

# ISPS HANDA World Invitational

Wednesday, July 28, 2021

Northern Ireland

Galgorm Castle & Massereene Golf Club

## Olivia Mehaffey

Press Conference



**ISPS** | **WORLD**  
**HANDA** | **INVITATIONAL**

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THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us here at the virtual media center at the ISPS Handa World Invitational. We're joined by Olivia Mehaffey, Belfast native and Arizona State university alumna. Thank you for joining us today. You can hear the rain coming down. It's a typical Northern Irish day except you said the weather had been pretty nice the last couple weeks, but how common is this having grown up here?

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, it's so typical that the second there's a tournament that this happens, but I've been telling everybody that it's been lovely the past few weeks.

**Q. You're a tournament sponsor invite this week. First time you're playing as a professional in your native country. What does it mean to you to be able to compete in front of I would imagine some family, some friends and just people that you know and have grown up with?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, this week is very special to me. Growing up we never had an Irish Open when there would have been a time that I would have been playing in it; it was kind of before my time. So to get to play here and to play here as a professional is also very, very special, close to home, and I'm sure I'm going to have a lot of people out this week supporting. I don't get to compete that much at home, so it's very, very special to me this week for many reasons.

**Q. You're an Arizona State university alumna; what was special about your time at Arizona State that helped you prepare for this phase of your career?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, playing at Arizona State has been very, very good for me. I spent five years there, so I feel like I really matured as a person, and it really helped my game enhance.

A few more years more than what I thought I was going to spend there obviously with COVID and a broken hand, but

it's very nice to finally be ready for this next chapter of my life. I feel like it's been a couple of years coming, so it's very exciting.

**Q. I saw you give the nice warm greeting hug to Linnea Strom, a former Sun Devil, as well, before we walked over here. To get to know people like Linnea during your time in Arizona and then to see them at the next stage, have you ever talked to them about the next step and kind of growing as a professional, what it takes, how they did it, how maybe you can translate into that?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, for sure. One of the main reasons I went to Arizona State was because of our amazing alumni. I spent a lot of time practicing with Linnea, with Carlota, Giulia Molinaro, Anna Nordqvist. I've picked each of their brains about things that they would do differently or things they've learnt while being out on Tour and how they travel, how they like to do things, so I think that's definitely one of the really good things at ASU. Also you feel comfortable out here; you see familiar faces and you have some company. I know we're in COVID now, but I know in the future I'll have many people to go to dinner with and be a little bit more relaxed out here. I think they're definitely going to help with the transition and they've been very, very good to me so far.

**Q. Is there any player in particular who maybe has taken you under their wing and maybe served as a mentor for you over the last few years?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, Carlota Ciganda has been very good for me. We have the same coach we both work with, Jorge Parada, and it's been very nice because obviously we know how he works and she's been able to help me, and she's been very, very good for me and somebody that I look up to and have for a number of years.

**Q. Just get your thoughts on what it means to be in a mixed event playing side by side with the men? Obviously it's a wee bit special for you playing at home as a professional. Can I get your thoughts on that?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, amazing to play with the guys and to play in an event with an equal prize fund. I think it just really takes the game to the next level. I think it really



... when all is said, we're done.®

helps with the female game and the recognition. I think the guys really enjoy being alongside us. I hope in the future we're going to see more events like this. I think it's very unique and very special, and obviously great to be here. I think it's so good for the women's game and the men's game, as well. I got a few messages from younger girls saying they were going to come out this week, and to me that's very special to have that role model figure. I feel like I've been playing this role this week for many of these girls, and if we help grow the game by a few more people this week, I think that will be very, very special.

**Q. You just touched on it, I know you're home this week and that feeds through even simple things you did with some of the juniors that you did at your own course and clubs and things. Can you tell us a bit the importance of that?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, it's very important to me. It's been important to me since I was a young girl. I grew up, and in recent years we've got Leona and Stephanie to look up to, but when I was younger I was looking up to Rory and Shane and the guys. It's very special now to have some female role models, and when I'm home I try to give as much time as I can now to the younger girls. It's something I'm very passionate about, something I enjoy doing, so I hope in the years to come we'll see a lot more participation of the younger girls in Northern Ireland.

**Q. Obviously Stephanie Meadow came and won this tournament in 2019, so I'm just wondering how much of an inspiration she is. Do you -- obviously this week for you having the opportunity to showcase your talent this week against such a strong field?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, I mean, incredible what Steph has done, but still a very young pro. This is my -- I think this is my LPGA debut playing at home, and I know there's a little bit of pressure but I just want to enjoy this week. I want to enjoy playing in front of my family, my friends. I just want to take it all in, and I'm not putting any pressure on myself. I don't have any expectations this week. I think as amazing as it would be to think about winning, that's not at all in my head right now, it's just shot by shot and really taking it in, gaining as much experience as I can and enjoying this week.

