

LPGA Media Conference

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USA

Mollie Marcoux Samaan

Diane Gulyas

Juli Inkster

Press Conference



KELLY SCHULTZ: Hello, everyone. Thank you all so much for joining us here today. We are very excited to have you all with us following this morning's announcement that Mollie Marcoux Samaan will become the ninth commissioner of the LPGA.

I'd like to introduce the people who will be joining us for today's announcement call. First is Diane Gulyas, who is the chairman of the LPGA board of directors as well as the leader of the search committee for the LPGA's new commissioner. Also joining us is LPGA and World Golf Hall of Fame member Juli Inkster, one of four members who served on the search committee.

Diane, I would love to have you give us some perspective on the selection process, how we got to today's announcement, and we'll give you the honor of introducing our new commissioner.

DIANE GULYAS: Thank you, Kelly. As you can imagine, the selection of the commissioner is the single most important duty and responsibility of the board, and when we embarked on this process a few short months ago, we knew that we were going to conduct a very thorough and exhaustive process, and indeed it has been.

We started with a very highly inclusive survey of all of our key stakeholders. We talked to the players, the teaching professionals, our media partners, our marketing partners, our sponsors to get input on what we wanted in the commissioner, and of course we went out and got a wide net, cast a very wide net, ably assisted by Spencer Stewart, and I have to say I was very impressed with the large number of applicants and the high quality of people who applied for the job. It really kind of blew us away.

I can assure you, it was a very diverse pool. Again, we looked very at a very wide range of backgrounds, experiences, both in and out of golf and in and out of business.

We did a lot of work as a team around the strategy, what got us to where we are today with Mike's leadership, but probably more importantly where are we going, who do we want to be five and ten years from now, and with that strategic base together with all the hard work that we've put in by talking to all the stakeholders, we are delighted, having met just last evening, and unanimously voted to elect Mollie Marcoux Samaan as our next LPGA commissioner, and we couldn't be more delighted today to introduce her to you and proudly welcome her to the LPGA family.

Kelly, over to you.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Mollie, first off, welcome to the LPGA. We're really excited to have you here. You've had an extraordinary career history and have been a standout leader in every role you've had. Being recruited back to your alma mater, Princeton, as athletic director must have been an incredible opportunity and honor. Why did the opportunity to serve as LPGA commissioner capture your interest?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN: Yeah, first I want to just thank Diane and Juli and the whole search committee for entrusting me with this unbelievable, I would say, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I just could not be more excited about. I had so much fun engaging in the process that Diane spoke of, just meeting so many remarkable people within the LPGA family, including Mike Whan, who's just been remarkable and so helpful along the way, and today in particular his support and guidance has been phenomenal.

I just can't wait to dive in even deeper and meet more people. Thank you very much again, Diane and Juli. I will say that I still am and have been for a long time a super fan girl of Juli's, so it was particularly fun to meet her on the first day. I ran downstairs and told my husband that I met Juli Inkster on this call, and I look forward to continuing to be pals along the way here.

In terms of the job, I have been so fortunate my whole career to be able to follow my passions and to work with organizations really whose values match my own, and when this potential opportunity was presented to me, it dawned on me pretty quickly that it was just the perfect next step in my evolution.



I like to see myself as a values-based sports leader, and I truly believe that this is one of the very best jobs in all of sports, and that the LPGA if you really think about it is one of the most unique and special sports enterprises in the world for so many reasons that I could go on and on about. But I could not be happier, and I think sort of at the core I believe and have always believed that sports have the power to change the world.

I think in this moment in time with just such tremendous positive energy around women's sports, around women's leadership, around sort of society's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, I think that we at the LPGA have just this unique platform to change lives for the better. I couldn't be more excited about that. I think that's what I love doing. I love helping people, particularly helping people through sports reach their peak potential and realize their dreams.

And then I think the last thing is I am just a golf fanatic. I love golf. I've loved golf for most of my life, and I think the lessons that you learn through playing the game are really unlike none other. It's just a test of so many important human characteristics.

