

Kingsmill Championship

Presented by GEICO

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Elsa Diaz

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: It's my pleasure to welcome in Elsa Diaz, recent University of Richmond graduate into the Kingsmill Championship media center. Welcome, Elsa.

ELSA DIAZ: Thank you, thank you for having me.

THE MODERATOR: First of all, congratulations on graduating. She just graduated on Sunday. Can you just give us a little insight into the last couple days into your life?

ELSA DIAZ: Well, the last couple of days have been really big for me. A lot of people have been telling me how I've been prepping for this event, but I don't feel like I've really had time to prep. Moved out Saturday, graduated Sunday, on Wednesday we came back from Tallahassee, Florida, because my team was playing in regionals, NCAAs. So it's been a little bit of a quick turnaround with everything.

I played my last college round on Wednesday, and then Wednesday night me and my sister got on the phone and started looking for sponsors. Then Friday I declared pro. So it's been some very exciting days. It's kind of hard to keep my feet on the ground. But my parents are here, and they've made it a lot easier, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: This is going to be your first career LPGA start. What was your reaction when the tournament called you and invited you into the tournament here this week?

ELSA DIAZ: I tell a lot of people, Matthew Schulze, he texted me the day before and told me, "Hey, can we talk?" And since he didn't say anything, I thought that was a hey, thanks for trying, you're not coming. But I called him the next day, and he told me, "Hey, I just want to make sure if you're still available that day because you're in the tournament." And I couldn't believe it.

I think I sounded a little serious on the phone because I was like there is no way, there is no way I'm playing. But my dad and I we were driving next to the golf course, and we just told each other, Can you believe it? Are we playing in an LPGA tournament? So it still



doesn't feel real. I keep telling people that last putt on Sunday, it's probably going to feel real.

But I'm excited. I'm thrilled to be here. I don't really know how to act. I'm still trying to get to know everybody. I see all the players, nobody's walking around with their lanyards and I'm proudly wearing mine, like showing everybody my I.D. I'm trying to act cool, but these players got it down. I'm still learning.

THE MODERATOR: You seem pretty comfortable. Any nerves here this week?

ELSA DIAZ: I am, actually. I came and played a round on Friday, and I had some maintenance guys watching me and I got nervous (laughing). But, no, having my parents here, my sister's going to be here, I think my brother's coming. I have a lot of members from Independence Golf Club which is where I practice. They're going to come watch me.

The fact that I've played this golf course with the University of Richmond feels a little funny, because it feels like a pro set-up. But at the same time, it feels a little bit like home. I know that first tee shot's going to be very nerve-racking, but I'm excited. Like I said, having my parents here has helped a lot. And everyone's so friendly. They give us everything here, so that's been great.

THE MODERATOR: Are there any LPGA pros you're looking forward to meeting or getting paired with this week?

ELSA DIAZ: I mean, it would be great to meet the greats like Lexi Thompson. I saw Michelle Wie walk through the clubhouse. It's one of those you do a double take. I saw Stacy Lewis, and it's so exciting. I'm pretty star struck too to see these players. But just the chance to get to practice next to them is a big honor.

Q. You've had a great four years at University of Richmond just down the road. How do you think your college career has prepared you for this week?

ELSA DIAZ: I think mainly, one, the University of Richmond treated us so well. They took us to very nice golf courses and they always provided us with

everything that we needed. Whether it was golf clubs, equipment, and the experience that you get as a college golfer to travel and be places where you're not sure of what's going to happen, I think is the experience that Richmond gave me the most.

Even when the swing doesn't feel right, in college golf you can't just back out. You have a team that you have to be helping out. I think that is what's helped me the most, the fact that you have to do it. You have to go. You better be confident and hold your head up high to play well.

The University of Richmond, I was a business marketing major. Like I said, I started calling all those sponsors, and I think my education with that and learning that I now have to be a business woman to learn who I can represent, what brand, and how I can brand myself. I think that's the part of the University of Richmond that kind of got me to this level. Because for a while I thought to myself I'm an athlete, but I don't know how those business conversations go. How do I ask someone for money? How do I ask a sponsor?

But those last couple semesters I took at Richmond, I took a professional selling class, and they are the ones that push you and teach you about the business side of the game.

So being able to play college golf and be part of a very good business school like Richmond I think prepared me well to be here today.

Q. How do you go from, you talked about walking through the clubhouse and seeing Michelle Wie or Stacy Lewis. How do you go from being star struck, like you mentioned, to feeling a sense of I'm here and now I have to compete against these women I've been watching on TV for quite a long time?

ELSA DIAZ: Well, I was part of the first tee growing up, and I think the First Tee put us in these opportunities growing up to be able to learn that these people are kind of what they say, just like you and me. And my family has had great opportunities to be with some of the greats. Like my sister played golf with Tom Watson. She shot a commercial with Jack Nicklaus. Rory McIlroy actually came to my house one day. They are the kind of people that tell you over and over again you have to keep doing your own thing.

I remember I sat down with Rory, and I said, "I've got to ask you about the Masters. What happened?" And he told me, "I was trying to be somebody that I wasn't."

