

ShopRite LPGA Classic

Presented by Acer

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Galloway, New Jersey, USA

Seaview, A Dolce Hotel

Meaghan Francella

Press Conference



MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: (In progress.) Spent all winter in Florida so I was hitting balls all winter this year. Last year I didn't hit balls for like five months, so I feel definitely more ready from a ball striking standpoint.

I would say I haven't got as much time to practice as I would've liked in the last few weeks. Number one, the weather has not been great with all the rain. And two, when I got back, I've had people calling since February to book lessons, so I've been fully booked since I started teaching on the 20th of April.

Also my body needed a little bit of a break, which I needed to listen to. I feel. I'll be ready in three weeks. I'm not concerned about that. I'm starting to really hit the go button now and just kind of grind it out.

You know, I'm not obviously playing every week like everybody else is competing every week, but I'm doing the best I can with the time that I have. You know, I don't do this full time anymore, which I know, and my expectations aren't like they used to be, which is good.

Q. What is a realistic way to approach that week? Obviously if play really well you could -- you know. But what is a realistic expectation for you?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: I think realistically I want to have fun. That's number one. That's really the goal. Like, I mean, I'm 41. I'm not going to be doing this for a lot longer. Who knows how many LPGA events I'll get in moving forward, if I even want to get in any LPGA events moving forward.

I still have a chance to qualify for KPMG next season. I will still try to do that, but my playing days are probably come to do a close here in the next few years and I want to just enjoy myself.

Realistically I know I can still compete. I proved it last year. I came out, shot 68 the first round last year and then my expectation level went through the roof.

So I know I can do it. Obviously you don't enter a tournament unless you think you can compete and win. I'm going to do my best to prepare and win, but realistically I want to go out and play well and represent myself and the club well.

Those are probably my expectations I would have.

Q. What's it like for your family and friends?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Oh, my God, they love it. They love it. I mean, I think I've given out at least 50 tickets already and had to get more. My mom said, well, can I come up on Monday? I'm like, well why don't you come Wednesday? The tournament doesn't start until Friday. She goes, this is vacation. I'm like, it's not vacation for me. This is work.

So, you know, my family loves it. My cousins are coming down from New York. Again, I have so many members that are so supportive that are coming down to watch, which is great.

And then, you know, they love it. They're all talking about it at the club. How can we get you ready? What kind of matches do you want to play leading up? People are stopping me on the range when I'm hitting balls, how you feeling? Everybody is super invested in it, which is great.

Q. How do you prioritize your practice time since it is somewhat limited? What do you focus on?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, that's a really good question. So I've been trying to do a lot of short game and putting because that's what generally goes first. I didn't -- to be honest, I didn't do a lot of short game and putting in Florida because of bermudagrass. There is no point for me to really do that.

So I've been focusing a lot when I have 20 or 30 minutes to go to the short game area. It's really the basic chips and pitches that I haven't practiced a lot. So that is what I'm focusing my time on.



Ball striking-wise, that usually comes back pretty quickly if I'm doing it every day. If I have 20 minutes I'll go hit some balls for 20 minutes. Then if I have a good bulk of time I'm doing short game. I did that all day yesterday.

Q. How important is it for you to have the support of your members? You're taking a week off to do this in the middle of the golf season. Obviously you have support.

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, our club and anybody that knows Philly Cricket, it's a group of really good players that pride themselves on competition. Somebody I teach right now Izzy, she's playing out -- she just played the Four-Ball, USGA Four-Ball out in Seattle. She was semis of the Mid-Am last year. We have people playing in a gap Mid-Am.

I mean, a bunch my students have qualified for that. They understand competition so they're very supportive and they also know it's not -- Meaghan is not going to win every time she goes out and tees it up. It's hard.

They know and understand that it's a grind and that it is hard, and that's great. Our golf IQ is so high at Cricket that they understand what it's like to compete, which is nice to have that support, and they understand what happens during a tournament week.

Q. What is it about this tournament? Is it the location, like it's close to Philly?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yep. Yeah.

Q. Is that it? Or something else about this tournament that attracts you or brings you here?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: It's as close to home as I can get. It's two and a half hours from my hometown and hour from where I work. Also, I probably can't compete on the longer golf courses as well anymore and this golf course, you know, you have to hit it straight. It's not super long.

Physically the walk is not that bad. So there are a lot of factors that go in my favor there. Smaller greens. So if you hit the middle of the green you have a 20-footer. It plays to my strengths for sure.