We talk all the time at Princeton about education through athletics, and I can't think of a sport that teaches more life lessons than golf does, and that's actually harder both mentally and physically, so I can't wait to watch these unbelievable women perform at the highest level and support them in their bid to win championships and to succeed.

And then also just all other elements of the organization truly match my core beliefs. Just with the foundation being able to provide athletic opportunities to a really broad range of young girls and women is really what I want to do at the next phase of my career, and I've been thinking about that for a long time. So passionate about that side of the business, passionate about the teaching side of the business, and just really look forward to diving into this opportunity.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Mollie, you can already hear your passion for the game, and I know you grew up a fan of the LPGA. Can you tell us about your introduction to golf and when exactly when this passion for the game really began?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, it certainly wasn't a normal path for a young 11-year-old, 12-year-old girl in upstate New York. My family, we were not a golf family. My parents have never played golf. My brother who was five years older said he wanted to go play at the local course with his friends, and of course I wanted to do

everything he did, so I convinced him to let me tag along one day and I was hooked from that moment. I think I came home and told my parents that that's what I wanted to do. I had seen these women playing golf on TV and I was going to be a professional golfer and I needed to join the local club, and literally to join the local club in Ithaca as a junior member was \$45 for the summer, so my parents were like, that's the best babysitter I could ever imagine, and they just dropped me off at the course at 8:00 in the morning and I played all day long with people from all different backgrounds, from sort of -- it was the seniors and the juniors generally at the course weekdays in the middle of the summer.

I just grew a huge passion for the game, and we'd sometimes play nine holes and just sit around and sometimes we'd play 36 holes and just have the greatest time.

Really had a core experience playing golf, just learning how to deal with people of all different ages and backgrounds and being respectful and polite and being on my own at the course. I really view that as a really transformative experience for me.

Then the second part of it, as I said, I was a sports nut from the minute I knew what sports were and I played every single sport and really pushed my family to let me play ice hockey and let me play golf. But I watched the LPGA. That's what I did because there weren't really other options. We could watch tennis or we could watch golf, and that's how I just developed this huge passion for the women who were playing at that time, including Juli, and it was more in high school when I was watching her just dominate on the course.

Watching Nancy Lopez and Jan Stephenson and Pat Bradley, just being able to see them succeed and see that there's a path for women in sports was inspiring to me. I've just always been a fan, particularly when I was a young girl.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Mollie, you talked about playing all kinds of sports. You were a two-sport athlete at Princeton. You have that background. How has that helped you in your career so far and how do you think it will help in this role as commissioner, as well?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, I'm a huge believer that the lessons that you learn in sports, they both teach character and they reveal character, sports do, but I just am a huge believer that it's not just -- people talk about what sports do for you all the time in terms of teamwork and dedication and sort of discipline, and all those things are very important, but I think the other thing that's so

interesting is that particularly for a young girl, it's a source of confidence and it's a source of identity that I think has 100 percent changed my life. I would absolutely never be sitting here if I didn't have some success in sports and develop a confidence in my own abilities to perform under pressure and to handle really difficult situations.

I credit everything to my sort of role in sports, but I think golf, too. Even though I didn't play golf at a really high level, I did play when I was 12 to 17 or so. I played on our high school team and I played in some New York state amateurs and I really decided to play soccer and hockey a little bit more, but I've always continued that. But I think that experience from a career perspective, being able to be competent and to go out and play with anyone and be confident in playing with anyone has helped me in my career every step of the way.

So I think providing that opportunity to young girls is just a joy and something that I can't wait to do.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Juli, we already can hear the passion that Mollie has. I know this is the second time for you to be a part of the search committee. You were on the one that helped select Mike Whan back in 2009. What impressed you most about Mollie and why do you think she's going to be successful as the next LPGA commissioner?

JULI INKSTER: Well, from her first interview on, you could just see that she is down to earth, just authentic, someone that cared deeply for her athletes at school. I think she's going to be a great player's commissioner. I think she's going to listen, and she's gritty, she's smart, but she keeps it simple.

I just think her vision for where the LPGA wants to go, I think she's the perfect person to take us there.

