

# LPGA Media Conference

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USA

## Mollie Marcoux Samaan

### Press Conference



KELLY SCHULTZ: Good afternoon, everyone. So excited to have you all join us today. We're really excited. It's been a busy first official week on the job for our new LPGA commissioner, Mollie Marcoux Samaan.

I know this is a really exciting time. It's been a busy time for you since we announced you as the ninth LPGA commissioner back at the end of May.

Thought we'd get things going, just having you talk a little bit about what this transition has been like and now being here officially at LPGA headquarters.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: First of all, thanks everyone for logging on here today. It's great we can do this via Zoom. I think the last time we all met I was maybe in my attic or maybe in a weird space in my house with kids running around. This is a little bit more private here, so really happy to see everyone.

Yeah, the transition has been awesome. It's been extremely busy. It's been a little over two months, and obviously I've been winding down my responsibilities at Princeton, obviously a job that I care a lot about and wanted to make sure that I did that as well as possible.

And then really had a great chance over the last couple months to learn a lot about the LPGA. I mean, I still have a ton to learn, but everyone has been phenomenally welcoming and open with information, and I've gotten a sense of the larger ecosystem. And really, I have to say, it's been great, and we can get into the details on that.

It has been quite busy trying to transition the kids to new schools, find a house, sell a house, get everyone adjusted, but I finally feel like we've arrived.

Driving up Route 4 on Monday I sort of took a deep breath and said, All right, here we go. We sort of made it through that stuff and now the fun begins.

This week has been phenomenal, and happy to dive in and answer any questions that you have.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Talk a little bit about this first week. I

know finally being here at headquarters, you said you've been learning a lot, but I'm sure this week has been some more. Can you give everybody a sense of what week one is like in this job officially full-time?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, to be honest, I really feel like I have been engaging over the last couple months but I've always had my hand in lots of different pots, and to be able to actually be here and to see people in person -- I've been to headquarters during the last couple months. I came down in mid-June or so and got to meet some people.

Obviously we still have a bit of a hybrid office going here so not everyone is here. I have been on lots and lots of calls with LPGA team members, and so to be able to actually see them in person has been great.

As we'll get into, we have created a 100 day plan, which largely in the first phase is about just getting to know people and to hear as much as possible from as many people as possible and to start to understand the major themes and to start to understand the various ins and outs of our organization, which is quite complex, and actually quite inspiring and positive and wonderful to a large degree.

This week has been a lot of the same, but with a lot more intensity and a lot more focus. That is always a really positive thing.

**Q. You've talked about a lot of the learnings that you've had over this time. What are some of the ones that jump out to you initially about some of those key learnings that you've had during the transition?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Sure, I mean, the first thing I think having been able to go on-site at a few events and to sort of watch and engage with some of the -- or all of the players is just -- I was really struck at minute one about the sort of tremendous athleticism of our Tour players.

They are quite remarkable, as you all know, and being someone who just loves athletes in every way, being able to see them do what they do so well, they're really the best in the world, that struck me right away. These women are strong and determined and fit and the best in the world.



That's been really great.

They are also just very positive and optimistic, and they love each other, and there's a great community out on the road.

I think we obviously have great teaching professionals. I've had the opportunity to engage with a number of them, as well, and they have the same type of passion for growing the game and for teaching the game to a large population of young girls and women and men.

One of the biggest takeaways is that the staff is phenomenal. These are people who love what they do. They work extremely hard, as you all know, and I know you all do, but they are in it for the passion and for the mission, and they sacrifice a lot to make this organization great, and they do it because they have tremendous passion.

And then I would say the partners that the LPGA has, I was -- I have just been wildly impressed and excited by the partnership and the passion. People really love the LPGA. Every time I talk to someone they say, The players are so accessible and they're so easy to talk with, but they're just these unbelievable athletes who are really willing to engage and dig deep into the world of golf, to share themselves and their personal stories.

Same thing, though, again with our staff, but the partners always recognize that. Everyone seems to really love to work with the LPGA. People are very service-oriented and want to help sort of partners and want to help each other. That's something I've really noticed.

