

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Annika Sorenstam

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Annika for joining us here at the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions. Obviously you're a resident here and have played this tournament several times. Tell us about this week and what you're looking forward to most.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, thank you. It's great to be here. It's highlight for all of us. When I say we, for the family obviously and for Mike and the kids. To be able to compete at our home course and come here and practice and see the LPGA and meet some of our friends on the celebrity side, it's a good way to kind of kick start the season.

I've been practicing the last two weeks trying to work on my game through the winter spell that we had. Reminds me of my younger days growing up in Sweden. It's great to be here. Look forward to a wonderful week.

Q. This is the start of the LPGA's 75th season. Can you talk about looking back at 75 years. Obviously you weren't here all those years. You played such an instrumental role in the Founders role. Can you talk about 75 being a number?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, like you said, I'm old but not that old. But it's amazing to see the growth of women's sports and especially golf. You look back and you think about the trail blazers, Founders, what they did with their vision.

Here we are in 2025 and certainly different level on every aspect I would say. Super proud our of the organization, what I'm seeing and hearing and what I'm experiencing. But that's why I think it's fun for me to still be able to somewhat compete. I know we're not in the same competition as them but I will be playing with some LPGA players. Just to have a foot in the game, I love that. As you know I really still enjoy the game.

Yeah, something I'm super proud of when I think of an



organization and I'm part of that to have the history that the LPGA does.

Q. Do you think at these moments with 75, are you far enough from retirement to look back and see the legacy you left on the game?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I mean, I think I when -- you know, I don't really look at the things that I did from that perspective. I think it's easier if other people judge your contributions. I look at my years on the LPGA and makes me smile. I'm certainly proud of what I achieved, you know, reaching my goals and having a chance to really pursue my career.

But I'm glad that you mentioned it. I think everybody who has contributed feels good about seeing something grow and something getting better every year.

Q. When you look at this golf tournament which brings together the LPGA pros with the celebrities, talk about the impact it's had in terms of bringing new fans and viewers to the sport of golf.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think it definitely does. You know, if you're a golf fan you would probably watch anything when you bring in baseball players, actors, whatever, singers and dancers that are here, it brings in a different demographic. People can relate to maybe their games more than the LPGA professionals. Oh, I can hit that shot. I know what that's like.

See some of their idols inside the ropes and see them pursue another sport, I think it's great to have them all come together. The friendships that have been built here the last few years I think will last a long time.

Q. Any particular celebrities you're looking forward to meeting this week?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think I met most of them. I've been playing in this event and also the Lake Tahoe event a few times. It's also nice to rekindle the friendship and talk about it.



You know, well, Jack Wagner, we always play. Supposed to play with Mardy Fish. I think he chickened out or did something. Then played with the defending champion, Jeff. I haven't played with him before. He was very, very nice and he can play. I mean, he's a great athlete and he was hitting some shots out there that was just kind of fun to watch.

Who knows? When you play in those events it's fun to play with different players. I know Joe Pavelski, the hockey player. He's super nice. But he's also good. I got to keep an eye on him.

Q. You've been working on some swing adjustment I see on your social media. Can you talk a little bit about that?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It never ends. Never ends.

Q. That's my question: How much do you change and just at this stage in your career, what is your training like? What is your technique like? Does that constantly change?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah. I mean -- well, first of all, my coach, Henry that I used since I was 14, 15, he came and he said, I'm coming so I'm going to hang out. I said great. He came for 12 days. I said, that's a lot of work. I don't practice that much anymore.

We really just dissected my swing and my putting especially. I think the last few years I just been getting in some bad habits and maybe haven't really paid too much attention. Just kind of played with it and tried to compensate what I was doing.

Now we got back to literally the basics. Wow, I feel like I felt like a beginner, reconstructing my golf swing. Now I'm hitting good shots, getting the ball up in the air and getting some of my distance back, which has been very frustrating.

I think I've been trying to muscle it, and when we muscle something we get the opposite effect, which you think you would know by now. You know, it's been good to refresh my thoughts about the swing and really the way the golfers are swinging today compared to when I started.

It's nice to learn a little bit about that as well. I guess I get a little extra energy just having something to work on and see if it works in competition.

Q. The mental aspect, is that still in place? Do you go back to what you had in your career or work on that as well?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Henry said, you used to do this and you used to do this. I'm like, well, I'm not doing that anymore. What do I got to do? I think a lot of it has been the turn, flexibility and strength, all of those things combined. My club head speed and ball speed have just really less and less and less. It's really frustrating when you know what it's supposed to look like and feel like.

