

# LPGA Media Conference

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USA

**Mike Whan**

**Diane Gulyas**

**Vicki Goetze-Ackerman**

**Marvol Bernard**

Press Conference



Anybody who covers the LPGA knows that it takes a village. We don't have either the funding or the ability to just simply create the mass message without you, so just on behalf of the players and caddies who probably failed to tell you, let me just say thank you for them and for us for covering us.

I think you asked me about the process of getting here, and the truth here is I had probably been thinking about this for a couple of years, but I always -- it gets close to my brain and then I always say, yeah, but not yet, and then I always say, because we have to, and whatever the "have to" is, have to finish that deal, get that TV thing finished, there's a revenue stream I want to secure.

I remember saying to my wife about a year ago, I'm always going to come up with a reason why not, and then I was kind of thinking, hey, maybe it's Olympics, 2020, and of course the pandemic hit and we stopped talking about it for the year 2020.

If I'm honest with you, watching us work through the pandemic of 2020 was the visualization I needed to know that it was not only time, but it was right. I watched my team take over in 2020. And I think five years ago pandemic hits, Mike Whan probably does much of the taking over.

In 2020 I got to watch more than do more, and there's an incredible pride that comes with that. As I think I've told people before, at 40 years old I probably would have been offended how good the team ran without me. At 55 I was really both blessed and honored, and I was really that they got this.

So it was time. It's not a great time. I know we're still working through the pandemic, and I'm going to be here to help us work through that. But I don't know that there was a great time. It was time to say it out loud and start working on what's next and figuring out who the next person who sits in my chair will be.

But I woke up nervous this morning, really nervous for the first time in about four years, and it felt great. I said that to my wife and she looked at me like, it's time to return you to consulting and get some help.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you all very much for coming in and joining us today. Happy to have you all here with us. I think you all know why you're here, the news earlier today that Mike Whan will step down this year after an incredibly successful 11 years as commissioner of the LPGA.

Those 11 years included such tremendous growth for the LPGA Tour by way of purse increases, more TV hours across 200 plus countries, more and more leading companies joining the LPGA as corporate partners, and most importantly, perhaps, to us, a true family feeling among those of us in the office and on the Tour.

And in the continuing growth of the Symetra Tour, our new partnership with the Ladies European Tour, the skyrocketing number of girls being brought to the game through USGA Girls Golf, the ongoing growth of the LPGA professionals, LPGA amateurs, and LPGA women's network. And Mike, it's safe to say your legacy here is really strong.

We have Mike with us as well as Diane Gulyas, who has been on the LPGA board of directors since 2017. She currently serves as the board chair after a 36-year tenure with DuPont.

We also have us Vicki Goetze-Ackerman, our player president, and Marvol Bernard, president of the LPGA professionals.

Mike, I'll start with you. This had to be an incredibly difficult decision for you and your family. Where did you begin this thought process?

MIKE WHAN: Thanks. Honestly I don't remember what you just asked me. It's been a pretty crazy morning. Just looking at all the faces on the screen, let me just start by saying thank you guys.



I like to live my life pretty nervous, and I haven't been really nervous in a while and I want to get back to that. I'm not exactly sure where that's going to take me, but every time I've been this nervous in the past, the outcome has been pretty exciting.

I'm not sure what your question was, but that's my opening thoughts for you.

THE MODERATOR: I like where you say you woke up nervous. You had to be nervous for some of the phone calls you had to make today, and also wouldn't be a Mike Whan without a Coke Zero. Tell us about some of the feedback you've heard from today. I know you've talked to a number of our members and a number of people outside the walls of the LPGA.

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, I got up this morning at 4:45 and started making calls over to Europe and Asia. I tried not to make many calls before this. I thought this was a unique opportunity.

As most of the people on the LPGA staff knows, if you want to keep a secret, don't tell Mike. So I've had this secret, and I'm not good at secret keeping, so I didn't want any member or sponsor or even one of you to hear this from somebody else if I could avoid it and maybe have you hear it from me.

So I tried to keep the list pretty short. Those were fine calls. Most of those were business relationships, and you get through the, "oh, no" and the "what-ifs" pretty quick and you start working on what's next.

But yeah, I had some pretty emotional chats, both on line, phone calls, a little bit of both. And some of them are harder -- if Nancy Lopez calls me again I'm not picking up the phone. That was really rough.

But it's nice. I really appreciate it. I think everybody who calls me has said good things to me knows I certainly feel the same way. I'm not leaving a Tour that I don't love. You can't fake this. I love these athletes. I love these teachers. I love the people that put my corporate money in my hands, in our hands.

As Armstrong and others on the call know, my staff is my family, whether they like it or not, because just like every family has the weird old uncle, that's probably me at the LPGA.

It's hard to say goodbye to your family. Luckily we have some time to do that. But yeah, it's been an emotional morning. I didn't need the calls to know how good I felt about the LPGA and the people we do business with, but it

still matters and it's been highly appreciated.

THE MODERATOR: Diane, I know this had to be a bittersweet discussion for you to have with Mike. What was your reaction when you spoke with him, and what do you see as the next step?

DIANE GULYAS: Thanks, Christina. When Mike and I first started having these conversations, the first thing I did was try to talk him out of it. I tried to negotiate. I tried everything to try to get him to stay.

