

LPGA Media Conference

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

USA

Jeremy Friedman

Ryan Cannon

Brad Hughes

Walter Wang

Shirley Wang

Natalie Gulbis

Press Conference



in an incredible amount of time and effort. They really do work nonstop.

I want to thank Ryan Cannon, David Tucker Tim Aaronson for everything you guys to do really make this a hit. We are really proud to be associated with you, so thank you. (Applause.)

I want to thank the folks from the Wilshire side who put in a ton of work. We do a lot to get volunteers and members and excitement and financial support to this event ourselves. Thank you my fellow board member, Debbie Heap who chairs the LPGA committee, Rick Barragan, who through his company supports the LPGA through this event. And then Suzanne Kelly who is a part of the group.

I want to thank Natalie Gulbis for joining us here today to support women's golf in Los Angeles. If you know women's golf and the history, there has been a ton that's happened here in LA. We at Wilshire are really proud to be associated with the LPGA. Thanks for being here.

On behalf of the members I want to reiterate our support for this event and the LPGA as a whole. Wilshire has had a really long commitment over its 103 year history to women's golf and to developing the game here in Southern California and in LA.

I was talking a minute ago with Ryan about how special this place is, and the fact at that Wilshire grew west before the city of Los Angeles really did. We are very much like a Central Park in the heart of Los Angeles and the city has kind of grown in around us and our 103 year history and about 103 acres out here are something really special to us.

Thank you for being the stewards of the game with us, and thank you all for being here, and we look forward to a great event today.

Thanks.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Brad, thank you. And again, thank you to you and your staff for the generous hospitality today.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Good afternoon, everybody. I would say good morning but it's approaching afternoon. At least good afternoon for us that came from the east coast. My name is Jeremy Friedman. I'm the PR media director for Outlyr, the tournament operator for this great championship. Thank ya'll for coming. We have a full room today.

It's an honor to be here, here in Hollywood for today's announcement. Before we get started, want to bring up a couple folks. First gentlemen that I'm bringing up to welcome everybody is Brad Hughes, president of Wilshire Country Club. So thank you for the hospitality here.

Brad, thank you very much for the hospitality. Would like for you to come up and just say a couple words.

BRAD HUGHES: Well, thank you on behalf of the club. I want to welcome everybody here this morning, this afternoon. It's a real pleasure for us to have everybody here for this really tremendous announcement.

I want it start by thanking Walter and Shirley Wang for their support of this event. It's been the goal of the members to support the LPGA in a very special and profound way, and you are helping us get to that ultimate goal of having a premier tier I event here in the heart of Los Angeles, the heart of Hollywood.

So thank you on behalf of everybody for your support of this event. Thank you.

There is a ton of work that goes into these things, and as the members here will tell you, I like to thank people for your service. I want to start with the folks at Outlyr who put



We appreciate it.

Next I would like to introduce and welcome the newest member of our Outlyr team. Brad mentioned Ryan Cannon. He's our executive vice president. Ryan is coming after a long career at the PGA of America. Past PGA championships, past Ryder Cups, this man ran the show. So Ryan, come on up.

RYAN CANNON: Good morning, everybody. First to Bradley and the entire membership at Wilshire Country Club, thank you for hosting us. Your enthusiasm and warm hospitality, it's hard for me to over-say how much we appreciate that.

Outlyr, look, we sit at the intersection of sports, culture, and philanthropy. We wake up every morning and pour our heart and souls into creating impactful experiences for others. Our small but mighty team here in Los Angeles, led by David Tucker, is no exception.

David, Lexi, Anna, Megan, we're proud of your efforts. We appreciate that you are guided by both your mind and your heart. We know today has been years in the making. I know I can't wait, but I'm sure everyone can't wait to see what you do next.

Now, at the end of the day, it's a privilege for Outlyr to be a part of this experience and this championship. It's a privilege that we're only afforded because of our incredible partnerships with Wilshire Country Club, the LPGA, our friends at Wasserman, all the people that have supported every event that's been at Wilshire prior to this one, and two incredibly new and exciting dynamic organizations that you'll hear more about in just a minute.

