

Solheim Cup

Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Gainesville, Virginia, USA

Robert Trent Jones Golf Club

Team Europe

Captain Suzann Pettersen

Laura Davies

Mel Reid

Caroline Martens

Press Conference



ROBERT TRENT JONES
GOLF CLUB
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THE MODERATOR: I'm delighted to be joined by our European Solheim Cup captain Suzann Pettersen and vice captains Laura Davies, Mel Reid, and Caroline Martens.

Q. Suzann, last year you retained the Solheim Cup in Spain. What would it mean to win here in the USA?

SUZANN PETERSEN: It's been a quick year since Spain. Obviously it was a quick turnaround, fast celebration. Obviously being back here in the U.S., it's different. Everyone kind of -- we're all aware of that.

At the same time, I think it's a great challenge to try and go out there again and get the job done. The players are all up for it, and they're always going to be a big task.

Q. Mel, how does it feel to be back on the team?

MEL REID: Obviously it's a huge honor. I think everyone's quite aware how much I love a Solheim Cup, so to be part of the team, even as a vice captain, is a huge honor for me.

Yeah, I think the team shapes up really well this year. Obviously I've got three great captains beside me.

Yeah, I think the vibe in the team room is good. You know me, I just love Solheim Cup. Whatever role I have to play in that, I will jump at the opportunity.

Q. Laura, what's your role this week, and what have you been focusing on?

LAURA DAVIES: Well, just supporting the captain, making sure the players have got what they want, get them where they need to be, watching them play, encouraging them. It's just a role that it's really good fun, to be honest

with you.

To call it a job is not really accurate. It's great to be involved with these young players; they're so good. Such a nice group of girls as well, which is fun for me to be around them because obviously don't play anymore.

The whole week so far has been great. The facilities that they've given us are out of this world. It's one of the best. We've been to some great venues, but this is getting close to the top of the list, especially if we win.

Q. Caroline, what does your role entail?

CAROLINE MARTENS: I think all of us and Anna, we complement each other very well. So we have the same goal and the same things to do. At the same time, we all have the things that maybe just differentiates us as well.

Obviously the first thing that we're here for is to make sure the players have everything they need. Just to always make sure that they're prepared, that they are ready to go, and whatever we can do, we will do for them to make sure that they're fine.

At the same time, I think I have a little bit of -- what do you say? Just taking care of some of the personalities and making sure that everyone's happy and everyone has everything that they need.

Q. Suzann, girls at the end, you surprised the PING Junior Solheim Cup team with some outfits the other night. How fun was that, and what kind of advice do you give to the young girls?

SUZANN PETERSEN: It was the first time I've gone to see them off-site. It was quite a surprise. It was a super cool experience to get to meet these young girls. Some of them are fairly young as well. I think the youngest on the European team is 14 1/2.

It was great meeting them. Tried to give them some encouraging words. I don't know if it stuck or not, but I think it was obviously a very natural thing for us to do. They support us; we support them. I think it's a great kind

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of -- they are the future of this game, and I think the Solheim Cup is a result of that.

I don't know how many past Junior Solheim Cup players are on both teams this week, but it seems to get more and more. So it seems to be a great channel to kind of feed the youngsters through what is already a great system into kind of the major event.

Q. You posted on your Instagram the girls, they looked mint yesterday in your outfits. How important is golf fashion and how it's evolved over the years? If you look good, if you feel good, you play better, and also far more comfortable. Has that been chatted in the team room, that the girls actually like their outfits this week?

SUZANN PETTERSEN: You know what, there's one thing I'm never going to become, and that's a clothing designer. I've learned a lot over the last three years and you have to make decisions and you have to kind of have opinions.

I've been leaning on the expertise from PING, who's been supplying us, who's been great to work with. I think it's more the colors more than kind of the style, and I think it's important to kind of feel presence at the golf course. Certain colors pop more than others. Some colors represent different kind of energies.

But being European, we kind of seem to stick with our blue and yellow for a lot of times, but it's nice to kind of mix and match a little bit.

Q. And looking very smart, I must say. Laura, quick one to you. You've been involved in the Solheim Cup since 1990. How much has it evolved and changed over the years?

LAURA DAVIES: You just feel them. They've been asking who the oldest is, and obviously it's me. From Lake Nona in 1990 and something 1992 and beyond, there's no comparison to what it is now. The infrastructure, the support the teams get now, it's a world class sporting event. I personally think it's probably the best women's world event in sports.

