

# Invited Celebrity Classic

Thursday, April 20, 2023

Irving, Texas, USA

Las Colinas Country Club

## Annika Sorenstam

## Dean Wilson

### Press Conference



PRESENTED BY  
**CHOCTAW**  
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THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started. Like to welcome Annika Sorenstam and Dean Wilson. Thank you guys for being here. Obviously a unique getting back together of ya'll. 20 year anniversary of your start at Colonial. If we could just get a few comments on how special that was, and 20 years later, how fun it is to get back together again?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, well, obviously it's great to be here. So nice to see Dean. We've seen each other a few times since, but I can't believe it's 20 years, so thanks for reminding us how time flies.

It's great to be here again. I played here last year. You know, this is a fun tournament, and now we can come and play, obviously not against each other. This time a different plight so to speak. Certainly expect a lot of memories. I mean, I look back on my career and that was definitely a highlight in so, so many ways.

Dean, you were such a part of it. I remember standing on the tee there, not really knowing what is going to happen and all the people that were there. It's been nice to reminisce a few times about how I think it changed both our careers in different ways and just kind of perspective of things, and things we appreciate the most in golf and friendship and so forth.

#### Q. Dean, you want to follow that up?

DEAN WILSON: Same thing, you know. I was just a rookie on tour in 2003, and so when I got that call early in the morning -- the tee times usually come out Tuesday afternoon. The TOUR called me and said I was going to be paired with her and we did the big press conference and then I just remember every day it just grew. The press was out. It was just such an unbelievable thing.

I felt like Annika and I were just kind of in this thing together, in a bubble together playing golf, and it was awesome. When I think back about it, it's just all good

memories and I'm reminded of being paired with her all the time, even today. It's awesome. It's an awesome memory for me to have to being part of the history of golf. I love it.

#### Q. Just kind of assess the state of each of ya'll's games as we're heading into the week here at Las Colinas. How you feeling about your game?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I would say the game is not where it was 20 years ago. (Laughter.) But, you know, the last tournament I played was first week in February, so I really haven't competed for over two months, but excited to be here.

This brings back great memories from last year. Had a good finish. Finished third. As you know, these celebrities, they're good. They are just tough competitors. Just think of Tony Romo or Mardy Fish. They're just really great players and others are right there behind.

So I have to play my best to have a chance against them. I've been practicing, but it's different than playing as you all know. You can go out there at home feeling comfortable and hitting balls, but to come out here is a little different.

See hopefully the weather keeps up. Yesterday it was quite windy, which makes the course a little tougher. Again, just great to be here. I love this format and of course to play with the champions.

I really enjoy that. I look forward to a few great days. My kids and my parents are coming, so we're all going to be here. It's all about the family, having a good time together, celebrate, and cherish the different moments.

DEAN WILSON: Same thing with me. My family just flew in last night, so they're going to be here. Wife and kid.

My game, I haven't been practicing, haven't been on tour. Last time I played last summer Canada, I did well, but it's hard to keep your game sharp if you're not playing every day.

I'm just at home enjoying life. I play every once in a while.

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Hit some balls and just play with my friends and enjoy it. Hopefully I can muster up some kind of game to not embarrass myself too much this week.

**Q. Annika, do you remember signing your first autograph?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: My very, very first autograph? Good question. Other than a check? (Laughter.)

No, I don't. Yeah.

**Q. Do you remember asking for an autograph? Who was it from?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, that's a long time ago. Bjorn Borg, I wanted to have his autograph. As far as golf and tournaments I'm sure Nancy was one of them on the LPGA, was one of the first.

**Q. What memories do you guys have that's special off the course?**

DEAN WILSON: You know, a lot of people always ask me do you keep in touch with Annika, right? My go-to line was always, yeah, I always congratulate her after she won, and I think you won eight times after Colonial that year. Seemed like I was talking to her every week. Congratulations. Thanks. Do did you do? I made the cut. So it was good.

Yeah, we kept in touch that way. She kept winning. How many tournaments did you win after that?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: A few.

DEAN WILSON: Yeah.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: But it's been nice. We kept in touch. Random here and there, but I think the bond that we created during that tournament was so special. It was just -- because it was so new to both of us, scary. Like, Dean said, we felt like were in this bubble and together. We would talk, how are we going to do this. What's going to happen.

I felt like the bond was a lot more than just players. I think it's neat and I still feel that way.

DEAN WILSON: Yeah.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It's funny how different occasions bring people together, but it's been great that way I think.

**Q. Do you remember any advice you may have gotten**

**that week?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I got a lot of advice from a lot of different players. I remember on the range the first day I got there on Tuesday and I had all these guys come up and they were curious, they looked in my bag. What kind of clubs. They thought I had ladies clubs. No, they're men's clubs.

Several guys wanted to show me how to work the ball, hit a draw, a fade. I was like, Oh, thanks, but I'm good.

Jesper Parnevik, he was offering volcanic sand. Remember when he was doing that, had his hat up? No, there were lot of guys that came up and obviously wished me good luck and have a good time.

Yeah, they I think wanted to make sure that I was ready and prepared, so I appreciated it from that perspective.

DEAN WILSON: Don't worry, she was prepared. Always tell people I remember her missing only one fairway and that's because she drove it through the dogleg straight through. She played fantastic golf the whole way around. She was the one giving lessons. We weren't giving them to her for sure.