But as you all know, you know Mike pretty well, once Mike makes his mind up about something, there's no stopping him. He's like a train, and he clearly had made up his mind that it was time for him to move on. I can appreciate that.

11 years he's done an amazing job, and it's great to go out on top. I wish him nothing but the most success in his future endeavors.

And the fact that he's committed to working with me on a seamless transition, a smooth transition that will be both good for Mike and good for the organization, makes me feel great.

As for the process that comes now, we've already formed a search committee. We're reaching out to executive search firms to find a partner who will take us on this journey.

The search committee itself is made up of players, independent directors, representative of the teaching professionals, so I think we've got a great blend of people who are going to engage in this work with me, and I'm very excited about it.

I think the role of commissioner is a challenging, exciting, very gratifying job. At times it can be highly demanding, as Mike has shown us. But I think we will attract some terrific internal and external candidates, and Mike and I are going to work together as a team to make sure we do the right thing here.

THE MODERATOR: Well, that person is going to have incredibly large shoes to fill. As you look back at his tenure at the LPGA, what are some of the most important things that happened, as to use Mike's favorite phrase that I'm sure we'll hear how he'll leave the game better than he found it.

DIANE GULYAS: Well, I've had the privilege and pleasure of working with Mike for four years, and it's been an amazing -- I haven't been here the full 10 years, but I will tell you in the four years of very personal experience, the growth in our schedule, the raising of the purses, the

improvement in our media and television relationships, the expansion of our sponsor base, both in diversity and breadth and the number of terrific sponsor partners we have today, and of course most recently the strategic alliance with the Ladies European Tour, all stand out in my mind as pretty amazing accomplishments.

But those all roll up together to the financial strength our organization has today. I mean, we are a very different LPGA than we were 10 years ago when Mike joined us. This financial strength really enables us to not just get through COVID, which we did, but to get through COVID with a 2021 schedule that we are extremely proud of and extremely excited about.

So, I mean, I think I could go on and on, but those to me were kind of the highlights of my time with Mike the last four years.

**Q. One thing -- the first question is for the last 11 years you've talked about corporate culture and the importance of it. What culture did you inherit and what do you think the culture is that you're leaving?**

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, it's a great question. I always tell people that I only really get one job and it doesn't have a budget and it's culture, and so everybody else has the budgets and everybody else actually has the accomplishments. But if culture is No. 1 then it's got to sit with the No. 1 person in the building.

I would say culturally I didn't change the culture. I think I just kind of brought us back to what was important, an understanding that check writers give us this ability, that our members are really our owners, they're not just members of the association, but they really own this association.

I do remember saying this to my first board when I got there, in our first board meeting I told them, I feel like I'm the manager of the Chicago Cubs. For those of you from Chicago this doesn't make sense anymore because since then the Cubs have won the World Series. At the time I said, you know, I look at my lineup card and I think I've got talent at every position and I can compete with anybody, but the team in the clubhouse sort of believe that come playoff time something will go wrong.

And I think the LPGA sort of had this mentality that we were pretty good but we weren't really that good, and you can only dream so big. I felt like people were always talking us down from bigger version.

I remember saying to the group, We've just got to make sure we're not the Chicago Cubs, and it takes 100 years to

change that. We just needed to start creating some wins and celebrate those wins, take some chances, but not accept being 10 percent better than we were the year before.

I remember being in a player meeting and I was telling people about this big thing we were going to take on, and somebody raised their hand and said, Do we really need to do that? And I said, Well, that's funny. Most of you will go home in the off-season, hire a coach, totally break down your swing, get worse for a while so you can be seven yards longer, just because you believe seven yards might be the difference between winning events and making cuts.

So if you're willing to do all that for seven yards because you're not willing to be the same golfer next season that you were this year, you got to let me be willing to do the same thing. You got to let me break down the swing, make some real mistakes. But I don't want to be four percent better next year, I want to be 100 percent better in five years.

I think both players and staff sort of understood the analogy that nobody on Tour can stay on Tour with the same strategy next year that they had last year, so why should we as an organization not be willing to make some aggressive changes.

Today I will tell you our culture is family. We believe in each other. We're very titleless, and the reason we're titleless is because I'll walk into anybody's office or anybody's cubicle, and I don't care who you report to, and they can do the same to me.

As long as you understand what's important to the customer, you have a voice at the table. I just said to the staff in a staff meeting, You may have always thought of culture as my job, but as I leave, make it your job. Culture is intentional, and when you find people that don't fit it, kick them out.

When you find sponsors that don't respect it, don't bring them on. Trust the fact that our culture -- I really believe we have the best culture in the game and I think we have sometimes the best culture in sports. And if you believe that, own it individually.

So, yeah, I'm very proud of our culture. I think we believe in ourselves as the underdog, and I hope we never lose that, because we believe we're the underdog we are willing to push a little harder, try a little longer, and not hear all the people telling us why that's not possible.

**Q. Diane, I don't know if you know who Ray Perkins was. There's only about five of us on the call who**



**remember him. He was a very good football coach, but you just couldn't replace Bear Bryant. How do you keep the next person in line here from becoming our Ray Perkins?**

DIANE GULYAS: Oh, wow. Well, there really is only one Mike Whan, as there is only one Bear Bryant, and I am a huge college football fan, so I understand your question.

