

# Pelican Women's Championship

Tuesday, November 8, 2022

Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

**Annika Sorenstam**

**Dan Towriss**

**Dan Doyle, Jr.**

**Marci Doyle**

**Mollie Marcoux Samaan**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the Pelican Women's Championship press conference for 2022, and also, as you can see up behind our panelists, talking about 2023 with the Annika Driven by Gainbridge at Pelican.

I'm going to start with introducing our panelists. On the left, Marci Doyle, executive director for the Pelican Women's Championship; Dan Doyle, with his family, owners of Pelican golf club; Dan Towriss, president and CEO of Group 1001, parent company of Gainbridge; World Golf and LPGA Hall of Famer, Annika Sorenstam needs no introduction; and also needs no introduction, LPGA commissioner, Mollie Marcoux Samaan.

First question for Marci, talking about this week, the Pelican Women's Championship in 2022, before we get to 2023. Talk to us with what can we expect this week. Talk about the field this week. Talk about the excitement that is brewing here at Pelican Golf Club.

MARCI DOYLE: First off, we have a great field, our best field in the three years of the tournament. We have seven of the top 10 ladies that are here with us, and we've got a lot of excitement going on.

But I literally just left the women's leadership Summit that's in process right next door where we have 250 ladies that are enjoying a fantastic panel. We had Heidi Ueberroth as our keynote speaker, and then a number of executive women for a panel. They're having a good time over there. That was sold out now two years in a row, and it just keeps getting bigger and better.



Throughout the week we have a lot of different functions going. We have Veterans Day on Friday. We are fortunate that that's during tournament week, and we're doing a major program where we have a program at the flag at 7:30 in the morning; we're handing out pins; we have a veteran that's going to be tending the flag all day.

And so a lot of different things going on. We have Hero Outpost where all veterans and military will get in free.

So we have a lot of things going on. We hope to give away a few Lambos this week. We gave away three last year. We're hoping for four. Dan actually very smartly listened to the ladies, the players who said, hey, that was really cool last year, except we can't put our clubs in the vehicle and we can't afford them. We don't want to pay this kind of insurance.

So he upped the game. Now it's an SUV, a Lambeau SUV, and we're covering all the insurance. So we're hoping to give away a lot of them. We've got the insurance for it. We're good. I promise.

Yeah, we've got a lot of things going on, and Dan likes to always say, how do we make it better, how are we going to take it to another level, and I think we did that this year with a lot of the programs that are going to be going on on-site.

We've got public fun zone, a family fun zone. We have a Publix chill lounge. We have a Casamigos family of friends general public area. All these are new this year for just general programming and things for people to do in between the holes while they're watching golf.

A lot of new things going on. We continue to try to raise the bar. As Dan says, let's do it better. Little things, but big things like every restroom that's on-site is an upgraded trailer air-conditioned restroom, all general public and everything. I know that doesn't sound like much, but for us women it's a big darn deal. We don't want to be using those portolets.

Just some of those details, and that's what the Doyles and Pelican are all about.



We've taken it to another level, and I think hopefully we're looking to do so in 2023, take it to a whole new level.

THE MODERATOR: Dan, really quickly, just talk about you and your family's excitement about this week, about the Pelican Women's Championship, and then let's look ahead to 2023 with the Annika. Talk about this week and look ahead to 2023.

DAN DOYLE JR: Obviously we're excited about this week, but it's funny, I always say once we get to the week I get to sit back and enjoy the tournament, and I've realized once we get to Monday, I actually start thinking about 2023, so I don't actually ever get to really enjoy the event.

It's fun to walk around, but it's constant, how are we going to improve it for next year, which leads into a perfect segment here.

We're really excited about 2023. So Dan Towriss was kind enough to join us as the lead sponsor, but with a stipulation which was great, because it tied right into what we were trying to create here. And he said, Dan, we've got to figure out how to get these girls a bigger purse.

Along with bringing Annika, and where we were happy to rename the tournament, so next year it will be the Annika, we're also going to increase the purse to \$3.25 million, which for us, we started three years ago and we started low, and we kept climbing every year.

