

# ShopRite LPGA Classic

## Presented by Acer

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Galloway, New Jersey, USA

Seaview, A Dolce Hotel

## Mel Reid

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the media center for the 2021 ShopRite Classic presented by Acer. We're joined this afternoon by defending champion here at Seaview, Mel Reid. Thanks for stopping by today. You became a Rolex first time winner here last October; what is it like to return to an LPGA Tour event for the first time as a defending champion?

MEL REID: Yeah, obviously it's nice. Have some really good memories here, as you can imagine. Yeah, I mean, it's just always nice when you come somewhere and you've got nice memories and you can see yourself hitting good shots. Really happy to be back, and obviously very, very proud to be a defending champion.

#### **Q. Do you see the course differently than you did in previous years?**

MEL REID: I haven't actually been out. Dez, my caddie has been out and he says it's not that much different, so I don't imagine too much change.

But I'm excited to get out tomorrow and see what it's playing like. I know they've had a bunch of rain but apparently the course is looking really good, so I'm excited to get out and see it.

#### **Q. How has life changed or your perception changed since the victory?**

MEL REID: I think my expectations are certainly higher. I think it's extremely hard to win on the LPGA. I think the strength and the depth of the players out here, I don't think people realize how good these girls are.

And so yeah, I think there's a certain amount of respect throughout the players when you win a tournament because people have been -- great players have been out here for many, many years and not been able to go over that line.

For me I feel like I've got a little bit more respect out here.



Obviously it's nice to get that monkey off your back, to pull through and know that you can win out here, and it does wonders for not just your confidence, but it has changed my career to a certain extent.

A lot more opportunities and things like that, so obviously it was a huge moment for me in my career.

#### **Q. The ShopRite Classic owns the title of world's largest pro-am. Do you have any PG13 stories that you can share from the pro-am here over the years?**

MEL REID: Yeah, I've met some really great people. One comes to mind is a really good guy called Paul Creely (phonetic); played with him, his brother, and his friend, and I think it was my first year, so four or five years ago.

We've remained in contact, and when I moved down to Jupiter three years ago, he was one of the first people that texted me. He kind of looked after me a little bit down there. They're kind of the relationships that you build during pro-ams. That's why I say to rookies I know probably pro-ams aren't the most fun, but you never know who you're going to meet. I've formed some fantastic relationships in pro-ams, and that's a great example of one of them really.

Yeah, we're still in great contact and I'm supposed to be going up to Georgia with him in a few weeks and play some golf with him. I think that's probably one of the best things about the pro-ams this week.

#### **Q. Where are you playing in Georgia?**

MEL REID: Ohoopsee?

#### **Q. Ohoopsee Match Play?**

MEL REID: Ohoopsee, yeah, so we're going up there, so he's a member there.

#### **Q. The Solheim Cup, you were not playing great coming into that and had a tremendous Solheim Cup. How is that going to propel you going forward the rest**

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## **of the year, do you think?**

MEL REID: I don't know. I've struggled the last probably four or five months. Like I went to Asia, I picked something up there, not saying that's an excuse, but I've not felt right since. Had to withdraw from -- I can't remember which event it was now, in Grand Rapids.

Just haven't -- traveling a lot in the summer hasn't really helped me.

Yeah, I just haven't felt right since Asia, honestly, and I don't know what it is. I've done a bunch of blood tests. We don't know what it is. I'm starting to feel a little bit better. Now we're having a little bit of breaks in between tournaments.

Yeah, obviously I'm hoping for a good performance this week because I haven't -- I seriously haven't played great. Been very disappointed with my results. But we're trying to kind of finish the year strong, and hopefully coming in here and having some good memories is going to kind of kick start -- I know I've only got three or four events left, but it would be nice to finish them in somewhat good performances.

## **Q. Talk about the golf course for a second because it's got a very linksey feel to it. Do you play out there and think, this kind of looks like home?**

MEL REID: A little bit. It's usually quite wet here, like it doesn't necessarily play like a links. But they kind of -- the look of it certainly, I think, obviously being on the coast a little bit, it does help with that kind of look of it.

