them obviously life takes us different places, so I look forward to catching up with those friendships and playing and just being part of the event. It's historic to come here but also look forward to having the family seeing me play.

I think it's really important as a parent to be a role model, and this is a passion that I have, and they see what it takes to be good at something, the commitment and the discipline. Hopefully there's a lot of lessons on the side that they see what it means to do something you enjoy.

**Q. You mentioned the way they set up the golf course, but looking back what did differentiate USGA championships from the rest?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I always thought they were really,



really tough. I also like the history; when you look at the trophy you see all the different names, the legends, the Hall-of-Famers, so it's inspiring. It really is.

I remember the first one I played was in 1992. I was an amateur, we played Oakmont, and oh, what a tough golf course that was. I was 21, and it was quite an experience, but I was hitting balls next to all the legends that I'd been reading about and watching, Patty Sheehan, Juli Inkster, Betsy King, just the standard -- it gives you the goosebumps. Obviously I still think about that, that I was hitting balls next to them. So that inspires me. Yeah, I think the USGA provides that.

Growing up in Sweden, it just felt like it was just the biggest championship there is in our sport. It's a dream come true.

**Q. Now you look at what you've done in that country, and this year I believe at the Women's Open we had five players from Sweden that certainly looked up to you and feel that same way, and I know the LPGA event you were paired with some of them, which was a thrill for them. In a few weeks, speaking of your foundation, we are going to Share My Passion clinic. Can you share a little bit more about that?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, so it's one of our initiatives at the Annika Foundation. We try to cover the aspect that you do, growing the game of golf from all kinds of levels. So we do young girls from the age of six up to -- we actually support the Symetra Tour. So I guess there's no really age other than starting at six, so we do different levels.

But Share My Passion is a shorter version of just inspiring young girls 6 to 12 years old. They get treated -- it's like a three-hour commitment where they get a healthy, nutritious lunch, we do fitness, I do a clinic, and then they get to see a little part of an event, whether it's the locker room, the media center, just seeing players on the range to inspire them.

But the things that make it neat is there's only 40. They have to write a letter, why they like golf or why they want to spend the day at a golf course with other young girls.

The lead-up to it and reading these letters is so cool. It gives you a tear and makes you smile, all the drawings, all the expressions that they have. It's pretty neat.

We're just trying to make it fun. It's more introduction to the game than anything, and I think it's really important for young girls to meet other young girls. A lot of times I think that's an issue in women's sport; there's no other girls, so sometimes they feel left out or they just don't want to do

something where their friends are not, so here they've got 39 other friends, so that's a good thing.

**Q. You'll still be wearing a few hats while you're here competing. Will we see Mike on the bag?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, he will be on the bag. Yeah, we have a good time together. Yeah, it's fun. I mean, all the things we do now is about creating memories, so yeah, we get along on the golf course, and -- I'll see if he says yes to it. No, but it's fun. We look forward to it.

**Q. You were saying there's some dust on your game. What skills have been the most durable that came back the quickest, and which ones did you have to work a little more on and what did you do to work on them?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, good question. I think that certain skills have gotten better and certain skills have not gotten better. I think course management and being wise on the course, being smart with the way I play is something that I really rely on now. I rely on experiences. Of course the accuracy and the distance is not there as much as I'd like, but I'm trying to fine tune my swing a little bit. I mean, there's a few moving parts, so it's easy to find a swing, but I need to play. I need to keep on swinging. I realize if I take a break I get super stiff and I've got to warm up again, and it's just finding a rhythm has been a little difficult, also, but somehow I think because I'm not hitting as many fairways and greens, my short game has gotten better. So there's some pluses and there's some minuses.

But I think I appreciate the game a little differently than I did. Before that, that was my career, that was my life. This was like my livelihood. Now it's more of a, I would say side show, but it's a little bit more fun. By the end of the day my kids and husband will still love me if I walk away with a bogey or two, where before I felt like the whole world was collapsing.

I have a little bit better perspective on things, so it's not just about results. I think it's more about memories. When you get a little older you realize what's important. My partners have been with me this whole time, and I appreciate their support, and I can do more things for them by not being so result-oriented.

So having that distance from being a younger player, being a little bit more intense, if that answers your question a little bit.

**Q. Your responsibilities with the IGF, how do you juggle all that?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, no, I'll be missing -- actually when I saw the schedule, it's unfortunately the same week as the men's Olympics, so I called the group and I said, I'm thinking about playing, and this is just what I see, and they're like, don't worry, we want to have an active president, so you're playing whenever you want.

So I literally am Sunday here, and on Monday I'm on my way to Tokyo, so I'll be changing hats there again. But I look forward. So I get the chance to see the women's Olympics. It'll be fun. So we have another representative for the men, and obviously with COVID they're limiting everybody's participation anyway, so I think it's going to work out.

But yeah, I'll be keeping an eye on that, but I think we're all just ready for the Games to begin. As I'm sure you can imagine it's been quite a task for the IOC with COVID and everything.

**Q. There's a tendency latest is always the greatest, but when you watch women's golf now on TV and you've played recently, what's your take on the talent now versus when you were out there and doing your thing?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think the LPGA is in very good shape. I think it's fun to watch them. There are some really young players, and just watching last week, Nelly Korda, she played quite well at Lake Nona, too. It's fun to watch. I think the players are great representatives of the game, true athletes. They hit the ball a long ways, and it's just fun to watch.

Obviously I'm a big fan and I always will be, but I think Mike Whan has done a super job, and to come back to courses -- that's I think one of the biggest things you see is they're playing some really fun courses, classic courses, like we get a chance to play here. When you see the recent one, Olympic Club and they play St. Andrews, and I think it's great for the game. Women hear about history and these type of courses, too, so I'm glad they're getting the opportunity to showcase their skills on these type of courses, and that's what I look forward to.

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