But this was a huge jump, because last year we went from \$1.75 to \$2 million this year, and along with Dan and Annika, we're jumping up to \$3.25, which I think will be one of the highest purses in the LPGA, minus the majors and the championship.

Again, like Marci said, we keep striving, how do we exceed last year. This is our first step, and I'm sure we'll have some other surprises that we'll announce throughout the year.

THE MODERATOR: Dan, Gainbridge has been a longtime partner with the LPGA Tour with multiple events. Just talk about your excitement and why partnering up here at the Pelican Golf Club and partnering up with Annika for 2023.

DAN TOWRISS: Yeah, so 2023 would be our seventh year on the LPGA Tour, and we've loved every minute of it. But now we get to pair up with the dream team, so to be with Annika it's a dream come true for us. To be partnered with her, with the greatest player in the modern era of the LPGA, and then with Pelican and the Doyle family, we really see a chance to not just increase the purse, but to really grow the sport, invest in the sport, increase

engagement, activations in a way that will just -- like I said, it's the dream team for us to come together at this venue. Can't be more excited about 2023.

THE MODERATOR: Gainbridge also recently announced your title sponsorship of the Billie Jean King Cup. How does that fit into the overall portfolio of sports sponsorships that Gainbridge has?

DAN TOWRISS: Yeah, absolutely. We looked at our customer base. 60 percent of our customers are women buying financial products. So if that's the case, why would 90 percent of our sponsorship spend be on the men.

So we started to look for ways to balance that out, and so we had an opportunity to work with Annika and we had an opportunity to work with Billie, and so two of the greats, again in those respective sports. But what it does for us is we have 45 to 50 percent now of our total sponsorship spend across Gainbridge is going to be supporting women's athletics, women athletes, women in professional sports.

And we think that, again, represents our customer base, but takes things to a whole new level. And with the two of them as ambassadors, we couldn't be excited about the direction of that.

THE MODERATOR: Mollie, I'll come over to you. What are your thoughts as you hear this news with this event being called the Annika, with the \$3.25 million purse, with all these additional elevated elements that the Gainbridge and Pelican groups are bringing to this event?

How important is it to you to see these partners coming together on behalf of our world's best female athletes?

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN: Yeah, and just to echo what you said, thank you guys. This is truly remarkable for the LPGA. It's a huge day for us. I think when we think about the dream team or what makes the LPGA great, it's always been about partnerships and the people that you align with, and the people that you do business with really matter. There couldn't be three -- actually four better groups with Outlyr being our tremendous partner and with the Doyles here at Pelican. I think this was the first golf course that I came to maybe when I started, and Dan welcomed me down here. I couldn't believe how much attention to detail that they pay and how beautiful this facility is and really how committed the family and the golf course is to the LPGA and to growing the game.

Then obviously Dan being able to attend the Gainbridge event in Florida was great, and we're so thrilled that you've been so committed to the LPGA. I can't think of a better

sponsorship. Annika and Billie Jean King, that's pretty amazing. And then to have the GOAT as part of an event and our namesake event on the LPGA, I think this has been a long time overview.

To be able to finally realize that today, I think the partnership is what really matters.

For us, we love the partnership but also what this says on their commitment to women's sports, to the LPGA. I think it's an inspiration to women and girls around the world, and that's really what we are trying to accomplish. \$3.25 million is a lot of money to be playing for, and it matters. It really matter for our players, and so we're just wildly grateful for this and can't wait to get going.

THE MODERATOR: Annika, more than 90 wins worldwide, so much you've done for your game, for the women's game, for the up-and-coming game. Why was this the right opportunity and the right time for you to step in as this namesake event on the LPGA Tour?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I'm super excited to be here, and a think a lot of what was said here is why, dream team and committed to women and the LPGA. We've worked hard to kind of get my name on a tournament. I really want to continue the partnership with LPGA, continue the legacy of giving back, and continue to grow women's golf.

When all these pieces were kind of laid out there, and it's like, well, how do we put them all together. I love what Dan said. They want to make the sport better, and then obviously with this facility, with the Doyle family, they are very female friendly and just so welcoming with the hospitality -- Mike and I have been here for a few hours, but I feel like we've known them forever, in a good way.