So with that said, congratulations to everyone involved on what today is, a celebratory day. We look forward to taking this journey with you together, and on behalf of the entire Outlyr organization, thank you for your time and thank you for giving us this incredible opportunity to be a part of it.

Enjoy the day. Thank you.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Thank you, Ryan. Also, going to be a little selfish here on this. He mentioned Dave Tucker. Dave is our fearless leader for -- we call it Outlyr west. He's been guiding the ship on this tournament since 2018. Dave, thank you for your leadership for all of us.

Now for the big announcement. We hinted at it a little bit, so I would like to turn your attention to the screens. Big announcement from LPGA commissioner Mollie Marcoux Samaan.

MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN: (Video) hi, I am Mollie Marcoux Samaan, LPGA commissioner. I'm sorry that I can't be with you today, but I am here in Korea at the LPGA Tour stop, the BMW Ladies.

Today is a very special day for the LPGA. I'm honored to announce that our coveted LPGA stop at the Wilshire Country Club, starting in 2023 will be the JM Eagle LA Championship presented by Plastpro.

In addition to being very excited about returning to Wilshire Country Club and to have two new like-minded partners in JM Eagle and Plastpro, I'm also thrilled to announce that purse of this tournament will be \$3 million, which is equal to the highest tournament purse on our tour outside of the major championships and the CME Group Tour Championship.

I want to welcome JM Eagle and Plastpro to the LPGA family. Walter and Shirley, we are grateful and really appreciative of your support of the LPGA players, and we look forward to a tremendous relationship moving forward. Thank you very much and we look forward to seeing you all in April.

ANDREA LEE: (Video) hey everyone, Andrea Lee here. I'm so excited to hear the news about the JM Eagle LA Championship presented by Plastpro starting next year, especially and the \$3 million purse.

Thank you so much to Walter and Shirley for all of your continuous support and commitment towards the LPGA, and we can't wait to put on a show for you guys next April in Los Angeles.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: So ladies and gentlemen, the JM Eagle LA Championship presented by Plastpro. That's our big announcement today. Taking place April 24th through the 30th in 2023. Thank you Mollie and thank you Andrea for the videos. We look forward to seeing you here in Wilshire Country Club in April.

So now, want to introduce the stars of the show. Walter and Shirley Wang, founders and CEOs respectively of JM Eagle and Plastpro, and LPGA Tour winner and 2023 U.S. Solheim Cup assistant captain, Natalie Gulbis.

If you can make your way up to the stage, please.

While they're making their way up to the stage, I want to take a moment to emphasize the significance of today's announcement. We run a lot of LPGA Tour events at Outlyr, and the \$3 million purse is huge. As Mollie mentioned, it equals the largest purse on the LPGA Tour outside of the majors and CME Group Tour Championship;



and a five-year commitment through 2027.

First off, Walter and Shirley, thank you for your commitment to this championship and thank you for your commitment to Wilshire Country Club.

First off, Walter and Shirley, kind of want to start with you. Congrats on today's announcement. Walter, if you could give a little bit background on JM Eagle and then also walk us through your kind of vision of this tournament and how this partnership came about.

WALTER WANG: So where should I start? (Laughter.) Well, I was born in Taipei Taiwan. Emigrated to the United States, Bay Area with my mother when he was nine years old, so been in the States for decades. I don't want to mention how old I am, but long time.

Anyway back in Taiwan my father founded this company called Formosa Plastics Corporation. Currently he has nine public, revenues about \$120 billion. What's important about Formosa Plastics to me is that my dad also not only built the company, but created an amazing healthcare institute in Taiwan.

Back in 1976 was built, named after my grandfather, and now has over 6,000 beds, and really brought advanced healthcare to the country of Taiwan with 23 million people today.

It first started, he treated everybody equally before Taiwan didn't have the healthcare system, and because of the hospital he treat everyone equally, and especially the needy and the poor. So he really elevated the health of people in Taiwan.