And you know, she's -- I know this is probably not the greatest term, but she's a jock and she loves sports and I love sports, and I think you have to be that way to really dive in. She's been AD for a huge athletic department, and she's been in a man's world. She knows the golfing world and she knows how to play with them, be nice and collaborate and bring the LPGA forward.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Mollie, I wanted to ask you one interesting tidbit we came across as we were chatting with you is that you actually did your senior thesis on the history of women's golf dating all the way back from the 1800s into 1955. Tell me a little bit about that project and what did you learn, and have you kind of revisited that thesis now as you're getting ready for your new role?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN: Yeah, I did. Right before

my first interview I called my mom, who still lives in Ithaca, and said you have to find my thesis and send it to me, and I had the most fun reading it 30 years later. I was a history major, and everyone at Princeton has to write an independent senior thesis, and the advice that I got was write on something that you're passionate about, write on something that you care about because it's such a big project. It's 100-some pages and you spend your whole senior year writing it, so you might as well do it on something that you care about. Of course the thing I care about most is sports. Golf has served a very critical social role for women really for many, many years.

I came upon this idea of writing the history of women in golf, so it was sort of mostly a history of women in society, but I used golf as an example of how women were living in society in the various eras, and I broke it up into three different chapters, and it really was symbolic of things that were going on in society, how women played golf, ranging from how they saw their identity as golfers and as competitors versus how they didn't, and that really evolved over that period of time.

There was a time when it was more about how you socialized, and then there was a time that people sort of apologized -- women apologized for being great at golf and said, yeah, I like playing, and they happened to be the best player in the country, but they would say, I like playing but it's more important that I take care of X, Y and Z at home.

And then as that evolved into the development of the LPGA, that attitude changed, and the women were just unbelievable. They were like, no, we are athletes, and they started to sort of form their identity around golf.

I could go on and on about it, but it was very fun, and my thesis advisor knew nothing about sports or golf. I was saying to the players last night when I spoke to them, I had to stand up in her office and show her what a golf swing was. She was like, I've never heard of it. I was never, you've never ridden by a golf course, seen the flags out? Did you think that was just a big piece of property? She said it doesn't matter because we're talking about society, and you're using this as a wonderful example of that.

It was a great project. I learned a lot. When I read it again, it certainly wasn't the most scholarly document that you'll find, but it was certainly fun and it seems so weird to be coming back at this now and so fortunate for me, and I couldn't be more grateful.

KELLY SCHULTZ: I know you've already talked with Shirley, and Shirley will probably help you flesh that out into even a deeper document as you go forward.

Q. My first question is what are your top priorities as soon as you get in the commissioner's chair? What's most important?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Well, I think the first most important thing is to learn and to just listen to absolutely everybody. Similar to what Diane was saying about the search process, I think the only way you can actually form a strategy is to hear from all the different stakeholders and make -- it's a very complex organization, and to sort of understand the landscape and then try to simplify that into the core values and the core strategy, I think that's what I love doing, just outside of being super passionate about sports, it's about setting a strategy for an organization, and again, like I said, taking really complex ideas and condensing them into a clearer strategy.

So writing our strategic vision will be sort of priority number one and thinking about how we expand on the global scale and how we work with our partners around the world to grow the game of golf and to provide even more opportunities for both our pros and to women around the world. I can't wait to dive into that.

There's a lot of specific things that we've all been talking about in this process, but more just learning, listening and just thinking about the growth of the LPGA more broadly and the game of golf more broadly.

Q. Convincing CEOs to write big checks is a big part of the job. What in your background, in your past experience, will help you to be successful there?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, I just think it's about relationships. That's what I love, to form relationships and find out how people can work together to accomplish everyone's goal. I've had a lot of opportunity to fundraise through my work at Princeton. We have a sponsorship program within the athletic department, and at Chelsea Piers we had great partnerships with many sponsors. Most importantly in any type of relationship it's just making sure that you have great communication and that you're finding solutions that everybody is going to benefit from.

I just think at this moment what could be better than sponsoring the LPGA and sort of how we're all working towards providing the most diverse and inclusive environments within our companies, and to be able to use the LPGA as a platform and commitment to that equity I think is a huge opportunity.

