

# LPGA Media Conference

Tuesday, October 5, 2021

USA

**Mollie Marcoux Samaan**

**Ed McEnroe**

**Al Williams**

Press Conference



CHRISTINA LANCE: Thank you for joining us. I'm Christina Lance with LPGA communications, and it's my pleasure to introduce our four panelists. We are joined by Mollie Marcoux Samaan, commissioner of the LPGA. Al Williams, vice president of corporate affairs for Chevron; Ed McEnroe, senior vice president for IMG; and Alyssa Randolph, a championship director with IMG.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Thank you for joining us today. I am just so thrilled to be here today to welcome Chevron to the LPGA family, and to announce that Chevron will be the new title partner of our first major of the year, which will now be called the Chevron Championship.

We could not be more excited about this news. I obviously want to thank ANA for their dedicated support for the past seven years, and I continue to look to have them involved for the coming year.

This partnership will be a game-changer for the LPGA in so many ways. It will allow us to elevate this major championship to new heights. Specifically, the championship is going to feature a \$5 million purse, which is 60 percent more than it has been.

It will allow us to have a dedicated commitment to network coverage. We'll play at a great course that will allow for tremendous fan engagement, and really it will focus on the player experience, and we're confident that it will have an amazing player experience for all of the participants. We are going to talk a little bit more about the ways that we'll also honor the history and tradition of this fantastic and really critical major for us.

Partnering with a global brand that's passionate about elevating women and using the LPGA as a platform to highlight the values we hold so dear - of diversity and inclusion and an opportunity to work with us to empower future leaders.

The other thing we are really excited about is that Chevron

intends in every way to use this event to continue to offer charitable and community engagement with their employees and with a broad group of the community. So that's something that's obviously hugely important for us, and we are really excited about that.

Then they are also forming a Player Advisory Council to ensure that, again, the player is at the center of this major but also we will work together to honor the history and tradition of this event and build really new, exciting traditions moving forward. Again, we are super grateful and really excited about this announcement today and look forward to answering any of the questions that you have.

THE MODERATOR: Al, thank you to you for your support of our amazing athletes. What are your thoughts on today's news and the partnership?

AL WILLIAMS: I want to echo Mollie, that Chevron is excited about this opportunity to partner with the LPGA and IMG.

You know for us, we see this new relationship as an opportunity to reflect on our shared values, as Mollie mentioned. With that we see where we will be showcasing our partnerships, promoting education and advancing women's excellence which is important for the LPGA as well. Having played sports myself, when I think about the LPGA and its talented players, it requires a high level of energy to compete among the best and win as they do. At Chevron, we have over 40,000 globally and 8,000 employees based in the Houston area alone, and we look forward to partnering with the LPGA and IMG, and with this combination, and our drive, we are excited about the access and opportunities the Chevron Championship will present for the players, the Tour, our employees, our partners, our customers and the community.

The LPGA board, the Commissioner, the players and IMG, they have demonstrated their commitment to showcasing excellence on and off the course and Chevron looks forward to partnering with them in their next chapter of growth, impact, and achievement. So thank you. We are excited about the future.

CHRISTINA LANCE: Thank you so much, Al. And again thank you for this amazing support. We are excited about the future, too.



Now we will turn things over to Ed. I know there are some additional details that will add this championship to new heights. Can you elaborate on what we will see the next few years at the Chevron Championship?

ED McENROE: Thank you, it's great to be with you, and certainly on behalf of IMG, we are honored to be part of this outstanding announcement. To this date, it's been an absolutely amazing process with Chevron.

I mean, once ANA indicated their interest in exiting their title position before the end of the term, we were lucky enough to begin those discussions with Chevron almost immediately. To be able to announce the incoming title sponsor as such a valued partner is exiting is fortunate and allowed us to secure the partnership.

AI touched on it but Chevron, literally from the moment we started talking about this championship together, it was very clear that they not only had a shared vision for elevating the championship and advancing Dinah Shore and David Foster's vision, but the depth of their experience, and quite honestly, their passion for advancing D&I and their women's initiative, youth development and programs that make a meaningful impact in communities they serve all around the world. It's going to lead to remarkable things for this championship and it very well positions us to carry forward the founders original vision.

Mollie touched on the purse increase and the commitment to showcasing the championship by way of network television. I honestly feel like we are just scratching the surface with the advancement of the Player Advisory Council, and other initiatives. They are going to initiate year-round community and philanthropic initiatives that's going to make a major impact on our host community and they have intent of enhancing experiences for all and introducing more girls to the sport.

As AI mentioned, with 40,000 employees worldwide and 8,000 in Houston, we have got quite a nucleus of folks that are going to help advance that mission. Look, a massive thank-you to AI and everybody at Chevron. We really cannot wait for this impactful work to begin.

As we pass the baton over to Chevron, I want to say a huge thanks to ANA. They've been an incredible partner for the last seven years and certainly the last two. The pandemic has had a devastating effect on their business, and they have always looked out for the best interests of the championship and all that it stands for, so a big thank-you to them.