The drama of the last four or five Cups has been incredible, and it's on the world stage now. People want to watch it. People want to come. We've heard the numbers that are coming this week.

Back in 1990, there were probably 30, 40 people watching, and you had some of the best golfers in LPGA history, Nancy Lopez, Pat Bradley. It just didn't have this gravitas that it has now.

But it had to start somewhere. The foresight of the Solheim Family, how they thought of it. It was an obvious fit with the Ryder Cup getting stronger and stronger, but they were the ones that stepped up. They've created a monster, and it's great fun to be involved in it.

Q. I was wondering if you could just comment on the golf course and which type of player you think it favors and can it be set up to favor a certain team?

SUZANN PETTERSEN: I think this is a very nice piece of property. I think this is a very typical American golf course. LPGA has obviously played a lot of events in Virginia in history. For me, this reminds me of a lot of the courses we've been at previously.

I think it's in spectacular shape. It's a course that would definitely suit my eye if I were to play, and I think it's the same kind of opinion from a lot of the players on our team.

I think the setup has been as expected. I would say without too much rough, you have the long hitters, could be an advantage on some holes.

But at the same time, I think it's a pretty straightforward golf course. There are some reachable par-5s for the longest ones. Par-3s are good. The way it sits right now, I think it's very playable for any type of game really.

They cut the rough over the weekend. Had it been a little bit higher rough, maybe we would have been more at advantage of fairways hit, but now I think it just opened up for, I don't know, bombers.

Q. Is there anything that you're doing differently this time around to last year in Spain? Do you have like a theme for the week in the locker room?

SUZANN PETTERSEN: Yeah, we drew a lot of great experiences from last year. I think what we learned the most is being precise. Giving quite clear messages goes a long way. Being transparent is great. But at the same time, they kind of look for somebody who can make decisions, the players. So there's a combination.

I think it's nice this year to have two new faces on our team. We have both Esther and Albane. Great to have new blood coming in. Like we can easily stir the pot quite nicely from the past with the players. We have a lot of players who have already played a lot of Solheims. So we have a lot of experience.

That being said, with the new players coming in, it kind of creates a new energy and kind of atmosphere.

Q. Given recent history, do you feel like your team's the favorite, or do you feel like because you're on the road, you have an underdog mentality?

SUZANN PETTERSEN: I think playing away, you're always an underdog. I think that's how we've always looked at it. Yeah, if you look at the previous three Solheims, we've come out on the high side, and we're going to try and keep that going for sure.

At the same time, being away, I'm very happy to kind of leave the pressure to the Americans to say they are the home favorites.

Q. And this being your second time around, do you take a similar approach that you did last time, or is there things you learn and you have a different approach this time as a captain?

SUZANN PETTERSEN: I think it's fairly similar. The players obviously have gotten to know me a little more. The ones who didn't know me that well last year. Like I said earlier, last year I tried to be quite transparent. I think that was maybe not -- it didn't come across the way I was hoping it was going to.

So I'm going to be quite direct with the players, and whatever we agree on is pretty much what's going to be the decision-making.

The players are all here to play. We're all here to win. And whatever match or pairings we decide, the players are all up for it. So that makes it a lot easier for us as well.

Q. Suzann, I wanted to ask you about Charley as the highest ranked player on Team Europe. What do you want to see from her this week? Do you get the sense she's comfortable with her celebrity status online, social media, Instagram, 600,000 followers, that kind of deal?

SUZANN PETTERSEN: Celebrity status, that's a new one. We're just happy Charley's already showed up. Charley's in fine form. She's flying high, doing her own thing. I actually think she's in great spirits.

She loves the Solheim a lot. Thankfully, we only have one of her on our team because imagine having 12 of her. That would be kind of a handful.

We've learned to deal. I know Charley fairly well over the years. I played a lot with her. I really enjoyed being paired with her. I feel like I've seen every side of her from a playing and kind of trying to be a captain.

I'm really happy to have Charley here. She's been excited over the last month or so. She's been trying to prepare the best she can to come out here, out here on her best side.

Q. For the assistants, I'm wondering if you could compare Suzann's approach to captain to some of the other captains you've been around in Solheim history.

