

# KPMG Women's PGA Championship

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Springfield, New Jersey, USA

Baltusrol Golf Club

## Stacy Lewis

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to another day here at the KPMG Women's PGA Championship. I'm pleased to be joined by KPMG ambassador, Stacy Lewis. Welcome back to the KPMG Women's PGA Championship. Some thoughts on coming to this exquisite host site and what you think of it so far.

STACY LEWIS: I can't believe it's been nine years, to be honest, of this championship. The golf courses we continue to get are pretty amazing, to be honest. This golf course is the ultimate major test. You've got tricky greens. You've got firm, fast greens. You've got rough. You've got doglegs and trying to keep the ball in fairways. Every part of your game is going to be tested this week, and the golf course is in amazing shape.

Forecast looks horrendous, which stinks. This golf course is playing firm and fast right now, and it would be such a good test. We'll pray that this rain stays away and we can get things rolling.

**Q. With the forecast in the back of your mind, we've heard a lot about the opening four-hole stretch of this course and some of the par-5s. What are the keys that will be needed to get through the opening and closing holes successfully?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, I'd say the opening six holes. Talking to some caddies, you may not legitimately have a good birdie opportunity until 7. I just think those first six holes are so difficult, and it just being that start right out of the gate, you've got to come out of the gate hitting great golf shots. No. 1 is probably one of the longest holes on the golf course.

The start is going to be important. I think the mentality of keeping yourself in it, knowing that okay, if I'm 1- or 2-over through the first six, it's okay, because you've got some shorter holes, some holes you can make birdies on.



Then like you said, the par-5s, the two finishing holes where a lot can happen.

**Q. Yesterday we had the whole cadre of executives up from the PGA and KPMG. What were your expectations nine years ago when you started this thing and how have they changed? You were one of the catalysts who brought all this together. What were your expectations back then, and how have they changed?**

STACY LEWIS: To be honest, this is what I expected. This is what I wanted for this championship.

Did I think that we could get to some of these golf courses we've gotten to so quickly? No. But I thought in my head this was definitely obtainable, playing these great golf courses, getting on network TV, where you have more eyeballs, getting the people out to watch.

None of this surprises me. This is what I expected out of it, to be honest.

**Q. What's the most interesting bit of history you've learned about this place?**

STACY LEWIS: Oh, man. I learned about Jack Nicklaus's 1-iron yesterday on the 18th hole. I honestly haven't learned a lot about it because I've been running from one thing to the next the last two days.

Honestly, not a lot. Just been crazy busy.

**Q. What's your favorite attribute of this course?**

STACY LEWIS: I mean, I'd say probably the greens. Just the intricacies of the breaks and trying to read them. They're very tricky. Then I love the look of the bunkers with the little wispy grass on top because there's a ton of blind shots on this golf course, so without that grass you honestly wouldn't be able to see any of the bunkers or know where any of the trouble is, so it kind of points it out for you at least.

**Q. You talked about obviously the opportunity to**



**come to courses that are very prestigious, that elevate the women's game. The next two weeks, with this and Pebble Beach, what do you hope casual fans who maybe haven't watched the LPGA that much will get out of watching these next two weeks, so much more coverage, primetime? What are you wanting them to come away seeing when they watch the next couple weeks?**

STACY LEWIS: I want them to see how good these girls are. I don't think your casual fan is going to know how hard this golf course is. But these girls are so good, and the fact there's -- we're pretty deep on who has an opportunity to win here, and you could say 10, 15 years ago was our Tour talent-wise ready for a golf course like this? Maybe, maybe not, but these girls are ready for a golf course like this, and they're going to perform great on it.

The biggest thing for me is you walk through that clubhouse, and you see the winners of all these past champions that have won big events here, and it's guys, it's guys, it's guys, and then there's maybe one here of a U.S. Am or something like that.

But to just start a history here of women being on those pictures and being around that clubhouse, that's the biggest thing for me of what's changing in women's golf, because we're doing this every year. We're doing this every golf course we go play. It's going to happen at Pebble, too. We're changing the history of these golf courses. I'm just glad that the powers that be picked up the phone and said that they were ready for it.