**Q. One question. Not every athlete was supportive of you playing the event. Dean got a lot of accolades for being welcoming and supportive. Quality is still being talked about in sports now. How important is it that male athletes supporting and being a voice of positive feedback with what women are doing in sports?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, no, it's huge. I mean, Dean and Aaron, they were super, super supportive. Obviously they made my experience even better. Not just from some of the other players and the fans and the sponsors, but to be able to walk the fairways with these guys being like -- I mean, if I made a good putt or I made birdie it was like, come on. We cheered because we all wanted to do well.

I think it's really important if you look at the big perspective. I mean, we need everybody to support each other, especially now. Obviously we talk about getting women into sport and keeping them there. You need everybody's support.

This sport is hard enough to go out there. Anybody who had negative thoughts about anybody trying to do their best, they should think twice about it. It's a hard thing to do. Looking back at this, I'm sure some people will say what was the purpose, but I think in the big picture it was good for women's sport and for young girls to be able to share that story.

It's not so much about getting to play with the men. It's more about having a dream and wanting to push yourself and put yourself in an uncomfortable situation because you have some goals you want to achieve.

I think we should encourage anybody who wants to get better. That's really how I thought about it and how I felt, that they were helping me to make this a successful thing for golf. I mean, obviously have Dean speak for himself.

But being a parent now it's all about inspiration and motivation to others and trying to make this place a better place rather than pushing people down. Let's lift each other up, because it's just going to help everybody.

DEAN WILSON: One of my biggest memories is when we did the ten-year anniversary and they snuck in some of the people that were there in 2003. In 2013, I remember standing next to here and they brought two girls that were twins.

We had no idea what was going on. The father introduced two girls and he drove them -- if I remember the story right, wanted to see Annika, got tickets, drove from Oklahoma, got them to watch Annika, and because of that those two girls were really inspired and went on to have full scholarships in college.

I remember and I were both in tears listening to that story.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Goosebumps now thinking about it.

DEAN WILSON: And that's when it really hit me of the impact of having Annika play in that event, how it just kept moving on. It wasn't just that week or those couple rounds. It really meant a lot to other people other than just us inside the ropes.

It was awesome. That was my favorite memory of just seeing the impact of her playing ten years later on different individuals they had brought in, how athletes and superstars like Annika can touch people's lives and change them for the good. Those are two paths that completely changed because she came and played at our event. It was really awesome.

**Q. (Indiscernible.)**

DEAN WILSON: Got my, Go Annika pin. Always got it.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Thanks, Dean.

DEAN WILSON: I always get asked about it. Really cool.

I love being a part of the history.

**Q. For new golfer, what are the three most important elements for success?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Enjoy the game, have fun. But I do think learning the fundamentals, whether it's the grip, setup, position, and aim and balance, those are important.

And then just play to your ability.

**Q. And then what advice would you give to young athletes that want to follow in your footsteps?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I would say same thing. It's all good having fun and follow your passion. What I like good golf is it's a game for life, something you can play all your life, but then also with friends, different ages, different skill level.

But learning the fundamentals and then play from there. I think it's important to play different courses and learning how to adjustment many players just play like their home course and they're very good at that and they travel and don't know how to take the game elsewhere.

**Q. A lot of young women it seems, a lot of new different people are coming to the game of golf. It's gaining popularity. I know you're doing a lot with your foundation. Invited as a company is trying to be more welcoming for not just old white guys who play golf, but people of different backgrounds, people just taking up the game. Are you seeing a shift in the industry that's becoming more welcoming doing different programming for women and young girls?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think so. I think it's changing. There is a lot of good initiatives out there. The intention is good.

I think what I see is a lot of initiative to get people to try it. I don't see a lot of initiatives how to have them stay in the game. So it's great to get them in but how did we keep them in the game, too.

A lot of times there is also people's choices. Golf fits everyone, but not everybody wants to play it. If there are ways to maintain that interest in the game I think that would be equally important as just an introduction.

But I do feel like people are trying, and I think for women especially, it's not necessarily the competitive part of it, it's more the social aspect. How can we make this fun together. Not how many far you hit it, how many putts, how many shots. A lot of women get intimidated if they're

not good enough and kind of lose interest.

I'm a fan of more team type competitions, nine holes and maybe scrambles and really feel like -- people don't have time to put into play, because it's difficult. So continue with initiatives that focus more on the health aspect and the social aspect.

**Q. With pace of play being such a hot topic on tour, are there mental exercises amateurs can use to avoid feeling rushed and staying in the moment?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, well, I hate slow play. I think I'm a believer in ready golf. I really am. There are things you can do to prepare while somebody else is playing and be ready when it's your turn. There are a lot of distractions out there with cell phones, people doing other stuff.

So how can we just be ready and go out there. I mean, I have a pre-shot routine so I do my routine and it's 24 seconds. If everybody had somewhat of a pre-shot routine, should go pretty fast.

So I think just be ready when it's your turn and hit when you're ready. You know, pick up if you're out of the hole. I think it's more -- people get mad if you're putting for 8 or 9, so pick it up and move on. Or maybe we can play more match play too.

I know it's different on the PGA Tour. At home, match play is easy. Just you and I playing and we can move on.

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