From CEOs to major corporations who just tell me how much they love the LPGA has been really inspiring to our tournament partners, to our media partners and the golf industry. I think there's just been a lot of outreach at the highest levels of the golf industry just saying, How can we help you? We're thrilled that you're there. How can we be supportive and how can we all work together?

I know that's a lot of positivity and a lot of energy, but it feels really good. So those are the things that I've sort of big picture noticed in my first 60 plus days.

**Q. Now that you've been around the Tour for a few months, I'm wondering if there's something that -- an area of growth that you've seen that is right up your alley where you're like, Wow, this suits me; I'm really ready to tackle this?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN: Yeah, there's a number of them, and one that I love and have been sort of passionate about in my previous jobs is just sort of growing the

consumer base, growing those people who are interested in the LPGA, so from a marketing perspective, and I think we do that in lots of ways.

We have amazing stories to tell, and I feel like more of the world should know these stories and should know our amazing athletes.

That's one area that I'm really excited about is sort of bringing our women to a larger population of people.

Really been diving in to kind of our media and looking at sort of our internal media, but also looking at broadcast, looking at streaming, looking at our storytelling, and I've always sort of engaged in that way. Those are some of the things that stuck out, technology, both internal technology and broader technology for the Tour.

I honestly think that part of my job, which is what I really love to do, is to be a support system for the entire ecosystem, to sort of use my platform and my role to help everyone else do their jobs better.

We have great people doing their jobs, and I feel like I can really help in that way just continuing to support them and give them the tools they need to continue to be super successful.

So that leadership part is really fun, being the coach, if you will, of a larger organization. That feels real comfortable and something that I love doing.

Some real specific parts of the business and the strategy piece, but also just kind of being able to support everyone else within the larger ecosystem.

**Q. As part of your listening Tour, our players are not bashful about telling you what they think your priorities ought to be. What are you hearing from them in that regard?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN: Yeah, again, I've had the chance to say hi to a lot of players -- again, I've only been to a couple of those events, and at those events I've been able to just kind of start to meet them.

As I think I said to you earlier, I'm really excited about those personal relationships and continuing to engage with all of the members and have kind of, again, within our 100-year plan, a plan and a strategy in terms of reaching out to all of them.

So I haven't had a lot of in-depth conversations. I have spoken more in depth with the player directors. Obviously a couple were on the search committee so got to meet them



during the process and then really have had one-on-one conversations with each of them. I think it's a lot of the same things that I mentioned there. They love the LPGA. They feel it's their Tour, which it is, and they want to just continue to see us grow and see the impact that we can have on girls, young golfers, the golf world more broadly, the world more broadly.

They want and deserve a tremendous amount of respect, because as I said before, they're the best in the world.

They're focused a little bit on the exposure, on TV, on technology, and also just kind of how we continue to make their lives as good as they can be on Tour.

And I guess to Beth Ann's question, I love that, too, sort of thinking through performance, thinking through how we can support them in their mission to be the best in the world.

**Q. I was hoping you could elaborate a little more on your 100-day plan. You touched on it a little bit, but is that something for you to get acclimated or is that something that involves the organization as a whole?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: No. The organization as a whole, I think we've broken it into sort of phases. The first phase is definitely continuing to listen and to learn from -- again, people have great passion for what we do and are very willing to share insight, people who have been around the LPGA for 70-plus years, people who have been kind of recently involved.

So I've been really just trying to hear the themes, and I want to continue doing that, and have been really excited about the people that I've been able to meet.

So that's kind of the first part. And then our team is really, really good and really experienced, so we're going to engage in a strategic planning process that really, again, starts with the values and the mission of the organization, and then what are the things that we need to do in various buckets of the whole organization to reach mission, and then we'll write a -- within those 100 days we'll write a sort of strategic plan. We're not going to spend a ton of time making it perfect. We're just going to kind of prioritize our initiatives.