If you're trying to create a company that wants to perform, just look at the women on the Tour. Look at how they have to perform day in and day out. The work that goes into it, the struggle that happens for that result at the end of the

day is really hard to attain, but the process that they go through is remarkable.

I think those partnerships -- I just can't wait to talk to sponsors and to talk about the value proposition of the LPGA because I can't think of a better value proposition.

Q. I'm wondering if it's a fair question to ask how many total minutes you spent in the penalty box in your four years.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: I actually got almost no penalties. I was trying to score the goals and get people to stop me from scoring, but I didn't have a lot of penalties back in the day.

Q. Back to what Juli has mentioned about the perfect person to take you to the vision, what do you see the LPGA as where it needs to go? What's your vision of where it could go?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Well, I think the beauty of coming into this position is that it's in amazing shape right now. I mean, I've been studying Mike and the culture of the organization and kind of the growth of the organization, and I think it is just positioned for tremendous growth.

I think it's really important that we think about the purse sizes, we think about how to grow that. We think about the technology that we're using on the course to think about ways of providing more exposure to these remarkable women whose stories are just so fun to hear, and I think we need to find a way to give them more exposure because I think that they will inspire so many more people.

And how does -- one of the things I really look forward to is having the LPGA partner with so many other great golf organizations and companies but also so many women's sports organizations. I think we're at this critical moment where the rising tide lifts all boats, and I can't wait to partner with so many people along those lines.

But I think we have some huge opportunities globally to grow our partnerships across the world, and I can't wait to do that, as well. Can't wait to get to know the people at the LET and our partners in Asia and really around the world.

I just think that there are really specific things that we've been talking about, like I said, with technology and broadcast and streaming, but also just to think about our footprint more globally.

Q. I know it's a transition period, but what do you expect to be at your first tournament, if you were guessing?



MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Well, I will certainly be at the Solheim Cup in early September. I hope to be at some this summer, but I'm going to transition out of Princeton. I think one of the things that I love most in life is team and being on a team, and so this is all really new. I sort of surprised my staff with this this morning and I need to take care of them in every way because they're unbelievable just like the staff at the LPGA, so Diane and I are working through the strategy there with my boss at Princeton and trying to figure out the most effective way to do this, certainly by the end of the summer, and obviously I'll be connected from now until then.

Q. As a lifelong LPGA fan I'm curious what an early memory of yours is of watching the LPGA, something that you could share.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Well, I always remember -- this is maybe not the right thing to say, but I watched them play for sure, and as I said, I really loved Nancy Lopez and I really loved JoAnne Carner and Jane Geddes who I think came on the Tour at the same time Juli did. She's actually become a good friend, so I remember watching her play and I met her through Chelsea Piers because her wife Gigi Fernandez worked with us at Chelsea Piers. The first time I met her, I said, I remember, Jane, watching you play.

But I also remember the commercials. I remember the Jan Stephenson commercials, like oh, he's my caddie and he's my daddy. Those were all memories that I had, and I started saying that to a friend of mine the other day, and she's like, nope, I don't remember that. I was like, how do you remember that? That was formidable for me. Those were some of the memories that I remember from my youth was just the exposure. You could flip the channels and find LPGA on broadcast television back then, and of course the TVs were about that big.

But I remember sitting and watching sort of all Sundays. I think Jane -- Juli, do you remember what year she won the U.S. Open? It was '85 or '86 maybe.

JULI INKSTER: I think it was '87.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: So I remember those moments. I also grew up playing a little bit with Dottie Pepper because she was from upstate New York, and so we played in like the New York amateurs, and she of course won them all and she was incredible and she was a couple years older than I was, and I remember idolizing her. So I really followed her, obviously, when I was middle school, high school and through college and her career. I love seeing her every weekend now.

Those were my most memorable memories of the LPGA.

Q. In the statement that went out announcing you being selected today, you said, "I believe the LPGA has an incredible opportunity to use our platform for positive change." What does that change look like to you?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: I think again, it's about this idea that women -- putting women in sports shouldn't be the other. I think that women's sports -- and men's sports is phenomenal and remarkable, and I think women's sports brings a different -- equal, similar value on one level but also a different value where it shows the world that women have -- some of the socially constructed gender norms are not the case. Women are strong and formidable and tough and can handle things under pressure. I think when you watch women perform on this platform, you learn that.