But it's just really nice walking around here, talking to the players, and they're excited we're here. And I think the field, like Marci said, that means a lot, the reception from the players. For everything to come together, this is somewhat in our backyard, and to continue to be part of the LPGA with people that dream big and share the same vision is really important.

Yeah, I'm excited, too. This is I wouldn't say another trophy for me, but it's close. It's a different type of trophy. Nowadays that's what I play for, and this certainly belongs at the very top.

THE MODERATOR: Starting in 2023 this event is also going to benefit your foundation, the ANNIKA Foundation. You're getting ready to run your event in Argentina and everything you do around the world. How important was it

for your foundation to be a part of this moving forward?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, I mean, that's closest to my heart right now, the foundation and giving back. We have many players that we call them Annika alumnis that are playing here, and many more girls that want to play on the LPGA.

Some of the funds that we're going to raise next year is actually really going back to the girls that will be playing here in the future. I really it comes full circle. That's really what I do nowadays, is spend a lot of time growing the game of golf and inspiring young ladies around the world to live their dream, kind of like I do.

**Q. For the two Dans, if you go back into history, we had celebrity names on golf tournaments everywhere from Bob Hope and Bing Crosby to Glenn Campbell and Sammy Davis, Jr. Those went away because corporate sponsors wanted their company to be the brand. You guys went the opposite direction. Why?**

DAN TOWRISS: Well, again, I think when I first talked with Annika and Mike about the opportunity for this opportunity and we came up with different names, it just was the right thing to do.

I think what Annika has meant to women's golf and her impact on the sport, we're so proud to be associated with her, and we think the order of the names is exactly right.

I think, again, we'll get out and activate. Gainbridge will get its due. But this is about Annika and what she's meant to the sport, and that's the way -- that certainly is the way we wanted it.

**Q. For Annika and Mollie, you addressed growing the game on the women's side. Curious between you two, what are some really good signs you're seeing that are real encouraging these days?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, I can talk from the junior girls' perspective. The ANNIKA Foundation now has been around for 14 years. We started small in the U.S. We had a tournament in Orlando and the reception was really good.

Then we went to China, we went to Europe, we went to Argentina, New Zealand. Many of these tournaments were the first girls' invitationals, especially the one in Argentina. They had never had a girls' invitational. Only now this is our sixth, seventh year coming up next week, and the participating is high. We have more countries represented. You can see the growth.

I know that junior girls' golf at the time we started 15, 16 years ago, only 17 percent were girls of all the juniors in the U.S. playing, which is a very low number.

Now that you look into those numbers, and we're talking about a third, maybe even 34, 35 percent of all juniors are girls nowadays in the U.S., and I think it's a combination of different initiatives that's been put together and the focus on girls' golf, and obviously many of them go on to play on the LPGA because that's kind of the final, the dream that they have. We see it in college golf. I think college golf is as strong as it's ever been. All different types of initiatives out there, Girls Golf, and obviously we take pride in our tournament.

When you have corporate partners that understand the importance of growing that segment of the game you see the fruit coming through, and that to me doesn't happen overnight. But we're seeing it, and I think there's more to come.

You can speak for the rest --

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: That's a great buildup. I think the result, as you see with the talent of our players, when we look at the metrics and we look at the data, the numbers are off the charts.

If you compare the women to the men from the proximity to the hole from various distances, our averages are higher than the PGA TOUR, and just the scores that the women are producing every week. And that's on the LPGA, but when you go to the Epson Tour, for example, the women who are coming off the Epson Tour are coming right on to the LPGA Tour and winning and finishing in the top 10.

On the LET the talent is enormous. We're seeing it there, but I think the result, too, is the corporate sponsorship dollars are up 50 percent over the last two years. I think there was a great report that just came out about the new deals that have been coming through the LPGA over the last couple years, and it's growing exponentially.

Then when you look at the purses, and this is big moment going to \$3.25 million, I think the purses in 2021 were at \$70 million. This year we announced \$86 at the beginning of the season. We finished the year at \$93 million, and next year we're just going to exceed that.

I won't give away the number for next year -- next week when we announce the schedule, but it's very significant, and that's due to the tremendous support.

