

# Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G

Tuesday, September 6, 2022

Cincinnati, Ohio, USA

Kenwood Country Club

## Gaby Lopez

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Here with our most recent LPGA Tour winner Gaby Lopez in the pressroom at the Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G. What a win, what a moment. I've never seen a "Gaby roar" in person so that was pretty cool on 18. Walk me through Sunday and the emotions of getting that first win since 2020.

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, very exciting to be able to finally close it out. I was just talking to my agent, Jay and Ben, about how tough it has been for me to see all this hard work of hours of training and practice, and actually kind of see myself doing things I didn't do before, like hitting much more consistent iron shots over the year, but it was very frustrating that nothing was clicking, nothing was connecting at the same time.

I just deep down believed that the best years of my golf are just getting to the surface, and deep down I believe that.

I'm not sure when or how far or how long it's going to take me or how far I'm going to get, but I just deep down believe that that's what I feel.

**Q. It looked like it on Sunday, tying your career low round on the LPGA Tour with that really impressive day. What was your mindset ahead of that final round? What were you thinking?**

GABY LOPEZ: Right, I knew I had to go really low to have a chance. I mean, I was just hoping for a chance.

But what was I thinking? I was just trying to repeat what I've been doing the last couple, three days or five days. We changed something in my routine, which kind of gave me more freedom, kind of gave me more -- like just more consistency mentally playing.

So yeah, I think that my mindset for Sunday was, yeah, I know I have to go low, but at the same time I can't get ahead. I can't rush it. You can't really chase golf. You

can't chase birdies. You really have to let them come, because when they come, sometimes they come in a big package.

**Q. They did on 18; you had to make an 18-, 20-footer up the hill breaking pretty hard. Walk me through that last putt.**

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, we actually had a great shot into 2. It was probably three feet from getting a really close chance for eagle. But I was in the bunker, and I know my bunker play has also improved a lot over the years, especially these past two years, so I was comfortable there. We got up-and-down from a lot of bunkers during the week, so not really too worried.

But when I was standing on the bunker I saw two balls. One was on an upslope and one was a little bit on a downslope, and I was really hoping that mine was on an upslope. We get there, and mine is the one that is behind.

So I still was like, you know what, no worries, we can still get up-and-down. I did overexaggerate the movement I wanted to bring into the shot because I was really low in the bunker and I knew I had to hit it high to get it close, so I got a little too picky there. But I got myself on the green and I told myself, hey, you have another chance, and exactly on that putt and that routine, from past experiences, I have been kind of rushing and trying to get just the shot done.

So in that moment, I said, you know, just slow down. This is exactly what you worked for. This is exactly what you want. You want a chance for this.

So yeah, I really took my time. I got my caddie to read the putt, and I just felt that it was a great moment for me to be able to embrace what I've been putting on the last couple years with all the hard work.

**Q. Coming here this week, obviously got to give you a lot of confidence, especially as we head into the last few events of the season. Being in Cincinnati, I'm not sure, have you been to Cincinnati before?**

GABY LOPEZ: No, first time.

**Q. First time at this event, as well; how excited are you to get back out there and continue what you found on Sunday?**

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, I'm really excited to kind of keep the momentum. I feel that having a brand new tournament just brings more energy and more excitement to the Tour. You never know what the course is going to be like, but what I've seen out here, it looks like a great golf course with amazing conditions. The clubhouse is amazing. Just the great company that is behind Kroger and all the other sponsors that are putting all the effort, time, money, interest in supporting women's golf, it just means the world to us.

Honestly, it's just really exciting to be able to be back and just compete for the first time in Cincinnati.

**Q. You've spoken openly about the mindset and your change in mindset to get you over the hump. What mindset now do you take in to try to reset for this week?**

GABY LOPEZ: It's been hard being able to reset. Kind of cool myself down. As you can see, I'm a very fiery player out there. I really have a hard time to calm myself on the golf course because I know I get pumped up. I have this Latino fire that sometimes it's a great thing and sometimes just gets me a little bit off.

