

# NW Arkansas Championship

Thursday, August 27, 2020

Rogers, Arkansas, USA

Pinnacle Country Club

## Gaby Lopez

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome everyone to the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G.

Without further ado, we've got Arkansas Razorback, the third we've interviewed this week. Gaby, how does it feel to be back, and have any of your friends and former teammates reached out incessantly upon your return?

GABY LOPEZ: I mean, you know that this is one of my ultimate favorite spots on the LPGA. I am very lucky to be part the Razorbacks community. We have amazing people. The LPGA loves to come back, every friend out there on the LPGA, every player. They have housing and they have people just so welcoming and so open to have us here at Pinnacle Country Club again.

It's just amazing to come back once again to Arkansas where it's my second home.

THE MODERATOR: Following up to that, how is it playing golf in a state that you're especially comfortable in?

GABY LOPEZ: I love this golf course. I think it sets up pretty nicely for our game. I think there is a lot of opportunities out there for birdie. We have some eagle opportunities out there.

So I think it's a very unique signature golf course where we can compete, show our games to the highest level, and the greens are rolling purely. I mean, we always have these perfect conditions for putting.

So I think we're always looking forward to that so we can see lots of putts drop.

THE MODERATOR: So is that your strategy, or what is your strategy moving into this week?

GABY LOPEZ: Well, of course my strategy is hit as many greens as possible so I can have as many birdie chances. There is a lot out there.

Yeah, we know the golf course like the back of my palm.

And, yeah, I think I've been putting very nicely the last couple of practice rounds. It's very different from British Open, so a little breeze is not as uncomfortable as 40 mile per hour wind crosswind.

Yeah, I'm really happy and excited to play this week.

THE MODERATOR: And although it seems forever ago, you did win at this year's Diamond Resort Tournament of Champions.

How would you say your game feels now compared to then?

GABY LOPEZ: It's a tricky question, because in January I was just coming out of an injury, neck injury, so I didn't know what to expect for that week for Orlando. I was really looking forward to just warming up for the LPGA season, and golf is a funny game. I ended up with one of the best weeks I've ever mentally played.

I think that week was just a mental strategy or a mental challenge for me since I was really not hitting the ball very well. So I don't know. Sometimes being at peace with yourself is the best tool you can have out there.

THE MODERATOR: And how is your neck now? Feel a lot better?

GABY LOPEZ: My neck is 100% now. I'm really happy to be able to get some treatment. I think it's very important that we don't overuse it. I think that's what I did last year. Last year I played just lots of events. I was playing well so I wanted to play more.

But I've learned the lesson over my fifth season, which I think sometimes the less we play the better we play. You're more prepared, physically better and mentally and not as exhausted.

Yeah, actually this year for me is going to be a great adventure, a good test to see what works for me, as in playing a little less.

**Q. Welcome back.**

GABY LOPEZ: Hey there.



**Q. I know you've played without fans now a little bit, but especially here, how hard is that going to be? We always got to see you interact with fans, and then of course the 17th hole, how hard will that be this year at this course?**

GABY LOPEZ: For sure it's been very -- I don't to say not depressing, but it's been very empty in an energy perspective. I think like the Razorback community are one of the most energetic and friendly and they're always cheering on every single LPGA players. Not only for the Razorbacks, for everyone.

So I think we're going to miss them a lot, especially me on 17. To me, that's the moment that I'm looking forward the most when I start the LPGA season every year. So it's going to be different, but I'm really happy that we are able to come. I mean, Wal-Mart and P&G being one my sponsors, they have done a tremendous job just raising the purse and having us with all the adversities we faced this year.

I think it's great to have support from them for women's golf, and hopefully we can keep coming back for many years for the Razorback community and Pinnacle Country Club.

THE MODERATOR: You're going to play with fellow Razorback, Stacy Lewis tomorrow. How do you feel about that? Are there any stories you'll share that you're already thinking of?

GABY LOPEZ: Yes. Actually I was just looking at some pictures on my phone yesterday and I found a picture where I was a Razorback. I was probably a sophomore or a junior, and I played with Stacy the practice round. I remember perfectly well what she said about looking for the straightest putt for every single pin out there to get a better birdie chance.

So I'm looking forward to playing with her. It's been a dream come true for me to be able to play on the LPGA, be a champion here, and just play this golf course with one of the best players the tour has ever had, and at home. I mean, couldn't get better.

I'm really happy to have the opportunity for tomorrow, and I think it's really nice to see when you're playing with such good players like Sei Young Kim and Stacy Lewis, to see lots of putts drop. When putts are dropping and when you see the ball going in, I think it's easier for you to visualize when your ball is going to go in.

So I'm looking forward to that, and we'll see how it turns out.

**Q. Bouncing off that a little bit, have you ever played a professional round with her? And the uniqueness of having that but then having no fans out there -- I'm sure there will be people at the houses -- but just what that's going to be like playing with her on a professional level instead of in a practice round.**

GABY LOPEZ: Right, I have played with her in Kingsmill I think it was last year. We played together, and I really like playing with her. She's fast. She doesn't show that much of emotion, so I think that -- it's nice to keep it neutral, as in feelings and emotions out there. I think it's key.

I'm really looking forward to it. I love to play with her, and Sei Young Kim. It's a great group. I'm looking forward to it.

**Q. And just the overall tournament, how important is it to make the cut and be around this week after coming back last week and playing in the British and getting your season rolling after the COVID and everything being off? How important is this week for you back here in Arkansas?**

GABY LOPEZ: I don't like to put it as in it's probably one of the most important weeks on tour. To me it's a special week. For sure it kind of gives it a taste different from any other event, but I like to call this at home and I'm comfortable here.

I like to just feel like I was -- I'm a Razorback on the team again. You know, like I'm playing college golf. I like to have fun as in don't take it so seriously like I have probably in the past years, and just being able to just enjoy them.

Coming back from my COVID test and being able to be here was just such a blessing. I think it's a plus, it's a bonus that we get to play again here this year here, because we have so many tournaments postponed and canceled.

Just having this one being able to play it here this year, it just means the world to me.

**Q. And then the event you're playing in tonight with Maria, just talk about that and raising money for the children's hospital and how much fun that will be tonight.**

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, I mean, every single time that we have an opportunity to raise money for the children's hospital I think it's a little piece that we can give back to the sport and give back to the community.

It's awesome to have this opportunity and being able to just have fun out there. Everyone is going to win in this little match. But especially for the fans, for the community, to be able to just raise money for them is the least I can do for the community and our sport.

**Q. When you come back, any places you have to visit or any people you have to see when you're back in Northwest Arkansas?**

GABY LOPEZ: Yes, former teammates for sure. I love to come back to the same host family. The Keller Family has been so nice to me and so welcoming every year. I like to see my coaches, Shauna and Mike. Haven't seen them this week, but they will be around.

School had just started this week, so it's a little busy out there. I'm looking forward to just reconnecting with friends, with family, going to -- not going. We can't go to any restaurants, but maybe getting just some food at Bone Fish Grill. I mean, everyone loves it out here. It's just really fun to see how we come back to our fundamentals, our basics, and our roots, right?

So being able to just connect with the place itself, it's very special to me.

THE MODERATOR: I heard from Maria that Local Lime is really good.

GABY LOPEZ: Uh-huh.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much, Gaby, and good luck this week.

GABY LOPEZ: Thank you so much.

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