

Gainbridge LPGA

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Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Gabriela Ruffels

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the second to final pre-tournament press conference of the day. We are joined by recently turned professional, Gabi Ruffels.

Gabi, welcome, and thank you so much for taking the time with us. What were your thoughts coming into this week? Wrap it up into a couple sentences.

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, I feel like it's been kind of a long time coming. It was kind of a lot of work getting everything sorted to come here. I received the exemption, sponsor's exemption I think a month and a half ago when I was still an amateur, so I kind of had to decide what I wanted to do, play as an amateur or play as a pro.

So that whole process was a little bit challenging, but I'm happy with my decision and really excited to be here and excited to tee it up on Thursday.

THE MODERATOR: And how has that been just hearing so many of your friends and family giving you love and support this week?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: It's been awesome. I've been receiving so much support from even people outside of my friends and family, so it's been awesome. As I said, I just can't wait to tee it up tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Have you prepared any differently for this event being a pro, or have you just been sticking to your game?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Definitely sticking to my game, what I know works for me. I feel like there is no reason to really change things up. I've been able to have some success last year playing in a couple pro events, so nothing changes. I guess just the title. I don't have a parenthesis next to my name, so that's about it.

THE MODERATOR: I forgot to remind, for those watching, if you have any questions, raise your hand or type in the chat function that you have a question and we'll call on you.

Before that, I think I have a question about this week. There is a lot of surprises, including Annika being here. How do you feel about that, and do you hope to play with her this week?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: I mean, I think everyone wants to play with her this week. She's the greatest of all-time, and it's really cool to see her walking around. I saw her on the range a couple days ago. Yeah, I was kind of star struck, to be honest.

She came up to me this morning because I had played in her events because I'm -- I played in her Annika Intercollegiate at USC, so she came up and said hi and she was shall awesome and I got a picture with her, so it was really cool.

THE MODERATOR: And what would you say is your goal for this week other than of course to win?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, I don't really set goals. I just like to be out here. Always feel like I'm learning when I'm testing my game against the best in the world. Just go out there and I feel like you can't really control how you do, so just go out there and try and play my best and just of a lot of fun doing it.

Q. Hey, Gabi.

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Hello.

Q. You have a lot of professionals in your life. What's the best advice you have gotten about becoming a pro?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: I guess like, as I said, yeah, just kind of keeping everything the same. You know, I've been able to do well in a couple past pro events, so nothing really changes except that I'm not playing for USC anymore and I'm out here playing as a pro.

So kind of keep everything the same. Know that you're good enough to be out here and trust yourself and have fun out there.



Q. Speaking of icons along the lines of Annika, I saw that you met Billie Jean King for the first time. What was that experience like, and any good stories between her and your dad that you can share?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, so that was awesome. She was in the desert for a little bit and my parents have a place out in the desert. So she reached out to my dad and said that she wanted to come over and say hi. Apparently she's been following both mine and my brother's golf career, so that was really cool. Just getting to meet her, again, I was star struck. She's been such a pioneer in the women's sporting industry I guess, and it was really cool to hear her stories of how she got to where she is.

She's so passionate about really elevating the women's game, not only in tennis, but other sports, too, and wanted to ask me about women's golf and how that could be improved.

It was just awesome. I've heard her name and didn't really get to meet her before a couple weeks ago, so it was really cool to finally get to meet her.

Q. And just one follow up. What did you tell her when she asked how women's golf could be improved? What was your idea?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: What was her idea?

Q. Yours. She was asking you for ideas I thought maybe is what you said.

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, I mean -- yeah, good question. She wasn't really asking me about ideas. She was asking more about how the day-to-day is done and what it's kind of like out there. She was never really part of the golf scene. She was more a part of the tennis scene. So she was great. She asked me if I ever needed any help or wanted to ask any questions any time, so it was really cool to get to know her.

Q. I was just curious, as you mark your pro debut this week, in your mind what would be a successful week for you?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Successful week for me? As I said before, I kind of don't really set goals. I feel like that's out of your control. Just sticking to my game plan, going through the processes. Obviously I'm going to be a little bit nervous. It's a big change. It's exciting.

If I can just be proud of myself at the end of the week and go out there and compete well and have a great attitude,

then I feel like I'm doing pretty good.

So obviously the result you can't really control, so just excited to get out there.

