

Solheim Cup

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Andalucía, Spain

Finca Cortesin

Captain Stacy Lewis

Press Conference



FINCA CORTESIN
ANDALUCÍA, SPAIN

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CHRISTINA LANCE: We're really excited to have you here with us. Thanks so much for joining. This is Christina Lance with LPGA communications, and as you all know from earlier today, we're here with the exciting news that Stacy Lewis here will be captain of the USA team at Finca Cortesin for the 2023 Solheim Cup. Before we start, this is strictly embargoed until 10:00 a.m. eastern tomorrow, which is Wednesday.

I'm going to start off with some questions for Stacy. Stacy, exciting. This is an honor. You finally get to talk about it. Tell us about your reaction and what happened when you got the call asking you to be the Solheim Cup captain.

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, the last month has been a little bit difficult, just knowing the news and knowing that I couldn't tell anyone. But I got a call back in December just asking if I was interested, so they said my name was kind of on a short list, and I said, absolutely.

Then I didn't really hear anything for a while, and then Mollie called me that first week of January, and we talked for about 30 minutes, but she offered me the job basically, and I immediately said yes.

Well, I can't say that. At first I called my husband and made sure that -- because having a child and I knew I needed some help with my parents, too, so I called my husband and my parents and asked if they were on board, and they said, absolutely. So off we went.

But I'm so excited. I obviously knew this was going to happen at some point in my career. Obviously earlier than I thought, but it's okay. I feel like it's the right time for Team USA and it's the right time for me to step in.

CHRISTINA LANCE: You've seen this game from so many angles, from a player, from an assistant captain, from a fan even before that. What are some of your greatest memories from your time being with the Solheim Cup team?

STACY LEWIS: Gosh. I mean, I was thinking, I've been

the No. 1 player coming in on points; I've been a pick; I've been told I'm not a pick. I've been kind of on all spectrums of the Solheim Cup teams.

I think I go back to Ireland and that first match, the chanting and the singing and I've never been more nervous in my entire life, and then probably one of my best and favorite moments was when Gerina made that putt in Germany. It was that week that we kind of found our partnership. I convinced Juli to put us out there together because maybe you look at stats, Gerina maybe shouldn't have been in alternate-shot, but I believed in her and I got Juli to believe in us to do it together, and to see her make that putt at the end to basically decide the Solheim Cup was unreal.

I love the passion of it, the excitement, the crowd, the energy. It's the best event in women's golf.

CHRISTINA LANCE: What are some of the biggest learnings you have about yourself as a person, as a player, as a teammate, as a captain from your past Solheim experiences?

STACY LEWIS: Where do I start? I've already started a book. I could make a huge list of things to -- man, there was one, it was kind of a humbling moment in Colorado. I was playing with Paula and I got frustrated about missing a putt, and I kind of walked off the green, and Paula kind of yelled at me, Hey, get back here, you need to stay here with me and be a good partner, and it was like, ooh, okay. It was a great learning moment for me.

Gosh, you have more humbling moments in golf when you lose. I had a tough loss in Des Moines to Beany there.

I don't know how you pick any. I've learned so much from my past captains, Rosie to Meg, Juli, Pat. You learn things that work and you learn things that don't work.

That's what I've already started doing. I have a notebook that travels with me wherever I go. I set it beside my bed. When I think of something, I write it down, and it's all going to help me formulate a plan for the next 18 months.

Q. What are some of the early ideas you have as you

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look to building your team for 2023?

STACY LEWIS: You know, for me it's about the environment. I want to create a really positive, fun environment where the girls can be successful. That's trying to figure out how to make the practice schedules a little bit more accommodating, build in some more free time in the week, which I don't know if that's possible, but just being a little bit more accommodating to all the different personalities, which Juli kind of started that with the pods and the personality test and that kind of stuff, and she certainly got us on a good path there.

But it's really about the environment. Most importantly I want these girls to have fun, and I want it to be a week that they leave there saying, this was the best week of my life.

Q. You mentioned Juli, you've mentioned all your past captains and other players. Who have you talked to so far? I know you're able to start telling people now before tomorrow's big news, but who have you chatted with and what are some of the responses you've gotten?

STACY LEWIS: Well, my first calls were to the captains that were part of the committee, which was Meg, Juli and Pat, and what was cool is we kind of talked about a few things, but they all kind of gave me a couple little pieces of advice. Some are logistics, some are dealing with the large groups. Just all different types of advice, but it was cool how they each kind of had something different to pick out.

I called one of my college golf coaches. I think that's the really cool part about me is I've had a lot of good coaches in my life, from my husband to my college coaches at Arkansas. I've seen how they've built teams and been successful, too. I'm definitely going to feed off of them for this next year and a half, too.

Q. My first one is maybe an obvious one; are you going to keep the pods or are you going to do something different?

STACY LEWIS: I'm going to keep the concept of it. It definitely works because I do think personality-wise it can be tough at times. But I do need to figure out a way to have some more flexibility with the pairings. It'll be similar, but it'll also be a little bit different.

