

# Palos Verdes Championship presented by Bank of America

Tuesday, April 26, 2022

Palos Verdes Estates, California, USA

Palos Verdes Golf Club

## Lizette Salas

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome inside the media center at the Palos Verdes Championship presented by Bank of America.

Joined by Lizette Salas, kind of hometown hero, USC alum. Pretty familiar with Palos Verdes Golf Club. I know I kind of played the golf course today. What do you like about this golf course so much?

LIZETTE SALAS: I love everything. How challenging it is, obviously the views are incredible, the staff here has been amazing. I've been playing here since 2008, so my freshman year at USC.

You know, I have some great memories here at PV, winning Pac12s back in '08. And, yeah, I had some good finishes here as a team. I did as an individual. My swing coach is the director of golf here.

This is my like my second home here, so really thankful that the LPGA is now stepping on this property and now gets to showcase some great golf.

#### Q. You mentioned Jim Gormley. How did you first meet him?

LIZETTE SALAS: Oh, jeez. So yeah, we met a long time ago. Jim Gormley was the volunteer assistant coach for our women's team at USC. It wasn't until I left or I graduated that we started working together. I came here just to get a bunker lesson, and that kind of just started our journey together.

We been working together for almost a decade now, and he's been a solid partner, solid coach, most of all solid friend. Just the fact that we're here at his course, this property, he just loves women's golf. You have seen how they've given back at the collegiate level, at the junior level with the AJGA, and now with the LPGA to host the best players in the world.

That says a lot about the club and what they stand for.



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#### Q. How instrumental has Jim been to your success and how often do you guys work together?

LIZETTE SALAS: I mean, he's been a huge part of my career, especially during the hard times. I see him more as a friend. He's one of my best friends. He just really saw what I was capable of even before I knew my capability. You know, we learned together. We go through ups and downs.

He's been the MVP of my team for sure. I don't want to get choked up, but he's just been an amazing team player and an amazing friend, and yeah, I am going to get choked up.

He's done a lot for me. Oh, God. Sorry.

You know, it's people like that that keep you going forward. Yeah, love that guy to death. He's more like family. Yeah, I just wouldn't be here. He's been at every single Solheim Cup, even during -- he was diagnosed with cancer in 2013 and he moved up his chemo treatment to be in Colorado with me and Team USA. That says a lot about his character and what he's able to overcome and what he's able to do for his players.

#### Q. Awesome. Sounds like an awesome relationship.

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah.

#### Q. Let's keep it light now.

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah, no more. (Laughter.)

#### Q. I mean, looking at this golf course, a lot of players are familiar with it from their collegiate days, but a lot of players aren't.

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah.

#### Q. I know us as outsiders aren't either. Just take us through some of the tricks out here that you would say or what does it take to play this golf course well?

LIZETTE SALAS: I've been picking his brain, you know,



because they did make some changes a few years back. I talked to a couple players that played in it back in their collegiate days and some of them are a little traumatized because the weather can be a huge factor and it can make things a lot more challenging.

You know, there are some tricks to this golf course, and I won't say them because I want that little advantage, but, yeah, I have been picking his brain on how to play this course to really get the best result.

I think it's going to just come down to being below the hole and knowing where to miss, and obviously your short game is going to save you.

**Q. Has anybody come up to you and tried to get those tricks from you?**

LIZETTE SALAS: No. (Laughter.) And even if they do, I'll just sugarcoat it. Just kidding. No, it's -- you just never know what you're going to get with this golf course. I think it's going to be a good challenge and I think we'll see some great golf.

**Q. Switching gears a little bit, big day for you. Not only have you been announced as Youth on Course ambassador, we actually released your Velocity Global story on LPGA.com, and for more on that go to LPGA.com to read that story. You're doing a lot. You're a Girls' Golf ambassador, you're Youth on Course, you're making an impact, which is why Velocity Global touched on you. What does it mean to be able to give back in that way?**

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah.

**Q. You're person that has been here, been a kid playing golf. What does it mean to be able to do that?**

LIZETTE SALAS: It means I'm doing my job. It means I'm doing what I was meant to do. You know, I think it's more than just hitting a golf ball. It's more than just putting on a smile and being on TV. It's about the grind.

It's about remembering where you come from; remembering all the ups and downs of your journey, and embracing each challenge that you're going through.

As I saw these kids coming in, it's like I'm looking at myself in the mirror. Reminds me of my early days as a kid and all the obstacles my family and myself had to go through.

So to be part of organizations like Girls' Golf and Youth on Course, that's what I stand for, to create access and to promote diversity and inclusion. That's huge.

I think the golf, the world of golf is going in the right direction, and I'm just very honored to be a part of these organizations and to continue on this journey to promote kids from all backgrounds to kind of continue that curiosity of the game and to see where it can take them.

