

The Annika driven by Gainbridge at Pelican

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Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

Annika Sorenstam

Dan Doyle

Dan Towriss

Press Conference



But the golf course survived. I actually think it looks better today than it did right before the rainstorm, so we're excited. We're excited to have it here. We're excited everybody is here.

Annika sent me a text I think on Thursday -- it hit Wednesday. First she checked on the family, which I give her credit for, and then quickly, how is the course?

THE MODERATOR: With that, once we got through those few days, it was looking ahead to this tournament. The original question, if we didn't have the storms here, how excited for year two of this event? It's technically year five of you and your dad's dream to host an LPGA event here at the Pelican Golf Club.

DAN DOYLE: Extremely excited. Last night at dinner we were talking about it. We kicked it off on a COVID year so it was kind of odd. Then I think we've had a topical storm, got hit with a hurricane the week before; obviously this one got hit with a hurricane four weeks before. But it's exciting. The town needed it, as well, I will say, because this town got beat up. It's a small town, so it didn't get a lot of press, but a lot of homes were destroyed, and the people got excited.

Once you start seeing the banners go up on the light posts and you start seeing the traffic directional signs and everything, people really got excited. I ran into a bunch of people in the town earlier today at the luncheon, they were excited to be there. The energy is here, and the energy got -- kind of raised its level last year when Annika -- when we named it after Annika and Annika joined.

The tough part with Annika is to give up to -- she said this in the luncheon, we set the bar very high and we tried to achieve it. So Annika I know has a very high bar set for this golf tournament, and we continue to try to achieve or it overachieve. I noticed every time we get close to it she kind of moves the bar. I wish one day she's stop, but she continues to move it, and I actually kind of like the challenge. So we're very excited.

THE MODERATOR: Dan Towriss, similar question about

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the Albatross Room and the State of The Annika press conference for 2024. Up on the chairs we have Dan Doyle, Jr., owner of Pelican Golf Club. We have Annika Sorenstam, tournament host, World Golf Hall of Famer. Dan Towriss, president and CEO of Group 1001 and Gainbridge.

I'm going to ask all three of you just an opening question and opening comments about this week and then we'll open it up for questions.

Dan Doyle, we'll start first. Talk about the excitement of this week, of hosting this tournament this week, and how beautiful the course is, knowing what we in Tampa have gone through over the past month and the recovery efforts that have been going on here at Pelican Golf Club.

DAN DOYLE: If you would have asked us four weeks ago how this tournament was going to go, I would have been crying. We walked out here, the whole place was covered in water. It was tough.

But like most people, we rise above it. We have an incredible crew here. We had members that showed up and everybody just rolled up their sleeves and literally, I think, four days, it might have been five days, we actually had the golf course back open, golfers were out there. It was a little wet, but it was incredible.

We got 22 inches of rain in six hours that night, and so there was nowhere for that water to go. Behind my son's house on 5, I thought we were in the bayou. I kept looking for alligators. But it's an event, and Floridians, we kind of get used to hurricanes. I hate to say it, but you always cheer if it's going to go south of you or far enough north. This one we were told we were going to get it, and we did.



the partnership with Annika and with the Doyle family and Pelican Golf Club. Gainbridge has been a longtime supporter for the LPGA Tour, so we're in year two of this partnership. Talk about how much the partnership means to Gainbridge and the Group 1001 family of companies.

DAN TOWRISS: This tournament means so much to us, our investment in women's sports. Just thinking about when we were planning this tournament out, we wanted to have it at a special golf course, and Pelican is absolutely that, so thank you, Dan, to you and your family and this facility is amazing, all the people that support this event.

Then reflecting on the name, I think we got it right, The Annika driven by Gainbridge. We love the fact that we're associated with a namesake tournament on the LPGA to be with World Golf Hall of Famer, all that Annika has done, what the foundation stands for, all the investments in young girls and women in golf.

So we couldn't be more proud to be associated with her, with the Doyle family, with this golf course, and very excited for year two.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned about investing in the future of women's golf and women's sports. This is the kickoff of two weeks of Gainbridge celebrating women's sports with Parity Week by Gainbridge. Can you explain to the group here about Parity Week and what Gainbridge has been done for the last few months?

DAN TOWRISS: Parity is an organization in our group that is all about pay equality, closing the gender pay gap between men's and women's sports.

