

# The Annika driven by Gainbridge at Pelican

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Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

## Nelly Korda

## Annika Sorenstam

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, I am so pleased to be joined here at The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican by our third-time champion, Nelly Korda and tournament host Annika Sorenstam.

Nelly, start with you. Just the emotions of the day. Really great back nine to take your third victory here at this golf course that I know you love so much.

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, it's so nice to play in front of friends and family so close to home. I think that's what makes me so comfortable out here.

Didn't start the day the way I wanted to, but it's not how you start it's how you finish. To have that run that I did on those five holes, yeah, just kept myself in it all day.

Didn't make big mistakes but couldn't get really anything going. To go on that run that I did feels really nice.

**Q. You're two people starting to be known by only one name in golf. Annika, for you, how special is it to have someone like Nelly doing things that you used to do back in your day win your event?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, any tournament would like the top player to win. I think we had a wonderful field this week. It got quite exciting until Nelly got on that run. You never know until it's over.

It's always great to have the No. 1 player in the world play in your tournament and play is well. Like she said, she has friends and family here and everybody knows her, so it's a great story.

I think the way she played this course, it was a good way it display how good women's golf, especially around the greens. Maybe you couldn't see it on TV, but the greens were lightning and she handed it so beautifully. To have a

player of her caliber, obviously this year has been a tremendous year, not just being No. 1, but really captured every award there is I think. Good for you, and happy to have you as a champion.

**Q. Nelly, one special person showed up the last three holes. Talk about what it meant to have Seby here.**

NELLY KORDA: I didn't know he was there on the last three. Just saw him on 18 when I made that last putt. Karen pointed it out on the green. Never won in front of him but family is so important to me. For him to drive up -- it's not that close from my parents house, hour and 40. For him to drive an hour 40 with three holes remaining, one, he was very confident in me, and, two, just really nice to have his support and be out here.

We haven't seen each other since the middle of summer, and to hug him, it was really, really nice.

**Q. Giving all that you've been through this year, does this win feel different to all the rest?**

NELLY KORDA: Just makes me really, really grateful for my team. The middle of the year was very, very tough part of the year, but I'm so grateful to have people that I can lean on. That will be with me through the hard times. I feel like in the world of sports when someone is going through a hard time, aka the player, people tend to search for something better.

My people stuck with me and grinded out the hard times and for that I'm super grateful.

**Q. You gave a shoutout to your physio.**

NELLY KORDA: Kimberlina. A lot of time.

**Q. What specifically has she spent the most time helping you with?**

NELLY KORDA: It's a lot of neck strengthening. A lot of it. I mean, it was three times a day that I was seeing her and she lived 40 minutes away. So she was coming to my house three times a day. Before and after practice. I



mean, to every work out. I think she needs a vacation that I will gladly pay for.

**Q. Annika, few people know what it's like to win this many events in a year; you do. Can you put in perspective what this -- how hard it is to do that on Tour and what makes Nelly so special?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, it's been a while, so I don't remember everything. I mean, obviously it's fun doing it. When you're on a roll you're on a roll. I'm just trying to think what it would be like today. It's very competitive out there. You play tournaments in Europe, Asia, you play everywhere.

It's just very tough competition. I think the hardest part is probably just to keep motivating and working and trying to get better.

Like she said, when you have maybe a few bumps in the road to keep working and believing in yourself and keep working towards those goals. You know, what's next.

Be interesting to see what your goals will be for '25 because you got to a new point in your career. It's like what am I going to do now? Like I said on the green, I just hope you're enjoying it. It's so easy to kind of keep going forward that you forget really all the hard work you put in to get there.

You set the bar so high so you almost expect it every week. There is a fine line where you push yourself and still can enjoy the moment and appreciate what you've done.

NELLY KORDA: Yep.

**Q. In that stretch of five birdies on the back nine, was there a point where it felt like maybe it did back in the spring when everything might have seemed to roll well?**

NELLY KORDA: I was playing really well all week. I hit some loose shots on the front nine and may have not rolled in the putts on the front nine. On the back nine I always felt really, really good.