So I think that's a way that we can change the world in business and also give young girls -- they always say if you can see it, you can be it, and I think giving young girls those role models to say I can do anything and nothing is going to hold me back. So I think those are ways. There's many more, but I think those are a few ways I think of it.

Q. I'm curious, how old are your three kids?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: You just heard them; is that why? He just got home from school. I have a 17, almost 18-year-old, a 15, almost 16-year-old and a 12-year-old. So two girls and a boy. My older daughter is just graduating from high school, and my other is a sophomore and my third is in sixth grade.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Thanks to everyone for joining us today. I'm going to throw one last question out there because I just think all of us are getting really excited about you getting started. I'm going to toss this to Diane first. As we get ready for Mollie to take over as LPGA commissioner, what are you most excited about for the future of the LPGA?

DIANE GULYAS: Thanks, Kelly. One of the things that impressed me most about Mollie was her ability to build relationships with a wide variety of different stakeholders at Princeton, whether it was the university officials, the big donors, the alumni, the coaches, the athletes, and when I think about our universe of stakeholders, I honestly think she's going to be awesome with our sponsors, and I think that will lead to even better relationships, growing relationships with our sponsors that of course always leads to more opportunities and bigger purses for our players.

I think she's really going to help us as we think about how



to increase our fan engagement in new and creative ways, bringing in new technology and different ways of thinking about fan engagement.

I know she's going to help us figure out how to really activate the 1,700 teaching professionals that we have all around the world who are a part of our teaching professional association. They are the front line that bring in the young girls into our organization, and I know Mollie is going to really help them be activated and engaged.

Last but not least, we have 13,000 LPGA amateur golf association, and they frankly are the base of our most ardent and dedicated fans, and I think we can find new and creative ways of activating them, as well. I think that's kind of all -- I hate to put so much on her plate, but I think Mollie's ability to work with different stakeholders will help us and all the many stakeholders that we have, and she'll help lead us to I think a pretty exciting future over the next couple years. I'm looking forward to being part of it with her.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Juli, what are you most excited about as Mollie gets ready to start as LPGA commissioner?

JULI INKSTER: Well, I think it's going to be a smooth transition. As Mollie said, she's going to come in and listen. I think the players are going to really enjoy getting to meet her. I think the sponsors are going to be ecstatic with Mollie. She's got great passion. I just can't wait until she gets started because I really think she's going to build her foundation, she's going to do what she needs to do, but I don't think she has a time set. I think she's just going to do it on her own time, and I think the LPGA team is going to love working for her.

I just think she's a home run, and I can't wait to play with her in a pro-am. Maybe I can get some strokes.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: I don't think that's what you want, just to be honest.

JULI INKSTER: It's going to be fun.

KELLY SCHULTZ: It is. I think we're all really excited, Mollie, for you to get started. Just some closing thoughts from you as you get ready to take over this new role?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, I mean, I have been sort of pinching myself over the last couple days. This is a remarkable opportunity and a remarkable responsibility to get up every day and be able to try to change the world through golf and provide these opportunities that I had and that others have had that will just help people.

I think that that's exciting. I think Diane and Juli said a lot of the specific things, but just generally I love working with the team, and it seems like the team just really globally is remarkable, and can't wait to dive in and make things happen.

I also love to -- I love to be positive and proactive and collaborative and to just make things fun, and I think that's another opportunity that the LPGA has is to show the culture.

I know I think Steve, I read the article that you wrote yesterday about how the LPGA players are sort of the most fan-friendly athletes, professional athletes. I loved that article, and I loved how you said, men think that they can come out and they play against these women and realize how good they are when they play with them and also what wonderful people they are. That's stuff that I just love and I'm looking forward to.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Thank you so much for the time. Thank you to all the media members for joining today. We are really excited to get your tenure started as LPGA commissioner. Look forward to working with you and look forward to seeing all of our media members out there again soon. Thanks, everyone.

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