

Gainbridge LPGA

Thursday, February 25, 2021

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Sophia Popov

Quick Quotes



Q. All right, Sophia. It's been challenging to have some under par scores here this morning. What is it about this course that is setting itself up to be a challenge this week?

SOPHIA POPOV: You know, I think that yesterday and the day before when I played it was interesting. I kept playing for score a little bit just to get back into things. I was hovering around even par and I was playing pretty well. I kind of figured it was going to play tough.

I think the course is just set up -- it's just an incredible course. The way it's set up, the fairways are mown down, the fringes are mown down, the greens are firming out, and the rough is really thick. Those all contribute to making it tough out here.

So you just have to be really accurate off the tee and have to make some putts.

Q. Some changes I see right away. No more Max on the bag.

SOPHIA POPOV: I know. No, Max on the bag. No, you know, start with working with Mikey this week. This is our first week together. Max is pursuing his own golf career, which is nice. That's what we want.

But he came out, which is comforting to see him around and know he's there. I think it's mentally comforting for me. Mikey and I work very well and I'm quite looking forward to the next few tournaments with him.

Q. I know you also have some familiarity with this area. Your best friend, Anne van Dam lives here. What's that like, to kind of hang with her and get know this side of Lake Nona through her eyes?

SOPHIA POPOV: It's been awesome. Like I love this place. It's kind of weird. I almost consider it a little bit of like my home course, too, almost a home course advantage because I've gotten to know everyone that works here. They're the nicest people. They have the

nicest members. I just love playing here. The practice facilities are incredible.

It's just been kind of weird because we're kind of cruising around with the golf cart because we live on the golf course, and (wind interference) it's not exactly tournament feel because you kind of have a feeling you're going out to practice, but then, okay, this time it actually counts.

But it's been really nice. I love being here and probably going to spend more time here throughout the year.

Q. What's there to take away from today? Tomorrow will be more of an afternoon tee time, maybe less of an early wake-up call. What is there to work on heading into the second round?

SOPHIA POPOV: I don't think I'm going to go crazy this afternoon. It's getting windy, so I don't want to hit a bunch of balls. I had a couple shorter putts that I did miss that were just misreads. I think it's not very easy to read the greens, so I want to go out and just work on that a little bit this afternoon.

I think that's what it's going to come down to tomorrow. If it gets a little bit windier and dries out a little bit more you're going to need your short game just that little bit more. And just kind of grind it out. It's a grinding course. It reminds me of Pelican. You have to keep your head in it and even par is a great score.

Q. Big story the week is Annika is in the field this week. Have you come across her? Have you played together at all? What's the feeling?

SOPHIA POPOV: I have come across her. I've got to say hi a couple times since I've been here practicing with Anne. Mainly on the pickleball court, which is really funny, because she's a very good pickleball player, too. So that's fun. We share that hobby, I guess.

But I haven't talked to her that much. I just watched her hit some balls. It's funny, Anne and I both are like, man, she can nip those wedges. It's incredible. It's like she never really left. There are some things I look, I watch, and I kind



of learn.

I just like think it's the coolest thing. I grew up and she was kind of an idol for all of us and we didn't think she was going to come back and play and now she's in the field.

Q. 13 years later.

SOPHIA POPOV: I know. It's amazing. She has her kids out and they can watch. That's just fun. That's cool just have a home game for her. Must be awesome.

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