

# The Annika driven by Gainbridge at Pelican

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

## Annika Sorenstam

## Caitlin Clark

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome back to the Albatross Room, Pelican Golf Club, for the 2024 The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican.

Now we have Annika Sorenstam, tournament host, namesake, and we have WNBA star, Rookie of the Year, Gainbridge ambassador, Caitlin Clark together here to speak with the media.

I'll ask both of you a couple opening questions and then we'll open up to the media. First one, you two just did the Women's Leadership Summit talking about empowering women's sports. Just recap that a little bit. Just touch on some of the topics that you guys discussed in the Women's Leadership Summit and we'll get into the golf and the pro-am.

CAITLIN CLARK: Come on.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: You're the guest.

CAITLIN CLARK: It was great. I think the cool thing about that is you felt the energy in the room. The amount of women sitting in there and so passionate about being a leader in their space, whether it was sport, business, whatever it is.

I think that was what's so cool about it. Obviously getting to sit next to Annika on stage was pretty special for myself.

I think a lot of things that me and Annika said is we share a lot of the same values. I think that's really cool, being driven but so do they at the same time. We're professional athletes or played sports or whatever it was, but at the same time in their lives it all relates.

People at times forget that we're real humans too and we're driven by the same thing they are; maybe just achieving things a little bit differently. You can just feel the



energy and excitement in the room. I thought that's what was so cool about it.

THE MODERATOR: Annika?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, same answer. No, I agree. It's always fun when people from different demographics and industries get together and share ideas, you know, just listening. And, I mean, at the end of the day there is a lot of common ideas and common thoughts.

It's also thoughts on how they achieve and what's important, the motivation and what drives you. Then listening to Kathy Ireland who has done amazing things. I think many people think of her as a beautiful model and then just to kind of go on and do what she does now with this empire, she probably just started just like us enjoying what we do and took a path on its own.

Like Caitlin said, leadership, self-branding, and I don't know, you pick up pointers here and there. To me that's inspirational. Just listening to Caitlin, her work ethic and what's important to her. She's just starting her round of golf, her journey. She just tee'd off on hole 1 or 2. I made the turn around. Kathy Ireland probably on the 15th hole.

We have our journeys but you can still learn and improve and keep moving. I think that the Summit is really a fun way to bring in some women that are successful in their industry but they like to hear from other women.

I think it inspires. A lot of women feel like maybe I'm alone and I don't know what to do. The empowerment, and everybody walked away and they were so energized and just ready to keep on going.

THE MODERATOR: Looking ahead to tomorrow and the pro-am, so Caitlin, you're playing with world No. 1, Nelly Korda on your first nine.

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, no pressure.

THE MODERATOR: Then you're playing with Annika Sorenstam on the back nine. I know you've been practicing. I know you have a coach in Indianapolis that



you've been working with.

Talk a little bit about your excitement going into tomorrow, one, playing with Nelly and Annika, and looking forward to being out here on the PGA Tour.

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think I'm just excited honestly. I'm not a professional golfer, so I think just having fun. Getting to be with two of the best probably ever to play this game, it's super fun and special for me. I'm a fan of both of them and a fan of all the women on this Tour.

I think it's absolutely incredible. It's special for myself. I've tried to practice as much as I can. I mean, you know, I'm just the average golfer. I'm going to hit some good, I'm going to hit some bad. It is what it is.

Just going to try not to hit anyone standing outside of the ropes. But it'll be fun. I'm excited for it.

**Q. Annika, how about you? Playing with Caitlin tomorrow; going to give her any pointers?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Please.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I'm sure she's going to get quite a few lessons with Nelly. Nelly will be about power and hitting it long. You said you're strong. Maybe I have to come in and fine tune that part of it.

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: You're an athlete and you're used to crowds, and I'm sure you play better under pressure. I'm a senior golfer now, so I have been working a little bit on my game because I needed to. It's all about having fun. Playing with Dan over there.

CAITLIN CLARK: Yes.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It's all about having fun and sharing experiences. It's going to be very memorable. Look forward to playing the golf course. I've been out. It looks great. Just to really hit a few divots out there, it's going to be fun.

**Q. So this is a part of your partnership relationship with Gainbridge, Group 1001.**

CAITLIN CLARK: Uh-huh.

**Q. Colton and Marcus will be here as guest caddies tomorrow.**

CAITLIN CLARK: Hopefully get so good tips. Counting on

them.

THE MODERATOR: Kind of the same question we asked in the previous press conference. This is more a crossover sports tomorrow with golf and basketball and Indycar. Talk about that, how Gainbridge is providing that.

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I'm just obviously really thankful for Gainbridge and everything they do not only in women's sports, but sports in general. It's tremendous. I feel very lucky to be a partner of theirs.