As Mollie touched on, we'll move the championship to a

new host site in 2023. We are going to announce that in the coming months. I think in working with Chevron and the LPGA together, we are taking the proper time on this. We have got to get this right. Mission Hills, their leadership and their membership, they have been an amazing partner, as has the City of Rancho Mirage, and the golf course has obviously contributed to so many iconic moments over the years.

There's just an awful lot to consider. I mean, obviously first and foremost, it's got to be a major-championship caliber golf course and if you look at things like weather windows, player travel flow, network dates, competitive landscape both as it relates to TV and the local host community, and as you know, Augusta National Women's Amateur has been the same weekend our championship weekend. We know these two incredible, incredible events for women in sport deserve their own stage.

So we are working very, very hard with Chevron and the LPGA to find our future home and dates, likely in Houston, which by the way has an amazing track record in hosting and supporting world-class golf tournaments. So more to come on that in the coming months. But in the short term, our absolute focus is on making sure the next ANA Inspiration, March 31-April 3 is truly a fitting final celebration for what will be 51 years of incredible history, fantastic golf drama and wonderful partnerships in Rancho Mirage.

A heartfelt thank-you to Mission Hills, Rancho Mirage, thousands of volunteers who have contributed over the years and our partners and community leaders there who have really championed this event's growth over the years. We are looking forward to celebrating our collective achievements at the 2022 Chevron Championship. We look forward to an absolutely fantastic future ahead with Chevron and the team.

CHRISTINA LANCE: Thank you, we appreciate all the support and partnership from IMG. Thank you again to AI and Mollie.

**Q. Mollie, since I don't have some of the details and those will come later, I'm curious how difficult a conversation that was with your membership in terms of leaving behind palm trees and history and Poppy's Pond and all the tradition that you had at ram.**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: We have just gotten the word out to our players. We have obviously had conversations leading up to it. We have been working hard to finalize this deal and we are going to have a conversation with the players tonight.



But overall, the response that we received so far has been very positive. Obviously the history and the traditions at Mission Hills and the partnership there are very important to all of us and to everyone.

So we have talked through that and again, overall, the response has been extremely positive. I think people know that this is an opportunity for us to sustain this major moving into the future, build new traditions, still honor the past and honor the great work that's been done.

But again, I think everyone realizes that this takes us to a whole different level. And again, we are going to work really hard. I think the one thing I have been so impressed by is just Al and his team's commitment to honoring that history and that tradition. But for the reasons that Ed mentioned and Al mentioned, we think that this is the right move for us in the future.

But today, we sent the note out and I have gotten a lot of fantastic responses from various players.

**Q. Curious what involvement -- Chevron has had big involvement in golf and frankly I'm not sure what exactly it's been, USGA stuff, Open stuff, etc., but what was the importance of taking on a title sponsorship for the first time since Tiger's event with the LPGA?**

AL WILLIAMS: For this particular one, as you heard Mollie mention, and I mentioned, what makes this so unique is the alignment between our core values, and really where we want to continue to actually carry on the mission of the Dinah Shore event was established for and that's really to empower women. That's something that we have as a value of ours around diversity and inclusion, and that's something that we saw as an opportunity to be able to do it in a place where we have the largest concentration of our work force, and really truly be able to have them be part of such a unique event that really showcases women.

And that's really what motivated us and that's what we see as an opportunity to not only showcase the women's excellence, but to expand our role we play in the community and how we give back to the community. As all of us know, we cannot overemphasize the importance of getting children, women and others to go into science, technology, engineering and math, and so it's an area where we have a heavy focus as a company and we think that it's an area that it can benefit the community as well as continue to advance the cause of the LPGA as well.

**Q. Will Dinah have mention or part of the tournament going forward?**

AL WILLIAMS: That's part of the work we still have to do

as Mollie indicated and that's what you've got, the players advisory committee along with the other committees. We want to make sure that we are paying the appropriate respect to the founders but at the same time recognizing we want to continue to do the work that they have set out with the intent when they originally established the tournament. That's part of the work we have ahead of us is to see how best to do that.

ED McENROE: If I can quickly jump in as well. Melissa Montgomery, Dinah's daughter, has been a fantastic sounding board for us over the years and she will continue to be. We have every intention of staying in line with the history and tradition and the values of the founders; so absolutely on our forefront.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Al mentioned something yesterday that was sort of perfect, sort of like taking the vision and moving it into the future, and certainly valuing that.

I think as this process has gone, I think Ed is keeping a list of all the ways and the great traditions and how we continue to move some of those forward. So it's hugely important to all of us.

**Q. I feel like I'm asking more questions than Christina now. Do you still expect this to be the first major of the year?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yes.

**Q. I'll hang up and listen, I swear.**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Thanks, Doug.

**Q. Are there any frontrunners as to location? I heard the Houston area. Is there any idea of where specifically it will be and if there is a pond?**

ED McENROE: It's a great question. Look, we are taking our time on this. We have got to make the right decision and it's a collective decision. It's Chevron and the LPGA here. You know, the golf course caliber has got to be major championship.