So we drove up Monday and my dad and I got on the range, and I was just kind of starting to pretend to be

like the other players, but then me and my dad -- he's my swing coach so we just started working on what we've always. I think that got my mind set to being it's just like when we're at home practicing.

Tom Watson told my sister, don't forget the smell of the flowers while you're here. Like I said, I remember when I saw Rory, I was like, what? But they are just people like us.

To think that I'm here, I'm competing the same way these girls are competing, I think helps a little, I wouldn't say a lot, to calm the nerves a little bit.

Q. Can I ask a quick how did you meet Rory McIlroy or why did he come to your house?

ELSA DIAZ: He came and played the have a lair owe Texas open, and he's a big fan of the Heat. And the Heat were playing the spurs. One of my dad's really good friend is Bruce Bowen. I refer to him as an uncle to me. Bruce took Rory to one of the games and I was there. So I met him there. It was a quick hello. But then Bruce had dinner with Rory and he told him, hey, do you mind if we stop by their house? So Rory very kindly said yes. And I think that's what shows they're people and they're willing to help anybody, just like me.

Q. Speaking of Bruce Bowen, he's a guy who has won a little bit in his life. Has he helped you coming into this challenge?

ELSA DIAZ: He definitely has. He's been a great mentor in my life. He takes me out on the golf course and we talk a lot. What's cool about Bruce is he's such a fun guy. So we can talk about the mental game and then he'll crack a joke, and he loves to dance. We're dancing on the golf course and then we're being serious. He's the kind of guy I can pick up the phone, doesn't matter what time it is, and give him a call. He'll always have a certain line, a certain quote for me that kind of stays with me.

He would look at my scores and every time he saw I had a good round or a bad one, a bad round he was the first one to give me a call and say, hey, good job, or, hey, keep going. It doesn't matter. Keep working on what you're doing. I think what's fun about him is he talks about his basketball and we can relate it with golf. He loves to play golf.

I think he's actually playing in a Pro-Am at the Byron Nelson today or tomorrow. So he knows how to take the basketball mentality and put it into golf and teach me and whisper things to me that have stayed in my mind for a long, long time.

Q. Do you remember the first time you wanted to be out here? Can you think back to when you

knew, okay, I want to do this? And now is it cool to think, all right, I'm doing this?

ELSA DIAZ: Yes, I do. So I started the first tee when I was 9 years old, but I didn't like the sport. I only liked it because of the First Tee. When I was 15, I got accepted to play at First Tee Pebble Beach Open, which is where they put the Champions Tour with First Tee participants and we get to play at Pebble Beach.

I remember very well, I was on the 10th hole and I looked out to the water and I said, "This is it." This is what I want to do. This is what I'm going to try to do. What was so cool about the event is we're juniors, we're kids and we got interviews with the Golf Channel, and little kids are asking for our autographs, and I didn't know. I just was signing ED everywhere.

But I tell everybody I remember it succinctly, it was at Pebble Beach. I think it was because it was the first -- it took me five tries to get into the First Tee, that event. I was too young and they were letting other kids go, so I felt like that was the first big accomplishment, and when I got to Pebble Beach I was like, I've made it. Now I want to play college golf and try to get on the Tour.

Q. You just turned professional, so what are your plans coming up this summer?

ELSA DIAZ: My plans are hopefully to keep playing in events like this. Get a few more sponsorships, which would be really nice. But finish this event and then I will look for sponsors and then start playing State opens and then go to Q-school in August. But maybe keep playing, keep winning, and maybe I can avoid Q-school, which would be really nice.

Q. Have you set any goals for yourself for this week, for this tournament?

ELSA DIAZ: Yes, to win. No, I'm just kidding (laughing). I got to talk to Natalie Gulbis the other day; she told me to have fun. And I have a lot of people like Robert Wren who is a close mentor of mine. They said just have fun and enjoy it. They say your first LPGA event is the one you'll never forget. And the fact that it's so close to Richmond, I think it's going to be probably the best event I'll ever play because of the whole community I have here.

I've had so much support. And anybody who sees my bag says, oh, a Richmond Spider. So if I play anywhere else I'm not going to get that kind of support.

So have fun and keep working with my father, learn new things on the swing, and just kind of feel a little more comfortable. Hopefully I'll be playing on Sunday and competing against the best. That is my goal, just to have a good time, enjoy it, and embrace it all.

Q. Just curious who will be your caddie this week, and will anybody from Richmond be here to support you?

ELSA DIAZ: So I know I have members from Independence Golf Club coming out. I also have some of Richmond's -- people from the Richmond community. My coach from my golf team is going to come. My father's here, my mother's here, my sister's here. My sister is currently acting as manager and now she's kind of taken over everything. She's my best friend. So it's either going to be my dad on my bag or my sister.

I know my brother's going to come out, and I think I have a couple teammates, a lot of friends. I know a couple of them are driving from D.C. to come. Yeah, just a lot of family and friends, which I think is going to be the most exciting part.

It will be weird to not let them come into the ropes. Usually we're trying to beat each other at Independence, but it will be a little different this time.