

# The Annika driven by Gainbridge at Pelican

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Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

## Stacy Lewis

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, pleased to be joined by Stacy Lewis. Stacy, welcome back to Pelican Golf Club. Just what have you made of the course so far, and what are your overall thoughts heading into the week?

STACY LEWIS: Well, it's a great track. Played nine holes yesterday. Got to check things out. Similar to past years. Not as much wind this week, which will be kind of nice.

But, yeah, I'm excited to play. I've had I guess about four weeks now since Solheim Cup and really two weeks to actually work on my golf game and be home for two weeks, which hasn't happened in a while.

So I'm excited just to see where things are at, and definitely feel better about my game than I did a month or two ago. So just excited to kind of just be able to focus on golf right now.

#### **Q. How was that process going from captainship to bringing back your game and competing again?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, playing after Solheim was not ideal. Game was definitely not there. I just more needed rest, needed some time. That week really took a lot out of me physically and mentally. I needed some time.

Figured I hadn't been home for a full week since July, so needed to unpack the bags and be settled for a little bit.

#### **Q. On the topic of Solheim, just what have been some of the bigger takeaways from that week?**

STACY LEWIS: Oh, man, there were a lot. As a captain it's exhausting. I thought it was hard as a player, but it is exhausting as a captain.

You know, thinking about how all the girls played, the girls played amazing golf. I hate the finish. I hated how it finished because I felt like they played good enough to win and I think they felt like they played good enough to win.



But definitely kind of had some proud moments. To see Angel win a couple weeks later after that, which it was such a big deal to her to get over that hump, and just to see some of the girls come out of that playing really good golf is kind of like a proud mom moment almost.

Like I just wanted the girls to get something out of that week other than just go represent your country and play Solheim Cup. I wanted them to actually learn something about themselves, their game that helps them going forward in their careers. I felt like we did that.

#### **Q. Now looking ahead to 2024, do you expect a lot of changes on your team?**

STACY LEWIS: Yes and no. There is definitely some changes to be made. I think there were a lot of things we did that worked and some things we still need to look at tinkering with.

Team-wise, I think the players themselves will be pretty similar. I think you could see two or three maybe shift around. I want it to be competitive. I want that decision to be harder for me than it was this past time. Just going to keep tracking the players.

Things are definitely easier now doing it for the second time. Not as many calls, not as much planning, because most of that is already in place.

#### **Q. Just talk about balancing the captainship and how much are you planning on playing next year?**

STACY LEWIS: I'll still play as much as I can in the U.S.

Probably not going to do the Asia stuff, long travel. Being away from my daughter and family, I don't do that like I used to, so that's going to change my schedule more than anything for next year.

#### **Q. So you were mentioning you hated the ending. Are you going to start a campaign to try to create a playoff system so do you feel like it should just stay...**



STACY LEWIS: I feel like it should stay unfortunately. Just now you have a precedent. There is history to it. I think it would almost be kind of weird to change it. I also think that's a lot on one or two players to go make them go play some golf and decide this thing.

Yes, it would be unbelievable TV, but I think now you got to stick with history.

**Q. And then on the subject of Lexi who just had this incredible turnaround, can you give us some insight into what you saw early week in Spain that was so different to prior weeks.**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, you know, I talked to Lexi in Cincinnati and I told her that she was probably just -- I was just going to play her in best ball.

I said, not because of how you're playing, but I want you to gain some confidence and play your own golf ball. I feel like alternate little shot puts a lot of pressure on your game.

Told her that in Cincinnati, would've been on Wednesday. The kid just took it as motivation. I think other people would've taken it and been mad, she's not going to play me, I'm only going to play two matches.

She took it as motivation and just worked on her game. Just the golf shots she was hitting, you saw something different with her driver. Driver has been her thing that hadn't been as good.

She is starting to hit driver more, which I think that's how Lexi has played her best golf. So it was just I didn't see her play a ton of golf early week. It was more what everybody else was telling me.

And also we had statistics on how the strokes gained during the practice rounds and her numbers were off the charts. So you could see some confidence in her. Her teammates had confidence in her. The girls are coming up to me and telling me how good she was playing.