To be able to turn a little bit more and being more efficient in my swing. So it was easier then and harder now.

Q. Does your son, Will, have more advice for you when you play here?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It's getting to that point, yeah. No, he has a lot of opinions about my game, which I enjoy that. Just listening to him. But sometimes he needs to have a filter.

But it's been fun to have amateur out here and watching. He wants to know where I'm hitting it and what my plan is. He was negotiating to come out here on Thursday, and then I said, well, you got school. I said well I really want to watch you play.

Talked to Mike about how well I was hitting it. Then of course he was being -- I really need to see how you hit it on Thursday, mommy. When you're playing so well now, I really need to see all those birdies you're going to make.

It was one of those. You're like, okay. (Laughter.)

Q. Does the competitor in you start to ask yourself, what is it going to take to win this event on my own course?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, every time. You know, I played in maybe 12 of these celebrity events. I finished everything I believe from second to fifth. I've had the chance and I just have not been able to put four rounds together.

That's what I like about this tournament here. This is four rounds and Tahoe is three. I feel like the more rounds maybe I have a bigger chance. We'll see. Then this year, the weather is a little nicer. I'm hoping that the warmth will make my ball fly a little further and shorter clubs in can be a little bit more aggressive.

And I do have home advantage. You would think I would be able to capitalize on that a little more. Keep in mind these guys are good. I really need to play solidly for four days. I think that's one the reasons I come back here. Not just because Hilton Grand Vacations is a sponsor of mine, but I want to know what it feels like to beat them at least

once.

Q. Going back to when you were just coming out on Tour, even had gone to college at UofA, what was kind of the European performance on the LPGA like? I think Laura Davies was probably the big name at the time. Who else was out there?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: We had a few fellow Swedes. Liselotte Neumann was somebody I looked up to. She was so popular lumbar. She won the U.S. Women's Open in 1988. I think many young girls just -- when she won, we all started dreaming. Maybe there is a chance for us to do that.

Helen Alfredsson was another player, Trish Johnson, Alison Nicholas, just to name a few out here. Those are the players that I had kind of watched from the sidelines either they represented Europe in Solheim Cup or just played in a few LET events in Sweden.

So I kind of watched them growing up and not necessarily followed in their footsteps because you never know, but they were a few years ahead. Like I always kept an eye on them.

Q. And did you have any particularly special relationship with any of the Founders as you got a chance to know them over the years?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: You know, I never really -- I mean, I've met the ones that were -- that I met on tour when they came out and just visited certain events.

I mean, Patty Berg was quite a character. She had amazing humor I remember. I mean, Louise Suggs I got the pleasure to meet. Kathy Whitworth of course.

Marlene Hagge I met also. And I'm trying to think of some of the names. They're blanking me at the moment.

It was very -- I mean, it was just when they showed up, it was just -- I think a lot of us had so much respect for them that we didn't really want to approach them. Especially as a rookie I was probably the last one -- I would be the last one in a row to say hi.

I always kept an eye and looked over and thought, thank you. So, yeah, it was pretty neat.

Q. You feel like you're kind of in their shoes a little bit now? I mean, none the original Founders are left. You, Juli Inkster, that generation that these pros are looking up to.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I never really thought about that. I don't know. They started the Tour so I think that puts them in a different level and different category.

I guess you have generations that kind of do their part, you know, hopefully to move it forward. With my generation, like you mentioned, Karrie and Seri and Lorena, that was kind of my group, I think we contributed with a few things, yeah.

Q. Obviously right now the LPGA is going through a leadership transition at the top. I'm curious to hear your thoughts, A, on the current state of the LPGA, and, B, if you were commissioner what changes would you make?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, no, very good question. Like you said it's an interesting time for the LPGA. I mean, I don't want to be the commissioner so I'm not -- but I mean, if you have a crystal ball we all want to be seen and heard, whether that's TV or any kind of exposure. The more the better.

I think when you look it's important to have somebody that can communicate. You have to communicate with a lot of people. I mean, you got the players, media, partners, the fans.

It's a complex job I think for a lot of reasons, but I have no doubt they're going to take their time and find the right person. I think women's sport is an amazing place right now. A lot of opportunity. A lot of upside in so many ways.

You talk to a lot of the players week after week, you see what kind of great athletes they are and individuals. Yeah, I think it will be an exciting job for somebody that's willing to take that on.

Yeah, it's easy to be a commissioner for a day and just point and point and point and then go. But, yeah, hopefully they have a search committee. They have hired some organization, a company, is search firm. Fingers crossed that the right person will step at the right time.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports