

Marathon Classic presented by Dana

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Toledo, Ohio, USA

Ana Belac

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome inside the virtual media center here at Marathon Classic Presented by Dana. Once again, if you have in any questions, please feel free to utilize the chat function to let me know that you have a question. Thank you for that.

Now that the little bit of housekeeping is out of the way, I am happy to be joined by one of the sponsor exemptions of this year's tournament, Anna Belac.

Ana, how are you doing today?

ANA BELAC: First of all, thank you for having me. It's such as amazing experience. I'm so excited to be here and to finally tee it up in my first LPGA event.

THE MODERATOR: This is your first LPGA event. I know it's so exciting, but when you got call that you would be a sponsor's exemption, what was that like and what were the emotions you were feeling?

ANA BELAC: It was so overwhelming. This is something I've dreamed of since I was a little girl to play a professional sport, and I finally got a chance to really tee it up on the biggest stage.

I first texted my mom and dad. They were back in Europe with a six-hour delay. I think they woke up in the middle of the night and like called me back right way. Everybody was really happy and supportive and happy for me that I finally achieved my dream.

THE MODERATOR: Now, you right now are a 2020 Symetra Tour rookie. You already participated in one event. Let's take it back a few months, because you were a senior at Duke and then suddenly COVID hit.

What was that like for you to adjust on the fly with your team of suddenly having golf and then not having it?

ANA BELAC: Yeah, so it was actually a really dramatic day when we found out. We were driving to one of our college events in the morning, and in the morning we heard

about NBA suspending. As we were driving we got a call from our athletic director to turn around because ACC has suspended everything, and then two hours later we found out NCAA suspended the rest of the season.

I was just like, What am I doing now? I can't just sit around and cry about it because I can't change the situation. So I was like, I got my tour card in the fall, so I'll turn pro and start playing; so that's what I did.

I hoped we would tee it up a little bit earlier than we did, but it was good experience. That kind of stretch of a couple months when I was just doing school and not competing gave me some time to really reflect on how I want to transition to my professional career, what my goals were, and just how my life is going to change.

So I kind of got some time to adjust to that on my own.

THE MODERATOR: It's a big decision to forego that amateur status and pursue the professional life. What was it like to make that decision and especially during quarantine?

ANA BELAC: I think it was a pretty easy decision store me. When i was little I would tell my parents that I wanted to become a professional athlete. I wasn't sure what sport because I played a lot of sports.

And then it really hit me. Like during quarantine I'm like, I'm really turning pro now. So it wasn't really a tough decision. This is what I wanted to do my whole life, so this is the right time regardless of whether it's the quarantine or not. Everybody is in the same boat right now.

So it was good decision.

THE MODERATOR: I would say so, because now you're here with us at the Marathon Classic. You have already participated in your first Symetra Tour event. What was it like preparing once again for a competitive tournament, but also knowing that this would be your first as a touring professional?

ANA BELAC: Yeah, I tried not to think too much about how it's going to be my first as a professional. Just getting back into the swing of things with playing competitive again. I didn't have any chances to compete in the four

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months where I had to stay at home. I just tried to play a lot, practice as much as I could, and just mentally get ready for the tournament.

I got out there and just tried to treat it as another event. It was a little different obviously having caddies around; it's definitely a professional event. You're surrounded by different people than you were in college. You don't have your coach there.

At the end of the day, I think I was ready with how independent my coaches at Duke raised me, and I think the transition wasn't too hard.

THE MODERATOR: Did you get any words of advice from any of those Duke coaches?

ANA BELAC: Just really believing in me, trusting that I can make it and that I can do well out there. They just told me to enjoy the moment, especially because I haven't gotten a chance to play in a tournament since March.

So that was like another -- adding to the excitement.

THE MODERATOR: And so now you were able to participate. What did you learn about your game going through the first Symetra Tour event?

ANA BELAC: It was definitely -- it was a little bit better than expected. Like I didn't know what to expect coming from a long break. Obviously was rusty in some aspects, but I was just really happy to be out there.