I kept hearing it and hearing it, and on Thursday I was like, we got to make a change. So Thursday afternoon with, what did I have, three or four holes left in the practice round, went to her and Megan and said, hey, can you guys figure out golf balls for alternate shot? Sure, no problem. Got to 18, we're good.

Okay, you guys are going out first tomorrow. They said, okay, and that's literally how it all happened. Happened within a span of an hour.

Truthfully it fired that team up. When I went in the team

room and told everybody Lexi and Megan were going first, I mean, I can't tell you the words that were said, but everybody was fired up and ready to go.

**Q. And then one last one on Lexi. I don't know if you had a chance to watch her play at Shriners at all.**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah.

**Q. Obviously that was 69 in the second round, a lot of positive energy from the men out there.**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah.

**Q. How do you think she can carry that momentum into a week like this week?**

STACY LEWIS: You know, I hated all the people that said she was going to play poorly or why is this happening. You're playing in the desert where the ball goes further anyway, and on a golf course that forced her to hit driver a lot, which I think is good for her. A lot of golf courses we play she can't hit driver on so takes that aggressiveness out of her.

So I wasn't surprised to see her play well. Wish she would've made the cut. That would've been such a cool thing for her. But just, you know, seeing herself hit good golf shots under pressure, I'll tell you this about her statistics is her putting has actually been really, really good and her ball striking had been the thing holding her back.

Ball striking numbers are getting better. Putting has already been better, and that's how this good golf comes from.

You could see it coming and so I just, I don't know, I hope she can learn from that moment and stay aggressive with driver even on some of those shorter golf courses.

**Q. You have a unique opportunity with the back-to-back Solheim Cups.**

STACY LEWIS: Uh-huh.

**Q. As you look back at the last month or so, are there already things you want to tweak a little, or do you feel comfortable with the formula you had?**

STACY LEWIS: I mean, I felt very comfortable. I was very happy with the way things went as far as inside the team room. Some little thing we'll clean up, change.

You know, I still got to get -- I thought we did a very good job in alternate shot as far as the way the girls played. We

got to work on best ball a little bit. That's still something I think we got to work on.

But yeah, the formula was there. The statistics work. I know I talked about it like crazy, but it worked and it was right. It provided a lot of guidance for me to trust my gut, to trust what I know about these players.

That was the hardest thing for me that week, was to keep trusting my gut and everything we had worked on. It was easy to say, oh, so and so maybe didn't have a great day today. Should we sit them? No. We're going to stick to our plan and we did that.

**Q. The Four-Ball is stuff you do every day.**

STACY LEWIS: Uh-huh.

**Q. You think you might have to work on foursomes for instance?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah.

**Q. How do you work on that as far as is it a pairings thing?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, pairings, but also a mentality. You know, I think the girls have to understand we need them to go play the way they always play, not try to say, oh, let's keep it safe and keep two balls in play.

No, I want you to play aggressive, go out there and make birdies. I think if you look at the makeup the of two teams, especially in '23, the Europeans were probably better in the Four-Ball format and we were better in foursomes just on the makeup of players and style of play.

So I think that was also part of this switch there I think in the points.

**Q. And finally on your take on Gainbridge backing this Parity Week where there is three events, almost \$13 million I think in purses. You spoken about this at KPMG before. What's your thoughts on that?**

STACY LEWIS: I mean, it's tremendous. These big events like this, these push our other events to raise the bar. You know, our goal I would say -- we had a meeting last night. The number of events we have over \$3 million that aren't majors compared to two years ago, I think we're over double where we were two years ago.

So events like this raise the bar. It's a great week leading into CME to an even bigger purse and even bigger stage.

Women's golf is moving in the right direction. It's just we need more people like this to continue to step up.

**Q. As the season is whittling down, looking ahead to 2024, do you have an idea of when you'll start looking to solidify the team?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, so we talked and the points will cut off after the AIG Women's Open and do picks as well after that. We've got to figure out obviously how and where we'll make the picks.

But it'll be -- we have two weeks between that and Solheim Cup. Give us enough time to get everything ready and include a major in there, too.

**Q. Obviously a lot has been made this week about the namesake of this tournament. In a broader sense, how important is it for the LPGA to maybe have its own version of an Arnold Palmer Invitational, the Byron Nelson, that will honor their legends?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, I think it's important to have history involved in the current game. I think it's important for these girls to know the players that have come before them. Fortunately, everybody knows Annika. She has so many junior events, college events now that a lot of these girls that are a couple years on tour, they've met her multiple times and know her.