So this week it's Parity Week. It starts with the ANNIKA and then it moves to the Billie Jean King Cup, which is the World Cup of women's tennis which will be in Málaga, Spain.

It's an incredible time to have both these events so close together, again, kicked off by The Annika. So a lot of events around that, as well. You know, 21 grants to organizations across 14 states supporting girls and women's sports and athletics.

And so again, just very excited about that, Parity Week, what it means. Again, everything is kicked off with The Annika.

THE MODERATOR: Annika, with that, this is year two of this event as the namesake event on the LPGA Tour. Talk about that. You heard Dan and Dan talk about this partnership, so from your side and your family and your kids seeing mom hosting The Annika, talk about that

partnership for a little bit.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, it's great to be here, and it warms my heart to listen to these successful men and what they have done and that they want to partner with the LPGA and really help women's sports. It's a dream come true, not just to have my name on this event but to have these type of partners and the support from the community.

Look at the tournament this year. We sat here, what, two years ago talking about what's coming, and then last year it was executed, and then I was thinking, what are we going to do next. It was such a good week, how do we improve. I really feel like we're already off and running this week with some great storylines and great additions to the event.

Obviously with Caitlin sitting here, and we have Brittany over here, there's so many stories, so much to tell, and to get it out there.

I don't know, it just warms my heart. It's so nice to be here. I'd like to say this is the best LPGA tournament, that this is my best one, and it can't be at a better place than here. It's amazing that we're sitting here and the tournament is going to take place, considering what happened just a month ago.

No, it's fabulous to be here, and everybody is coming together, and from my side, whether it's the foundation and different partners that I have and your partners, your family and the same thing with Gainbridge, what they do is amazing.

I feel like really it's a winning recipe.

Q. Dan Towriss, you signed Caitlin before she was even a member of the Fever. In the year she's been with you, how have you felt her directly impact your initiative with Gainbridge and Group 1001?

DAN TOWRISS: Yeah, it's had an impact on so many levels. One from the business standpoint. If you don't know by now, Caitlin moves the numbers, so that's been pretty special from that standpoint. But also the person that she is, what she stands for, the way she gives back to communities, to young girls.

From that standpoint, I think that's exactly the kind of partnership that we want. It's really energized the company from that standpoint. It certainly has had an impact on the numbers. Then to have her come to the Indianapolis community to be a part of the Fever really was just icing on the cake. I think we were just happy to have the association but then to have that in our own backyard in Indianapolis has been pretty special.



Q. Dan, I was hoping you could tell us a little bit about what the chatter has been like in the club about the anticipation of Caitlin coming this week and then in the community itself.

DAN DOYLE: So I'll start with the membership was very excited because they put out a newsletter I saw that said Caitlin Clark was coming to play in the pro-am. Some of them actually thought she was going to be the pro playing, but I learned earlier that she's hoping to get a few lessons from Annika.

To tell you how the community has reacted, I think ticket sales are up 12X just from her showing up for the pro-am, so not letting a lot of pressure on her, but people are expecting a lot and I have a feeling you're going to see a lot of young ladies out here following that group, which that will just generate excitement?

Q. Annika, what's your hope for the impact that Caitlin can have on the LPGA, not just this week but beyond?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, I think she's had a big impact just in general. I look at women's sports overall, and it's just been incredible, the exposure our and interest and just the excitement, like Dan was talking about, how you sell out and the records she set in college. She's a role model, and she's an inspiration.

For her to be here and how it would affect golf, we'll see, but we're probably going to see people we wouldn't see otherwise come out here. The effect that she has, I'm thinking young girls might say, well, maybe I don't play basketball I'll play golf. They look up to her. Whatever she does, she want to do. I'm excited she's here and bringing a little more exposure to this event.

We spoke a little earlier, and I think all of the golfers, we have a lot in common. We're very competitive and so is she and I think there's going to be some friendships made with her and the golfers, so I think it's a good thing?

Q. Annika, second consecutive year that we've had over 50 ANNIKA alum in the field. For you, your ANNIKA Foundation is so important, and having Lilia win last year as a beneficiary of that foundation. What does that mean to you, just to consistently see your alumni of your foundation show up at this event?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, it's so awesome in so many different ways. When you start an initiative and then you see how it's coming together and then you see all the players playing so well and to have 54 here, I don't know, it's just come full circle with everything we do.