LAURA DAVIES: I've played under quite a few captains over the years. Never played under Beanie, Catriona Matthew, but they have a lot of similarities for me with their approach. It's very direct. Players know where they stand, and they have huge respect because they've both been such great Solheim Cup players.

That's one thing the players can look to, the new players. They might not have seen them necessarily playing at their very best, but they can look at their records and realize when they say something, they're saying is from a good position of knowing what's gone before.

Some of the captains over the years, Dale Reid, they all bring something different. But I would say the last two captains for me have been in a very similar vein. Although very different personalities, but a lot of the same traits.

Maybe that's why we've won the last three, because what they bring is a good combination of great history in this tournament plus respect.

Q. Suzann, what's the challenge like of being a captain while not actively playing and still managing your team while not out on Tour all the time?

SUZANN PETTERSEN: I think the hardest thing that I experienced last year, it was actually not as hard as I anticipated. It was actually, once the players are on the 1st tee, you have no control. It's always easier to kind of be inside the ropes, having the club in your own hand, and you're in charge.

Now you're just like crossing your fingers, like hoping for the best, hoping that the preparation you've kind of done is good enough.

Then you eventually just have to let them go, let them do what they do best and trust that. I'm a little bit of a control freak, so I thought that was going to be a lot harder last year, but I really enjoyed just sitting on the sideline watching these phenomenal golfers getting the job done.

I mean, win or lose, all you want is for them to go out there and play their hearts out, and that's all you can ask. I think that was kind of the best experience that I drew from last

year.

Q. What do you think needs to rebound or improve the most from last year for the team to potentially win this year?

SUZANN PETERSEN: I think it would be nice to have maybe a little bit better start. But that being said, I think last year's Friday morning was a good wakeup call as well for all of us. Don't necessarily think that everything is just going to roll our way just because we've been successful over the last previous ones.

I think that's still kind of quite fresh in all the players' minds. So, yeah, trying to be consistent in each session.

Q. I was hoping any of you could speak to Leona Maguire and what are the intangibles she brings that makes her excel so much on this stage? What's she like in the locker room? What's she like on this golf course in this environment?

MEL REID: She's my best friend, as everyone knows. She actually sits next to me at dinner now without me pushing her, which is actually quite nice. She's fiery on the golf course. I think you see that. She's very passionate. She loves match play. She loves Solheim Cup. She loves looking her competitor in the face saying, I'm going to beat you, and she wears that extremely well in the team.

She has no -- she never gives up. She has so much grit and determination. It's exactly the kind of player you want on your team. And she's not a long player, and I think that's what frustrates the competitors as well, is that she just gets it done not hitting it very far.

As far as a teammate, obviously she's one of the quieter players, but at the same time, she's really come out of her shell in the last few years. I spoke about this at the previous Solheim Cup, I think, that I was part of, and even Inverness. From the start of the week to the end of the week, she's a completely different person.

I'm just really proud of how she's really kind of grown and is very comfortable in her own skin now. But, yeah, we still call her the MVP. She really is. She really has excelled at the last two Solheim Cups, and she's really becoming quite a fierce player, someone that you don't want to be drawn against.

So we're just really proud that she's on our team and she's a great teammate and just an all-round top class girl.

It almost made me sick saying nice things about her (laughter).

Q. Suzann, are there any challenges in having this event held in consecutive years? Any things that go on behind the scenes that we wouldn't see that present challenges for you?

SUZANN PETERSEN: I wouldn't say a lot of challenges. It's just a lot of work. Even before we hit a tee shot last year that we had already kind of done the outfits for this year. So really just kind of a lot of crisscross stuff and admin stuff, logistics.

From the players' perspective, the rankings kind of overlap quite a bit. I think it's going to be nice once we kind of get this one out of the way and then we're back on the regular every other year. I think that's good for the game. I think it's respectful for the guys as well as us.

Yeah, this is just what -- we're just doing what we needed to do to kind of get opposite the guys again.

Q. With little turnover on both sides, does that give an advantage to either team?

SUZANN PETERSEN: I don't really think it matters, to be honest. I think the nice thing, it literally feels like the '23 Solheim was just yesterday. It's so fresh in mind, it literally feels like it. So it's kind of nice to kind of get that feel and kind of energy going again.

Other than that, it hasn't been that hard, and I think it was only the right thing to do for both Stacy and myself to kind of do this because I think it would have been an awful hard job for someone new to come in and do everything in 11 months time.

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