But I think the important thing as we look for the next commissioner is for us to do some more -- go back to our strategic plan that Mike has led us in and take a look at not where we are today, but where we want to be five and ten years from now, and what is that next level of greatness we want to achieve.

I know Mike will want to build on my comment because I know what he's going to say. And then look for the skills, capabilities and talents. I expect the next person to be very different from Mike just because there is no Mike.

I think as we think about the skills, capabilities, attributes of who we want, we are not looking for Mike Junior. We're looking for somebody different, I'm sure.

Mike, do you want to comment on that, go back to your 2010 base?

MIKE WHAN: Well, well-said. I think anybody who comes in as a leader and tries to be a version of the last leader is going to fail whether they like it or not. In this case, as I've said to Diane many times, the next person who walks in here, the only trait they have to have is to look at 2021 and say, That's nice, but we'd better not be there in 2025.

Right now when I think of 2021 it's hard not to think about 2010 and the progress we've made and the strides we've come. But when I walked in in 2010 I really didn't care about 2009 and how far you think you'd come. I just knew that 2010 wasn't high enough.

So hopefully we'll find the next 40- or 45-year-old leader who is willing to go at this as hard in the next 11 years as I went in the last 11, and doesn't view status quo as successful at all.

I think if we find that person and they're themselves, I mean, the players and the staff and the members of the LPGA will embrace anybody who believes in them and has big dreams, and that shouldn't be that hard to find.

**Q. I wanted to ask you, you talked about your team being capable of going forward without you and how that played a major part. But I just wondered if the grind of 2020, the pandemic, if anything about last year**

**from a personal standpoint caused you to reevaluate or maybe have a conversation with Meg?**

MIKE WHAN: I'd love to lie to you. A lot of people have asked me that this morning and it would be a really easy out. But this is really embarrassing, but I will tell you the pandemic was energizing for me because the world was voting against us again and the players didn't think it was possible and sponsors were scared to death.

I'm embarrassingly willing to admit that I thrive on that. It didn't mean it was easy. It didn't mean I always enjoyed it. But I got up every morning and realized that I didn't have a good day, we didn't have a good day, and that matters to me.

But in the meantime, to your point, as we work through all the things that I didn't have a clue about, it was really great to watch people do it.

I got closer to my sponsors than I'd probably been in a few years. I definitely got closer to my members than I'd been in a few years. We were having conversations not just about golf but about life and all that stuff matters.

Yeah, the pandemic didn't wear me down. In fact, I only got on a few planes in 2020. A lot of people have said to me are you just sick of the travel and everything else? Of course I'm sick of the travel. I was sick of the travel in 2010.

But that's not the thing. The reality of it is, as I think I've said, I'm 56 next month, and maybe some of you can relate to this, at 56 you say to yourself, There's a fork in the road; am I going to spend the next five or six years running the LPGA and I'll retire and walk into the sunset and that would be great because I love the people, I love the team, I love what I've built? Or when you're 56 are you going to jump off another cliff with inadequate parachute and see if you can figure it out on the way down?

I'm person B. I like let's take another leap and see what happens. I'm not sure that makes me a great husband or father, but they get that.

I said to them in our little family meeting, It's time for me to do this again. This is the third time I've left a really good job without one, and as my son said to me, I know you've gone two for two, but I think you're pushing your luck. So I get excited about that.

I know, and to Diane and the board's credit, I feel like I've got the love and support to do this longer, but I think it's time for the business. I really do believe it's time for me to hand the baton to a younger, faster, crazier version, and

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I'm excited about whatever is next.

As I said, not knowing what's next is probably the most exciting part.

**Q. What's the most important thing you can relay to the next person who has this job?**

MIKE WHAN: Well, this will sound strange coming from me, but early on, listen, because there's a unique culture at the LPGA, probably true in sports in general, but I walked in thinking I had a lot of answers and realized I didn't even have the right questions.

Those great insights don't just come from players on the driving range, but they'll come from fans sitting next to you on a plane and they'll come from players that played the game 30 years ago and they'll come from media writers that ask you a question that really catches you off guard. And if you're listening, there's some insight in there.

And the last thing is I would tell this to any leader, certainly whatever leader would follow me, that culture is your job. Everybody else will take care of results for you and with you, and if they don't, we'll find the right person. But how it feels to work at a place like this, and whether or not you really are proud of the place you call work is up to you. Nobody else gets to make that.

And if you don't figure that out, somebody else will figure out that we need somebody who can.

**Q. Mike, you've talked a little bit about culture, and there's a lot of numbers that we can look at, whether it's increased tournaments or prize money, and I'm just curious, if people look back at your tenure and had to sum it up in one sentence, what would you like to hear?**

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, I think that -- I'll come back to the sentence part because I'm going to stall to bide myself some time to think about a sentence. But I do think all the numbers stuff, I'm proud of it. I'm glad -- I'm proud of the resume we built. I also think in 30 years nobody is going to think back about Mike Whan and rattle off about tournaments. All that stuff goes away in time.

It's all important in the moment, but I feel fairly confident in 30 years people are going to look around and go, Man, there's a lot more women playing golf than there was 30 years ago. I'm not sure that they'll tie that back to me or my team, and I'm not really sure that's important in terms of who they tie it back to. But that's going to happen.