So like I didn't try to like be too worried about all the things I thought I was rusty about. I got another week of practice before the Marathon and I can try to take care of these things and do my best here.

So it was just a good experience to play again being really.

THE MODERATOR: I was going to say, how long has this week been etched on your calendar? Ever since you got the call?

ANA BELAC: Yeah. Everything was kind of revolving around this one.

THE MODERATOR: And it makes of sense; your first LPGA event. Did you get any words of advice from other Duke players or from any of your friends?

ANA BELAC: I mean, I talk a lot with Leona Maguire, my close friend from Duke. She's out here on tour as well; unfortunately not here this week.

But she's been always like a really supportive friend, like a big sister. Just reassuring me that it's just playing golf, like just like we did in college. It's on a bigger stage, but at the end of the day, you got here for some reason, so just trust your game and just go and play and enjoy.

THE MODERATOR: Perfect. Now, if you have any questions for Ana, please let me know in the chat function and I'll call on you.

I just want to know also, how exciting -- today is our first day on the course here at Highland Meadows. Have you been able to take in the course at all, or are you waiting until tomorrow?

ANA BELAC: Yeah, so I already played my practice round and I really love the course. It's something spectacular. The greens are in good shape and it's just like a nice set up.

I think the layout really fits my eye, and I am just really excited to play on such a good course and so well-prepared.

THE MODERATOR: Were you able to watch any of last week at Inverness to see some of the people you would be playing against this week?

ANA BELAC: Yeah, I obviously love to follow, especially women's golf, on TV when I have a chance. So that was really cool to see LPGA being back.

And just seeing all the people that will participate here this week, it was really fun.

THE MODERATOR: I know you've got some sturdy goals for yourself I assume for the Symetra Tour coming up. What are some of the goals you set for yourself as you embark on your rookie year?

ANA BELAC: I mean, definitely I would like to get my LPGA Tour status as soon as I can. Hopefully this season if things go as planned. I would like to finish in the top 5 so I can advance to the LPGA Tour and just keep learning.

You know, like I know it's like a different setup than it was in college, so just keep learning and getting a lot of good experiences.

My ultimate goal is to play on the LPGA.

THE MODERATOR: We just talked with Jillian Hollis who really gives praises to the Symetra Tour and what it was able to do for her as a professional.

Have you heard that from other people that have come up through the Symetra Tour?

ANA BELAC: Yeah, definitely, especially those coming from college. Symetra has been a really good steppingstone in teaching you how to travel, how to live a tour life pretty much.

So I'm excited about this opportunity that I'm able to participate in Symetra Tour this year.

THE MODERATOR: Do you have any family here with you this week, or are you on your own?

ANA BELAC: I'm on my own. My family is back in Europe. I hope they have a chance to watch even with the six-hour time difference. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: I was going to say, has it been tough adjusting to your touring life schedule and also keeping your family to the loop of what you're doing?

ANA BELAC: I think they trust me a lot so that they're not necessarily -- like obviously I keep them in the loop, but I think they have enough trust in me so they don't need to know about my every step.

Obviously they're worried, but I think by now, by me living away from home for the past four years, they kind of got used to me not sharing every detail where I'm at every single moment.

THE MODERATOR: As we wrap up here, what is your excitement level like to be able to prepare for multiple events? I know Symetra Tour is just around the corner. How excited are you to be able to do something like participate in an LPGA Tour event and take what you learn here and use it the rest of the year?

ANA BELAC: Yeah, I think it's really -- it's something amazing. You know, like definitely it's a step up from anything I've seen before, the best competition I've ever been around. So it's going to be just a great experience. I'll try to learn as much as I can from the experience, from people I meet, from people I play with, so hopefully one day I'll be able to share that knowledge to the younger people coming up.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Well, thank you for joining us, and thank you all for joining us as well.

ANA BELAC: Thank you.

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