So I think that's an attractive quality. I've always loved this tournament. It's just my family always came to it. It's really close to home.

Again, now in Philly, it's just -- Philly feels like home now. I really love Philly. So it's just nice. My members at Cricket

have not seen me play on the LPGA before. They're super excited about it, which is -- which I'm really happy about.

Q. You said this was one of your favorite tournaments to come back to. The tagline is A Shore Tradition. For me there is a lot of tradition. Like you said, your family and different aspects like that, but also like places I would like to go to or restaurants.

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah.

Q. Is there anything that like in the local area that is a tradition for you?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, Chef Vola's, Italian place in Atlantic City that I'm lucky that one of my --

Q. How do you get in?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: One of my students is best friends with the owner, so I just send him a text and I get the reservation. Juli Inkster used to make a note on her calendar to call like six weeks ahead of time to get a reservation there. We go to the seafood place down the street. I can't remember the name of it.

But we go there every year. Morgan and I, we went there last year for dinner and Grant Boone is already texting about going to get ice cream this week during this tournament week.

You have your routines. Generally stay in the villas back there, which I'm doing again.

Yeah, it's good to catch up with everybody, and it's a three-day event, so you kind of have that whole week.

Q. KPMG is coming up in a few weeks. What does it mean to the teaching side of the industry that you've got teaching professionals playing in that event and showing the public what they're about?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, last year -- I didn't qualify this year unfortunately. I missed by two in July and doubled the 17th hole in February to miss by one, so stings still a little bit.

But from a teaching perspective, to be able to be part of that event and for KPMG to have us and give us eight spots for that event, it's really incredible.

And the teachers, I mean, we can still play. I mean, obviously that's not our main focus anymore, but, I mean, a lot of teachers that have -- that are competing and playing in these events have played professionally. Sandra,

myself. Stephanie Connelly, Joanna Coe. We all played professionally at some point, either being on the LPGA or Symetra.

It's just nice to have that opportunity to still get back and play.

Q. What's does it mean to represent not only Philly Cricket Club, but also local women's golf?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, I mean, I'm honored to be part of Cricket Club. I mean, I told somebody last week I think it's the greatest place in the world. I mean, you can't appreciate it until you go somewhere else. I've been to so many clubs around the country and Cricket -- just from a membership standpoint the staff is incredible. Jim Smith is the greatest boss.

I've had two guys that I have worked for in my life that have been just truly incredible people, and one was John Kennedy at Westchester Country Club and the other is Jim Smith. You know, and there is a guy, Phil Owenby that I worked for at Dormie Network that was another one of those guys.

They just put great staff together, and the camaraderie at work, you want to walk into work every day. And the women's golf is getting so big, especially in the Philly area. It's incredible between all the W-gap stuff with Merion and Aronimink and Cricket. Being a female golfer is not easy. I don't know if you guys saw that video last week. I think Hally Leadbetter did it with an all women's club. Like you walk in, oh, sir, your shorts are too short. I'm sorry, you have to go in the pro shop and change.

Or oh, that's the women's -- oh, no that's the women's grille. You're not allowed in there. It's such an accurate representation of how golf has been for so long. I think it's changing. I love being a female professional golfer.

And my juniors, I teach a handful of juniors, and I teach this one junior girl that is, I want to go to Stanford and play golf. So just being able to kind of mentor kids, too, is a lot of fun.

The women that I teach look to me for advice on competition. I was sending emails like, okay, you're playing in the rain this week. Make sure you put your golf gloves in a Ziploc bag. They're like, oh, my god. Just little things like that to help. I really enjoy it. Whatever I do, I do it a 100%.

You know, representing Cricket is -- I'm super proud to wear the logo and be here and play and represent and have everybody watch. It will be fun.

Q. Are there things that you learned or discovered through teaching about golf that you didn't know about how you feel about golf or just the sport?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, I think I was telling Brynn before, like I wish -- or maybe it was Suzanna -- I would be a much better player ten years ago if I taught and caddied first. I feel like I look at it differently. I know a lot more about the swing. Feel like I would be able to help myself more on the road instead of call my coach in a panic.

I'd be able to fix myself a little bit. My coach was more of a crutch at times, which I try and not do that with my students. I was the type of player that didn't want a lot of information so the less the better for me.

But knowing what I know now, I mean, it's just -- I feel like I'm such a better player. Like, I mean, I think about things so much differently now. I can't really describe it. It's just more of the process I think.