You know, it's got to work well for so many of those other things that we talked about, right, from weather to travel flow, network windows, what kind of experience can we create within that golf course, not just from an infrastructure standpoint but for volunteers and media and all fans and if we are in Houston, the Chevron employee base is going to be important for us because I think they are going to be a critical player in helping us really build the community equity that's so important for this -- for this

championship.

So bear with us. We are working hard but it's going to take a little bit of time to figure that through.

**Q. In reference to the jump into the pond, the limited feedback that you have gotten from players, is that something that people brought up at all or was it not front of mind?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: No, listen, I think for the players, tradition is important and being a part of something bigger than yourself is what the LPGA has been about for 71 years. That's something I know personally I always look forward to. Yes, people have brought that up, but again, I think recognizing that we are moving into new heights here for the LPGA, for women's sports, for women's leadership, for this tremendous partnership with such an amazing company.

CHRISTINA LANCE: Mollie, I know we've talked with several players who are excited about the move. What's the general tenor of the players as we make these next steps in the life of the championship?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: We've talked about it a little bit. They are thrilled obviously with the purse as you can imagine, but also the commitment to them and our history and to really their talent, and AI mentioned that; I always talk about the tremendous talent of our players. If you watch them, I had the pleasure of playing in a Pro-Am on Monday, and you know, they are just remarkable athletes, and so having an event that really is representative of that talent; and as AI said, the human energy and human performance required to compete at such a high level under such pressure.

So I think they want all of our events to continue to understand that and respect them, you know, for the tremendous athletes and leaders that they are. So again, everyone has different thoughts on moving things forward but that's why the player advisory board is in place and we are an organization that likes to get feedback.

I've spoken to some of our former players, some of our current players, and you've gotten some quotes, Christina, I know that you've put out there and they are talking a little bit more specifically about their ideas and thoughts.

**Q. At what point in the process of you coming on board with the LPGA did you first learn about Chevron being in the mix and what your initial reaction was?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, the conversations had started before I came on but I got up to speed really

quickly. I just will also say that our team and Ed's team and AI's team, the partnership has already started and started long before the agreement was signed; the way that everybody approached it, I was super impressed by the open-mindedness and hearing everybody's ideas and thoughts. They had already started and we have all just worked together moving forward from there.

**Q. Curious as you absorb all of these fast-moving parts of taking on this new role, how significant have you discovered that the scheduling and the sponsorships are to kind of unify all of the other responsibilities on your plate?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: The schedule is what our product is. You have to get the schedule right for so many different reasons. I would say Mike Whan gave me that advice when I first took the job. Focus on that schedule and make sure that you have the most robust and really, for me, what I've been thinking about, is the sort of player-centered approach to the schedule. You know, where they have to travel, how they move from -- I think as AI mentioned, how they move from location to location, what the experience is like when they are at the tournament. These are high-level athletes who need an environment, the most conducive environment to reach peak performance.

So having partners that understand that, which is really important which we have a ton of them. I would say the other big impression that I have is that people love the LPGA and really want us to be successful and want our athletes to be successful. This is just another example of that at a very high level. But the schedule is really key. That is what we do at the Tour. We produce an opportunity for women to live their dreams through golf and we want the very best possible schedule for them.

**Q. I can just imagine due to all of the sponsors and obligations you have how tricky maintaining a schedule that makes sense is, but as you've gotten your feet wet, I know you had said in a previous conference that listening is going to be a big part of your first steps in this role. What are the other things outside of the schedule and sponsors that you've come to realize are also very significant especially in 2021?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: We have an amazing and remarkable team and group of partners. I have broken it down to players, partner, professionals and people, and you know, so I have been going around and listening to as many people as I possibly can, in those areas and in particular listening to our players.

I've had a number of one-on-one meetings where they talk about what I just mentioned before, their experience and they are so positive and grateful. But they have good ideas. 'This would make our lives a little easier', or 'have we thought about this?'. And really they feel like, first of all, they own the Tour. They are the Tour.

So listening to them has been really great for me, and they have already given me a bunch of really good ideas. So I think focusing on that player experience, focusing on getting the very best partners and focusing on that player experience is critical.

Also, just what are other revenue sources for us to be able to elevate the whole organization to the next level? So trying to be as creative as possible.

And then lastly I would say, how do we get -- and that's part of this event, too, --how do we let the world see our amazing athletes? How do we get more exposure for them using the new media and assets that we have to tell our story, because you would be amazed at how remarkable -- you all know that but how remarkable our athletes are, and getting their stories out that are inspirational.

Golf is a hard game and requires a tremendous amount of talent, discipline, sort of ability to get knocked down and get back up again on a week-to-week basis. I think telling their stories really inspires and is inspirational, so how can we do more of that?

CHRISTINA LANCE: Mollie and Al, thank you so much. Any of you have any final comments you'd like to make?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Just we are really excited and appreciate everybody's engagement, Al, Ed, Andre, the whole team, thank you very much.

AL WILLIAMS: Thank you.

CHRISTINA LANCE: Great, thank you all, everyone, we really appreciate your time. A reminder we will have the transcript off to you all as soon as we can get it back from the lovely Renee who has been typing away. Thank you all and we'll see you down the road.

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