Also, in 1974 about, my father also built one of the few golf courses in Taiwan. It's also called Chang Gung Memorial Golf Course, and was 27-hole golf course and today still very popular, even though I do not get to play very often.

But I guess that's how the golf started in the family. For me, I'm a hacker but I love golf. I watch especially LPGA as much as I can, and every time I go play golf, I remind myself to please keep my day job.

But it's just fantastic. For me, my attitude in my heart is just that playing golf, stepping on the course every time brings you much joy. It's a lot of joy playing golf for me. You know, golfers, even Natalie here doesn't hit a perfect shot every single time, but, I mean, I hit just a little bit less than you. But I have joy because there is always something to look forward to.

There is hope. There is hope for the next shot. Hope for

the next hole. So because there is hope, there is joy. And I find much joy in playing golf.

Again, back to every single time I watch these amazing lady athletes play golf I was so amazed. Decades ago I said, one day maybe I could help LPGA just a little bit. Just a little bit. And these amazing athletes that work so hard, so dedicated, and yet they walk on the course, no matter hit a good shot or hit a bad shot, they have this smile on their face.

The attitude you see from LPGA player, they have hope and joy in their heart. That's what also make them so good and they enjoy the sport.

So it's an honor, a pleasure for me and Shirley to be a part of the LPGA family, and our commitment is that we want to do this in a long run. This is LPGA golf, life, you know, how precious life is. It should be sustained in the long run, right?

Hopefully in this very different world these days that human beings can still find that there is love somewhere, and that piece is important. What Miss America would say: It's one piece.

But anyway, joke aside, it's an honor and pleasure again to be a title sponsor, and, again, I'm just so admiring of the ladies that work so hard.

I think it's a necessity to double the purse, and I look forward to -- because this is a long-term commitment, we would like to very much increase that purse every single year.

Thank you so much. (Applause.)

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Walter, I think Natalie is probably just beaming with just the commitment that you're expressing.

Shirley, similar question. Give a little background on Plastpro and then also essentially reiterate your excitement and partnership in joining the LPGA Tour family.

SHIRLEY WANG: Yeah, people ask me why am I sponsoring this, right? I was going to say, because my husband told me so. But joking aside, well, really excited that we're sponsoring the LPGA, because actually first advertisement for Plastpro was on the Golf Channel. We advertised on the Golf Channel and also had LPGA players come to our trade shows and hit our doors, golf balls on the doors, and it would bounce back to prove that our doors are really good. Everybody should buy fiberglass doors. That's my plug.

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Honestly, I guess the other thing, why I'm so happy that we're supporting the LPGA is because I'm a woman, and I really think as a woman I know how hard women work. Not just at work, but at home, taking care the kids, taking care of everything, every schedule. I think most women are taking care of these guys here.

So I know how hard it is, and I want to support the women out there. It's not an easy life being a pro and working for whatever it may be, so I'm so happy I'm doing this.

The other thing is I really think women should have more exposure. We are really happy that we have upped the purse from before, and to give more exposure to the women. I think they deserve it and we want more women players to excel and be great.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Thank you, Shirley. So, yeah, absolutely. (Applause.)

Okay, so Natalie, after hearing that and hearing Walter and Shirley and their commitment to this championship and the LPGA Tour, as a player, the purse going up to \$3 million, their long-term commitment, just give me your initial reaction as a player.

NATALIE GULBIS: Well, initial reaction, and then I heard you guys speak. I mean, this was the most incredible introduction to an LPGA event I have ever seen, and I have done plenty of press conferences.

But in 20 years of playing on tour there is always excitement for a new event and excitement to be part of the LPGA, but you're talking about things that are really the essence of not only the LPGA and women's golf, but of golf: Bringing hope and joy.

That was so beautiful what you said. And giving exposure to women's sports, and in particular women's golf, is something that has been incredibly important to me my entire career, and you guys really are a dream come true.

So thank you so much for being part of this. You just didn't increase the purse, you blew it out of the water moving it from \$1.5 million to \$3 million. It's not only incredible, it gives my chills even talking about. It's not only incredible you're doing it not only for this event, but that's going to send a message to all the other events that you're bringing up the purse at an event that isn't a major, and that you believe in the future of women's golf and women's sports, and it's just really amazing.

So thank you on behalf of the LPGA for sharing the joy of the LPGA and loving golf so much. I'm the same way. I

still love golf so much. And during the week of the LA Open, I hope that every player smiles every time they miss-hit a shot.

WALTER WANG: Yes.

NATALIE GULBIS: But what you guys are doing through this event and increasing the purse, raising awareness, keeping the event here at Wilshire, which is such an incredible venue and has been since I think the first event in 2018, just thank you guys so much.

I am so excited and it's exciting to be part of this event in general, because I don't live too far from here, and seeing golf continue to just grow, especially women's sports and especially in a market like Los Angeles.

So thank you, and we're really excited to be partnered with you guys and your passions and companies. You guys are quite a duo.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Natalie, you pretty much answered all my questions I had for you actually. Let's talk about Wilshire Country Club a little bit. You have an affinity for this place.

As you mentioned, you don't live far from here; played here a few times. Talk about from a player just having the stability and consistency of this tournament at Wilshire moving forward for the next five years.

NATALIE GULBIS: There is so much history associated with Wilshire and golf, right? Like this is one of the most prestigious courses, not only in Southern California but in the country.

So to be able to have the opportunity to play in a venue like Wilshire Country Club is incredible for us. Personally I love this golf course. I love it because it seems to me like a classic, traditional golf course. Something I've always loved about this golf course and the greens are incredible. They're fast and pure and difficult to read.

If you have read any the press clippings from years before and the player feedback, they love this golf course. They love these greens. These greens are so fun to play. We come in the spring, which is a beautiful time in Southern California, and it's a really fun place for players to play.

It's a fun golf course, great area, and Outlyr does an incredible job with events. But this golf course, it always is a little bit challenging when you don't expect it to be. You hit a shot a little bit too much to the right and you wind up in a spot that's difficult to get it up and down.

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I love playing here, and I'm just really excited that the event, there is a long year commitment with this event going forward. Really looking forward to that.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Awesome. Walter and Shirley, so hearing Natalie speak as an LPGA player, you two are LPGA fans. Just from a pure fan perspective, how excited are you to come here in April and just watch the world's best professional golfers compete on this golf course?

WALTER WANG: I think there are no words to really describe it correctly, but just hearing Natalie speak and her passion, you can feel the energy. It's just fabulous. I have been to a few pro-ams, and every time you play with these super athletes, outstanding athletes, and again you feel that they work so hard but, you know, they don't -- they just don't have that -- you don't see the fatigue.

It's amazing. You don't see the fatigue in working so hard. You see, again, the joy, the commitment to really go out there and win the tournament and be ahead.

I think that to me is this is the journey of life. Golf is like a journey of life. No matter how talented the golfers are, they still have to work hard at it. There is no such thing as being so talented you don't have to work hard and you can leap and be a winner.

So it's like journey of life that we have to walk this journey of life a step at time. To walk it is really left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot, and you accumulate those skills and experience to win the tournament.

So it's just the hard work that these ladies put into it, it's just amazing and inspiring for me. To me, our company, I have spoken to Dave and Tyler and my team, is that this tournament also it's about the community. It's about our country, the world we live in as well.

The essence of life is what do we need? We need air to breathe, right? Everybody needs air. And second we need water. Water is the essence of life. Our product -- and I have to do a little bit of advertisement here, our product brings water, good clean water from point A to point B.

I don't know if you notice, and I give you a little statistic here while I have time, and it's that we lose in our country, United States of America, 2.8 trillion gallons of water, of leak age, potable water, through corrosive pipelines. There is a lot of secondary water pollution, if you care about the environment. Why? From corrosive pipelines and from leaking sewage out to contaminate water pipe that is on top of the sewage pipe.

