

American Century Championship

Wednesday, July 9, 2025

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

Dylan Dreyer

Cathy Engelbert

Kathryn Tappen

Hally Leadbetter

Press Conference



themselves and enjoying the spectacular view. So it's truly a blessing to come back every year to this special place.

DYLAN DREYER: I will say that the wind off of Lake Tahoe made my bad game even worse. There's that. I'm also very fortunate. We do a hit for "The Today Show" every Thursday of this event, and it's pitch black when we first get here.

Then the sun rises over the lake, and it just gets more and more stunning as the morning goes on.

Then we have the wonderful events that we get to experience with each other, with our folks that we're playing with on the course and then American Century people and all the clients.

Then you watch the sunset over Lake Tahoe. And it's just it's absolutely stunning. Pictures don't do it justice, although it looks good in pictures, too.

But as not the best golfer in this group -- I have been in last place every single year -- but I still enjoy every single second of this whole week because it's stunning to look at and the golf course is absolutely incredible.

HALLY LEADBETTER: I agree. If you're playing in this incredible event and you're having a bad time, there's something wrong with you because it is truly incredible.

As someone that grew up in Florida, this is not a lake to me. Like, I don't know what this is. It's a magical body of water. But it's truly so spectacular. The setting is spectacular.

To echo the other sentiments, the people are amazing, everybody from American Century, sponsors, to the clients, to the people that we get to play alongside. And the friendships that I've made just in the last couple of years that I wouldn't have if it wasn't for this event.

It's so special to come back here. I said earlier today, in the weeks leading up to this event, it's kind of like a little kid on Christmas. You're just, like, checking it off the calendar.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by WNBA commissioner Cathy Engelbert, NBC Sports reporter Kathryn Tappen. Today Show host Dylan Dreyer and golf host Hally Leadbetter.

General question on this tournament and being at Lake Tahoe -- Cathy, this is your first time; Kathryn, you've been here a few times -- just talk about playing the course today and just being here in the beautiful scenery here at Lake Tahoe.

CATHY ENGELBERT: As a rookie -- I'm looking for rookie of the year by the way -- it's great to be out here. What a backdrop, what a golf course. I loved playing it today with my American Century friends. Really special to be out here in something that I really could have only dreamed of 10 years ago when I took up golf. We just had a lot of fun out there and can't wait for the weekend.

KATHRYN TAPPEN: For me, obviously just coming here every summer, this is a week I block out of my calendar and hope that invite comes through at some point during the winter months to get invited back.

I bring my family, the same group of people to cheer me on. We just love this place. It's spectacular, morning, noon, night, whatever it may be.

The people that are here and American Century clients that we get to play with, you get to see them throughout the course of the week. And then of course repeating year after year. And they're wonderful people.

And I think just the event in general lends itself to kindness and happiness and everybody's just here enjoying



So really, really special, and so happy to be back.

Q. Cathy, this is your debut. Kathryn, this is your ninth American Century. So you are the veteran of the group. We talked about this earlier. You are the, what's the right phrase, the longest running female professional -- not professional, but female competitor. As someone who has played nine times, and Cathy, who's playing first, what's your piece of advice for Cathy this week?

KATHRYN TAPPEN: I think my best advice to Cathy yesterday was, okay, this is the time the bus leaves and this is where we're going to dinner tonight and here's the routine. When you come into this event, and Dylan is one of my best friends, and the first year you did, what do I pack, what do I do?

It's just a matter of understanding the course of events throughout the week but most importantly, and it's something I need to heed my own advice on, is just to have fun. We're all competitors up here. We're all extremely proud of what we do for a living. We're proud of who we are as humans and we want to do our best out there.

And it can be hard. We don't play in front of fans all the time. At least I don't.

So my best advice to Cathy is probably the best advice to myself as well, just really try to have fun. There's going to be moments of frustration and holes where you just want to throw your club in that beautiful lake, but you fast-forward to the next hole you get a chance to do it again.

CATHY ENGELBERT: No littering.

KATHRYN TAPPEN: Yeah, no littering.

CATHY ENGELBERT: The one thing she forget to tell me is all the fans -- selfies and autographs and a lot of young kids, which I love, who were inspired by some of the work we're doing at the WNBA come up to me.

