

# The Annika driven by Gainbridge at Pelican

Wednesday, November 8, 2023

Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

## **gabriela Ruffels**

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Pleased to be joined by Gabi Ruffels. The newest 2024 LPGA Tour member. Gabi, welcome to Pelican Golf Club. How excited are you to be here?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, super excited to be here. I got the call I think last Tuesday that I was in the field, and I was super excited. I played this three years ago as an amateur. My brother was caddieing. So it's nice to be back. I really like this area and this golf course; excited for the week.

**Q. What is it about the golf course that maybe you've seen in the practice round, pro-am, that you think you can take advantage of this week?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, I was talking to someone earlier. I think it is kind of like an Australian style golf course with the big greens and not much rough around the greens, and you can kind of putt from off the greens. The bunkers are quite similar as well.

I definitely feel I guess kind of at home on this golf course growing up playing golf in Australia. Yeah, hopefully have a good week.

**Q. Couple players got asked this yesterday, but have you met Annika? And if so, what do you remember?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yes, I have. I played in her collegiate event. I think she has that once a year, I think at the start of the season, and USC was always in that. It's great what she's doing for women's golf from the junior level to the pro level with this event. She's always been great, super personable. I feel like every time I see her she says hi.

Yeah, it's great what she's doing for women's golf.

**Q. You mentioned it off the top, take us back to Four Winds Invitational where you mathematically clinched your card for the year.**



GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, that was awesome. It was cool to kind of do it in that sense. I think the week before I needed a solo fourth finish to secure my card, and I think I was tied four. So ended up playing that next week at the Four Winds, and super glad I did. To seal my kind of card with a win was extra special.

**Q. What have you learned about your game bouncing between Epson Tour and LPGA Tour from the start of the year? What have you learned about yourself and your game?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: I've learned so much this year. I've been grateful to have some LPGA opportunities this year as well. Just I guess learning from that level and learning about myself and learning now win and how to kind of go about it on that tour will prepare me really well for this tour.

Just I guess so many different things I feel like I could write an essay. No, yeah, super excited to be here and looking forward to next year.

**Q. This is your second start since you knew you were going to be a member out here in 2024. Now that Epson Tour Championship is down, you've won the Player of the Year honors. Does this one feel any different knowing you'll be full time out here next year?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Not really, to be honest. I've been grateful to have some starts the past couple years. Even as an amateur I've been able to come out here.

I try and treat every week the same whether it's mini tour or Epson or LPGA or a major. So I feel like it's just another week and you're just focusing on yourself and the golf course and see what happens.

**Q. I feel like a lot of girls go to college and try to go straight to the tour. Having to go on the Epson Tour this year, how valuable do you think that experience is for young up-and-coming players to get their feet wet with professional golf life on the Epson Tour?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: I think it's invaluable and has been



great for me. Maybe not the pathway I would've wanted, but what I got and I'm so grateful for it. I've learned so much. How to manage type of with travel, routines heading into a tournament. You know, all those kind of different things that I feel like if you're thrown in the deep end, being here out on the LPGA you don't get those learning experiences.

Also learning how to win. The girls out there are good. I keep saying that, but it's super competitive out there. I feel like, yeah, the past couple years learned so much. Hopefully it's prepared me for next year.

**Q. And I know your brother, Ryan, got through the first stage of Korn Ferry Tour qualifying. What's it been like to both go through this whole professional golf process in the past few years?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, it's been awesome. I lean on him a lot for knowledge. He's been playing more than me so has a lot more experience, so I definitely pick his brain for certain things.

But, yeah, it was great to see him get through first stage. Was at Albuquerque at his first stage site a couple weeks ago. It was so great. Kind of weird being outside of the ropes.

But I was nervous watching him. I didn't think I would be. But, yeah, hopefully he can keep going.

**Q. Are you heading to second stage at all?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: No, I'm not. I would've but I'm playing the TaylorMade Pebble Beach Pro-Am next week and his qualifier is on Tuesday next week. I would've if I wasn't doing anything.

**Q. I know you said you could write an essay on all the things you have been able to pick up in this process. Was the bigger learning curve stuff on the course or all the stuff that a new professional has to learn away from the course?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, both. I'm sorry I can't give you like -- but just learning, yeah, so much I feel like from every experience I get.

I always said no amount of practice can equate to the same as playing a tournament, whatever level it is, mini tour to Epson to LPGA. And every time I feel like I step out here and play a tournament I'm just learning so much about on the golf course, off the golf course. Just trying to keep piling those learning expenses.

**Q. Was there any one or two moments out there where something happened and you say, okay, lesson learned; from now on I'm...filling in the blank?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, I think the first year as a pro was a huge learning experience. When I first turned pro I tried to be kind of a pro. So I tried to -- I changed a few things that maybe I didn't have to from an amateur to pro. I tried to be just a little bit more professional.

I feel like what I learned is it's just better to be yourself. I feel like what I was doing was good enough, and just keep trying to be myself and improve upon that. And that's probably the biggest lesson, is just be yourself and try and just try and improve yourself.

**Q. How big a help to you has it been that Ryan has been on a similar path?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, no, my brother has been so helpful for me. As I said before, I haven't been playing as long as him so I pick his brain a lot on his experiences, especially with shots around the green, you know, kind of how to handle yourself during a tournament.

I don't know, I really enjoy picking his brain. Kind of going through his journey together has been super special as well.

**Q. And you mentioned about winning this year. That's a huge piece of the puzzle. What led you in that direction, do you think? What was the biggest part of you starting to win on a regular basis?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, so I think that first win I think was the second Epson event of the season in Arizona. That was huge. I had never really been in that position before as a pro. It was a four-day event. I think I had the lead after the second day, so going into final two. Then I had the lead going into Sunday, a two-shot lead. I had never really been in that position before as a pro.

I wanted to see how I would handle myself in that situation. To be able to pull it off in the end gave me a lot of confidence, and I think it gave me the confidence to be able to do that two more times for.

**Q. And what's the age difference between and you your brother?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Two years. He's two years older.

**Q. Is he the biggest part of you doing what you do?**

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah. I would say I'm a big family

person and I'm very close to my family and my parents as well. Have been huge influences in my life.

But, yeah, as far as golf, he was playing golf before I did and when I stopped playing tennis I just followed him into golf I guess.

But no, I lean on him and my parents quite a lot.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you for your time, Gaby.

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Perfect. Thank you.

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