I will tell you when I started at the end of 2009 I remember

looking at the data going, Junior golf was 15 percent girls, and people keep asking me what I think about the future of the game. Well, the future of the game is exactly what the adult game looks like.

As I walk out with a little less than 40 percent of the future of the game being girls, I think that's a difference. I can tell you from just talking to Shirley Spork last night that that's a difference that a founder could be proud of. You know, that we hadn't really moved that needle in the 60 years before in a significant way, but in the last 10 we really did.

And I think you could make that comment about virtually every country around the world in the last 10 years. I think we're giving women an opportunity to experience a game that's been good to me, that I've loved, and are going to be a major part of this game going forward. And if people remember nothing else about the time when we had the baton, I think that's something that we can always be proud of.

**Q. Diane, as it relates to the succession plan, will a female candidate be given greater consideration?**

DIANE GULYAS: Well, I think the answer is we're going to find the best next commissioner we can. Clearly we're going to consider diversity as an important thing, but I would say if you look at Mike's leadership team today, Mike, is it 80 percent women? Our board is 80 percent women today. Our search committee is 80 percent women.

So I think we have a very, very good representation today at all levels, but clearly it would be terrific if we had a female commissioner. But we're not going to rule anybody out. We want the very best commissioner we can get. Mike Whan has been positive proof that you pick the best guy or the best person, and you'll have amazing results.

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, the LPGA is going to be run by women. It is today and will be in the future. So if the next person doesn't get that, they'll be miserable.

**Q. I'm just sort of curious, what's next? And do you think you will look for something in golf?**

MIKE WHAN: I don't really -- to be honest with you, I said this to my wife over Christmas. I'm not in the right head space to really nail down what's next, because I feel like I have to kind of get past this.

I had to communicate this, deal with this, work with Diane on the process for what's next here, but I'll get there pretty quickly.

I don't know that it has to be golf for me. Listen, I love this sport. There's a reason I keep coming back to it. But if the next big opportunity isn't golf, I'm okay with that, too. I'd love it to be, but let's face it, that's not as likely.

But the real point to you is I don't really know. And while that makes me really nervous, it also makes me really excited. I never would have answered the recruiter call for this job if I was still the CEO of Mission-Itech when it became available.

We had sold the company. I had promised my wife I wasn't going to work for a year, and in that year I listened to more things than I ever would have listened to before. I'm trying to get myself back into a space like that. I don't return recruiter calls when I'm working. I just don't need another call as LPGA commissioner, and I certainly don't need the distraction.

So it'll be interesting to kind of see what's available, what's up, but exactly what it'll be will be kind of the fun part. Like I said, my wife and family may disagree that that's the fun part, but I do think that's -- as I said to my oldest last night, I didn't know this was out there when I asked you guys to kind of jump with me last time.

I don't know what's out there the next time, but let's jump again. I hope that -- as I said to him, I hope you're comfortable enough doing that in your own career, because sometimes the jump is the most exciting part.

**Q. The bookends of your tenure with a great recession on one end and a great pandemic on the other end, and we're not going to blame you for either of those, but which was the bigger challenge? And overall what looking back has brought you the most satisfaction?**

MIKE WHAN: The greater challenge is an easy one for me. I don't know that it's true. It's just for my world, 2010 and '11 were alarmingly scary. It was just, one, I didn't know that much. So first off, I know that many of you would probably argue that's still true, but I walked in fairly clueless. I didn't know who my supporters were outside the building. I still had to learn inside of the building. I had a bunch of athletes and teachers worried about the future and I was certainly an unknown.

You had to build trust, and I was calling corporate headquarters that were saying, You sound like a good guy, but our budgets are frozen for the next couple years until we figure out where the future of this thing is going.

And current sponsors calling saying, I'm sorry, but we're cancelling anything hospitality related. It felt like a pretty good mudslide, and you were standing at the bottom of the

hill watching it come.

The difference between that and 2020 is the team I was surrounded by. I probably had plenty of horsepower around me in 2010, I just didn't know it and I hadn't hand selected them and they hadn't been with me long-term. It's hard to go to battle in a huddle where you don't know the other players that well and you don't know the one calling the plays.

By the time we got to 2020 we had a team ready for whatever was coming our way, and I never hesitated about the horsepower that I had around me. And to be honest with you, every check writer, either current or about to be future, was both a friend and a confidante and somebody I could pick up the phone and call.

My wife finds it crazy that I can pick up the phone and call a CEO of a Fortune 100 company on their cell phone, but you create those kinds of relationships.

I remember Tim Finchem telling me, you won't experience this in the beginning, but you will get to the point where your sponsors are as close of your friends as the people you went to college with just because that is who spend your time with.

By 2020 I was there. I was worried about safety and health of players and staff, but success of the Tour never really entered my mind in 2020. In '10 and '11 and probably in '12, yeah, it was a consistent fear. Maybe more fear, maybe more of that backed up in my head than reality.

But back then when you're brand new and getting your feet under you it felt pretty daunting. It's weird that I'm going to look for another daunting challenge, but those are the things that keep your blood pumping.

**Q. I am curious as to what you set out to do 11 years ago, like how that compares with where you are now, where the Tour is now.**

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, I mean, the reality of it is, I mean, a member of the board when we first sat down, they gave me a three-year deal. I redlined it back as a three-year deal and we agreed on a four-year deal in terms of the back and forth.