I wish we had more of them, to be honest, because I think there is a lot of players that played even before Annika that we probably haven't done a good job of honoring. So while I like this week, I think there needs to be more of it.

**Q. There was once a tournament for Betsy King; once one for Nancy Lopez.**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah.

**Q. I think Kathy Whitworth, even though it wasn't named off her. You mentioned the generational thing. In your mind, who either before or after, might be a really good next candidate to have a tournament in honor of?**

STACY LEWIS: I mean, you could pick a lot of them. Juli is probably the first person that comes to mind. She would be a great host for an event.

I think we're going to -- Kathy was on that event in Dallas, but unfortunately I don't think we're going back there next year. So we're kind of losing that connection. I mean, gosh, any of them. I think the best part is you get Annika in front of the sponsors, that they remember seeing Annika

play, right?

So I think that's an important part of it, too, being in front of the sponsors and the sponsors getting to understand the history of the game and where we came from to where we are now and what we're trying to do in pushing women's golf forward.

**Q. A lot of these women out here got an early exposure to Annika. Who is the LPGA legend perhaps that you met first and maybe had a star struck moment?**

STACY LEWIS: Man, I mean, for me, it was probably -- she was still playing when I came on tour, but Karrie. I got to play a lot with Karrie. She's a friend. I've got to know a lot of them pretty well actually that I could call right now and they'd answer. Meg and Beth and Betsy, Nancy, Judy. You could name a lot them. I went out of my way because I wanted to meet them and know the history of the game. I wanted to see what made them successful. How they went about their business.

I learned a lot just from playing practice rounds with Karrie, about how she went about her day. So much knowledge there that I wish this current generation would think about taking more advantage of.

**Q. What do you think it is about this golf course besides the grass that suits Nelly and Lexi so well?**

STACY LEWIS: Well, bermudagrass, number one. Learned that from Solheim. I think it's the length of the golf course more than anything, because there are some holes that -- especially when it's windy that are into the wind that are very long that they can take advantage of and carry some cross bunkers and things like that.

And also the height that they hit it. They hit it high, which is a lot of these elevated greens, which you wouldn't think is good in the wind, but on this golf course it is good.

I think a lot of it is the familiarity of growing up on this grass. The surrounds of these greens are very tricky, so my husband -- the SEC Championship is coming here next April, so my husband was asking what type of shots they could work on to help get his team ready, how they could simulate this golf course at home. I was like, you can't get grass that tight in Texas. I don't know how they're going to practice it.

To me it's the surround of the greens is what makes this place so tough.

**Q. I know from the time we spoke at the top of the year**

**to now it's been quite a whirlwind of a year for you. I think you're finally going to have a moment before we rev up the engine for 2024 Solheim Cup season. What are the off-season holiday plans looking like for and you the family?**

STACY LEWIS: Yes, things have slowed down tremendously, which is great. We got a couple little trips planned, do a few things. December is going to be pretty light for me other than phone calls and trying to plan some Solheim things. Be working on that through the off time.

I'll play that first event in January, and really play as much as I can in the United States next year.

**Q. Just thoughts on does the goal remain to play on your own team next fall?**

STACY LEWIS: No. (Laughter.) After experiencing Spain, I really don't think you can captain and play.

**Q. Really?**

STACY LEWIS: There was one day of the entire week that I actually sat down and had lunch. Every other time it was my cart driver, Megan, was just handing me half of a peanut butter sandwich, eat, eat, eat.

I think I wanted to be on the first tee when all the players were going off. That was something that I had seen captains do in the past and I thought that was important to see everybody before they do off.

Because of that, those morning matches finish and then there is basically probably about 20 or 30 minutes before the next matches are starting. Then you finish in the evening and you have got an hour to get pairings in and then have to do media and come back and the team has eaten dinner and they want to go to bed.

You meet with the team and it's 9:00 or 9:30 and it's oh, I get to eat dinner now.

And on practice days, we divided up practice where they could play more when then wanted to. Some played early, some more around noon, which is great for them. It just made my day a lot longer. There is definitely no way to captain and play.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time.

STACY LEWIS: Thank you.

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