A man came up to me and said, you're inspiring my granddaughter to pick up a ball, whether it's a basketball, soccer ball, volleyball, it doesn't matter. So that was the cool part for me today out there. And I go this is only the practice round.

But there were a few yelling things about the WNBA to me and their favorite player, favorite team. And a lot of Bay Area people here. So a lot of Valkyrie fans.

Q. You three have seen the growth of women sports here at the tournament. As the WNBA commissioner,

you're at the forefront of the growth of women's sports. How is golf contributing to the growth of women's sports as a whole?

CATHY ENGELBERT: We have a new LPGA commissioner coming in, Craig Kessler, and I've already spent a little time with him around a little bit of the playbook on how to invest and grow women's sports and we raised capital, we hired great people, social, digital.

So there's such a movement out there around women's sports. And it's really important to find people who are believers and who invest in the product. And I think obviously, as you see on the LPGA Tour, the quality of the game is great. I know there's some things that need to be fixed around the edges.

But you need three things in sports. You need household names, you need rivalries and you need games of consequence, or in this case rounds of consequence. And I think golf is such, for me, as a former businesswoman who worked for Deloitte for 33 years, golf was a great equalizer for me, to get out there in a very male-dominated world with only, I think when I became the CEO, only 4 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs were women. Now it's closer to 15 percent. We've made some progress at the end of the decade.

But really important, I think golf is really important to kind of giving women confidence that they can compete on the golf course and obviously more broadly in kind of society. So that's what I've taken from the game and give back to the game, to my USGA Executive Committee role and definitely devoted to making sure more women come into the game and have confidence to play the game.

DYLAN DREYER: I will just say that being out there on the golf course today, getting to meet the fans, I took a lot of pictures with a lot of young girls. And I hope to be out there -- I have three boys, but they see their mom competing with all these former athletes or current athletes. I mean, mostly men out there. So to be one of five women out there to show that women can compete, too.

We can do it. Might not be the best but you can do it. You can try. If you love something enough, go out there and do it. And there were so many girls that I took pictures with today that say, I just love watching you play. I said, me? Really? You like watching me play.

So that's what makes it special, that connection with the fans.

KATHRYN TAPPEN: I would add, too, seeing the five us, Annika is not with us right now, but representing the

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

women out there, I think it gives girls the opportunity to have the confidence moving forward. You don't have to be the best, but just get out there and enjoy the game that you love to play.

I think all these young girls that are on the course and they ask you to take a picture, they're looking at you with these bright eyes and what a special moment, right.

We're standing on the tee box, for example, with Aaron Rodgers and whoever else. That's amazing to be representing a different brand, a different demographic. And for these girls to have someone to look up saying, I can do it too, I can live with boys as well.

Q. Hally, you being from a legendary golf family with your dad. Talk about that?

HALLY LEADBETTER: When it comes to women's golf, it's always so funny to me when I meet a young woman that is into golf -- like, I'm into golf; I have to tell you -- they look around as if they have some embarrassing secret, like, I'm not very good.

I'm, like, who is good? Most people aren't good unless you dedicated a large portion of your life to it, which most women that have put a lot of time energy into their careers probably haven't. I think it's so important to see people, whether it's in this tournament, on social media, documenting their golf journey, just showing it's totally fine just to show up however your game is. As long as you show up and keep up, that's all you need to do.

I just find it funny because you don't see as many men being, like, I'm not very good. They're, like, I love golf, no problem. And I'm great.

So I just think it's important for women to adopt that attitude as well that, listen, as long as you show up and you keep your pace of play and have an open mind and are willing to learn from your fellow playing partners, it's all good.

At least when I play with people, they are like, oh, you wouldn't want to play with me. I'd love to play with you. Are you fun? Then great. That's all that really I care about.

Q. Cathy, obviously you're here. You're looking to integrate in the future WNBA players into this tournament. I wanted to know what else would you be looking to do, what other vision do you have of bringing the WNBA further into the mainstream?

CATHY ENGELBERT: As a sports league, one of the most important revenue sources is media and corporate

partnerships. So from the business side of things, that would be great.