But yeah, I've had terrible past two nights. Really very exciting, but I talked to my psychologist, I talked to my coach today, and I'm ready to start from zero, because at the end of the day it's a brand-new tournament, it's another opportunity, and we all start from zero.

But I do have this backpack of confidence that brings me on, and it doesn't have to be perfect. The conditions will not have to be perfect for us to play a great tournament, to pull out that 8-under through those kind of foggy, kind of misty and raining conditions, which certainly wasn't comfortable, but just embracing that. Whatever is inside of me is more important than whatever is outside.

**Q. You mentioned the ball-striking particularly with your irons. From an outsider's perspective, it appears as though the driver has been one of the biggest changes. Is that wrong?**

GABY LOPEZ: No, but I think that also, for the past two years, my driver has been like really, really good, has been long and has been straight, but this year in particular, yes, my driver has been off. Sometimes coming from an injury

-- I had a neck injury and a wrist injury, and that really kind of got me a little bit of impatience and frustration not being able to see myself as long as I was last year or as accurate.

Yes, I've been struggling with my driver, but I feel that now with more consistency on my irons and my wedges, I've been able to just transfer that into my driver and know that it really doesn't have to be so, so long as I think it has to be. As long as it's straight and you're impacting the middle of the golf club, you're going to be just fine.

**Q. Just speak a little bit about those injuries. Obviously we didn't see the Gaby we're familiar with earlier this year because of those. How much effort has time has it taken you to bounce back and get yourself in a condition where you feel like you can win?**

GABY LOPEZ: It's been tough. It's been dark. It has been negative. I've been not myself outside the golf course because I've been impatient. I've been frustrated. At some points it just gets in your head; am I going to be able to win again. Am I going to be able to compete.

I just feel that this past weekend just proved myself that I'm not only a great player but I'm a great competitor.

**Q. You mentioned your swing coach, Horacio, and your psychologist, as well. Is there anybody else you're leaning on in those dark moments to help get you through?**

GABY LOPEZ: Too many people. It's really hard to call them out. But first of all, my family, they have been rock bottom and they just have been the fundamental, the base of everything. Of course my coach, and recently probably more close -- just closer to me has been Steven Yellin, someone that has been next to me for the past eight years. He came actually to Toledo for three days for my preparation, and I really think that he made a big impact.

**Q. I feel like when a lot of people win, they're not always inclined to play the next week. You said it's been a couple of crazy days. You obviously wanted to celebrate and soak that in, but how have you been working on your recovery to get yourself ready for the challenge of a new golf course and new tournament?**

GABY LOPEZ: Right. Actually I have this sort of life coach, nutritionist that helps me to get my life back in track, restructure it, because sometimes we get so many things over your schedule that it's hard to put everything in order, and she's been telling me, you've got to take care of your hydration because for the amount of hours that I'm

spending not only on the golf course but in the heat and my body is like just working too hard to calm those emotions down, hydration has been key, just eating well, clean, and trying not to stay up too late. But that has been a little hard.

**Q. Tell me what the celebrations have been like, if you don't mind sharing.**

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, Sunday we actually stayed at my host family last week, at the Howard house, and it was Emily, Ollie, we had Chris, we had my physio Bondy, we had Zoot, so many people coming over, and we did a little party. I think it's more satisfying and it's just sweeter when you have had a really, really hard time and then you come back and you make this amazing comeback.

Yeah, I mean, I've had probably not that many opportunities to win, but I've been able to just embrace those opportunities to get the job done.

**Q. As we look ahead to this week in particular but also the rest of the season, we're kind of closing in on the end here. Now that you've won, now that you've come back from injury successfully, so far as we can tell, what are some of your goals? What are you thinking for yourself? Where do you see yourself by CME?**

GABY LOPEZ: Right. Before, I've got to be honest, I was really hoping to picture myself in the top 10 in the world and top 10 on the LPGA. That was really one of my pictures. But honestly, after yesterday and after Sunday, I really don't want to put a number. I want to be limitless. I want it to be as far as I can go. I want it to be, let me surprise myself. I feel that that's -- it's interesting because I do believe very firmly in what I feel and what I've seen and all the hard work that I've put in behind, so I'm just not going to limit myself.

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