Obviously as you guys talked about it started before I was drafted by the Indiana Fever, so I feel it was fate in a way. It worked out perfectly. Now I live in Indianapolis. I play in Gainbridge Fieldhouse every single night and I absolutely love it. I just feel very thankful.

The thing I would say is I feel sports unites people. That's what this feels like, too. It's bringing people together where they can find joy in something. I think that's what so beautiful about sports and what I really love about it and what I loved about it my whole life. Some of my best memories from being a kid or spending time with my family or friends have been around sports and how it brings people together.

That's exactly what this feels like, and I'm sure I'll remember this for the rest of my life.

**Q. Caitlin, growing up were there any golfers in particular that you were watching on TV that you looked up to?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Honestly I tried to watch as much as I can. Rory was probably one of my favorite players growing up. I would have the TV on watching him. I had this pink cute golf club set growing up that I got for one of my birthdays. I would beg my dad to take me out and go golfing.

I loved it. I played just about every sport growing up. I remember when I had one off weekend of not playing soccer or basketball, whatever it was, I begged my dad to take me. Obviously wasn't very good, but I just loved being outside and trying something new and the challenge of golf. Obviously a lot different from definitely basketball and the team aspect.

It's much more individual. So that's another challenge I love about it, too.

THE MODERATOR: Caitlin, what was your first reaction when this idea was presented to you? Also take us through the last couple months of what the prep has been

like. Have you focused on playing being practicing, instruction?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I mean, I've known about this for a while and I've been pretty excited about it for a while. Honestly, it's been in conversation before I decided if I was going to go back to college for a year. I didn't know if I would be able to make this event this year. I'm fortunate that I am.

You know, having my first WNBA season behind me and being here is super cool. I've tried to take as much time as I can to practice, but there is only so much hope. You just cross your fingers, pray.

No, I've practiced a little bit and I just had the quote about becoming a professional golfer. Everybody thought I was serious. I was not serious. I love it. I love being outside and making it competitive with my friends.

Yeah, that's what's been fun about it. It's challenging and getting to come here and be around the best and have a good time is what I'm looking forward to.

**Q. I think average golfers everywhere would agree they have about three or four swing thoughts at any given time. Interested to know your swing thoughts in golf, and is that weird for you coming from a sport where a jump shot is natural?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I mean, obviously a jump shot is a lot easier. I was joking, maybe Annika should come to the basketball court and we can work on her jump shot. No, I think I tried to change my swing. Honestly, it is what it is.

I don't know. It's fun. I love golf. I love the challenge of it. I'm definitely looking forward to it.

**Q. Caitlin, you're standing next to a generational talent as a generational talent. Is anything from Annika's career, how she carries herself? You talked about how similar you guys are. Is there anything you really look up to her or somebody like her that you want to emulate as you continue on in your career?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think the coolest thing about her -- and it's way beyond golf -- is her impact she's had on people. I think as a professional athlete, yes, you love the sports, the wins, you love the titles, whatever it is. But it's the way you impact people, and obviously she's clearly done that.

She just represents that in everything she does, whether it's the events she puts on, her foundation, the way she interacts one on one with somebody passing by in the halls

here. You can see it and she lives it every single day.

For me it's cool to watch and be a part of that. I hope to be able to be that one day as well. So she's just a great representation of truly what a great role model not only for women's athletes, but just women across the country in the golf or sports world.

I feel very lucky to just have a little experience with her.

**Q. I know you played in a pro-am before at the John Deer. What were the nerves like there and when you were outside of your comfort zone, what are things you go back to to help you?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Oh, gosh, that was probably a couple years ago now. I was pretty nervous. I'll probably be nervous tomorrow, too. I don't know. I mean, I remind myself, like I don't really care what happens. Doesn't really matter. I don't play golf for a living.

Just have fun with it. This isn't super serious. Enjoy the experience. There were so many people that would kill to be in my position or in my shoes. The people following outside the ropes would love an opportunity to hit a ball on the first tee or something like that.

So just remind yourself how cool this experience is and don't let it pass you by. I think that's anything I do in life. Whatever I get to do and the opportunities I have, soak it in. A lot of people would trade and want to have these opportunities as well.

**Q. Caitlin, somewhat related question.**

CAITLIN CLARK: Statement. Here we go.

**Q. When an athlete starts out you just want to get as good as you can, and as you get better you realize your platform, recognition begins to grow; then you have opportunities like a Summit and the opportunity to influence others. For you, at 22 when did that start to hit you? And at 22, how do you prepare for that?**

CAITLIN CLARK: I feel like my life has definitely changed a lot over the last couple years from the end of my college career when we made the Final Four the first time, making it the second time, and now completing my first WNBA season.

Life changes pretty quickly. I kind of tried to just go with the flow the best I can and take everything in stride; not let to pass me by.

Like you said, I'm 22 years old so this can be a lot at times.

I think I surround myself with really good people. I don't have to shoulder this all by myself. I feel very fortunate to have really good people around me, whether it's teammates and coaches or friends and family.