I remember a good buddy of mine in California, which is where I lived saying, are you really negotiating your board down in term? I just said, Listen, I don't really do anything longer than three or four years. That's long-term for me, and then if that works you talk about the next one.

I just really thought the LPGA at the time needed to work

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through a bad period, kind of work through a good turnaround, get back on solid ground, and I was a good guy for that and probably wasn't the guy once the train was rolling down the track.

If I was being honest with you, back in 2010 I would have talked to you about rebuilding schedules and creating a value proposition for the customers, getting a television schedule that fans could actually follow, and then creating a Tour paths -- both tours and Tour paths, where young players, if they couldn't instantly walk on the LPGA they had places to play to get there.

And so they were pretty basic objectives when I started. I really thought of myself as a turnaround guy and I was going to help turn it around and they'd find a real golf person to run it when it wasn't me.

I fell in love. Just it happens. I love this place. I love these people. I love the mission.

I raised three boys, so it's embarrassing to tell you that I didn't spend much of my life thinking about what boys have and girls don't. And it just -- cluelessness is bliss, and you're driving your boy to Pop Warner football or travel hockey, you're not worrying about whether hockey is going to be around for their boys and whether or not the opportunities for these kids will be there when they want to go to college or go pro some day.

I've now spent 11 years of my life around young girls, parents of young girls, and realizing that the dreams, unfortunately, have to be very different and have to be much more realistic. And if I'm being honest, it just pissed me off, and it's pissed me off for 11 years. It got in me and I felt like I couldn't leave.

And so much so that the hardest part of this decision is that. I'll be a part of providing opportunities for women in sport the rest of my life. Of that I have zero doubt, whether I'm in the sport business or not.

Because it's personal now, and when things get personal, as Diane said, I don't let them go and probably won't let this go, either. Reality is I came in thinking I was a turnaround specialist. Thought I was going to get in, get out, and fell in love with the people, fell in love with the business, and most importantly fell in love with the mission.

Realized that the mission is harder than it read on a piece of paper, and is going to take some real over-the-top passionate thinking and action.

So as many board members have told me over the years, You can't keep running at this pace and live, and I said,

Well, let me just run at this pace as long as I can and find someone else who can run at this pace, because the mission deserves it. That may sound a little cheesy, but that's the truth.

**Q. Mike, you mentioned it here and I remember talking to you a couple months ago at KPMG, but you came in as a turnaround guy. Do you still see yourself as a turnaround guy in the next job?**

MIKE WHAN: I do. I do. I think of myself as a turnaround guy today at the LPGA, because that word -- we're really not turned around. We're better, and you guys are all writing in terms of great things because you're comparing it to 2010 or 2009.

But if you compared it to other things, and you've done that before in your articles, too, this ship is a long way from the port it should be in, right? It's just a mentality of mine. It's the same logic I use. Don't tell me about the 10-year plan because I think 10-year plans are humorous at best. If you didn't write that in pencil, shame on you.

I want to know about your two-year plan, and then in two years let's revisit it. I don't think long-term makes sense anymore in business. And so to me, if you stay in a turnaround mentality, because the turnaround mentality gives you the freedom to spring and miss because you can't stay status quo. You can't just say, That's not bad. If you are in a turnaround mentality you just keep pushing, keep making mistakes, push again.

That may not be healthy for an organization after 11 years. I'll be the first to admit that maybe the next person shouldn't be as turnaround minded.

But I'd be turnaround minded whatever I was running next just because it's an approach I like to take to the business. I don't want to be afraid of failing. I don't want to be afraid -- I don't want people to tell me the opportunity cost of what if I'm wrong on this new idea. I just feel like that's the beginning of stagnant, and stagnant is the beginning of decline.

That's the logic.

**Q. If I could follow up, there is a high profile job that we're all aware of in golf that's going to be available relatively quickly. Fitting your time frame, similar to when you were thinking about leaving it seems like. Is it premature or is it unfair for us to even speculate on that?**

MIKE WHAN: Is it unfair to speculate if I'm staying in the golf business?



**Q. Or in this particular case the USGA business.**

MIKE WHAN: Yeah, it's certainly premature. I think for any job, that one certainly included, requires a cleanse of my brain to get -- requires both parties to think it's a good idea.

I feel like there will be opportunities. Probably there will be opportunities in golf, and I certainly think there will be opportunities in sport that are worth a solid look on both sides.

I'm unique. I'm the first to admit that I'm unique and I'm probably not a great cultural fit at certain places, and that's okay. But I think when I find the right fit and the right business, I'll want to attack it full scale.

But I feel like I need to get through this transition to be fair to somebody else.

**Q. I'm wondering, I know you're going to leave this job with sort of a reputation as being a very forward-facing commissioner. I'm wondering what your advice would be to other commissioners in professional sports elsewhere.**

MIKE WHAN: I don't know that other commissioners in other sports would care what my advice is. But I think if you can treat your members like they're the owners -- I know you can't always do that, but I think sometimes it gets easy to think about them working for you and not the other way around, and I don't walk the range on Tuesday to tell my members what to think.