Our initiative starts at six years old and then we have a teenage event which is coming, the ANNIKA Invitational, and then a college event and then we have a development program and now we have the pros playing here. It's coming to full circle.

Louise Rydqvist is an invite. She's here for the second year. She's literally played in every initiative that we have. It just makes you want to do more. It inspires us to figure out how we can impact more young girls around the world so they can have kind of the same opportunities as Louise, but also Rachel Kuehn who's playing here on another sponsor invite, this is her professional start, which is cool for her to make it here, and she's been playing our events. So there's a lot of stories there.

It justifies the giving and the time we spent and seeing what they do, and I don't know, like I said it makes me want to do more. Thanks to these two guys we can provide that opportunity and hopefully other girls will, too, one day.

Q. Annika, you talked earlier about waking up and making sure you don't lose your purpose. I think this year we've had a 11 players announce that they're going to retire or peel back their schedule. This will be Brittany's last tournament full time, as well. What's your advice to Brittany and kind of her peers that are turning the chapter about how to fill that void that first year or so after hanging it up?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, I mean, first of all, I've known Brittany for quite some time and she's had a wonderful career and now she has a wonderful family, a husband and two young girls. I think you start to see your priorities change in your life, what's more important.

But I have no doubt that she's going to go on and do some other things. She has a great charity tournament, and other interests will come up. I talk to a lot of the young ladies out here that are looking at the next chapter. I think we all feel like as female athletes this is probably the only thing I can do, but once you start to venture out, start looking at things, you realize that golf really teaches you a lot about things in life and you can use those skills into other things.

I have no doubt that Brittany is going to be busy. Hopefully gets to spend some time with her family is I'm sure priority No. 1. But golf is a great sport that way that you can still have your foot in the game doing different things.

I stepped away in 2008 and I think I'm busier now than ever. I was supposed to retire but I haven't really figured that out myself, so I might have to ask somebody who's

retired, what does it really mean. I'm really happy what I do, and it's nice to be able to give back.

Q. Annika, can you talk a little bit about the evolution of women's sports, some of the changes and improvements that you've seen in terms of golf and other sports from the start of your career through the present?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, no, it's been going straight up. I think it's fantastic, not just the venues that the players on the LPGA but the purses, the exposure, the sponsorships. We're moving in the right direction. I wouldn't say that we're going to sit and just relax now, but the momentum is on our side, and great athletes -- right now Nelly Korda with the start that she had this season is really giving the LPGA some more interest, and superstars like Caitlin is giving interest. I think all those together, people are opening up their eyes and saying we want to be part of women's sports. They have a lot to offer. They're very approachable. Our price tag is still a little cheaper than the men's sports, so why not get in early and be there and set the pace and kind of form it the way you want it to be.

THE MODERATOR: Dan Towriss, we also have in addition to Caitlin being here, which is amazing, we have two IndyCar champions that are here tomorrow in Colton Herta and Marcus Ericsson. Colton used to live here in Belleair. Talk about the crossover in sports, golf, basketball and IndyCar, and how golf is connecting all of that together?

DAN TOWRISS: Well, really golf was the start of all of it. Going back to the very beginning, the first LPGA tournament we sponsored was at Brickyard Crossing, which was at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, which really was the foray into racing to begin with. So to some degree it's bringing it full circle but now we're making the racers come to the golf course.

When I first sponsored a race car, I didn't really know much about it. I remember telling Larry Foyt, just make sure that car is on the golf course in August when all the fans walk through the gates.

We've grown a little bit since then in the world of motorsports, but really happy to have Colton Herta and Marcus Ericsson here, and really just with Caitlin, as well, having all these athletes that have associations with Gainbridge here with Annika to support her event and just to really show that it really is one big team, and kind of like Annika said in the ad for Caitlin, greatness knows greatness, and it's really great to have all these Gainbridge athletes here today.

THE MODERATOR: You have a special announcement you'd like to make?

DAN TOWRISS: Absolutely, so we talked about Parity Week and the 21 sponsors over 14 states, and we just thought with No. 22 in the house today we really couldn't leave it on No. 21, so we wanted to have one more gift to go to the Caitlin Clark Foundation, so we want to end on that No. 22.

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