

Dana Open presented by Marathon

Sunday, September 4, 2022

Sylvania, Ohio, USA

Highland Meadows Golf Club

Gaby Lopez

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: I am pleased to welcome the champion the 2022 Dana Open presented by Marathon. I know there is a lot of people who are looking to talk to you, but I just want to know what was the mindset like as you got ready for today's round?

GABY LOPEZ: Well, today, this week in general, has been just very different than any other week on tour.

I pretty much reset my whole kind of mental game. Spent sometime with one of my coaches, Stephen, and we had a great time Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

So, yeah, it's been basically just creating more quiet moments and quiet spaces out there so I can flow a little bit more.

THE MODERATOR: When did you really start to feel the momentum pick up?

GABY LOPEZ: Probably after 14, I think. We made that birdie putt and I stayed calm. I did fist pump because I do a lot of fist pumps, but I stayed calm and I knew that we had a chance.

That's all I wanted. I just wanted a chance. I was hitting such amazing shots into the greens all day long. I miss couple six-footers for birdie.

So, yeah, I just me caddie was, Hey, stay patient, stay in the moment. We're not done yet.

THE MODERATOR: Walk me through the last three holes.

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, we hit a great drive on 16 and I hit it to two feet, my second shot.

Then on 17 I knew it's so easy to get ahead of yourself because you have two par-5s and birdie opportunities. So, yeah, I tried to just break it down to one shot at a time.

Hit a great 3-wood into a bunker and almost made it from the bunker on 17.

18 I had probably the best drive all week. Didn't hit a great bunker shot on my third shot, but I was standing over the last putt and I told myself, this is exactly what I worked for, this is exactly what I trained for.

So, yeah, I'm really happy that it paid off.

THE MODERATOR: Was going to ask before I open it up, that final putt, it was much needed. It was the putt that would've broken any tie. When you look at that particular moment, what was going through your mind?

GABY LOPEZ: I knew I had to make it. I knew I had to made it because Megan was putting beautifully. She just got on a roll as well and a couple birdies.

So I told myself, well, I'm just going to try to roll it through here. If it rolls through this putt, it has a great chance.

And so I tried to be calm all day long, but sometimes excitement gets me and I couldn't hold it for the last putt.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You began the day outside the top 10 and there were I think around 20 people within five shots of the lead. Did you come out with an aggressive mindset knowing it would take something pretty low to have a shot?

GABY LOPEZ: More than aggressive mindset. I guess more of a quiet mindset. Yeah, I mean, I knew I had to make a lot of birdies to give myself a chance.

I knew with all the names on the leaderboard, with Lexi and Nasa and Hannah, so many girls that I know that can really go low on a Sunday, I just told myself, if I just try to break it down, block it block by block and box by box and shot by shot and process by process, if I do that, then we have a greater chance.

Q. You and Megan both went really low today. Did



you feed off each other playing in the same group?

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, I mean, when you see some putts rolling it's easier to visualize putts rolling into the cup. I tried to do that. We kept a great sportsmanship out there. She's a great girl. She's going to win very soon.

But, yeah, you know, I was lucky that it went my way.

Q. When the conditions are as they were, I mean, soft greens, which is at the same time sloppy out there. How do you make it through?

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, I didn't have the best warmup honestly. It was raining and I had to put my pants on and jacket on, on and off, and I really was struggling at the beginning just getting comfortable.

But walking up to 1 I told myself, like, okay, I'm going to make these conditions comfortable for me. Like if I just embrace this moment, if I like the rain, if I like the challenge, if I like the gray sky, then you're just going to feel more comfortable over the ball, and as a consequence, just hitting greater shots.

Q. Is that something you do frequently?

GABY LOPEZ: Honestly, I really like the tough conditions. I think that gives me more focus. Not every day is the same. Sometimes you just got to fight a little harder mentally than other days.

Yeah, just being able to know exactly how I perform my best on the course, like getting to know myself and getting to know that inner Gaby and making her her best friend, I think that was the takeaway today.

Q. You mentioned you've been working on your game for eight months. What in particular made you win the golf tournament today?

GABY LOPEZ: Honestly, I was very surprised how the year has been, because I have hit it the best I've ever hit it in my life through this year, but I just couldn't connect it.

I was struggling sometimes on my driver and sometimes on my putting and sometimes on my iron shots, but I felt that I was hitting it really, really close the last couple months, and I was very, very frustrated that I couldn't connect it.

Yeah, this week I've been able to just kind of quiet my mind and take it one breath at a time, made it connect everything.

Q. You said mental block today in this press conference. How huge is that for you?

GABY LOPEZ: You know, sometimes the biggest win is not winning over the field, it's winning against yourself and getting out of the way. To me, it's overcoming those fears, overcoming those battles, those doubts, because sometimes you don't believe in yourself when you're in a hard stretch, right?

So I think that's the biggest win. Being able to recover myself from two injuries I had at the beginning of the year and that sets you back, and you start doubting even more if you can come back from an injury, if you can come back with more speed and consistency.

So I'll take the win over my fears, over any other.

Q. You mentioned your grandmother.

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, my grandmother, she's pretty much my guide. She guides me through life, guides me to God. I've been in touch with her a lot this year, more than any other because I felt that I was overthinking and down on myself too much.

