

ANA Inspiration

Friday, April 2, 2021

Rancho Mirage, California, USA

Mission Hills Country Club

Sophia Popov

Quick Quotes

Q. Great day today, making your much-anticipated debut here at the Inspiration. How would you describe the experience of being here for the first time?

SOPHIA POPOV: Obviously so far so good. You know, with good play you're actually having fun, so, so far it's been awesome. It's kind of what I hoped for. I watched this tournament so many times. Been here, watched my former teammates play.

Yeah, it's an amazing course obviously in really good condition and I'm playing I guess up to my expectations, so that's good.

Q. Earlier this week you competed in the charity match with some other fellow major champions. What was the highlight of that experience?

SOPHIA POPOV: I love how you call Annika a fellow major champion, the GOAT.

Q. Yeah. You have a major too, now.

SOPHIA POPOV: No, I just think she's a lot more than that. It's pretty amazing. We had a great time and so much fun, and just doing that to raise money for the ANNIKA Foundation, such a great event. Just kind of nice to get into the week a little bit.

And honestly, I was more nervous there than I was teeing off on Thursday. I think this benefited me in that way.

Q. We just need to have a nice warmup like that for all majors now.

SOPHIA POPOV: Exactly, exactly.

Q. Bogey-free 69 today. Take us through the day. I imagine that's pretty pleasing, especially with some wind to start and varying conditions.

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, absolutely. Definitely happy about a very solid round today. No stress. I hit almost all



greens, you know, and I made up and down when I had to. Probably left a couple out there, but like I said, if it's stress-free and you're making a lot of pars, that always feels good.

Q. Major champion, so how can you dwell on some past experiences in this major week over the weekend?

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, I think just playing the same way I did obviously at the AIG Women's Open would be good. Just kind of solid, keep plugging along. I like the position I'm in right now. You know, I know there are some girls that shot a little bit lower than me or are shooting lower than me right now, and that's fine.

But being up there and playing in the afternoon is always a good sign. So just fairways and greens is always good out here.

Q. Absolutely. It seems like every week we're talking to you. What is it that's gotten you to this point?

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, it's nice talking to you guys every week. I like that. I know things are going well.

No, it's just been kind of, yeah, just -- I guess I'm just like a lot more calm out there. I'm enjoying myself. I'm hitting good shots. I'm not even -- I wouldn't even say every part of my game is 100% right now, but I think the confidence is really giving me that little edge.

So when a round could go one way it's going the other way just because I feel like I don't have a lot to lose. I'm not sure why I feel like I'm in that position, but I think I am.

So I'm just kind of going out and trying to create as many chances as I can and going along and trying to make birdies.

Q. People look at major championships as a grind. The rough is higher, greens are firmer, everything is tougher.

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah.

Q. You seem to be having a good time out there. What's the mindset?



SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, I think, you know, I talked to my caddie, Mikey, about it and I said, I think this course is a lot about missing the fairways on the right side. So if you do miss them or you have a tendency, kind of play with that and then just -- it's okay to miss them. You can run them up to the green, but you just have to give yourself angles like to some of the pins and then just be patient.

Sometimes you have to play for the middle of the green, two-putt, and go. I'm just -- I think in major championships I'm kind of okay with that and I back off it a little bit. I think in a regular event I'm a little bit more aggressive and I'm like, We need to be going for pins right now; during a major championship I always know people are going to have bad shots or make bogeys out there.

So just staying in it and giving yourself as many opportunities as you can is the key to winning out here.

Q. I think you're also a golf junkie, right?

SOPHIA POPOV: Totally.

Q. You love the game.

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah.

Q. You love everything about it. When you can come to a course as pure as this, does that make things a little more enjoyable?

SOPHIA POPOV: I think so. Obviously the fairways are like carpets. It's awesome. After lift, clean, and place last week I am always like -- I always almost bend down to want to lift, clean, and place and I look at the lie and I go, Wait, I haven't had a bad lie in about four or five days now.

So it's just so nice. You get tough lies, but that's what I think I love about major championships. And I love watching it. When I watch the women before I played any of the championships or even the guys, like really deep rough, cool, let's see what happens.

I think that's the attitude that I have. Let's just try to make the best out of any lie that I have.

Q. And just makes it that much more special when you can perform like you are.

SOPHIA POPOV: For sure.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