I walk the range on Tuesday so I can hear what the members think I should be thinking. I always tell our members, You can't be in boardrooms with me when I'm arguing for you, but you can be in my head. So you have the opportunity to tell me what you think is important, and at least I'll know you're in there when I'm in the back.

I think I have a personal philosophy that you never delegate bad news. So if somebody writes a nasty email or letter to the LPGA or says something on the website, our team knows it has to go to Mike Whan before it goes to anybody else. I find in leadership positions people always want to tell you the good stuff but not the bad stuff, so bad stuff comes to me first.

A fan sends me a bad letter, I will typically call them. Probably shouldn't say that now they will all send me a letter so they get a call, but I think if you fix the bad stuff the good stuff is really easy.

I find way too many leaders, not just commissioners, but leaders try to insulate themselves so the bad stuff has to get handled by somebody else.

I think if you're aware of the bad stuff, it doesn't stay bad stuff very long. And my father used to say, It's okay to have problems, it's just not okay to have the same problems next month that you had this month. It's one of the ways I kind of avoid that.

And the last thing is be honest even when it hurts. I hate answering some of the questions I get at players meetings, some of the questions I get at staff meetings, because the answer I know is going to hurt.

But it's going to hurt more if they think they asked you a question and find out that wasn't the right answer a couple of months later. It's a hard job to stay honest in, and I don't mean that because you're sly. I just mean you're sitting on a lot of knowledge of things that are coming out eight months from now or two years from now, and sometimes you can ruin the whole deal by talking about it ahead of time.

So sometimes when a player says, Don't you think we should be, I'm thinking to myself, not only do I think we should be, but we are, but I can't tell her then because if that would get public I would probably lose the deal. Sometimes they will walk back to me and go, When I was yelling at you on the 4th fairway, why didn't you just tell me that you had this figured out? And I just can't at the time.

But I think the fact that they know you'd come back to them and remember that you had that conversation matters. Most importantly I would say to any commissioner, Remember who's writing your check. My guess is it isn't just the owners of your league, it isn't just TV contracts, and it probably in a lot of cases isn't just fans.

Think about where your accounts receivable are happening and ask yourself if you're treating accounts receivable like the guys writing the check. If the answer is yes, great. But I find it's pretty easy to get away from the fact that the real revenue you're generating has got to be important to you and you've got to prove that to the people that are sending those checks, otherwise the checks stop.

**Q. Diane, obviously you have a clock now and a time frame. Can you give us an idea of when you're hoping to have someone that you've selected and how long you're hoping that Mike will be around to be with that person?**

DIANE GULYAS: Sure, thanks for the question. As I said, we've already formed the search committee and we're



talking to executive search firms, so we'll get that underway. So I expect the next 90 days there's going to be a lot of activity as we work on a specification, and I think as I said earlier, we're going to attract some terrific internal and external candidates and that search firm will help us whittle down the number of candidates.

My hope is that we could get that all accomplished so that in perhaps the second quarter of 2021 we would be passing the baton from Mike to the new commissioner. However, having said that, I'm not going to let the timeline shortcut the process for us. We're going to have some challenges with COVID and Zoom and doing interviews, and so we're going to take as much time as we need to thoughtfully and thoroughly conduct a search process, because it's our hope that we will find a terrific candidate who's going to want to stay with us for at least five years and create the next part of the legacy of the LPGA.

So that's sort of how we're thinking about it.

**Q. Following up on the question about a female being the next commissioner, I know when Ty Votaw left there was a lot of pressure by us, meaning the media, saying there needs to be a woman. There were a lot of players who said it needs to be a woman. There was a woman; it didn't work out; you went back and you hired Mike. I'm not saying because he was a man, you just hired Mike. The world is completely different than it was 20 years ago, and I think there would be considerable pressure and a lot written if this selection wouldn't be a woman. Does that bother you that maybe the first thing that would have to be dealt with if it's not a woman that the questions would be why didn't you pick a woman?**

DIANE GULYAS: I think we'll cross that bridge when we come to it. I think the first part is to do a really exhaustive and thorough search, and if we have the right search firm, I have no doubt we're going to come up with lots of candidates.

I think there are lots of terrific candidates out there, and I think as we go through the process making sure we fully -- part of why we're announcing it today, to be perfectly honest, is to have some transparency so that potential candidates out there who might be interested in this will hopefully hear something from some of you all and contact us.

I think we're going to run a thorough process. We're going to do the right thing. We're going to find the best candidate, and I look forward to welcoming the next commissioner.

**Q. I'm just wondering as you look back on the last 10, 11 years if there was an event or a tournament or one of the awards ceremonies, something that really stands out for you as a highlight, like oh, my gosh, I can't believe this happened or I was so excited to be a part of this. Was there any big highlights tournament wise events wise awards ceremony wise that you can recall?**

MIKE WHAN: There was a lot. As you asked the question what shot into my mind was sitting at my first press conference in Rio, and I remember the Rio press conference is - some of you were probably -- was made up of so many media that had idea what golf was, which was actually one of the reasons why golf in the Olympics worked so well, because people took a look at golf that normally wouldn't.

The first interview question I got was, Commissioner, how unique does it feel to have players from all over the world competing on one common golf course? And I remember thinking to myself, Okay, just breathe. This person really doesn't get it.

And I said, Well, if it makes you guys feel any better or worse, we'll have more women from more countries in my event next week than I have this week at the Olympics, but this is a pretty impressive field and it's pretty broad in terms of countries represented.