**Q. If I can just ask you about the conditions. Obviously there has been a fair bit of rain over the last couple of days which will naturally soften up the courses here. Are you expecting a lot of birdies this week, just the players taking advantage of the soft conditions?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, you know, I played 18 at

Massereene on Monday and I played 12 holes yesterday and hopefully get out this afternoon in the pro-am. The course has been very, very firm. We haven't had very much rain here recently at all. It's going to be interesting to see how the course does play. It was extremely firm, so whether that rain softens it down a lot and birdies are easier to come by, I'm not sure, because it has been so firm. Maybe that will definitely change, but there's a lot of birdie opportunities out there.

I think it's very key this week to get it in a good position off the tee, and it's not super long, so that kind of opens up the door for some birdie opportunities.

**Q. You've played a couple Symetra Tour events this year, played the Carlisle still as an am, you played your professional debut at the Mission Inn Resort Club Championship back in May. Take us through those experiences, how you got into the field, when you were there what it was like to be playing, maybe the difference between playing in one as an am and one as a pro to get your career started. What was that like?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, I think it was very good for me. Obviously the first event the Carlisle event in Longbow in Arizona, that was something I really wanted to be a part of. I always say I have two homes, I have a home here and I have home in Arizona. That was a very special week for me. First time leading a professional event, I think I was leading through two rounds, so that kind of experience was very, very key to learn that while you're still an amateur, I think that's going to pay dividends in the future when hopefully I'm leading some professional events, and I learnt a lot from that kind of managing expectations, not getting ahead of yourself, not putting too much pressure on yourself because you go into a week like that and you're not thinking about winning, and then all of a sudden you're leading through two rounds and then it does cross your mind.

Obviously that, and then making my pro debut I did put a lot of pressure on myself, and having quite a good amateur CV a lot of people were expecting me to just go out there, and same again, you start leading again and obviously things weren't my best the first few days, and I think you learn a lot from that.

It's learning these things early on in your career where I feel like those two experiences are going to stand by me for the rest of my career where I know how to handle leading a professional event and then also I know how to deal with kind of expectations and going into weeks.

I think those two events are definitely going to stand by me for the rest of my career.

**Q. One thing I've seen from players over time is every player has got their schedule down, their warm-up routine before a round. They've got their schedule booked weeks in advance. What does your schedule look like not having status anywhere, having stayed at Arizona State for your extra year? What does the next few weeks look like for you with qualifying school coming up?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, my priority is Q-school. Obviously when I decided I was going to turn pro in May I wasn't sure if I was going to turn pro in May or I was going to turn pro in August after Q-school. I decided I could gain as much experience as I could throughout the summer. I decided to do that, and my goal was this and my goal was Q-school.

My focus is going to be on Q-school for sure, and if I can tailor in a few events around that, maybe try to get a few more invites, I will, but very much still going to head back to Arizona after this week and get used to the heat again. I think it's going to be quite warm in Palm Springs. My priority for the next few months is definitely preparing the best I can for Q-school to hopefully have status for 2022.

**Q. You mentioned you've never played Galgorm before. You've played Massereene. Do you have any Massereene stories for us? Do you remember maybe a low round or playing with family or anything that stands out from your time at the course during the time you grew up here?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, I think I was really, really young when I played. I think we might have played Senior Cup and interclub girls matches. I think maybe I was like 12 or 13 and maybe like a Mary Peters Trust event. I actually remember when I was going up 18 and I saw the clubhouse to the right, I remember when I was younger it was between me and a few other girls, and I think it was the Mary Peters Trust and we were sitting looking out the window to see what was happening, if I was going to win or not. That kind of came back to me on 18 and being out there on a few of the holes. But I was so young, I was probably shooting about 85. A few memories came back, which was quite nice.

**Q. You mentioned you have a home here in Northern Ireland, you have a home in Arizona. What are the home courses for you in both spots that you've been able to keep your game sharp as you start your program?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, I grew up at Tandragee and Royal County Down here and they've been amazing for

me. I've received so much support. I'm sure I'm going to see loads of the members out this week from both of those courses.

Arizona we've been based at Papago, spent a lot of time at Grayhawk and Superstition Mountain. There's some brilliant golf courses out there that are very, very nice and welcoming for us to play.

It's very nice to have a lot of support from both of those clubs.

**Q. Obviously a historic week, the first tri-sanctioned event with the LPGA, LET and European Tour in the northern hemisphere taking place in Northern Ireland. 144 men, 144 women. What do you think the men learn most from the women and what do the women take away from the men just in watching the competition and the groups ahead and behind you?**

OLIVIA MEHAFFEY: Yeah, obviously the guys absolutely bomb it, so I feel like maybe they can learn a little bit of strategy from us. I think both of these courses you have to be quite strategic. There's a lot of doglegs. You have to place it very well off the tee. Maybe if they watch us, how we do that, they might learn a little bit from us.

And then I think obviously watching the men play they're a little bit more aggressive. They go for things when they can, as well. They pick and choose the right times to go for things. I think that kind of aggressive nature, going for par-5s in two and maybe cutting off a few of the drives, that sort of thing, I think we both play quite differently. It's definitely going to be fun for us and also fun for the spectators. If they watch how we play a hole and watch how the guys play a hole, I think that will be quite interesting, the contrast.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your time. Best of luck this week.

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