Yeah, I mean, honestly, before I won, I hadn't actually played great here. I feel like if -- the greens are kind of tricky to read. I feel like if you hit a lot of greens, you've got a great opportunity to win here, and think that's why someone like Anna Nordqvist who hits a lot of greens has always performed well here. When she gets her putting going, she's pretty hard to beat.

Yeah, if you're ball-striking it pretty well, you've definitely got an opportunity here this week.

## **Q. Do you expect there to be much difference in the way the course plays from May as opposed to September?**

MEL REID: I mean, maybe. I mean, I don't know. Like I came for a Media Day, I thought the course was in actually really good shape considering the amount of rainfall they've had. I know the green keepers have had a bit of a hard time getting it ready for it, but I'm excited to go see it,

excited to see how it's playing.

Obviously I feel like it sets up well for me. Like I keep saying, it's always nice coming back somewhere where you've actually got good memories and not bad memories, so I'm excited to see how it's playing.

## **Q. After the AIG in August you had a few weeks off, obviously, with the exception of Solheim. What did you do with the downtime?**

MEL REID: We just moved into a new house, literally before that seven-week stretch, before like the Olympics and stuff, so I've basically just been -- I can't sit still, so I've basically just been painting, doing all that kind of stuff.

Yeah, I mean, we're finally getting there. But yeah, I think that's probably taken up a lot of my time, is moving into a new house and just trying to recover, honestly.

Honestly Solheim, as well, takes a lot out of you. It was nice to have a couple weeks off before playing last week. Yeah, it's towards the end of the season, your energy isn't quite where you want it to be, so that's probably the most important thing is to take some downtime and recover and get your game in a bit of shape, so yeah, that's basically what I was doing.

## **Q. Obviously you didn't play the weekend last week in Arkansas and you mentioned to me how badly you want to be playing the weekend. What is something maybe you're working on to get into that rhythm for the final stretch?**

MEL REID: Yeah, I mean, I parted ways with George. I did that last week. We're completely fine. I just felt I needed something different. So yeah, I'm just kind of figuring it out on my own for a little bit until I kind of find the right person to kind of bring into my team.

Yeah, I mean, it's hard. It's hard when you break up with someone who you've had such a close relationship. It's kind of an emotional relationship. We're obviously on great terms and I have a huge amount of respect for him, but yeah, I'm trying to figure the last stage of my career, I guess.

I just turned 34 and I still want to achieve really cool things, and just trying to figure out the right kind of path for that now.

## **Q. Speaking of things you want to achieve, what motivates you at 34 to keep going, especially with maybe some of the changes that you have made in your life?**

MEL REID: I think especially like in women's golf, I think that people retire pretty early, whether that be because they want to have families or the girls out here are just so good, so young that I think that they kind of burn out a little bit.

I kind of want to change that perception a little bit. Obviously we have the likes of Laura and Juli who -- and Angela Stanford -- who are playing into their later stages of their career, and I think that's fantastic for women's golf.

Because you've just got to look at the Ryder Cup like Lee Westwood at 48 and Paul Casey at 44. They're still winning golf tournaments, which I think is amazing. I think it's really healthy.

I would love to kind of change the perception that you still can have a career from the age of 34 and a great career, like the best part of your career from 34 to 41, 42.

I also do it -- my motivation, as well, is I feel like I have a little bit of a voice. The better you play, the more people can't ignore you, so that's something that always motivates me, as well.

**Q. You mentioned trying to get right after Asia and your withdrawal at Meijer. Has it been a fatigue thing or what has it been that you've been trying to just more or less figure out? Has it affected the game?**

MEL REID: Yeah, it's affected my focus, honestly, more than anything. You know, when you're not focusing, you just can't do that out here. The girls are too good and you start missing a few shots that you wouldn't normally hit because your focus isn't there and you're a little bit fatigued and you're seeing shots that you don't normally see.

So yeah, it's kind of -- that's pretty much what it is. It's funny. I was talking to Carlota about it, and since she had COVID she felt like she couldn't focus for about a year. I didn't have COVID, I got tested for it, but I felt like it was something pretty similar. It's just kind of interesting really.