She always told me, you know, that everything is inside of us. If we start looking for everything outside, then we're not going to hit the jackpot. We really got to just have true, honest conversations, even if we don't like them.

So, yeah, she encouraged me to journal, to kind of stay closer to God.

Q. I was talking to your host family. They told me the story about last night. I think during the football games you were helping unload the dishwasher and you took out a silver vase and kind of held it up as the trophy. What do you remember about that?

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, so I was helping Steph getting everything out of the dishwasher, and all of a sudden I saw this exactly the same trophy as today. Like I think it's probably, I don't know, where you put flowers, right? I told them, oh, my gosh it looks exactly like the trophy for tomorrow.

She said, well you should practice. I held it and I was like, okay. And honestly, you see when -- that's when the mind gets really, really interesting. When you see yourself a little bit where you want to be and you see yourself ahead, it doesn't come as a surprise as much probably.

So, yeah, the power of mind is pretty much everything in this game.

Q. What did you think of the football games?

GABY LOPEZ: Well, I'm really proud of my Razorbacks. Yeah, I'm just really happy that we can get more Hogs wins.

Q. Congratulations, Gaby. You said something to Golf Channel about staying on the couch or something with the couch. I've got to know what that's all about.

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, I've been working with Steven Yellin and the Fluid Motion Factor for eight years now. He came to Highland Meadows Golf Club this week for three days. Basically we just reset my mind. We tried to stay more quiet, patient, get rid of all the drama.

Because I guess sometimes we expect perfection and we are very, very mad when we miss a shot.

So just getting out of -- rid of the drama and the reactions just really helped.

Q. So where does the couch come in? Is it like you're in therapy on the couch?

GABY LOPEZ: Well, the couch comes from this story that -- well, he has to tell you better than I can tell you, but basically if you stay on the couch and you don't get ahead of yourself, then everything comes to you and you don't have to chase anything.

So it's pretty much letting everything come, staying comfortable, sitting instead of going and rushing everything.

Q. Oh. I like that idea. My next just follow-up question is can you give us the brief version of your two injuries?

GABY LOPEZ: Yes. March of 2022 I had a neck injury. I had a tear in a ligament on my interspinal ligament and I had to stop. I had to withdraw from a couple tournaments.

I was really in pain. I played LA with pain, and then I withdrew and then I had a tendonitis in my left wrist. I was really in a lot of pain at the U.S. Open.

So, yeah, I just felt like nothing was really clicking for me over the year. I was struggling physically, struggling mentally, and that's where the doubts and fears come from.

You just got to keep it real and accept where you are and just got to surround yourself with great people around you.

Q. Any idea how the first injury happened? Was it hitting a shot?

GABY LOPEZ: No. It was jumping. I'm really extreme. I'm all or nothing, right? So I did this kind of just squat jump and I was going to try to touch the ceiling, and when I did it was a whiplash movement and I just tear my ligament on my neck. Yeah, it wasn't fun.

Q. Yikes. Thank you. I appreciate it.

GABY LOPEZ: Thank you.

Q. You talked about the mental resets that you have been having, but you're driving it now straighter that I can point. Is there anything you have done mechanically in your golf swing to turn the driver around?

GABY LOPEZ: Yes, I didn't hit a lot of fairways early in the season and I was -- to me, I always think that my driver has been my strength, and my putting. And this year I have drove it terribly for so many tournaments.

Just trying to get more tempo on my backswing and not rush it back. That just got me more coordination and getting more inside of the club face on impact.

Q. And for those of us watching on television, you immediately, once you found out you won, got on a FaceTime with somebody. Who was that?

GABY LOPEZ: My boyfriend, Santi. Yeah, he was crying. He's been my rock. He's got me through hard times. Can't tell you how many times I've cried next to him and he's just been holding my hand and telling me everything is going to be fine, as much as we learn from every mistake we make.

Q. Thank you.

GABY LOPEZ: Thank you.

Q. After your round you and Megan exchanged a moment. High fives and hugs. What was said between you guys after the round today?

GABY LOPEZ: To Megan?

Q. Yeah.

GABY LOPEZ: Oh, yeah, she came up to me and she was like, she said, you're a rock star. You just pulled this off, an amazing putt to win.

I think we just had a great time out there. We were rally

embracing each other's great shots. I feel when you keep the energy light, positive, it comes back to you. In life and everything, what you give is what you receive.

So I was really cheering for the good shots we were making in the group.

THE MODERATOR: I know we mentioned it a little bit; I know you were just talking about it in Spanish, but you mentioned on the green your grandmother's name and the town that we're playing in.

Do you mind sharing what the connection is there?

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, sure. So we're playing in Sylvania, and my grandmother's name is Vania, so it's so funny, because she told my mom at the beginning of the week, oh, she's going to win because it's Sylvania and I'm Vania. So it's just probably the greatest coincidence, because this win definitely goes to her. She is my guide through life and to God, and I'm super thankful that I still have her. I'm going to share with her this.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. Thank you, Gaby for joining, and congratulations.

GABY LOPEZ: Thank you.

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