

American Century Championship

Thursday, July 8, 2021

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, USA

Edgewood Tahoe

Annika Sorenstam

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Annika Sorenstam. You were with us in 2014. You finished in second place.

And in case you are not that familiar, she's the eight-time Player of the Year and probably the best female golfer in history. It's great to have you here again. Welcome back.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Great to be back. I can't believe it's been since 2014. Time certainly flies. I'm excited to be here and it's wonderful to be here in Tahoe and part of this event and enjoying the week so far.

Q. I remember the first time you came out here, it was not as a competitor but during a practice round. You came out and played Edgewood, the back nine, sight unseen. I believe it was with Michael Jordan and Ahmad Rashad. Without ever seeing the course, playing from the blue tees with the boys, you shot a smooth little 33?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I'll take that this year, how about that? That was a lot of fun. That's what this tournament brings. It brings out the best in all these different athletes. And obviously to get a chance to play with Michael Jordan was a treat.

Q. How is the game coming along since you announced this, what you called, "not a comeback"?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: For quite a few years I was really not playing that much, since 2008. But I would say thanks to COVID, being home and spending more time with the family, our son, Will, has really gotten into the game. We go out there, we'll play as a family. And I started to hit some balls. Started to hit it a little better. Got more interested. I realized I'm turning 50 later that year. There's some tournaments that we have now for the senior women.

I thought, well, why not keep practicing, see how it goes. I've been spending some time on the golf course the last few months. It's been fun, and I'm enjoying the game a



little bit. Certainly a different perspective now being a little older, a little more remote from competition, but just come out here and enjoy a little bit more. Having my husband, Mike, on the bag is fun as well.

I worked a little bit on my game just to fine tune it. Especially when you're away, I would have a few good holes, but it's always one or two holes that would ruin the round. I'm trying to get a little more consistent and try to go out there and score and finish up and not just pick up those three-footers and walk the fairways and not just ride the golf course. So it's nice to be back and just really enjoying it.

Q. You mentioned perspective. That leads into this one. I believe you mentioned back in an interview in February that you're in a different stage in your life, a reference, I believe, to golf not being the highest priority as it once was. But has your competitiveness taken over at all? And do you have that fire back?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It's funny, there's certain things that don't go away and some things go away. When I'm out there playing, some things feel very natural and there's some things that don't feel so natural. I would say once I'm inside the ropes I'm still quite competitive.

I like the feel when hitting a good shot and I like the feeling of making a putt. And that I don't think will ever go away. But I think I'm having an easier time leaving the course and forgetting about my shots.

As a matter of fact, I've already forgotten about today's round because I'm thinking about other things, seeing the kids, what are we having for dinner.

I'm wearing all these different hats. It's nice to be able to have that option and not just feel like golf is my life and that's the only thing I have in the country. I feel like I have a lot of really nice things going, whether it's the Annika Foundation and my partners. I keep busy. It's nice to be able to leave the game on the course and just move on.

If I play the next day, I will. If I don't play for a week, it's okay too. Golf is still part of my life. But it's not that



serious. It's not the most important thing for me anymore.

Q. Along the competitiveness nature, there are two of your competitors are even with you at 8-to-1, and there's three that are expected to do better than you. Does that bother you at all?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: No, I haven't really looked at it. My husband was throwing out some odds. And I'm not much of a bettor. So I didn't really understand what he was saying, other than I've just got to focus on my game. And I know he has some money on a few people and I think one of them was myself. So I've got to focus, I know that.

But golf is golf. And I think the key for me this week is, other than just having fun, is just play my own game. I don't hit it as far as these guys. And if I can hit fairways and greens and have birdie opportunities, it's going to be fun. And hopefully I can post something, and we'll see where that puts me.

Q. How do you think the course is playing? And what do you think is a realistic number for you to get to this weekend?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It's tough to tell. The wind picked up a little bit. I think that would make the course maybe a touch more difficult. And it would dry them out. I think the greens is where I noticed, they're a little firmer than -- I would say that I would love the shots to stop a little bit more on the greens.

You know, it's not playing very long for me, which I'm glad. I can hit some shorter irons in. Hitting a lot of 8, 9 and pitching wedges. I can be a little more aggressive even though it's releasing with a longer club.

First of all, the course is in amazing shape. The greens are smooth. The fairways are just incredible. I think this is about as good as I've ever seen it. It will be interesting to see. I think we're going to have some warm temperatures that will dry out the course.