So it's really an integrated approach starting with girls golf and with junior golf and the popularity of the game and

growing that talent and growing the exposure and the support from so many really important partners.

**Q. I heard you talk a couple years ago about your vision for what you want this tournament to be, a staple on the LPGA. I'm just using the men's game for comparatives for people to kind of gauge, but WM Phoenix has kind of their brand, East Lake has their brand. What do you consider the brand and the atmosphere that you want to see here for the Annika?**

DAN DOYLE JR: So I would like to see it be the Masters for the women. That's what we're striving for. That's what literally day one when we went out and sat with the LPGA and convinced them to let us hold a tournament here, that was our vision.

We may not have explained it to them right that day, but from that point forward, I've always told everybody I would like to be the women's version of the Masters.

I think we built a facility that can hold it, that can replicate that, and you're seeing by great partners joining us, you're seeing our purse get to a level where it's got some size to it, where it will intrigue a lot of the players to come, and then we take a lot of input from our players.

At the end of every tournament, we quiz the players, if you walk around the facility, you'll see we doubled the size of the practice putting green because that's what the players asked for.

All the way to the part where Marci was joking about the Lamborghini where they couldn't fit the golf clubs in the car, so we went to an SUV. But it's their input that helps, and then we try to grow it from there. So it would be the Masters would be -- that would be the pinnacle.

**Q. Mollie, there's been so much turmoil in the entire game of golf, and certainly in the LPGA there's certain challenges that many of us in this room know what comes with it, but for people who might not be totally aware of the sponsorship commitments and the gratefulness we have to Gainbridge, but when it comes to the whole landscape of the LPGA, could you reflect on this past year and what has been good and some of the challenges that you have faced in your role?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, listen, the LPGA is a complex organization. We wake up every day trying to be the leader in women's golf, and to use that platform to inspire and transform and sort of advance the opportunities for girls and women.

We're really committed to that mission. I think we play all

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®



around the world. We have women from all over the world playing on our Tour, so that always brings complications of just travel and making sure that we're putting on the very best tournaments and allowing the women honestly to reach that first tee ready to perform and making sure that their travel and all of the other sort of performance environment that they need is good, and that's always challenging.

We wake up -- in the LPGA we wake up, and when the year begins we have to put on a schedule. A lot of professional leagues, the schedule is already designed. Our most important thing that we do is have great partners like this and that we can put on tournaments and have those opportunities for our women.

That's challenging as an organization to make sure that again, you find the right partners that are willing to invest, fully invest in the women and have purses that are commensurate with the talent of our players, so that's always very challenging.

Just running the organization is tough, but it's going extremely well because as I said, the partners that we have are so committed to us. I think my first impression as I took this job is wow, people really love the LPGA and feel committed to the values, feel committed to the players and advancing the sport and advancing the women and allowing them to live their dreams.

**Q. I've been appreciative as a media member of how frank you've been with the conversations you have to have. What is the dynamic like between the LPGA, the PGA TOUR, and the LET Tour as it stands now?**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN: The PGA TOUR and the LET --

**Q. Well, for example, PGA TOUR was part of making those media deals come to life with that partnership and just speaking to what is happening with LET and maybe what you could tell us about that partnership.**

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN: Yeah, the PGA -- we have a great relationship with the PGA TOUR, and obviously they are great partners on many fronts and they help us with our media.

With the Ladies European Tour, we're in a joint venture with them. They obviously are a different separate organization, but I think the goal with forming that joint venture was to help grow the game of golf, the women's game around the world, and to make sure that there are clear pathways for women and giving opportunities to women all around the world to live their dreams.

I think we've been able to help the LET and elevate the Tour there, and they have more events playing for more money, and I think that's been good for opportunities for women.

**Q. Marci and Dan, we've talked about this previously, but looking ahead to 2023, Marci, you and Annika have a special relationship going back a lot of years, from your former --**

MARCI DOYLE: We won't say how many, right, Annika? Don't ask a woman her age. But it's been a long time.