But it was the greatest non-golfer viewership of women's sport in the history of women's golf.

And if I'm being really honest with you, in 2010 I looked over to Finchem in the middle of an Olympic board meeting and I said, Tim, why are we spending time talking about getting golf in the Olympics? I've got a full schedule, you've got a full schedule, we've got majors.

Like I get why handball wants to be in the Olympics, but do we really need to be? As Tim typically did, he tapped my arm and said, We'll talk right after the meeting, because he was always coaching. At the end he said, Mike, I think you'll understand this better when we get there.

And Tim, to his credit, he went to Rio the week before I did for the men, and he left me his driver and the car that they had for the week. So I was able to use his driver for that week, and he left me a little note, too. I talked to him right after that and we talked a little bit about the driver experience, and then I said, Tim, I don't know if you remember saying this to me, but you told me I would get it when I got there. I get it.

Like that was -- and so it was a pretty amazing moment. I

had never been to the Olympics. I figured I'd been to every big sporting event in the world, but as you all know, the Olympics is unique and every night was the greatest sport fan experience of my life. It was really -- it was unbelievable.

I remember sitting on the first tee explaining to fans why they put a ball on a tee. There was people there watching that didn't understand golf on a tee. We had to put signage up that said, If you see a white ball, don't pick it up, because fans thought of it like baseball. Like if you found one you put it in your pocket. In the practice rounds we were losing golf balls.

Yeah, the Olympics probably stands out for me, one, because I didn't get it going in. Then I saw the Olympic movement and what it meant to women's golf all around the world, and then I saw what it meant to me athletes who were sitting there in Rio, because Rio had its challenges of Zika and travel and in between two events that weren't close to Rio.

Man, when I was sitting there at breakfast with those players seeing the look on their face, I mean, it was special. I'll never forget the Rio Olympics.

**Q. We've kind of seen what you've meant to the players and the LPGA Tour. What have the players meant to you maybe personally and professionally?**

MIKE WHAN: Well, I mean, something I already touched on. First, it gave Mike Whan the dad and leader a female perspective that I wish I could lie to you say that I really had before I got here. I was 44 when I got here, so I was clearly late to the party. But I got it; I get it.

Second thing is it's hard to look at a 22 year old woman and realize that she works 10 times harder than you do and she's -- somebody said to me one time in an interview, Do you worry about what the players are doing at night? I said, no. The players are definitely worried about what their commissioner is doing at night, but it's never the other way around.

My players on a school night, they're asleep at 8:00 at night. It's just what it takes to be one of the best in the world at something. And you guys see it. It's so different seeing it up close than what it's like to watch it on TV.

I'll never forget walking into -- we were in Thailand, it was my first year, and I decided I wanted to work out. It's a long flight. I wanted to work out, so I called down to the workout place and said, Hey, when do you open? They said, 5:30 a.m.

So I thought I'm going to get down there about 5:00 and just see if they'll let me in early, because I don't want to workout with a bunch of 25 year old women. I clearly don't look like them, and they're going to be -- they'll be in there working out hours after I leave.

So I got down there at 5:00 thinking I was pretty cool and there was six players standing there at 5:00 waiting for them to open, too. At 5:30 they opened. They didn't open early. I was in there for an hour. Stacy Lewis I just remember at the time, I was in there for an hour, I left, took a shower, had breakfast, had to walk by it on my way to the shuttle bus, she was still in there.

She had a two-hour warmup, played 18 holes. You know, Thailand is like Orlando in August all the time. It's 190 degrees, there's humidity, she plays all day, and that night when I'm walking to dinner with IMG and the sponsor, I walk by there and she is in there stretching, and the other person that was with us, I can't remember her name, she is not on the Tour anymore, was on the treadmill who was there at 5:30 in the morning.

And I just realized like there's a reason why I'm not a professional athlete. I don't have that. I wish I did, but it's amazing to see what it takes up close and personal. And these women have no idea how over the top unique they are.

When they look at me and say, Jeez, commissioner, I don't know what I'm going to do next. All I really know is how to play golf on a professional level.

You just want to hug them and go, You are so prepared for success you can't even imagine, but they can't imagine. Yeah, it's a powerful thing, and as a result when you see them work that hard to make a cut, make a check, you just have to work that hard for them.

I mean, it's hard to blow it off and say, Well, I'll make that call tomorrow. I'll take that trip next Thursday, because they wouldn't. And because they wouldn't, you shouldn't.

**Q. Just had one kind of wrap-up question. When the search committee identifies a really strong candidate or a finalist and that person called you and said, why should I take this job, what would you tell them?**

MIKE WHAN: I'd probably ask them a few questions first to see what's in their head, but I would say there's a lot of jobs that can pay you well. There's jobs that can give you media exposure. There's jobs that will have teams, and even jobs in sports that can be based around a topic you like.

But I don't think you're going to learn more about yourself than in a job like this. I imagine most commissioners would say the same. You've got to fight for the same player on Tuesday that you fine on Wednesday. You've got to push rules officials to be even more aggressive on pace of play, but please don't set up the golf course that way because we've still got to get a golf tournament in on the thing.

You really have got to wear a lot of hats, and at the end of it, you've got to be willing to really fall in love with this place. You've got to be willing to let this place become part of you.