Q. Just a quick follow up to that. You said you feel like you will be nervous on the first tee. From your amateur experiences what will you lean on in that moment to help you battle those nerves?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, I think just the past experiences I've had. You know, I've been on the first tee before. I've played in the U.S. Open, been able to play in the ANA, British Open, so those past experiences last year have definitely helped in those circumstances.

Even though I'll be nervous, I'll be excited. A lot of that will be excitement too. It's one of the most exciting things right now I feel like in my life, and as I said before, I can't wait to get out there.

THE MODERATOR: Talking about excitement, a couple weeks ago you think you met Jason Day. How was that experience and how did that happen?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, so he was in the desert. He usually does his pre-season work in the desert and plays out at the Vintage Club, which is like ten minutes away from where my parents live. He's really good friends with my brother, so they played the Zürich Classic together a couple years, maybe about two, three years ago. So he's been a great mentor to my brother.

They kind of invited me out. I was pretty star struck again. No, he was awesome. I couldn't say any more I guess nicer things about him. He really gave me the time of day and I got to know him well, and I feel like if I ever need anything I can reach out to him, which is pretty cool.

Yeah, it's cool to kind of meet someone that you idolized so much and watched on TV all the time.

THE MODERATOR: You spent a lot of my time in the Land Down Under, but then you were born in Orlando. How is that to be able to play your home tournament as a professional in the home state?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, no, it's really cool. I've never really considered that Florida is my home state, but I was born here. We moved when I was I think like a year old so I didn't really remember it. I do spend a lot time out here. I recently just joined Isleworth Country Club, which is the sister club to here.

So it does feel like home. I'm staying with my brother who

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

lives in Windermere, so, I mean, it's nice to just be around family and, yeah, we'll call it a home event.

THE MODERATOR: If no one else has any questions, the course, just playing here at a sister course, how is it playing, and do you feel really comfortable around these conditions?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, Lake Nona is awesome. I had actually never played here before. I was always out at Isleworth. I had heard so many great things about it and I couldn't say any more great things about it. The course is in great condition. It's going to be a really good test.

Yeah, I mean, I couldn't say any more great things about it, and I can't wait to get at it tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: You got to think about the Aon Risk-Reward Challenge on the 15th hole. How is that playing, and do you think you would take any risks on that hole?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: I didn't even know about it.

THE MODERATOR: I just learned about it the other week, too. The Aon Risk-Reward Challenge is the more -- like how does exactly work, but basically the rewards -- basically it is if you take the risk and then you -- at the end of the year the average player, whoever took the most risk and the lowest score, will win a million dollars. So that's like as a professional.

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Is it like every event there is a hole?

THE MODERATOR: Yes. Every event there is a hole, and that's the Aon Risk-Reward Challenge for our sponsor. The player with the lowest average will win a million dollars at the end of the year.

GABRIELA RUFFELS: That's really cool.

THE MODERATOR: This event is the 15th hole.

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Uh-huh.

THE MODERATOR: We've been asking players how they might approach the 15th hole if they have been out there, and if they think that they would take a risk on that hole?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: 15, oh, yeah, that's a great hole.

THE MODERATOR: It's a Par-5, dogleg.

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, it's hard to tell. I feel like

look this many factors that go into it, where you are in the tournament, how you're doing. I'm generally a pretty aggressive player, and if I can reach it I'll probably go for it.

But, yeah, I mean, I guess it just depends on a lot things, but probably more often than not, I would go for it.

Q. Knowing that you're going to need to kind of build a schedule now as a professional, can you just talk about what will be upcoming? I know you're in ANA. I assume you'll qualify for the Women's Open. Few the landmarks for us.

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, so I have this one and then I have the ANA, which is early April. Then I have a Symetra event, Coper Rock in Utah, which I think is a couple weeks after the ANA.

So at the moment just have those three. I'm waiting on a couple other tournaments. I think they put me on the reserve list or something like that for a sponsor exemption.

But, yeah, at the moment I'm just relying on sponsor exemptions because I don't have any status anywhere. Yeah, I'll take whatever I can get.

THE MODERATOR: No one has any questions? Last one I will ask is: The Nike family, how has that been? Have you been feeling a lot of support from the Nike family this week?

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Yeah, it's been awesome. I just joined with them maybe a week ago so it's still new, but super exciting. I feel like for a young golfer you look up to Nike athletes, not only in golf but in all sports. So it's an honor to be part of their family. Even with my brother I've been around it, but it's cool for myself to actually have it.

So, yeah, I'm looking forward to the partnership with them.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for taking the time with us, and good luck this week.

GABRIELA RUFFELS: Thank you.

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