**Q. Let me rephrase. A few years, going back to your days as the tournament director and COO for the Arnold Palmer Invitational, you were Mr. Palmer's lady for a lot of years with the Arnold Palmer Invitational. So working with Arnold Palmer and then working with Annika next year, how passionate and how excited does that make you feel?**

MARCI DOYLE: Well, I think we have a bit of a personal connection. There was a business connection many years ago when we first met. I was with an agency that represented one of the companies that she was sponsored by, and we were fortunate to get to know each other maybe a few decades ago.

But in between then and just more recently, I was over at the Arnold Palmer for 12 years and we got to know each other even better, and I think there is a personal connection because of the hospitals over there, and she had her kids there, and I know there was just a very special bond, and she ended up serving as an ambassador for Arnold Palmer once he passed.

We had a lot of special time together, and I'm very much looking forward to creating the women's version of that.

I think it's been a long time coming for Annika to have her own event. I think Dan and I are excited to be rolling that out, and I think the fact that we're doing it with the GOAT is pretty cool.

There's nothing better. We're really excited to be creating, forging this relationship, and it's for many, many years to come.

**Q. Dan, follow-up on that?**

DAN DOYLE JR: Hey, we're in the Tampa Bay area, so we've got one GOAT, now we have two, which I think is wonderful. It kind of -- as you move along, you look for markers and say, are you successful or not successful, and

by putting the Annika name on this tournament, I think it just elevates it to one more level of success.

So for me it's kind of a yes, we got there, and now it's now we're here, so how do we take it to the next level. With the GOAT, I think we're really going to get to new spots.

**Q. Annika, same question as Marci said and Dan said, you had a special relationship with Mr. Palmer over the years. Just talk about your relationship with Mr. Palmer and then moving ahead, looking ahead to this tournament as the Annika.**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I look back at the times where I met Mr. Palmer, whether it was Callaway or whether it was the hospital in Orlando or the tournament; like many people, I was a big admirer. Obviously a great player, but just what he did for the community, for the game of golf, and I just kind of looked up and said, wow, this is so neat, and learned a lot of lessons from him.

Just the way he talked about sponsorships, the way he talked about giving back to the game, I think that was really important.

So I've always wanted to do a little bit what he was able to do. So now to sit here -- Marci, when you talk about it, it just gives me goosebumps just thinking about now working with you and we're going to try and do something he did because it meant so much.

When you talk to some of the PGA guys, you know how they respected him, how they would play his tournament, and that's really -- I think it's really neat.

I think having my name of course it's cool for me personally, but I think it also -- hopefully people understand the commitment that we're giving, being part of this tournament. We're going to work hard together and really elevate this event. Really just talking about the purse is one elevation, but there's a lot of stuff here. Like Dan was saying, they want to make it one of the best tournaments out there, and we're committed, as well, from a lot of different perspectives.

So listening to the purse, I'm like, maybe I should get my clubs out. But maybe not that committed --

MARCI DOYLE: Yes, please.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: But just want to be part of the event as much as we can, so that's my commitment. And having my name on there hopefully shows that to the players out here, and again, to continue the partnership with the LPGA.

Yeah, it's exciting, but yeah, I mean, it's hard to compare with Arnold Palmer, but if anybody can do maybe 10 percent of what he did, I would call that a success.

**Q. I was going to ask you whether anybody was going to mentor you, but it sounds like you've got that covered with your background. I do have a question going back to either one of you guys addressing it. I had a conversation when I was doing a piece with Stacy Lewis talking about the dynamics of the Tour and how it's changed with all the international travel. With this in mind, and Annika, especially when you wanted to start your own family, is it sort of pushing the Tour more toward a younger person's Tour because it's just so hard to try to balance that travel and all of that with maybe the idea of family, et cetera? I wondered whether looking at it from that perspective and whether today you would have a different approach.**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: You know, when I competed we didn't have any kids, so it's hard for me to compare. But I do remember traveling quite a bit. Being a European player, I played in Europe, I played in Asia, I played in Australia, and that was kind of what I liked about it. I loved that it was -- my office was worldwide. I loved that.

I loved meeting all the people overseas and the experiences and the culture, so I embraced that. I just thought it was part of it, and I wanted to be an international player. I played on the European Tour and LPGA.

But I think every player has a different goal and maybe a different vision of how they want their career to look like. But I didn't travel with kids, so I'm sure that's very difficult. If I would put myself in there now, yeah, it would be very difficult to travel with the kids, and especially home schooling.

I remember the first few times I traveled I was more concerned about having diapers than where my wedge was. I went up to do a clinic and I realized I had left my wedge at home, but I had plenty of diapers and wipes so I was all set for that.

There were different things that came with being a parent, and I would think it would be very difficult to put 100 percent into your career knowing that the family is either at home or at a hotel and want to make sure -- it's quite the balance.

But I know that the LPGA, they're lucky. You have amazing day care and they do a lot of fun stuff with the kids, so I'm sure that gives them a peace of mind, too.



Yeah, if you look at I think the age the last few years, all the major winners have been in their low 20s, so I don't think that that's really changed. You can correct me, but a lot of upcoming players are the ones that's really leading the Money List.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: I think one of our very unique distinguishing elements of the LPGA is that we are a global tour, and we're really proud of that. We have the very best in the world coming to play here.

But I think with 30 plus events on the schedule we give players an opportunity to pick and choose a little bit which events they go to and they can plan their schedule around what works for them.

But I think we're also really focused with the day care and with other ways of thinking through what environment do they need to be able to reach their dreams and reach their peak performance.

I think there are examples of women who are really doing it and doing it very well. But as Annika said, each person has to make their own decisions.

But we are really proud of the fact that we're a global tour and that we really bring the very best in the world together to compete here.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I would also just add to that, I'm curious, I'm sure there's more mothers playing now than there used to be because you're providing the service so well.

When I played there was only a few mothers out there, so I think you guys have done a really good job. There are a lot of mothers like Stacy or Brittany coming back after having their first or second. That says a lot that they want to be out here and want to continue to compete.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: Yeah, we're a women's organization, and I think that's really important for us to continue to focus on that environment for them out here.

**Q. Annika, such a big commitment, like you said, to be the first title sponsor at a women's event, and there are many reasons behind it, obviously. What would you say is the main reason that you have decided to align with this particular tournament and make such a commitment moving forward?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, just continue to build my legacy within the game of golf. I mean, I'm all about providing playing opportunities for young girls, so how can

we continue to do that.

I think this falls right in kind of the full circle.

But I think it's not just one reason. You have to have the right ingredients, and the ingredients is right here, to get the good recipe. Now we just have to kind of cook it and put it together.

But I think that's just really -- I think Mike and I, we're in a position in our life now where we're very fortunate to be where we are, so when we work with somebody or associate with somebody, we want to have fun, too. It's about the relationships. It's about making a difference.

It needs to be fun along the way, and I think a lot of us up here, we share that, the synergy of what's important in our lives. I think all of you here can -- this is a free time. I do this, it's a job, but this is really just my charity, going back to women's golf.

So that's where I think it's important to have that in mind, too. And also my way to say thank you. That's what the ANNIKA Foundation is all about. It's giving back to the game that's put me where I am today and the people I've met and my husband, so yeah, it's our way to say thanks.

**Q. Dan or Marci, you talked about how much excitement there was surrounding this event but also this golf course in general; pretty exciting in a month's time The Match is going to come here, as well. Can you talk about what went into that tournament to come here and just how exciting it is for Pelican to host that?**

DAN DOYLE JR: So The Match -- the whole purpose of having The Match here is really to help Southwest Florida on hurricane relief, and it started with I've got an 81-year-old father who said, look, Southwest Florida got devastated. You don't get to hear about it a lot in the press, and Florida kind of says, okay, we'll handle it ourselves.

So as we went down that path we said, what can we do for it, so it took knowing a few people and making a couple of phone calls, and lo and behold, we ended up hosting The Match here. So it's 12 holes on December 10. They like the golf course. They had seen it on television because obviously this is our third year hosting the tournament, and they said, this would be a great spot, the West Coast of Florida.

It's going to be a fun night, but it took more phone calls really and just asking favors.

THE MODERATOR: With that, I think we'll wrap it up.  
Mollie, Annika, Dan, Dan, Marci, thank you very much.  
Thank you all very much. Jeremy will send out the  
recording of this and a transcript when we're finished, but  
thank you very much, and here's to a great week here at  
Pelican.

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