

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

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Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Annika Sorenstam

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the virtual and physical media center here today with Annika Sorenstam.

I won't take up too much of your time because I know we got a lot of reporters here. Just wanted to know your thoughts on playing here again at the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, it's great to be back. This is my home course. It's where I live. It's nice to be playing in my backyard. I want thank Hilton Grand Vacations for putting this tournament up. I'm excited to play as a celebrity this year again to kind of kick start the season off.

The Tournament of Champions, LPGA, I think it's a big deal for the ladies. I enjoy playing my home course. Roll literally out of bed, I'm on the 16th hole, so nice to be heave.

Sometimes gets a little distracting when you're trying to have all the different roles in your life, taking kids to school and making lunch boxes and making the sandwiches and put a little mustard and mayo on it and everything like that.

But it's nice to be here. Family and friends are coming out to support, and the course is looking fabulous. It really is. Now this year we have a little better weather, so I am excited to be here. Looking at the field, it looks great on the LPGA side and also on the celebrity side.

Q. You mentioned that you're a member here. How does the club receive this event?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think they're super excited to be here. I know many of the members the last month or so, they're excited to see first of all how good the course is. The shape is generally good, but to see it peak this time of year.

A lot of members on the range wishing good luck and we're going to be there and support you. They're excited. A lot



of members are hosting players I'm sure you know. They want to make sure the players feel very welcome.

I think it's been great. Everybody is excited to be part of this event in different ways.

Q. And this is arguably the best golf course in Orlando. What does it mean to have the Tour have an event out here?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think it's really important, and I like that it's kind of kicking off the season. I know everybody wants to be in Florida this time of year, but the course is in good shape and I think it's a nice way to just expose Lake Nona in a way to show really what we have. This is a gem. People that live here have been here for a long time. I've been here for, what over 20 years.

It's just a great community, schools, everything around is just nice. I think it's a great way showcase Lake Nona in a good way, and we can see a lot of improvements when you got on the hotel, the concert series. There is a lot of fun activities. I'm proud to be a member and I'm proud to be here, and look forward to a great week.

Q. First of all, what is your playing schedule going to be like this year? How much have you been practicing?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: You know, I really don't know. I haven't really prepared as much as I would like to come into this event. We been busy on a lot of different fronts.

So I'm just going to take -- obviously I'm playing in week, as you know, and then Mike and I heading to Portugal in two weeks to play a senior event.

And then I actually will have to see. The schedule is very -- I really don't know where to play. I know obviously LPGA is not where I belong anymore. So just kind of see how it goes and how I feel. We're very busy on the side, whether it's foundation, different businesses with Fizzy Beez, et cetera, and of course the family.

So I want to see how it goes, how I feel, and kind of take it in there.

Q. I'm sure you're aware there has been a little bit of



talk this week about the locker room situation.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Uh-huh.

Q. What's your status this week with the locker? Do you have one? What's it like in general as a member, and how important do you think that space is for players?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I mean, I saw you last night and you said, did you get the memo? I'm not an LPGA player. I don't get the memo anymore.

I really don't know. It's obviously unfortunate what's out there. I think I'm focusing on playing. I think just being here, the golf course is fantastic. It's one of the better courses that ladies will play all year and people are excited to be here.

It's unfortunate that that story is kind of being discussed. I just want to focus on the game, and hopefully they can sort all the logistics out and we can focus on what's important.

Q. Last year you played very, very well. You are a celebrity this year you were a celebrity last year with your chances very good. What do you think your chances are this year?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, you know, I want to improve one spot. (Laughter.) That would be great.

Q. My money is on you.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Thank you. I was so close last year and really didn't finish the way I wanted. The conditions were tough. You're out here, it was cold. I was probably wearing everything I own, lots of layers. The course was long and just really -- I was grinding the whole time.

I feel like this year the weather looks a little nicer. Maybe that will favor me. I don't really hit the ball as far as some of these guys and I need a little extra distance with warm temperature. I feel the course is really playing great. The greens are fast, they're firm.

So I'm excited about that. Again, I'm not going to underestimate any of the celebrities. I've played with many of them, and they're just really, really good. They're obviously very competitive and they're excited to be here. Last year was kind of the first time I felt like I have a little bit more local knowledge. Now they do. They played here as well.

So just look forward to teeing it up and having a good time

together and see what happens.

Q. One other question about junior girls. I have a lot of junior golfers and junior girls. What advice would you give to a junior girl today?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It's all about having fun. Enjoy the game. Go out there, you can meet a lot of great friends. But it's a game for life. Teaches you a lot about the life skills that are out there. Just give it a try and have a good time. Be outside and enjoy what's it has to offer.

Q. When you were playing what was your season opener like? Did you ever have one that is fun-filled and kind of loose like this one? Golf is such a mental game. How did that kind of -- how did you treat the season opener and did you have one like this?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, I think I'm in a different spot now. I'm playing a celebrity. The pressure is not there. It's a little different than if I was one of the champions, one of the LPGA players. I would go into this event a lot more focused, a lot more prepared. This is a big deal. You got the very best players here this week, so you really want to make sure you get off to a good start.

So their approach is a little different than mine nowadays, but it's important. This is a big tournament for the LPGA, kick starting the season here in Florida. I think whoever wants to play wants to show they're going to have a good year.

Q. Along those lines about the tournament, what do you think is the benefit for the LPGA players to be playing with celebrities in this -- I don't want to say a laid back event, because it's still a tournament for them -- but having that extra element with the celebrities right next to them?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think many of them really enjoy it. Keep in mind, the celebrities have done something, a big accomplishment in their industry, whether it's in acting or sports, you name it. I think there are a lot of similarities as far as just knowing what they have gone through with the commitment and dedication and skill to have in their sport.

So I think it's fun. I played with Jack Wagner the other day, just kind of talking about he's been really good in his field and talking about his approach to life and what he's doing now.

That just shows you that the game of golf brings people together from all areas, sports, et cetera. So I have a good time doing it. I'm sure the girls do as well, or I should say

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

the ladies.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Thank you, everybody.

Keep in mind, a lot of these celebrities are really good players. Mardy Fish for example is always going to be in the hunt. He's an amazing athlete and has a lot to contribute.

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So if I was one of the players I would talk to him and say, hey do you have some lessons? What have you done? What have you experienced in life? He's had quite the journey and quite the experiences to share.

So just playing with them, we can all enrich our experiences together.

Q. LPGA has grown and evolved and changed so much over the years. You've been a part that. Were there any times throughout your time on tour that you dealt with any issues like Beth Ann asked about with not have locker facilities?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Oh, I'm sure, but I think that every time it's been addressed and every time we made improvements and learned from that.

I think when you look at the organization, the LPGA is a fantastic organization in so many ways. The players is really the first thing on their mind. They want to create a great experience. And then you have sponsors; we want to make sure they're happy and the fans are happy.

There are a lot of people that the LPGA tries to fulfil and make a complete event. We all learn from different things and happens along the road. It's just nothing different than any other sport, any other business, any other family situation. We all learn and just got to move on and deal with it and fix it.

I just don't -- let's focus on the tournament here and let's work together. This is going to be a great year for the LPGA overall. Let's do it together.

THE MODERATOR: I will close it out then. Expectations for tomorrow's pairing with Gemma and Brian McCann.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, haven't played with either of them, so I look forward to a new pairing. It's going to be fun to go out there and get this tournament started.

The weather looks great. I've asked for a lot of tickets for my friends and family and look forward to a lot of support and a great round.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much.