I think the people that fail in these jobs see them as jobs, and if you view golf as just a sport and commissioner as just a job, you're not going to like this because it doesn't turn off.

I can't imagine -- I turned my phone off before this thing, but I can't imagine when I turn it back on. Even separate from my announcement day, do you know how many calls and emails and texts you get in an hour, and if you don't love it, if you're not into it, this job will swallow you.

I think I've told you this story. I remember getting off the plane. I was with my dad and he lived in Arizona. We landed in Arizona. I turned on my phone, I looked at my dad and said, "412." And he said, "What's that?" I said, "That's how many emails we got while we were in the air."

And he said, as a father would, "Shut up. Every one of your emails has the subject golf. Just start answering them." And he's right. How many people get to get off a plane and 400 people emailed them about golf.

Because you're going to get 400 as the CEO of something else. It's a lot, and in case you can love it and can really get into it and really let this place teach you, I think it's the wrong place. If it's just another stop on your CEO track, this place will overwhelm you.

THE MODERATOR: Diane, I know you had a few final words you wanted to say about Mike's biggest legacy as we look back at his 11 years at the PGA.

DIANE GULYAS: Thanks so much, Christina. Mike has left us an amazing legacy. I loved what he said earlier about girls' golf, our girls' golf initiatives, leadership academies, helping get girls more interested. That's a huge one. All the amazing accomplishments he's had.

But today when I think about where we started, his team, he has built an amazing team of people, a team of A players. We saw it in COVID. The executive, the staff are truly incredible.

And underpinning all of that is the culture that he talked about, how he saw his role as chief culture leader. You asked earlier for a sentence and I'm surprised he didn't come up with it, because the sentence is or the phrase is, "act like a founder."

Mike has challenged each and every one of us to act like a founder every day. And because of his challenge and because when we rise to the occasion and truly act like founders, that's why I think he's left us with frankly the premier global women's sport franchise that we have today.

Thanks so much, Mike. We appreciate you and we're going to miss you. But not too soon.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, we'll turn things over to you for the last word. Before we do that, I want to say on behalf of everyone at the LPGA Tour, the staff that works there, thank you so much for making it a place where we have learned so much and learned from you.

And yes, everyone, he does just walk down the hall and come in. My door was two doors down and I'd see him down there all the time. On the other hand, his door was two doors down and always open to me.

You don't get that at a lot of places, so thank you, Mike, for everything. We wish you luck in these next steps, and I think you're always going to be an honorary LPGA member.

As you look back on your time at the LPGA, what do you want your biggest legacy moment to be?

MIKE WHAN: I'll leave legacy stuff up to you guys. Certainly writers and other people determine what my legacy is.

I hope that others that are really important to me will respect the fact that I tried to engage and encourage others to get behind this mission even if it wasn't part of theirs. When I think back to 2010 we didn't have the PGA of America engaged in a big way. We didn't have the R&A engaged in a big way. The PGA TOUR was a competitor as opposed to a partner. The USGA wrote a check to LPGA girls golf but wouldn't really be a part of it.

When you look back today, this is something my dad used to always say, If you don't have enough money, find somebody else who does and encourage them to find your dream is important for them, too.

When I look around, I've sent this letter earlier this morning

to the Martin Slumbers and Keith Pelleys of the world and Jays and Will Jones at Augusta. I mean, what they've done for women's golf in my tenure is game changing. All of the biggest things that happened at the LPGA happened because some other partner said, I can help you with that, Mike, and took it over.

So in now our biggest events, our biggest go-forwards, all of our biggest contracts have the thumbprint of somebody else who didn't need to do this. Nobody is going to ask Jay at his next performance with you, How did you help Mike last year, and nobody is going to ask Martin, how is it being on the LET board. He's not going to get rewarded for that. He did that because it was the right thing to do.

So I hope there's something -- that those guys would say, I don't know how he's gotten you roped into it, but, man, we're really involved in women's golf in a much bigger way than we were just a while ago. Because I think golf deserves that, and I hope that will be something that -- to the question that was asked prior, hope that's something the next person who follows me believes, because we're not big enough or strong enough to do everything we want on our own. The good news is the others in the industry have really picked up the rope.

I'm not saying that because I'm leaving; I think most of you know I've said that for quite a few years. The KPMG Women's PGA, the girls golf program and U.S. Women's Open, the fact that the Women's Open Championship is what it is today and the fact that we played four our five events with the European Tour and Keith has joined the European board, it matters, and I know our members are watching. It's why I feel so good about the future of the game.

It's not us against everybody as I felt like it once was 11 years ago. I really feel like it's golf now, pushing together to succeed, and that matters. And I'm proud of that, because I consider those people and those businesses some of my best friends. Even though I've probably driven them crazy in 11 years, they really responded when I challenged them and they've made us better, better than I could have made us without them.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Mike. There's no doubt you're leaving the LPGA better than you found it, and this is your act-like-a-founder moment and we thank you for it. Thank you, everyone, for joining us today. We'll have a transcript ready for you as soon as possible.

Thanks, Kristin. This is your last time having to do this one. Thanks to everybody. Let us know if you have any other questions. And Mike is not leaving tomorrow. He's still around. Let you know if you need anything. Thank

you so much, everybody.

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