**Q. At the risk of hyperbole, how important are these next two weeks in your mind to help send a message about women's golf?**

STACY LEWIS: I mean, our majors are our biggest opportunity to grow our sport and to grow this tour. It's when we get the most people watching, the most people here in the media center paying attention. These weeks are so, so important, and where you play matters. It matters to the casual fan. It matters to who's watching.

**Q. Part of watching the experience is going to be watching the struggle. We saw that with the PGA at Oak Hill. We're going to see that this week here. Can you talk a little bit about the resilience of women in conditions like this.**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, I mean, this golf course is going to play hard, and then you're going to add some elements of wind and rain, and it's going to get even harder.

It's going to be one of those golf courses that you just have

to -- when you get in trouble, you've got to get out. There's tons of -- a lot of the par-4s have cross bunkers that if you try to take something, be aggressive out of the rough and get caught in these cross bunkers that are 50, 60 yards from the hole, you can make some big numbers. It's going to come down to who manages it the best, who can get up-and-down from 100 yards the most often. It's not going to be -- I don't think it's going to be, at least, one of those birdie fests where everybody is just attacking pins.

**Q. I wonder how long it took you, for the majors especially, to accept bogeys and celebrate pars, which is kind of the key, too, this week.**

STACY LEWIS: Well, I love hard golf courses. I love when it plays hard. I've never had to accept it. I love the challenge of hard golf courses, and it's always suited my game. I get excited for places like this.

**Q. With that unique feature of ending on two par-5s, can you walk us through your strategy of how to play 17 with that blind second shot and 18 with water down the left, water across the fairway and that slope up to the green?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, 17, I honestly think the most important shot is going to be that tee shot of getting it in the fairway so you can kind of get over the big mess of bunkers there in the lay-up area because then if you can get to that lay-up area you've got a pretty short wedge in your hand, green is coming back at you. It's a good birdie opportunity, and maybe they move the tee up there to make that a little bit interesting.

18 is actually very similar. You've got to get it in the fairway because then -- if you hit it in the rough, you can't get to the green in two. But two, you can't even get over that creek sometimes, so you're having to play back at 160, 170 yards for your third shot into a par-5. To me, it's get it in the fairway and then can I be aggressive from there.

**Q. How mentally challenging is it to prepare on a firm, fast layout when weather coming might soften it? They have SubAir and drainage out here, but how challenging is it to prepare on something and then have to play on something else?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, it's really hard. You come off the last couple weeks where it's been a little bit softer and then you come here, the first day you probably watched everybody, everybody's chips were going too far, you're carrying them too far, they're rolling out too much. So you make that adjustment, come backwards, and then you're going to see something completely different once the rain starts.



We face those challenges every week, but with the SubAir, I don't think the greens will change a whole lot, to be honest, but it'll just be more drives aren't rolling as much. They haven't had a ton of rain lately, so hopefully things -- we don't get a ton of rain and things don't change too much.

**Q. I know we've heard it's playing a little bit linksey out there being so firm and fast. As a player that's won on a links-style golf course before, do you think that favors you?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, I think you've got to be a little bit creative. You've got to see the bounces. You've got to know when you've got to bounce it into hills. Especially even on approach shots, whether, okay, I'm 120 yards, but if I carry it up on top of this ridge it might go over the back, can I chip a little 9 into the hill and let it release out on top. You've got to be a little bit creative when it's bouncy like this and just take the opportunities when they come.

**Q. In your opinion who's the No. 1 player in women's golf right now?**

STACY LEWIS: Oh, somebody asked me this the other day. I didn't have an answer the other day, either. I'd say probably the most complete player right now is probably Jin Young Ko. I know she's No. 1 in the rankings and everything, but as far as ball-striking, the putting, where she's at right now, I would probably say her.

**Q. Rose Zhang is coming in here a little bit later today. Solheim Cup Captain, have you had a chance to spend any time with her and can you give us your impressions of Mizuho?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, I texted with her a little bit. I've known Rose for a while now. She played for me at the Spirit, the amateur competition a couple years ago, so she played for me there. So I texted with her a little bit, tried to leave her alone because I know things have been crazy for her, and just told her I needed her to try on clothes this week. That was really all I needed to bug her about and I said we could talk more after Pebble.

