

U.S Senior Women's Open Championship

Wednesday, July 28, 2021

Fairfield, Connecticut, USA

Brooklawn Country Club

Annika Sorenstam

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. We are joined by Annika Sorenstam who is competing in her first U.S. Senior Women's Open. You've had a chance to see the course this week and a couple weeks ago. What are your reactions?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I love it. This is just a beautiful place. I think the course is just magnificent. Played yesterday, and of course now it's more tournament conditions than it was about a month ago, and I love it. I love classic golf courses, and Tillinghast is a great designer, and it's in superb shape. I told my husband, I don't think there's a grass that's out of place around here. It's going to be fun to play.

I would say that the challenge is around the greens. You need a little local knowledge or practice rounds and taking a lot of notes to figure out where to be, but overall of course you want to stay below the hole.

No, it's great to be here. Look forward to playing.

Q. You've seen some of these fellow competitors in social settings, things like that, over the past few years, but what is it like to tee it up with them even in practice rounds, and what will this week be like do you think?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, arriving yesterday and seeing many of the players for the first time in 10, 12, maybe even more years, because I retired 13 years ago, but some of these players retired even before that. It was just kind of strange to see them and just thinking, okay, fast forward, here we are 15 years later and thinking about what everybody has done the last so many years, whether it's getting married, starting a family or just doing other things, and it's just been really nice to catch up with players I just haven't seen, and it's been really, really nice.

Yeah, I had a nice practice round yesterday with some players that I haven't seen, and yeah, really enjoying my week. It's great to be here, and yesterday we hosted one



of my foundation's initiatives, Share My Passion. So we had the veterans here but then we had the young ones, the next generation, two generations, maybe 6 to 12, and just introducing them to the game, so it's been a really fulfilling week already.

Q. You had your practice round and then you switched into your foundation duty, but it seemed to us like a really active group of kids, but I know you do this all over the country. Talk about yesterday's clinic.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, it was really fun. These kids, ages 6 to 12, they wrote a letter why golf is so important or why they love golf, and you could really tell yesterday they were super engaged and full of energy and asking questions and wanting to be engaged and wanting me to hit some different shots, and that's really what it's all about is I love spending time with them, I think they give me energy as much as hopefully I can give them some inspiration.

It was a lot of fun. We got 40 of them, and just to kind of show them what golf is about and hopefully share some of my passion and a little bit of knowledge. But they taught me a lot of things, too, so it was a win-win for sure.

Q. If you'd have told yourself in 2008 that 13 years later you'd be back out competing, would you have believed yourself?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Probably not, no. I mean, I stepped away with the intention of not really playing because I was very content, I was very happy. I had achieved everything I wanted to achieve. Mike and I were getting married and we wanted to start a family, and we've done all those things, and then this tournament pops up and then I turned 50 and our son is really into golf and COVID hit.

There's just a lot of pieces that made this happen. I'm glad it made it happen. I do enjoy the game. I do respect the game, but it doesn't mean that I'm going to play full-time anywhere in the country.

This has been a busy year, but it's great to be here, and I think it's important to support the USGA because they're the ones that put up this tournament. If we don't support it they will go away, so I think it's my way to say thank you to



the USGA. The USGA has a big part in my life, a big part in my heart.

My first win was a USGA event at the U.S. Open in '95, and they do a lot for golf. I think it's a privilege to be here, and I didn't want to miss it.

Q. The swing looks the same; is the competitive passion coming back?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: You know, you're right, the swing looks the same, and it reminds me of something funny. When I played -- Ava was born and I played a -- I think Will might have been born, too. I was playing a TV match in Norway with Suzann and Lorena and I believe it was Seri, and Suzann came up to me and she said, you know, your swing hasn't changed. I said, thanks. And she goes, but you don't hit it anywhere. That's Suzann for you. I'd like to see what her swing looks like now when she has two kids.

But no, kidding aside, the swing looks the same. My game is not really the same, but I feel as good as I can be at this age and what I do in my life. Golf has been in addition to what I do, it hasn't really taken anything away, so you can imagine the days are quite packed, and I try and do most of what I've got within an hour here and two hours here.

But as far as my competitive drive, certain things don't go away. I am competitive, and of course I'm going to do my best out there. My husband Mike, I mean, we are as prepared as we can be, and things happen for a reason. We're going to go out there, we're going to have a good time. That's one of the things I've learned or maybe just matured, I guess, maybe is the right word, is learn how to forget bad shots and move on. It's not the end of the day. I'd be upset for about 10 seconds and then I'd move on to the next tee and something else pops in my mind. Before it would linger a little bit. We would sit there and try and figure out what can I do, and nowadays I don't really do that anymore because life is precious and it's not about my score so much anymore.

Go out there, do my best. I'm still a fighter, still a competitor, and we'll see what happens.

Q. Somewhere like Brooklawn requires a lot of distance control, which was really your bread and butter back more in your heyday. Does it make you feel more comfortable that it's this style of golf course?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I love it, I really do. Mike and I were talking, and the last few weeks or months when I've been playing, I've been playing with the celebrity guys. They hit it 100 yards past me, and I'm hitting longer irons

in, and here I come and I feel comfortable, I'm hitting shorter irons in and I can be a little more precise and I can fire at the flag. My approach shots is not releasing 20 yards over the green. Here actually I had two shots that were spinning back. I can't remember the last times I had shots spinning back.

I think this course fits me very well. I love it.

But again, you've got to score here, and that's something I haven't really played as much as I would like, but I know many of the players would say the same thing. I think we're in the same boat.

It's fun to play here. I enjoy the course very much.

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