One of the impediments for our players participating in this is we're in the middle of our season right now and it's a really competitive season. We have a lot of parity at the top of the standings, a lot of people fighting for playoff spots. Our All-Star game is next week.

Unfortunately I don't think our players, in the near term, would be able to compete. But they compete outside the season. You saw Caitlin Clark play in the Annika in Tampa last year. It's fun to see. And we have plenty of other players who play the game.

They all know the resilience that sports teaches you. Golf really humbles you. And, so, again it's great networking, great to carry the brand here at the American Century. And that's what I look forward to because these young women have told me how great the networking has been, and already it's exceeded my expectations.

Q. Have any of you leaned on Annika up here or at other tournaments, maybe, for some tips or anything to help?

HALLY LEADBETTER: My dad has a funny story of me. I grew up in Lake Nona, a place in Florida. And, Annika, when she was the at the height of her career, that's where she would practice. As a little girl I would go to some of her junior golf clinics.

My dad says Annika is working down the range and gets to me and had to wait 10 minutes for me just to make contact.

Then fast-forward to just a couple of months ago I was paired with Annika in the Hilton Grand Vacations, and I've never been more nervous in my life. This is such a full-circle moment.

She's such an incredible competitor, the way she carries herself. Her game is amazing. So in terms of leaning on her, I've had the opportunity, she actually now lives in the house that I grew up in. Yeah, she bought the house from my parents.

So it's funny, when I started getting recruited for college and I moved out to Sarasota, Florida, I had to go back to the house because a lot of my recruiting letters were going to her house. She was, like, oh, I can see you can make contact now. So that was cool. I've known Annika for such a long time.

And she's always just been such a role model for me. To play in a field with her as something as a young girl when I



used to potentially have dreams of being on the LPGA, that's something that I always wanted to do. It just came about in a very different way, but I'm so grateful for the example that she set for not only how to be an incredible golfer, but just be an incredible person, everything she's done for the women's game is amazing.

DYLAN DREYER: I don't have that history with Annika. She didn't buy my parents' house in New Jersey, for whatever reason.

I will say, the honor of getting to play in a tournament when someone like Annika is also playing in it is incredible. But now I know her family through this tournament. We're eating breakfast, she comes up, says hello. It's like, wow, she remembers who I am. It's so impressive. She's the ultimate. She's so good. And I never get a chance to play with her because we're at different spots in the leaderboard. But I know when she's creeping her way to the top, I'm just rooting her on.

I want to see her beat all these incredible male athletes. And I think there will come a year where she will. This could be the year. It's just so fun to cheer on somebody who is just so, so good, and it's so much fun to watch her.

KATHRYN TAPPEN: For me, I grew up playing golf leisurely with my mom and dad. My grandmother lived on a golf course in North Carolina. Annika, obviously at the height of her career, we were huge Annika fans. My grandmother, who loved to go play, started playing golf in her 60s in retirement, mom an avid golf. I learned a lot from my mom. We've been generationally big fans.

We were at the player meeting at the trucks outside. My mom and I, of all the celebrities here, we were absolutely starstruck by Annika. I thought my mom -- she caddied for me at the time here at the American Century. I said, Mom, you have to keep it cool; there's going to be people here who are kind of interesting in life, just, like, act cool. She's like, but it's Annika Sorenstam. I thought, boy, I'm going to lose my mom tonight. I walked over, introduced my mom to Annika and introduced myself as a player in the tournament. She could not have been nicer.

Her husband, Mike, is a huge hockey fan. I broadcast a lot of his teams' games. He was nice to me, clinging to me, this is so cool. I looked up to her for so long.

Last summer we were doing something in the sand, she was showing me how to take proper sand shots, get out of the bunkers. In a way it was like I was trying to listen to so much she was telling me but at the same time I was processing, like, I'm learning these shots from one, if not, the greatest female to play the game. So it's just, yes, it's

amazing that she's here. We're so honored to play in a field, as Dylan said, with her. We cheer her on. We want her to win more than anybody.