I just stuck to my game plan. I just needed one putt to really go in, and that did on No. 11. From then on, I just felt a little bit more comfortable on the greens.

I mean, they're super slick. It may not seem on the outside but they're so fast. With the amount of break and they're tricky too, very subtle. One putt can break both ways.

Being committed to your line on these greens and hitting it

hard enough but not hitting it too hard where you have another four-footer coming back, that was the key.

So for me to hit it a little closer and roll some putts in, felt really good.

**Q. And I know that they all fall under the calendar year 2024. Considering everything that's happened in between, how far back does it seem the days of Chevron and the days of winning in Bradenton...**

NELLY KORDA: Years ago. It feels like lifetimes ago. Just life kind of goes by in a blur like Annika said. Sometimes you do have to step back and smell the roses. With sports you're constantly looking ahead and going, what's next, what's next, never kind of reminiscing.

Sometimes taking a step back and putting the phone away and going on a vacation and realizing what you just did is really nice. Yeah, I mean the beginning of the year feels like a long time ago. Yep.

**Q. So you mentioned out on the green that you did feel some nerves.**

NELLY KORDA: Uh-huh.

**Q. You sure didn't look like you were nervous.**

NELLY KORDA: Yeah.

**Q. Can you kind of elaborate a little bit on what was going on?**

NELLY KORDA: I mean, I was in contention after a really long time, and I felt like in the middle of the year when I was in contention I just made a really stupid mistake or made a really big error that turned out to be -- that took me straight out of the tournament.

For me I was obviously trying to focus on what was right in front of me and just playing golf. At the end of the day, I mean, you are nervous. You're in the battle of it. You're going in a sense head-to-head.

So you're feeling all the nerves, but trying to stay composed out there.

That's why I have Jason who I believe in who I have spent a lot of years with that I can rely on and lean on.

Also distractions are good. You know, you get into the zone but can't be in the zone for too long then it can eat you alive. Looking out into the distance and talking to Jay on about something other than golf has really helped me.

**Q. Nelly, what is the significance of having Annika's name on this event and how significant is it to now win with her name on it?**

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, Annika is someone I've looked up to and so many other people have looked up to. She's a driving force in our game.

Having her out here, playing in front of her and having her name on the tournament just makes it so much sweeter to win it.

Also, I think it just grows the game because you have all the legends coming back trying to grow it as well. I feel like that's the great thing about golf. Everyone is involved and everyone is a family.

**Q. Nelly, how do you feel you've grown as a person this year through all you accomplished?**

NELLY KORDA: A lot. Feel like I definitely matured a lot. I realized what really matters truly in life, you know, through the tough times. I would say you're not really grateful for them. You're like why me? Why is this happening to me? Here we go again.

But you have to be grateful for those times because they do help you grow. They make you realize what really truly matters. The people that really truly look out for you and are there for you will stick through it with you.

**Q. Annika, what it is about this golf course that brings out the best players to the top of the board each and every year?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It's quite challenging. It's a second-shot type course and you have to hit your iron shots in the right place. These greens are so undulated.

NELLY KORDA: It's open off the tee, but very difficult going into the greens, especially with how soft the fairways were and how firm the greens were this year and how slick they were.

I think you have to be on top of your game. It's so grainy around the greens that you have to chip it well, you have to putt it well, and hit your second shots really well as well.

You have to be on top of it. I feel like that's maybe why the top players play well out here. Everything kind of has to click.

**Q. Are these the fastest greens you played this year?**

NELLY KORDA: No, think U.S. Women's Open were really fast. Obviously those were way more undulated back to front. But these were probably Top 5 fastest greens I played on this year, yeah.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I agree. That's what I was going to say.

**Q. Nelly, for all you've done this year I think they mentioned on the telecast first time you birdied five in a row.**

NELLY KORDA: No, I definitely birdied five in a row. I know that. This year maybe, but I birdied five in a row 2016 Sebonack U.S. Women's Open to make the cut, yeah.

**Q. Can you take us inside that zone a little bit?**

NELLY KORDA: I didn't even know that I birdied five in a row until I looked at my scorecard. It goes in like a blur.