So it's a lot that JM wants to do in and one municipality at time to minimize water secondary pollution and to bring good, clean water to every household. I don't know if you remember the Flint, Michigan issue, the lead poisoning? That's also due to lead pipe and abrasive water, bringing the lead down to the water and going through the house.

So I went there personally and the kids, they can't drink water, they can't take the shower and so forth.

Anyways, in a nutshell I just want people to be aware how important our infrastructure is to a developed nation. Infrastructure is growing and so forth, and I just want people to be aware of how we need to work together to not only save the water, but not waste it. Not waste the good water so it will benefit for generations to come our children, grandkids, and so forth and so on.

And I thought that LPGA and also this platform, you know, with the attitude, work attitude of the ladies players is that this is the one of the best platforms to push that message out there. It's great. (Applause.)

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Shirley.

SHIRLEY WANG: Well, you know, LA is our home. So, I mean, as with the Wasserman Group, we sponsored and helped bring the Olympics to LA and we have lived here. We are very involved with the community. We love LA.

For us to sponsor an LPGA in LA and showcase LA, that's where our heart is, and we want to show how wonderful LA is and we want people to come and see the tremendous players that are going to be flying in.

That's another thing. I think I have so much respect for athletes, especially LPGA or PGA. You know, they have to fly all over the world and they can't be with their families, but have to fly out here and play their best rain or shine.

So it's tough. And to see them excel at what they're great at... That's one thing I won't be. I will never be an athlete because it's so hard. So I appreciate all you guys. I'm so happy that we're doing this.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: We are over the moon excited about the partnership here for the JM Eagle LA Championship. Natalie, so Shirley mentioned about you guys being athletes. I'm going to shift gears for a second.

Also in 2023 you have a big job next year. You are the assistant U.S. captain for the Solheim Cup team next year. Talk about that a little bit and just kind of what are some of your initiatives in looking at LPGA players, helping captain Stacy Lewis with your co-assistant captain Angela

Stanford, what you're looking ahead to.

NATALIE GULBIS: Well, it is already in just a couple months that Stacy has asked me help her with the captaincy of Solheim. It's incredible to process. I played on three Solheim Cups. They've been the best weeks of my career. They've been so incredible to play for your country, play for your captain, alongside your teammates.

As a player you don't really get to see all the hard work that goes into not only selecting the team, but into putting on the event and the responsibilities of the captain. I just didn't even know.

Stacy has been a great friend of mine and I was so honored and excited that she asked me to be her assistant, along with Morgan Pressel and Angela Stanford. What's different so far is that not only at an event last week I played in New York, and both the Kordas were there and Lexi, and so not only am I playing there to get ready for the tournament or play and work on my game, but you also I get to have another role.

It's really such an honorable role, but you get to spend -- it's almost like this incredible connection that happens a year or so before a Solheim Cup. You see the players come together, and every moment that I got with Lexi or with the Kordas, we were talking about Solheim, which is at the end of next year, whether it's fun little things about the golf course or where it falls on the schedule next year.

It's just been so fun for me to be part of Solheim and to get it in even a different role, I didn't know what that would feel like because I loved playing so much as a player. So far I've loved being part of just the experience and being with the players and helping Stacy any way I can. I have a Solheim call tomorrow.

It definitely is not just like, oh, you show up and they put your name on there and then you make sure the girls have water and snacks. It's really incredible the process, and just so much honor and pride. It's been really fun so far to be part of.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: For those of you who have experienced Solheim Cups, yeah, the pride similar to what Shirley mentioned about the pride of this event being here in LA, the pride that you guys have at Solheim Cup is off the charts.

NATALIE GULBIS: You guys got to come next year. It's in Spain.

SHIRLEY WANG: Oh, wow. I'm going.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: She's going.

SHIRLEY WANG: Committed.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: With that, Walter and Shirley on behalf of the Outlyr, on behalf of the LPGA Tour, Wilshire Country Club, thank you for your commitment to this event starting next year, long-term commitment JM Eagle LA Championship presented by Plastpro. Thank you. (Applause.)

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