CATHY ENGELBERT: Nothing to add. I met Annika about a decade ago, as a CEO at Deloitte, at a Masters corporate event. It was very corporate. But really, as you said, honored to be in the field with her this week. If she can come help me figure out how to get out of the bunker, I'm definitely in. Look forward to spending some time with her while I'm here.

Q. Cathy, if the WNBA Players Association wanted to take this week off to be able to play in this tournament, would you be for that?

CATHY ENGELBERT: I would definitely be for it. But we have a really, really challenging footprint every year and every other year we have international competition, like next year we have the FIBA World Cup, the basketball equivalent of the FIFA World Cup. We have LA '28. It would be tough to take a week off because we have to take a week off for the basketball competitions; but, yes, I'd be all for it.

KATHRYN TAPPEN: Take the players the day they retire.

CATHY ENGELBERT: Absolutely.

Q. I think social media likes to make a thing out of Caitlin Clark versus the world in the WNBA a little bit. Do you buy into that? If you do, is that good or not good for the league?

CATHY ENGELBERT: Again, you need household names. You need rivalry. You need games of consequence to get people to watch. You need to have your games shown on national broadcast. We had 80 of 240 games when I came in. Now we have over 205. If you build it, they will come. There's no more apathy for the WNBA. Everybody's paying attention to every play.

I always tell people, before last year, maybe I got 40 emails a season. Now I get 4,000 a week with people who are watching the games. And obviously they don't like the officiating or they do like the officiating, or they don't like something we're doing. But they're all proud of the growth of the sport and they're all proud of the expansion.

We just announced bringing in Cleveland, Detroit and Philly. 18 teams. Scale matters in sports. That's how you bring fandom in because you have to be fans of a team and players.

I think there's a lot on social media that's -- the vitriol is

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

absolutely unacceptable and we're doing a fair amount of things. We just launched a platform called No Space for Hate. That's on every court. We have a technology now called Social Protect that's going to help the players, should they opt in, to quarantine some of this vitriol they get. So that's the bad part of the notoriety and the rise in the sport. But there's a lot of good. We just, over a five-year period, have contributed over a million dollars to 501(c)(3) not for profits as part of our Commissioner Cup Championship.

We just crowned the Indiana Fever Commissioner Cup '25. There's a lot of vitriol that comes. We're trying to deal with it in a four-pronged way with technology, cyber protection, physical, security, and then mental health resources in addition to the No Space for Hate platform.

Q. You're all outstanding in your separate fields, but all the men athletes say they are nervous as hell when they get up to that first tee every day and their names are announced because they don't want to look out of place. Cathy, have these three women mentioned anything like that about the teeing off the first --

CATHY ENGELBERT: No intimidation from these three for sure. I grew up one of eight kids, five brothers, brothers in the backyard. Nothing can be more intimidating than brothers in the backyard. I'm good. I've worked in a male-dominated world. No nerves. First tee I'll probably feel it.

KATHRYN TAPPEN: That's when you feel it, the first tee. They say your name, everybody's silent, quiet, waiting for you tee off. I know I can tee off, I've done it several times before, but this moment is make or break for the rest of your life.

Q. We've had male athletes who have pitched the Game 7 in the World Series and Super Bowl quarterback to victory, and they say they're still nervous as hell when they get up there.

CATHY ENGELBERT: It's all about muscle memory. Sport is about muscle memory. Muscle memory. You've got to get up there, block it all out, swing your swing. These ladies know how to swing and so do I.

DYLAN DREYER: I like that everyone's nervous. We're all in the same boat.

Q. Cathy, since we're in the neck of the woods, Golden State, last team to join the league was Atlanta, takes a while get the funding, Golden State is knocking it out of the state. What would you say to the Valkyries?

CATHY ENGELBERT: I was so proud walking around here. A lot of Valk fans. Warrior fans. Same ownership. Sold out every game. Not only off the court are they killing it, but on the court 9-for-9. Expansion team. Sixth place. We take eight teams to the playoffs. So they are killing it.

Joe Lacob has hired great people. Jeff Smith is the team president. And obviously, Ohemaa being the GM, and Natalie the head coach. It's proven, when you're building a business, hire good people and you can succeed. They're proving it. Most valuable franchise in the WNBA this first year.