To be honest, there is so much momentum right now, it's not like our team has stopped during this transition. They've accomplished an incredible amount even during the transition, and they are very growth-minded. They keep growing. They keep doing new things.

And so some of it is just prioritizing all of those various initiatives and getting aligned around that prioritization.

By the end of the 100 days I think it's our plan to be able to have a template of, Okay, this is where we're going to put our energy or most of our energy. But again, we're going to keep doing what we do because it's been pretty successful.

**Q. You talked about listening and learning so much; what has surprised you most over these last few months as you have been going through that process?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: I think there's been a number of surprises. Again, most of them have been really positive. I think one of those surprises is how broad-based we are, sort of how far we reach into the world really, and that's been exciting, to meet people all around the globe and to sort of see the impact -- as I said before, sort of see how people at the highest level of industry, of corporate America, are focused on the LPGA and what we can do for the world. Not just golf or women's golf, but really how we can have a positive impact through sort of our women's leadership programs through the way that we talk about women's empowerment and equality.

So I think that's been a really pleasant surprise to see the passion amongst so many different people.

**Q. Dovetailing on what Beth Ann asked when you started the questions, what would you think the biggest challenge is going forward for the Tour?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: You know, I mean, I think it's always a challenge to continue to create the very best Tour schedule. I think that kind of -- from a -- sort of tips and fuels a lot of the ecosystem, so I think we have to just continue to put together the very best schedule that allows our women to make a great living at all levels of the LPGA specifically.

So continuing to grow sponsorships and partnerships and grow tournament purses. I think that's something people have been working on for a long time, and I think we're at a great moment to be able to do that. I think that continues to be something we have to focus on.

I think growing all of this at scale is always hard. I think we can reach in and provide more opportunities through golf. One student, one young girl, one young woman at a time, but how you scale that I think is challenging.

Again, how do we grow our resources to have the biggest impact, and those are things that will constantly be a challenge that we'll have to focus on all the time. I think that's probably front and center for me.

**Q. As you're going about building this 100-day plan, this strategic vision, what aspects of the Tour are you expecting to spend the most time on?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, I think, again, you have to spend a lot of time with our amazing sort of tournament team and our tournament partners to put the best schedule together. Mike has been really wonderful in his sort of education and mentorship, and we've talked a lot about that. I think that's kind of -- we want to make sure we've got a great plan out there and a great schedule. So I think we spent a lot of time there.

And again, I think we'll spend a lot of time on partnerships, sponsorships, spending a lot of time on our broadcasts and our technology. I see myself spending a lot of time there.

Again, I love building teams, so continuing to support our sort of human resources and our people so they can go out and do such a great job that they do, I would say that's probably where I'll spend the majority of my time.

And really excited about the work that the professionals do. Really excited about the foundation. Again, the Tour fuels a lot of that, but at the end of the day our mission is to allow girls and women to live their dreams through golf. How do we do that at different places.

I love the foundation work that we do. I love working with the amateurs. Obviously growing girls' golf and working with our partners on that.

It's a complex job and there's lots of things to do, and I think part of the strategic plan is to say, how do we prioritize things.

I'd like to spend my whole life doing each one of them, but I think we need to pick and choose; but also the beauty of it is we have a team that does all of this and we have a great team, so my job is to figure out how to support them in what they do.

**Q. I'm curious as to the conversations that you've had with Mike Whan as you've transitioned into this role. Is there any like piece of advice that really stuck out to you or anything like that?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, I mean, he's been phenomenal. It was interesting, we've been sort of ships passing in the night. Although he came up to New Jersey and I was still there, so we were only about 45 minutes away, so I had the chance to be able to meet with him in person a couple times. We had a home-and-home. I went to his place once and then he came down to mine, and we've had a number of conversations.

The greatest thing is it's so clear how much he cares. It wasn't really a job for him, it was a way of life, and so we kind of approach life in that same way.

We've had some nuts and bolts conversations sort of about the way things work, but also some strategic conversations, and he's really good at elevating to like, Hey, these are the most important things and this is how I approached things and this is how I do things.

But he just has been more like, Anything you need, let me know and I'm here for you and here for the organization. I texted him on my way here on the first day, just saying, you know, I'm commuting, and he said, You're going to hate the commute but you're going to love the people and you're going to love the job.

I think that's been kind of part just our dialogue. He sent me a great note yesterday. It's been really awesome to have him around still and to be able to lean on him.

**Q. You've had the opportunity to be at a few LPGA events, get a little bit of that experience and meet some people. What are some of those moments that have stood out to you and who's had that big impact on you that you've had an opportunity to meet?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, I mean, I think it's the sort of juxtaposition of this amazing athletic contest with the best athletes in the world competing with this idea that we're empowering women in different ways, sort of either leadership summits or inclusion seminars, and sort of the way that we are utilizing golf to, as I like to say, sort of have a positive impact on the world.

So that's been really fun to see. Obviously those are two things I care deeply about. It's like the actual competition inside the ropes, and seeing the women perform under such intense pressure in such a hard sport has been really inspiring.

And then again, to see kind of the action outside the ropes and to see all the things that are going on and all of the people who are having fun while they're there, too. I think I was driving around at Dow with the person who runs the event for Dow, and he was -- you know, big smile on his face. I'm like, This is what you get to do all the time, huh, this is what I get to do. This is pretty fun to be able to be in that world and to see the positive impact that we can have and the fun that people are having and the inspiration that people are having, and, again, how much people love what we do.

And also I think hearing from -- as I said before but I'll just

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

reiterate -- hearing from the CEOs of these major corporations on how important the LPGA is to them and to their company and to their mission and to their employees and how they're utilizing their support of us to kind of grow their initiatives directly from them. That's been pretty awesome.

**Q. As you now are only a couple days in but you're starting to get that sense of the mission at hand and some of the different items to tackle, what are you most excited about as you get ready? I know Solheim Cup is going to be your first official event as commissioner on the job. What are you excited about as we move forward? You talk a lot about optimism and positivity. What gives you a sense of that as you look ahead?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, I mean, again, we've been working together for a little while, but I think you know that I love those words, sort of gratitude and optimism are two of my favorite words because I think they fuel happiness and growth and all of that.

It feels like this is an amazing moment in time just where there's a lot of attention on women's sports. I think there's a lot of movement there. I think the media and sponsors and everyone is seeing that being engaged with women's sports is not just a good thing to do, but it's a really great investment, and that the world wants more content around women's sports and wants it to grow and wants women's sports to not just be seen as kind of "the other," that women's sports are what they are for the uniqueness of what we are and for the quality of the athleticism and what it represents about sort of what women's role in the world and in society.

I'm really excited because, listen, none of this is easy, but it feels like it's a great moment where people are really focused on women's sports, and I think there's been a lot of studies done to show the engagement that people have.

I know we all saw at the Olympics. I think some of the top athletes that had the most engagement were women, and the world is watching.

So that feels really exciting, and I think I'm really optimistic about that because I think it can then trickle down also and allow other people in the world to have the same experience.

I know Kelly, you know I talk a lot about the power of sports, and we'd like to believe able to give the gift of sports and the gift of golf to people all over the world and people who maybe haven't had opportunity before. Sort of open up this opportunity to as many young girls as possible

because we know it can change lives.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Thanks so much, Mollie, for the time, and thanks to our media for being on here. I know this is just the beginning of all of your introductions to Mollie, and we know we're going to look forward to the opportunities when Mollie is on-site and gets to actually meet some of you in person, and looking forward to an exciting stretch ahead as we have a major championship next week and then Solheim Cup and coming off the Olympics.

Appreciate as always all of your coverage. Thank you for taking the time today, and we look forward to seeing all of you very soon.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: The other thing is, too, I look forward to being at pretty much all of our events for the rest of the season in some way, so happy to engage when appropriate, starting with Solheim.

And then looking forward to that pretty exciting rest of -- the finality of the season and being able to be at all those events and continuing to learn.

KELLY SCHULTZ: Thanks, everyone.

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