I just try to surround myself with really good people and share a lot of experiences I get with them, too. That's what makes it really fun.

Yeah, just go with the flow, enjoy these experiences. Obviously life has changed a lot. You know, I try to live in the same exact manner I did when I showed up in college and stepped on campus and try to be the same authentic person I am.

For me, like I feel like I am living in a dream, and at the same time, it's special. I try not let it pass me by. Just thankful that I get to have these opportunities.

**Q. You and your fellow W stars have had a huge impact on women's basketball. Annika said earlier that women's golf has made huge progress, but the work isn't done. Is there anything you can take from your first season in the W and your experiences to advice women's golf how to take the next steps more into the sporting spotlight?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Gosh, I don't think I have any advice really. They're doing pretty great. I think one of the coolest things is when people show up for the first time and then they continue to come back. Once they give it an opportunity they see how great the product is, you know, whatever that is.

Whether they turn on the TV and then they're going to turn it on again. Whether they buy a ticket and they're following alongside, sitting in the seats at a game. People realize how tremendous the product is and how great women's sports are.

I think that's been not my biggest piece of advice, but give it a chance. Turn it on. Watch it. You see how tremendous the product is.

Obviously women's basketball has grown a lot, but it's every women's sport. It's across the board, and I think that that's what's really cool.

It's only growing, but still so much room to keep going and going. As somebody that loved women's sports from a young age, it really gets me excited about the future of where it can go.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

CAITLIN CLARK: Gosh, depends on the day. Got to ask me that? I don't know. Driver because I'm pretty strong so I can -- when I hit it good, 1 out of 10 times it gets you fired up. When you hit it bad, it's bad.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

CAITLIN CLARK: My handicap is like 16. Stroke a hole, average golfer.

**Q. This is your second pro-am, one on the PGA and now the LPGA. Are there any courses you haven't played that you would like to sometime in the future?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Gosh, there are a lot. I would love to play Pebble. Honestly, anywhere. I'm open to any of them. Wherever I can get on. Going to Arizona for Thanksgiving. Play a few there. That will be fun with my family. Haven't been on vacation since the season ended. It will be a nice break for me.

When I have time I love to play golf. It's just when the time opens up and I can travel and go play places, I love being outside and playing new places. Honestly, wherever.

**Q. Annika, question I wanted to ask you is we already talked about the Indycar drivers being here, Caitlin being here. The growth and notoriety in a year's span, how do you put that into words?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I'm very thankful. I think the team in general are thankful. It's a lot of hard work behind the scenes and people are interested in the event and want to be engaged and part of it. It's just elevating the tournament.

This is the second to the last event, so a lot of things are at stake for the players, whether it's Rookie of the Year, some of the scoring averages. People just want to be part of it. This location, this time of year, it's fun.

With Gainbridge bringing in all these people, I think it's -- I don't know, this is one of the best weeks of our lives here. We come here and see everybody we know and be part of the event. Who knows what Gainbridge have in store for next year. I'm curious. Going to be hard to beat.

So far so good.

CAITLIN CLARK: Uh-oh, Dan.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Just fun to see.

**Q. Caitlin, have you had a chance to play the course yet?**

CAITLIN CLARK: I haven't even seen it. I'll be out there at 7:00 a.m. and hoping for the best. I'll find out where I'm supposed to aim and hope it goes there.

**Q. What did you think seeing and knowing the damage that was here that they got it ready to play tomorrow?**

CAITLIN CLARK: I have quite a bit of family in the St. Petersburg area, so I've been following it quite a bit.

But obviously it's very impressive. I actually texted a couple people that helped me with all my stuff. Oh, my gosh, is everything going to be okay? Will be still be able to play? I've been so excited about this.

I know they were in touch with a lot of people helping put the event on and they gave us good vibes, so we had our fingers crossed. I feel very fortunate and thankful for everybody that has put in all the hard work to make this course really great and special so this event could happen. Obviously for Annika it's very special. I'm lucky to be here.

**Q. Not seeing the course, what's the game plan for tomorrow?**

CAITLIN CLARK: I don't have one.

**Q. Rip it?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Should I? I don't know.

**Q. I am curious, have you ever played with any of the other WNBA players? Anybody that's good competition for you?**

CAITLIN CLARK: I haven't played with anybody on any other team, but some of my teammates golf. One of my teammates was a state champion golfer so she's pretty good. I haven't played with her yet. I think she might be scared or something. I don't know why. Her game might have gotten rusty.

Some of them do play. We like to go out there and have fun. Obviously it's hard because the WNBA season is in the summer. So that's the one tough thing about the W, is it's in the summer so I don't get to go out and play as much as I did in college.

It's been fun. We're really competitive with whenever we do so there are some really intense battles out there.

THE MODERATOR: All right, everybody. Thank you. Annika and Caitlin, thank you.