

U.S Senior Women's Open Championship

Wednesday, July 31, 2024

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Fox Chapel Golf Club

Annika Sorenstam

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Please welcome our 2022 champion and three-time Women's Open champion Annika Sorenstam. What does it feel like to be back at the Senior Women's Open?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It's great to be here. This is really a fun place. It's beautiful. Love the golf course. Nice to come to a place, this is kind of Mike's, my husband's -- I wouldn't say hometown, but it's not far from it. Pennsylvania, Ohio, it just feels great to be here.

Q. You mentioned that you love the golf course. For someone that's never seen it, talk a little bit about the uniqueness.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I'm trying to explain, it's something very similar around the corner would be Oakmont. I've been lucky to play there a few times. We played the U.S. Open there a few times. It's open, but it's quite undulated, big greens. There's so many different options off the tee. There's options to the greens, and then you've got the greens are different kind of shots around it.

I think it's fun. I love the setup. I think USGA has done a great job so far, the different tees, the options, moving tees forward and then have different angles in, different clubs. It makes you think, and I love that about golf courses where there's nothing -- you don't take anything for granted. Go out there, maybe have another approach to it and attack the course differently.

Q. What keeps you coming back to play these?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I don't know how many I'm going to play, but I'm back. When I played the first one and was able to win, I think that kind of got my appetite going. The last few years I haven't played as well as I would have liked, so I'm still looking for the great feelings, so happy to be here. Feeling strong about my game and been playing a little bit this season. Not as much as last season, but considering how much I do put into the game playing with Will and just having fun, it's just, why not, and I want to



support the USGA and this championship because it means a lot to us.

Q. You do play in a few celebrity events. How was preparation for this week different?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I'm glad I've had a chance to prepare a little bit. The last few celebrity events I've played in, the guys are about it twice my size. They hit it twice as far, and I think I'm double their age. It's a little different. Now I feel like I'm playing more with my contemporaries and a little bit more fun.

It gets very competitive in these celebrity events, no doubt, and I'm determined to one day beat them and haven't been able to do that, but it makes me work on my game, and it helps me stay sharp a little bit.

Q. Knowing your role with IGF and the Olympics going on, if this had been available during your time, how would you rank winning a gold medal with the other majors?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Oh, I think it would have been fantastic. It really is. Think of it, many of us grew up watching the Olympics, and it's just every four years. Of course with the Winter Olympics we'll have something to watch every other year.

But I think it's just such a neat concept, and it would have been fun to meet some of the other athletes and be part of the athlete village and the opening ceremony or the closing ceremony and just obviously be very proud to represent your country.

I think it would have been really sweet, and just knowing that it would only happen once every four years. We think majors are really special because they are because we're limited, but this will be extremely limited, so I think it will be very cool and very special to have the chance to compete and the memories you would make.

Q. What was Will's advice for you this week?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: He's told me several times just to have fun, enjoy. He walked with us on Monday. He thought it was a really neat golf course. He was giving me some chipping advice on the course, but now he's playing



Oakmont, so I think he's kind of ditched me for the day. I think I'm on my own.

Q. What would it be like for you to win two of these?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: To win any tournament is great and to win a USGA championship is wonderful, obviously. They're very, very difficult to win.

I like to just kind of stay in the moment and just enjoy what's out here. It's really neat to come and see all our contemporaries. I only see them once a year, but it's just so neat that everybody is still playing the game and everybody is still so competitive, all of us. I think it's pretty neat.

Again, I don't want to get ahead of myself. I've done that in the past, and I've learned a lesson the hard way, so I'm just going to walk the fairways with my husband, my friends and family are around and enjoy every moment, and then we'll see. Especially now when who knows what this forecast -- what will really happen. I try not to think too far ahead and just take one step at a time and cherish it.

Q. How cutthroat is it with you guys?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: We all have other purposes in life, if you know what I mean, other meaningful things that we spend our time doing. But I would say once you've been a competitor you will always be one. It's like this magic line with the rope. Once you're inside the ropes there's something clicking in your mind. I still remember some of the good hits I've hit and some of the good putts I've made. That's what keeps you going.

I think overall most of us are -- it's easier to forget a round and move on than in the past. I think we probably all felt like it was so important and it was the only round that mattered. I think now you put things in perspective a little bit more maybe being a parent or maybe being a business owner or knowing, hey, this is the only tournament I play all year, I'm just going to enjoy it.

Q. What puts more pressure on you, teeing off No. 1 or throwing out the first pitch for the Pirates game?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, golf is kind of more my thing. I feel more comfortable. But I've been throwing quite a bit with my daughter Ava this summer. She plays softball. When Mike told me that this opportunity came up, I was like, that's cool, I've been practicing with Ava a little bit. Hopefully I do a little better than the last time I threw a first pitch it was in 2008, so it's been a few years. Maybe it's been shorter than that. But I'm going to get it all the way from the mound to there.

Q. You've played the course Monday and you played today. How different is it?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yes, different. It's playing very different because there's zero roll. I think every time I come up to a drive I would see my pitch mark, and we had a lot of mud on the ball. It's all about carry. That's really what it is.

But today we tried some more of the forward tees that they had put out some markers to get a little different feel for it than what I like, but those tees, it's not just 30 yards forward, the angles are different so now you might have to cut over this bunker or cut this corner, so it makes the course play a little different, so I want to make sure I had some options. I would say that the greens, at the end of the round today, they are drying out, so that's impressive.

Q. Talk about No. 9 and No. 17. They're kind of unique.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: There's a lot of unique things around here. I'm looking at one behind you, No. 16 you've got three bunkers in a row the way they are angled. 17, I considered it almost like two different greens. You have a front green and you have a back green. I'm curious if they will put the hole location in the middle. I guess they do for the members' event. That would be quite interesting. But it makes such a big difference.

Obviously being in front of the hole and the back, it's going to feel like you missed the green because you're going to have a 40-yard putt, which is not very common.

The 9th hole, I like the holes here, I really do. You've got to know your yardages. You've got to be accurate with your irons. It's something that I enjoy playing.

Q. It rained yesterday and they canceled everything. Did you find somewhere to play or just take the day off?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, we took -- Mike took Will and myself, and we went to hit some balls somewhere at an indoor facility, just to kind of swing and keep Will happy, and our daughter Ava got to go to Starbucks and then we worked out, so everybody got to do their favorite thing. Obviously we had a lovely evening last night that the USGA hosted.

It turned out to be a great day.

Q. Juli Inkster talked about how she could hit all 18 greens here and still shoot 80. Can you talk about that



comment and the quadrants on the green?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: You know, I love to hit every green, but I hope to shoot better than that.

But she's right. I think she meant they're just very big, and the front doesn't mean -- if you're in the front you could have a really long putt. I think that's what she's referring to. The greens are big.

I think it's generous area, but you still have to be precise. There's a lot of breaking putts. So just getting on the green is just half the battle. You've got to make sure you're on the same level or on the same side or just kind of have an uphill putt. Again, it puts a premium on the irons. You've got to know your yardages and be accurate with them, but it's a true test. You've got to hit the ball well, and hitting the ball in the fairway is going to be key here, too, especially if it continues to rain. The rough is not too thick, but it gets wet and it gets a little tougher.

I'm just excited about the course. I think it's really fun, and every hole is so different. I look forward to the tournament starting.

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