It kind of goes back to communicating with the players and making sure they know what to expect as far as who they could possibly play with, but I just felt like especially last year, we didn't have a whole lot of options with our pairings as things kind of started to happen, so that's going to be

something that I kind of work on over the next couple months.

Q. Just your overall thoughts on going up against one of the great characters in the game in Suzann Pettersen.

STACY LEWIS: Yes, I'm really excited. Suzann and I, we played a lot of golf together over the years. I think we only played one Solheim Cup actual match together, but it's one of the things I look forward to the most about this Solheim Cup is going up against her. Her record speaks for itself in the event, and the putt she made in Scotland coming back after having a baby and all of that, she's definitely got the one-up on me there.

But I'm so excited. We both have kind of the personalities that hopefully we don't have any rules issues because I don't think either one of us will back down.

Q. Obviously players don't get paid to play in the Solheim Cup; how important is this event to the tour, and how will you try to convey that to your team, especially new faces?

STACY LEWIS: Well, one, they need to know the history of the event, and that is getting the past captains and the past players involved so they can see their passion for the event. I had Meg and Juli and that age of players kind of -- they brought that to me. I saw their passion for the event, and that's what I want to convey to them, and in myself and the assistants that I do bring in, they're going to have a passion for this event, and that's one of the biggest things I want to do.

This event, gosh, it's everything for our tour. It's everything for women's golf. It is truly the biggest stage we get to play on. It's different than your traditional four-round tournament, but this tournament is so important to us that these girls will know it's important.

I also want them to know what it means to have that American flag on them, as well, and what an honor that is, too.

Q. Just curious on how do you think this captaincy will impact your playing schedule this year. Will you play less or will you play more because you want to be at more events spending more time with your potential team?

STACY LEWIS: To be honest, I don't really know right now. I've got the team I'm going to work with at the LPGA. They've actually been great so far. They're kind of building a little mock schedule for me of what the next year and a

half looks like.

That's the one thing about all this. I know kind of how everything works the week of the Solheim, the pairings and that sort of stuff. I just don't know exactly how the preparation part goes and the steps we need to take. So I'm going to rely on them.

I want to play as much as I can because I think being out and being around the players is important. I want to get to know some of the rookies that could potentially make the team and some of the younger players, be around them a little bit, too, so I can get to know their personalities, as well.

I plan on playing as much as I can for sure.

Q. If I could follow up to that, obviously a couple years ago Tiger was a playing captain at the Presidents Cup; is that something that you kind of dream about and maybe hope becomes a reality for you?

STACY LEWIS: Man, I always thought when I was captain I would not be playing. I would say the last two weeks have definitely changed my view on that, coming out the way I've played the last month or so. But I'm not going to say yes or no either way right now.

If it gets to sometime next summer and my name is still on that points list and I'm in the mix and my team -- if I need to build the best team possible and my name is a part of that, then I'll do it.

But it's just going to be a conversation to have with my assistants, if they feel that that's the right move to make for the team, because I also want to be able to be there for the girls during the event, as well.

It's not a conversation right now, but hopefully I keep playing well and it is a conversation we have to have.

Q. You said you felt this is the right time; 36 years old, I think you're going to be one of the youngest captains in Solheim Cup and Ryder Cup history. Could you talk a little bit more about that decision when you made that in terms of you're not giving up on your hope of playing again, but it must have been a big call in that respect.

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, for me I felt like -- I look back, I think Juli has been getting me ready for this. I got a great experience in Scotland not playing and kind of seeing behind the scenes of what goes on, and they brought me in as basically being another assistant captain, and then obviously Pat gave me the opportunity last year.

I felt like it was a natural transition. I know after that week some of the girls were even talking about me being a captain one day, and I just kind of pushed it off as "one day." I definitely leaving Toledo never thought that we would be having this conversation right now, but those past captains were the ones that picked me. They were the ones that felt -- they felt like I was ready. Juli even said that on the phone. Juli said, "You're ready for this." That's the biggest boost of confidence I could ever get.

I feel like the team needs me right now.

Q. Could you share a little bit about what you're most looking forward to of this experience and maybe some of the things you're most nervous about?

STACY LEWIS: I'm looking forward to the week of Solheim Cup specifically, just being there on-site and all that it entails. Probably not looking forward to telling the people that are close that they're not going to make the team. I think that's what any captain dreads.

I mean, I've just been so anxious for today, just wanting to tell people so I can go get started. What are we going to do for clothes, what are we going to -- I have all these questions in my head that I haven't really been able to answer yet because we haven't even announced it yet.

I don't know. I don't know what this next year and a half is really going to look like yet, but I do have a lot of ideas; I know that.

Q. You've been such a forward thinker for the LPGA in helping to propel them forward. Any ideas you already have in mind or things you've seen over your years through your involvement that you'd like to improve upon or change as you get more involved?

STACY LEWIS: Well, I think one of my big things is I want to -- behind the scenes I want to set things up in place for future captains, so certain things from when the announcement is made to when you go about the process of doing your clothes and your bag and all that stuff, that it's already kind of in place and set up, that it's not kind of reinventing the wheel every time, because I think looking forward your captains are going to continue to be younger. They might still be playing like I am, so there's got to be a balance there. Just setting up some consistency for that.