We don't know exactly what it is, but I'm certainly feeling a lot better, which is good. Like I feel like I'm getting stronger again, like working hard in the gym again.

So yeah, I'm definitely on the mend. It was just bad timing. That's basically what it was.

**Q. The Aon Risk-Reward challenge hole this week is No. 18, switched from No. 9. How impactful to you in your perspective has the venture between Aon, the PGA, and the LPGA Tours been?**

MEL REID: I think it's awesome. I mean, any chance that we can be on par with the men. I think Aon coming in and doing equal pay for men and women is huge. I know the girls are obviously very interested in it. It's life-changing money for us. It's life-changing money for anybody.

Yeah, I think it's an unbelievable concept, and so yeah, we're really thankful to Aon for kind of providing that with us.

Like I said, having equal money to the men, I mean, that's what we constantly try and fight for, so I think it's a huge step forward.

**Q. What's your strategy for the par-5 this week, and do you think it could be a determining factor in how the leaderboard shakes out?**

MEL REID: Yeah, the par-5s are good this week because you can reach them in two. I feel like sometimes on Tour we have par-5s that are too long.

So yeah, it's nice that we are able to actually go for it in two and have the potential for an eagle putt. Yeah, I think the par-5s this week are going to be huge. I feel like that's one thing that I did do well last year, I did play the par-5s really well, and that kind of set me up to have good scores.

Yeah, I think the par-5s are strategy-wise you've got to pay attention to it and you've got to take your opportunities.

**Q. Since becoming the title sponsor, ShopRite has donated more than \$37 million to charity. There's a few other sponsors on Tour that I can think of that reach a number even close to that. From a player perspective, what does it mean to see a title sponsor contribute to the community and beyond a tournament in that way?**

MEL REID: I mean, it's huge. Being a golfer you want to give back to the game, and I think what ShopRite has done is extremely impressive, honestly.

That's why we want to bring tournaments to different parts of the country, because we want to impact the community. That's our ultimate goal at the end of the day. And obviously we're trying to win golf tournaments, but when you hear something like that, it just makes the event even more special.

That makes me even more proud that I was able to win here and get ShopRite up in lights a little bit more than maybe it was. And so yeah, I just think it's an unbelievable achievement, and they should be really proud of



themselves.

I will obviously stop in at some point. I'm going to probably wait until Carly gets here. I'm actually shocked Dez hasn't been in yet, to be honest with you. He's trying to behave, I think.

**Q. About the ShopRite tournament, this event has been here since 1986 and there are few events outside the major that -- Nancy Lopez played in, Kathy Whitworth played in. The fact that this event connects the LPGA to its past and winning an event like that, how special does that make this tournament and this stop?**

MEL REID: I think it's huge. I think it just goes to show the great relationship that ShopRite has with the LPGA. I think Laura has pretty much played in -- I don't know if she's missed many of them. She's back here this week. That's what we love to see. I'm obviously close with Laura, but I love to see her coming out and playing.

I think it's just a huge achievement from a relationship point of view from both the LPGA and ShopRite. I think you want to build these long relationships and we're obviously very thankful that ShopRite want to be a part of the LPGA, and hopefully we bring a little bit of entertainment to the town, and like we said, a little bit of giving back to the community.

So I think it's an unbelievable achievement. I think it's huge.

**Q. I remember Laura played in a playoff here in 1992, and you talk about having a longer career. Could you see yourself here in 30 years?**

MEL REID: Absolutely no. This game will put me in the ground before that.

Yeah, no, I want to achieve other stuff in life, but yeah, right now I obviously want to play and have the best part -- I still feel like my best part of my career I haven't had yet. But yeah, still half the girls weren't even born when Laura was doing that in 1992.

Yeah, I think it's cool. I think it's really cool and it's really healthy for women's golf, honestly, that Laura has played this long, and she's still playing really good. I still think that she can win out here, I really do.

Obviously she wouldn't be out here if she didn't think that. Just to have the women out here like that, people like Laura still playing and playing well is great for our game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Mel. Good luck this week and enjoy the defense.

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