I wasn't surprised at all to see her win there. I do think having the juniors there helped her just be a little bit more comfortable maybe in that environment, but at that Spirit two years ago, Rose shot 10-under for three days, won by two or three, and if you had watched her play, you'd probably say she played bad. It was very impressive with her demeanor and the way she carries herself.

I played with her during COVID at ANA on the desert. I've

seen her play a lot of golf. Not surprising. I've obviously followed college golf because of my husband, so I get his side of it, as well.

As captain, I'm excited. I'm excited to -- I had her on my radar just more for 2024 because I knew it would be hard for her to win because that was the only way she was going to have a chance to play for '23 was for her to win. So I've been following her, and now obviously we're following things a little bit more closely.

But like everybody else, she can still go earn her spot. She's obviously moving up Rolex pretty quickly. I'd love for her to make it on her own and take the decision out of my hands.

**Q. Looking at the forecast with all the rain that's hopefully not coming, what kind of player does this golf course favor?**

STACY LEWIS: I think approach play, ball-striking. Fairways are tight at points, but in general you've got some room off the tees in general. I would point more to like a second shot and then who can just kind of have the smarts to manage things when you do get in trouble.

**Q. Yesterday we learned a lot about the KPMG insights and stats. What would you say is the main contribution from those stats, and how do you plan to use those at the Solheim Cup?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, so yesterday -- they've been working on this for a long time, I do know that, of getting our stats. You have to have a login and basically players and caddies are the only ones that can see it. Now the stats are going to be out there for the public to see, so they can go on and see.

I just sit here and say, okay, it's going to be a great iron play. Now the public can go on there and say who's got the best strokes gained approach, who should I be looking for to play this week. I think it just brings more interest to it, especially for people that are interested in that and kind of -- the analytics are in every sport right now.

Just a great opportunity for us to take advantage of it. I know a lot of the girls have used it in their own games of how to get better and what areas they should get better in.

Then Solheim Cup, it's been a long process of basically trying to get our team to have what the men's Ryder Cup teams have had for the last three Ryder Cups of having this access to data to allow us to -- we're meeting with them today, but to really dive into these players of what's their strengths and weaknesses, who's trending in the right

direction, who's not, who plays best on certain types of grasses, and then once the Solheim Cup happens, it's the pairings themselves, simulated pairings of who can play well together.

I've learned a lot over these last few months of -- they have a lot of data, a lot of research on the four-ball and the foursome format of what types of players play best in those formats, and it's completely changed my mindset on what type of players you put in those situations.

I think it's going to really help us. I think it's given me some clarity on why we've struggled in the past in certain formats, so I'm excited to hopefully see it work out a little bit better for us.

**Q. I'm guessing it might be even a reference for your picks, too, no?**

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, 100 percent. I think you could look at the picks when it comes down to it, of what player -- say somebody has automatically made it and I need someone to pair with that person and I'm between two picks, of those two people who pairs the best with that person.

Yeah, so it's a huge part of the picks already. They're able to project who's going to make the team based on the players' past schedules and how they have played at those past tournaments. Basically anything I ask statistics-wise they can figure it out. I'm very much that mindset as you can probably tell.

Yeah, it's been great for me, and I think it's going to offer clarity for the players of hey, I'm not just putting you together because you play the same golf ball or you're friends or whatever it is. I'm putting you guys together for a reason, because I think you can be really successful.

**Q. That might have been the most analytical answer we've ever gotten from a Solheim Cup captain who's still trying to play. How do you go out and try to work on your 5-iron?**

STACY LEWIS: That Solheim brain shuts off, and when I'm inside the ropes I'm Stacy the golfer. I try to be where I am. I try to focus on the task at hand, and when I leave the golf course, I'm going home to be with my family and everything else shuts down.

Just try to compartmentalize things and get through every day, but yeah, my brain is always going. It never really shuts down.

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