Maybe get some more roll off the fairway. So that makes the fairways a little bit more narrow, which I don't mind.

Like I said, I'm happy to be here. I think the course is playing great. I need to find my game and have my strategy and follow that and go from there.

Q. Would you like to see more women in the field here?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Of course!

Q. And of the current crop of players on the LPGA, who do you think would -- do you think they'd beat Mulder and Fish?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I'm sure you would have a handful do it. These guys here are very good. I mean, there's no doubt. Mardy Fish, the way he played last year, he played at Diamond Resorts in January. These are amazing athletes. And I think my husband and I have said it several times, you look at them, and they're legit golfers, many of them. They act like pros. They play like pros. It's hard to tell -- if you take a current LPGA player, that person would maybe hit it further and straighter than I'm doing and make some putts. But we don't have so many here. So I've got to carry the flag this time and do my best.

But of course it would be fun to have some women from different areas. Not just golf. I'm talking actresses or other athletes. There's some great athletes out there. Like you see here, you see football players, baseball players and hockey and so forth. It would be nice to have some athletic women playing here and be part of the event.

It's not just about the competition. I think if you ask many of them, it's about everything around it. I know with COVID it's a little restricted with some of the events, but this is a fun week. This is a party week. This is social week.

This is building memories and friendships. And I think that's what many of the players are looking forward to.

Q. You still live in Tahoe?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: We spend a few months here a year.

Q. You could have any place in the world. Why Tahoe?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: [Pointing to the lake]

This is one of the reasons, obviously the lake, the view. We love the people. We love the seasons. There's a lot of good things to love Tahoe. We are based in Florida. A lot of it is for travel reasons. I still travel quite a bit and kids go to school there.

I feel we get the best of two worlds. We come here -- when it's super hot in Orlando, we enjoy the lake and be part of this event. In the winter, we ski. I really wouldn't want to change anything.

Q. Where do you like to ski around here?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: There's so many. We live at

Incline. So obviously Diamond Peak is one of the places we go. We've been down to Heavenly quite a few times, North Star. That's the thing there's so much to do around here, we love it.

Q. As a local resident, I think the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority would be glad to use that designation right there. Thank you, Annika, and testimonial.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It's true.

Q. Going back to 2014, you tied for second with 65 points. You had more than 20 each round. The winner that year had 76 points. Mardy Fish, last year, had 76 points. What do you need to do to try to strive for 76 or 78?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Or 77. That would be the goal. A few more birdies. If you look at the way the point system -- it rewards birdies more than it does just being steady golf. But again, you've got to be out there and not make a lot of mistakes. There's some holes here where I can be aggressive, hopefully make some birdies.

But you're right, I think we know what kind of points that it takes to win. I've got to get off to a little better start and hopefully get hotter and hotter by the weekend.

Q. You mentioned a little bit earlier when you're playing with these guys, they're big hitters, big athletes, strong, in their prime, whatnot. They'll probably be 50, 60 yards ahead of you.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Or even 100.

Q. Do you think with your experience, your background, your record, that there's an intimidation factor working the other way, too?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: We have to see. I think that's one of the reasons why I can play here is because I have that part of the game. I don't have the distance, but hopefully I can add some other things to it. So it makes it exciting. But there's no doubt that some of these guys -- I saw just 16 today the driving, they were carrying it 326, that's a driver 9-iron for me I've got to focus on my game. When I played the Colonial, it was the same situation there. I knew I was going to be the shorter hitter. I was going to hit to the green first.

I think I have to have the mindset of trying to hit the fairway, trying to get on the green first, and show them where the flag is.

That's really what this game is about, is about getting the

ball in the hole. You can only do what you can do. And I'm very aware of my strengths and aware of my weaknesses and where I am today. And just putting a good score together, it's what I'm going to try and do. And like I say, we'll see how many points there will be and we'll see where that puts me.

Q. You had six birdies today in your round; is that correct?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: That sounds about right. So hopefully I can do that every round and stay away from big numbers.

Q. I understand you played with one of your partners today was John McLaughlin, the president and CEO of Edgewood. If you had one tip for his game, what might that be?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: First of all, John is a great guy. We had a good team today. And the team overall did fantastic. I think we had a good time. As far as John's game, he's pretty steady, I would say. I can tell you he does work for a living. So you've got a good place around here. But I would play with him anytime.

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