**Q. How excited are you specifically to partner with Youth on Course as one of their ambassadors?**

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah, super excited. When I was asked it was just a no-brainer. It's what I went through as a kid, you know, trying to find courses that allowed me to get on and play. I was not a country club kid. My family and I learned the sport as a family. I was fortunate enough to have organizations like the STPGA and the SEGA to create those opportunities for me.

And to now see this organization on a more national level, it's going to just change the current of junior golf all across the country. I think we have over 2000 golf courses, over 30,000 members, and for less than \$5, I mean, this could change a kid's life. Regardless if they want to be a pro athlete or not, they have the caddie program, internships.

The sky is the limit for these kids, and I'm so very hand in order and thankful to be part of their organization.

**Q. When you were growing up golf didn't look like it does now.**

LIZETTE SALAS: Uh-uh.

**Q. How much does it mean to you to be able to foster that next generation of people that's going to be a little bit more diverse?**

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah, I'm just proud to see golf where it is right now and see the capability it has to continue this momentum. You know, we're seeing all these -- we're seeing a rise in girls' golf, seeing a rise in -- from ethnic backgrounds pick up the game. It's just a beautiful thing to see.

These kids don't realize how golf can impact your life or your family's life. I'm a first-generation American and it just changed my world. I'm so very, very thankful. Even kids that I grew up with -- it's just a family within a family. I don't know how else to put it.

But it's just a beautiful thing to be a part of. Hopefully with my journey and what I stand for, hopefully other pros can express or talk about their journey and create that connection with the next generation so that we can continue this going forward.

THE MODERATOR: I think we have a couple questions from our kids at Youth on Course, Meredith and Isabella. Isabella, you'll go first.

**Q. What do you think is your best and favorite moment that you have played throughout LPGA golf?**

LIZETTE SALAS: Oh, that's a great one. I'm going to give you two. One of them is 2017 Solheim Cup in Des Moines, Iowa when I was -- when I did the final putt to clinch it to keep the Cup home, on home soil with my family there, and then was wrapped around with the American flag. So that was probably my favorite moment.

And also, last year -- oh, actually, no. My first win back in 2014 at Kingsmill. You know, that's when I had my breakthrough win and was finally like, I'm here and I'm here to stay for a while.

So those two.

THE MODERATOR: Meredith?

**Q. So I did some research and I read an article that talked about how when your dad first came to the U.S. he had a job at a golf course and he brought home a 7-iron for you.**

LIZETTE SALAS: Oh, yeah.

**Q. And you couldn't swing it because it was too heavy.**

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah.

**Q. So he had to drill holes into the club face so you could swing it. I was wondering how you went from not even being able to swing a club to getting a spot at USC, a Division I school?**

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah, that 7-iron is just an example of what my dad was just willing to do for me. You know, he's my Superman and he somehow just had an imagination to make things happen.

So he did drill those three to five holes on the side of the head, and he just knew -- he just figured it out.

It's crazy to see that. I still have that 7-iron. I saw it in the garage the other day. It's just incredible to see -- you're right, I went from that to earning a scholarship to USC, and now I'm in this position and I'm talking to kids like myself.

It's a beautiful thing, and I'm just so very thankful that my

dad was able to do that. It not only says a lot about us as a family, but him as a father and how he's just willing to do anything possible for me.

I don't want cry again, so I'm going to stop.

Yeah, thank you. That's a good question.

**Q. Just to wrap it up here, playing in front of a hometown crowd, kind of your hometown golf course, how excited are you just to tee it up here and have the LPGA Tour tee it up here this week?**

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah, no, I'm super excited. I think it's about time that the LPGA, the best players in the world come to a So-Cal hidden gem.

Again, it's a very challenging golf course. You think of Southern California and Torrey Pines and all these different -- LA Country Club, Wilshire, but now it's finally time to put PV and Palos Verdes Golf Club on the map and to now let us showcase some really great golf.

I think it's a start of something great. Very thankful Bank of America stepped in and is the title sponsor. Just going to hope for a great week. Hopefully we have some home course advantage, and happy that I get to be so close to home for another week.

**Q. We actually have one more quick question.**

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah.

**Q. What about growing up in Southern California made you a better playing and someone who contended in majors with conditions that are more links-y and not really Souther Cal kind of golf courses.**

LIZETTE SALAS: Yeah, you know, I'm very thankful and lucky to grow up in this area. Every golf course is different. You know, like last week it was very different compared to PV. Where I grew up it's very different.

I also had different access to a lot of different golf courses. While I was at USC we had so many different access to prestigious golf clubs like Riviera, Virginia Country Club, Wilshire, Hillcrest. I mean, I can name you a lot.

I think that really helped me have a game that adapts to different golf courses. I'm a feel player. I like to use my imagination. I love links golf. I love the creativity. I just think with the help of Jim Gormley that my game can be so adaptable to different golf courses and I'm just able to contend at venues like Atlanta Golf Club and Carnoustie and all these different places.

So I'm just very thankful for every single person that's been a part my journey and that's helped me get here.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much and good luck this week.

LIZETTE SALAS: Thank you.

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