You know, I want more involvement from the players themselves. I want to know who they want to play with. I want to know who they don't want to play with. I want to figure out practice time specifically. I think as a player that's one of the hardest things is we all -- all 12 are going

to practice -- you go to a normal tournament week, they're going to practice at different times, and all of a sudden Solheim Cup we say, okay, we're getting on a bus to practice. Maybe half the team that's okay, and the other half is freaking out because they're out of their rhythm, they're out of their routines, so I want to figure out a way to make that a little bit more conducive to them and just help them be successful and help them be able to enjoy it a little bit more because it is stressful.

It is the hardest tournament they will ever play it on the golf course, and so I want to make the off the golf course as stress-free as possible and fun.

I'm going to have Chesnee running around, so that should keep things pretty light in the team room, but it's really about their experience more than anything is what I'm going to focus on.

Q. How familiar are you with Finca Cortesin? Do you know the course, and what do you think of what it brings to the field?

STACY LEWIS: To be honest, I know nothing. I have never played golf in Spain. I've never been to Spain on vacation. But I did -- I got online and looked at the course and the resort online, and it is beautiful. I do know that.

I can't wait to go on a site visit. I'll probably have to do a couple, little mini-vacation around it, too. But I'm excited.

It looks beautiful. I don't really know much about the golf course, but I want to play it because I think it's important to know kind of style of golf and if it fits certain players, especially with your picks and how that would fall in.

I will definitely be over there. I plan to come later this year, so I'll definitely come over and check it out.

Q. You've mentioned Chesnee a couple times. Does she understand what mommy gets to do right now? This is pretty cool.

STACY LEWIS: It is. At first she thought she was going to be captain of Team USA, which she actually wasn't happy about. But when I kind of explained it to her, I think she kind of understands.

She had so much fun at the last Solheim Cup with our little pod and the girls were so great with her. I'm excited to get to experience this with my family and bring them all over, and just what an honor. It's something you dream about.

When you make the Tour you dream about just playing on a team, and then to be able to lead the team is just a

completely different honor, just in the way you go about it. Like I've said, those past captains selecting you to do it, gosh, what more -- I don't know how you tell them no.

Q. I'm just wondering, I know you've got a long runway until the team is actually picked, but I'm curious about your POV on American golf as it stands right now. Three of the top I think it's 11 in the Rolex Rankings are from the U.S., so just speaking about the team and the potential makeup that you may have, how do you feel sort of about how things are looking as you move forward?

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, I think those three that you talked about are kind of our staples and the three that we're going to rely on quite a bit.

I see the team probably looking pretty similar to Toledo, but those players are gaining more experience, and that's what I think I didn't realize at Toledo until we were sitting at opening ceremonies was how little experience we really had as a team. It was first Solheim Cup, second Solheim Cup for over half of the team.

I encourage our girls to -- they need to play, they need to get in contention, have opportunities to win tournaments. That's the stuff that's going to feed over into the Solheim Cup and help us win is getting that experience and being in those last groups.

Even you look at Brittany and Marina last week, they didn't win the tournament, but they got that experience of being in the last group, and the emotions of it and how you manage it. That's what I would like to see a little bit more of our team.

I'm going to start kind of diving into the rookies and see if we can get somebody working her way in there, as well.

Q. In your opinion which is the reason the U.S. has been defeated the last two times, although the team is stronger than Europe usually?

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, you look at -- it's like a broken record every year that the U.S. is better on paper than Europe, and Europe has somehow come back and won every time. At least the last two.

It's a challenge. You know, I think the way the last two Solheim Cups have been where it's come down to those last couple matches, I think we're going to see a whole lot more of that going forward. I just think the talent level is way too good for someone to go win by four or five points. I just don't think that's realistic.

But it comes down to putts. It comes down to making putts. We didn't do enough of that at Inverness. That's what I talked about, being in these lost groups and learning how to handle the pressure and the emotions of it. That's really what the putting comes down to.

But I think our girls are getting a lot more experience, and we will be ready for Spain.

Q. How would you describe what your style is going to be as a captain?

STACY LEWIS: I don't know. I mean, I think -- I don't know. I don't have a word for it yet. I'm still kind of formulating my plan for it.

I'm going to do a lot of listening here for the next couple months. I want to talk to probably some of you guys in the media. I want to talk to fans. I want to talk to the players, the caddies, the players' families. I want to figure out what we're missing, the pieces that we're missing to help these girls play better and help make it be a better experience for the fans or whatever it may be.

I'm going to do a lot of listening, and then we're going to get together as a team and formulate a plan and go from there.

I don't know what the style is going to be. Maybe we'll figure that out when we get to Spain.

CHRISTINA LANCE: Thank you guys, very much. Stacy, congrats. We're really excited to work with you over the next year or so.

This is embargoed until 10:00 a.m. eastern tomorrow. I will follow up with the transcript, and if you have any other questions, please let me know. Thanks, everybody.

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