You know, like I said up there, I tell people what to do all day, so I have to practice what I'm telling them. I have to actually do it. When I'm out there chipping I tell them, you have to have intent and you have to pick a target to chip to and you have to have a landing spot. Well, I catch myself when I'm practicing not doing that.

I'm trying to focus on what I'm telling people to do and I have to put it in play.

Q. Professional players, touring players, are they prone to trying to shut out kind of expanding their knowledge about golf because they know what they do really well and just stick to what they do really well? Or are you always trying to expand that knowledge base as you're growing as a player?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, I think you can always learn. I mean, for instance, I teach with Martin Hall down in Florida in the winter, and Martin is one of the smartest people I know, one of the best instructors in the world. And the one thing I love about him is he's constantly learning. I think as a player you can constantly learn.

I played with Karrie Webb over the winter and we were playing in Seminole and she had in 50-yard bunker shot and she's maybe one of the best bunker players to play, to ever play.

She hit this shot and I'm like, Webby, I've never seen you hit that shot. She goes, I just learned it last week from one of my scholarship girls, one of the girls that she was playing with. I go, wait, what? You learned that from some

20 year old kid? She was like, yeah, it was the greatest shot. I had to practice it but I think I got it now.

So you have a Hall of Famer like Karrie Webb still learning at -- she would kill me -- but at age whatever she is, 48.

She's still learning and growing as a player. I think you're always continuing to learn and grow as a player, and I'm still continuing to go grow as a teacher and I'm never going to stop learning.

Yeah, I think people that have one way of doing things and this works, I'm not going to do anything else -- I use the example of clinics. When I'm teaching these clinics, it's like how many of you are a one clubber? Grab the sand wedge. That's all they chip with.

You have to be able to use every single club in about your bag. Until you learn how to do that, you're not going to be the best player. So I'm big on learning and education. I think it's super important.

Q. So when I first played at the ShopRite I had all the local fans. Like you have way more, but I had some. I struggled to not get distracted by all the people out there but then still be grateful they came out to watch.

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah.

Q. You had such a hot start last year.

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah.

Q. You had to have a pretty good way the balancing it, but you also have a different expectation now. You want to go out there and have fun. How do you balance the two between enjoying it and then focusing on golf?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Well, it's hard, because my number one job is customer service at the club, so I'm a -- customer service membership is my number one priority. It's hard to balance that being inside the ropes and getting off the golf course and having 200 text messages after I shoot 68 and I'm responding to every single one and they're responding back.

So it's hard. But, again, if I were doing it for a living, you know, I would have a hard time balancing that if that were weekly. But because of what it is now, it's just nice to have the support. But it did get a little overwhelming last year.

I wouldn't want it any other way. Everybody is invested in it and it makes me feel fulfilled that everybody wants to see me do well. They had so much fun.

The other thing is people want to feel like they're part of it, and if I can give them that to feel part of it and feel connected to me in some way inside the ropes, like for me to send the text back and say thank you so much for your text, oh, my God I didn't think you would respond. Of course. You come to me ever Friday at 11:00. Of course I'm going to respond to you. You invest in your game you're investing in me, like I'm investing back in you.

But it is hard to balance at times. I do my best, the best I can. Again, at the end of the day I'm still in a customer service role as an employee at the club.

Q. As a player does it fire you up and fuel you when you have fans supporting you? Does that make you go play better?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, I like when people watch and come out. It's fun. Makes me focus a little more. And then I played so well last year and it was -- everybody is talking about it at the club and Jim is sending stuff out at the club. I'm like, all right, we didn't win the tournament yet. Like let's relax.

But everybody was super excited about it. I'm grateful I get to do what I do. I'm grateful I still get to compete a little bit, too.

But at the end of the day, my full-time job is teaching, and I got to make sure I remember that when I'm out there, too. I'm not quitting my day job.

Q. What does this event mean in particular to you in your career?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: You know, like I said, it was just like a local event. It was a hometown -- felt like it was a home field one for me.

I think being able to be here and play and have family come, you know, it's just really important for me. I stopped playing for so long, and for people to come back and see it, it's funny. Like my -- we had a lot of family friends that came to this event and went to Atlantic City and gambled ever time I played, so they loved it.

One guy that was part of the crew has since passed away and my uncle is not doing 100% right now, so they won't be here obviously. We'll have part of the crew here, and obviously my mom is going to come up.

It means a lot to my family, my friends, to have me back inside the ropes.