I mean, I birdie 11; I finally get one there.

You wait for such a long time on 12. It's a tough tee shot. Stick it close; obviously have a four-footer; drain that.

Then the longer one I made on 13.

Then 14 reachable par-5. I mean, you kind of expect to make a birdie there.

And then I kind of pulled my tee shot on the par-3 just a little bit but it worked out.

**Q. What did you hit there?**

NELLY KORDA: 6-iron. Sometimes you got to have a little bit of luck on your side, too.

**Q. Annika, you remember that zone. What's it like to inside that as a player?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, that's what we work so hard for. Golf at those times seems simple, right? Big fairways, big greens, big cups, and we have a lot of confidence. I think the better you play just kind of keeps on going and you believe in yourself. You really don't think about bad shots. Don't think about bad bounces. Just the positive vibe that you have.

NELLY KORDA: But, oh, does it humble you after.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It does, no doubt. When you start hitting bad shots you get the opposite effect. That's the

only thing you see then. Narrow fairways, small greens, and no cup, and then you just think of bad shots. When you're playing really well, I remember standing on the tee. I never saw bunkers, water hazards. You just see birdies. That confidence is so important. I'm sure that's what Nelly feeling right now.

I know it's been some ups and downs, but you know you have it in you. When you can have that mindset and not let the negative creep in, you make good decisions and it's easy to make decisions. You don't question yourself. Okay, you see it. Cup right and you hit cup right. When you don't have that you're like well, maybe it's half a cup. That hesitation, when I stand over the ball it's like you're not really committed properly.

**Q. Nelly, you did talk about the middle of the year sometimes when there are doubts in there when you played.**

NELLY KORDA: Uh-huh.

**Q. What helped you get through that?**

NELLY KORDA: My team, my support system. I mean, I do truly rely on it a lot and I think it's really important to have good, genuine people around who -- you know, when you get knocked down to stand up, and sometimes you just need a little bit of help.

**Q. Nelly, congrats on the win. Wanted to ask about the win and where it was. Obviously having Sebastian there must've very been special to you. When did you find out he would be there for and you what do you think the 19th hole celebration with the friends and family will look like tonight for you after the win?**

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, I didn't know he was there until I won. After I walked off the green I greeted him and he gave me a massive hug. We talked about him coming out but I didn't think he was going to just because he hasn't been home in a long time and probably wanted to spend a little time at home and didn't want to drive over an hour.

I was happy to see him out. Haven't seen him since the middle of the summer since I went to see him in New York at the U.S. Open. Yeah, I mean, having my family out here and get to go celebrate with them is super special.

As for celebrations, I have next week and I don't want to be feeling bad, so I will be going to sleep.

**Q. Nelly, wanted to go back to the neck injury real quick. You mentioned ahead of the tournament you rushed your rehab to play these final two events.**

NELLY KORDA: Yes.

**Q. What was the initial timeline for you to fully recover?**

NELLY KORDA: I don't know truly. I don't know the exact timeline. Everyone's body is different. For some people may take maybe a little slower. For others a little faster. I was seeing Kim for rehab three times a day. I really did want to play these last three events.

If my body wasn't cooperating I knew it wasn't going to be smart to play these two, but I was happy with the progress that I was making. Didn't really play for too long before this event. Didn't really know what to expect going into this event.

Just happy that Jamie Mulligan could fly down to see me just before this event. He was out here with me on Monday. Came to practice with me on Sunday before this event. Jason drove over to my side of Florida just before this event to do like a one-day bootcamp.

Did some work with my first coach, David Whelan. Super grateful for my entire team.

**Q. How long were those sessions rehabbing three times a day?**

NELLY KORDA: It varied honestly. I mean, it was about -- you can't really overdo it, so between 30 to an hour.

**Q. If this tournament wasn't in Florida where it was a short trip for you, do you think you could have got in the tournament and played with your injury?**

NELLY KORDA: Yeah. I mean, if I was feeling the way I was feeling before this event, then yes.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, thanks so much.

NELLY KORDA: Thank you.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Thank you.

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