Q. A lot of you athletes mention golf being an outlet for mental health. I want to ask each of you, what do you do if maybe you feel off center? We're in a crazy world with social media, your jobs are demanding, please share some of your mental wellness tips.

HALLY LEADBETTER: Ooh, therapy. Therapy. Just going back to what you said about -- I think golf is such a unique game for many reasons. I think, well, sport in general. But at least golf, the only sport I can play worth anything, for me it's really a mirror into who you are and maybe what you struggle with.

Like I always laugh when I'm really nervous on camera, I tend to speak very, very quickly. And I break into a cold sweat. My mind kind of goes blank.

When I used to play college golf, when I would get really nervous, even out here sometimes when I get really nervous, I start swinging really quickly. It's a very similar physical sensation.

Golf can be a way where you can learn, okay, when I'm in pressure situations, whether it's on the golf course or it's in a work arena, what are the things that, what are my tendencies and how can I -- what are the tools I have to combat those things? I think golf in itself can be something to help you become better with your mental health.

DYLAN DREYER: I think for me, when I'm always nervous out on the course, breathing goes a long way. I mean, I have an eight-year-old starting to get a little more anxious with everything he does. Even trying to get him to sleep at night. We sit and we breathe together. When I'm nervous on the course, I sit and I just take a deep breath and I breathe. When I'm nervous to do something on air, same thing. Does it always work? No. But at least it recenters me. It's a simple thing that all of us can do if you just learn the techniques to do it, like the box breathing, breathing in for five seconds, holding it, letting out for five seconds. I think there's something about adding that extra oxygen to your body and just letting your heart rate come down a little



bit, so you can at least do what you know you need to do.

KATHRYN TAPPEN: For me, I would say the golf course is definitely a special haven for me because I play often with my mom in a women's 18-holers group at my golf course. I'm one who, I don't look at my phone the entire time I'm on the course. It's never in the cart. It's in my bag. It's off. I know when I get back to the phone I'll have a lot of stuff to deal with, emails whatever it may be. But for four hours I'm looking at nature, enjoying the conversation with the three women I'm playing with. It's a special place.

My job comes in waves. I was on the road for the Stanley Cup Finals for three weeks. Came out. Scheduled and blocked out days where I wanted to be at the golf course and spend that quality time. That's one way that I mentally get myself back into good headspace.

The other ways, it's very simple, I get myself off social media. I put that away and I don't look at Instagram for a long time. I don't post on Instagram. People probably wonder where I go. I don't really care because that's very toxic for me. There's a lot of stuff. I see everybody's in a happy world and we don't live in a happy world; it can take a toll on you. I like to take major breaks from all the social media platforms, focus on the simple things, schedule time with friends and family. Those are two very important things for me this time of year that help with my mental health.

CATHY ENGELBERT: My mental health tip has nothing to do with golf. But every day I have my admin schedule on my calendar something called a SMOR, Small Moment of Recovery. So it's got to be a minimum of 20 minutes, maximum of an hour, I do something other than the like feel like I'm on a trading desk in the day job. So SMOR, Small Moment of Recovery, just put them on your calendar.

THE MODERATOR: Tomorrow at 10:30, making this announcement to everybody, so we are doing a skills competition, men versus women, skills competition on the putting green, putting green near the driving range. So these three, Cathy, Kathryn and Dylan, are going up against Alex Caruso, Derek Carr and Zach LaVine and Hally Leadbetter is hosting a pitch, chip, putt competition tomorrow.

DYLAN DREYER: I didn't really know the details. I think I signed up before I knew what --

THE MODERATOR: I'm letting everybody know the details.

HALLY LEADBETTER: Can I be a biased host?

CATHY ENGELBERT: Give us a team name. Let's go. Come up with it.

FROM THE AUDIENCE: Girls on the Green.

DYLAN DREYER: Girls on the Green. I like that.

THE MODERATOR: Girls on the Green. Kathryn, you're playing.

KATHRYN TAPPEN: Am I coming off the course to do this?

THE MODERATOR: Sorry, it's Cathy, Hally and Annika.

CATHY ENGELBERT: How about Pros on the Green. That's us.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports