

ShopRite LPGA Classic

Presented by Acer

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Galloway, New Jersey, USA

Seaview, A Dolce Hotel

Marina Alex

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome inside the virtual media center here at the ShopRite LPGA Classic presented by Acer.

I am pleased to be joined by Marina Alex. Welcome back to Seaview, how are you feeling here back in native New Jersey?

MARINA ALEX: I know, we've got a lot of New Jersey in the last couple weeks. Upper Montclair and Founders a few weeks ago and now back here at the Bay Course, which is crazy. This is my tenth time playing here. I got my very first professional start here ten years ago, which is unbelievable.

I just have to so many memories of playing this golf course. Junior events when I was young I would actually come down here with my dad and my brother randomly like in the winter months on the weekends because one of the only courses that wasn't snow covered.

So we would drive like two hours and play golf in the dead of winter. Yeah, I love the Bay Course. I've probably played it at least 100 times.

Q. You stole the question right out of my mouth. I remember being there at Founders when you learned that it was the ten year anniversary of your debut here.

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, I know, because it's my ninth year on tour, but I forget that I started out here very first professional event straight out of college, just finished NAAs.

Yeah, so it's cool to see like everything kind of coming full circle just in life. The same people work this event. I mean, the same woman who works registration in the ladies locker room has been here for the last ten years. Just a wonderful friendly face.

The group of Outlyr, you know, Tim Aaronson has been here and he was basically the guy that gave me a start, so

it's crazy.

Q. Very crazy to think about. When you think about that first start, what are some of the emotions that you remember ten years ago making your first professional debut?

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, my dad was on the bag. He caddied for me. I did not play well the first day. I was so nervous. I think I maybe had like a crazy double bogey. I started on the back nine.

So I remember having a really bad hole on 11. I think I shot something around 76 or 77, and we played early the next day and I was paired with Becky Morgan and I believe Heather Bowie Young.

Becky and I had an amazing morning round. I shot 66 and she shot something else and was like right up there in the top, and I ended up make the cut, which was so cool.

My final day I'm paired with Mo Martin and at the time her caddie, Kyle Morrison, that was the first week they had been working together.

You know, I think like Cristie Kerr was the group in front of me and Laura Davies was the group behind me. I couldn't really believe it. It felt like, oh, my gosh, you're playing LPGA and you have all these legends and it's just amazing players.

There has been a lot of cool memories of that week. I ended up playing with Mo and Kyle when they won at Birkdale together. That was another funny full circle -- that was their first week together on the bag here, my first tournament playing, and then I played with them a year or two later at the British Open and they won.

So I have a lot of the like cool, fun memories and ties together.

Q. I love hearing that you remember the first event, the emotions.



MARINA ALEX: Oh, yeah.

Q. And remember everything that you were going through. As you look back of your time competing here, the last couple years you've had some pretty strong finishes here. What is it about the Bay Course that suits your game well?

MARINA ALEX: I think it took me a little bit of time to get comfortable. Because this is the closest event to where I grew up, I felt like there were a lot of years of a little bit of pressure and anxiety, and my family would be out here and friends and everyone is kind of pulling for you.

If you're not used to that it can feel uncomfortable in some ways. So I think it took time for me to settle down with that. But I really do like the golf course. I know that the greens can be a bit fickle in terms of the poa and it's tough. It's not easy to make putts out here.

It doesn't matter if you're a long or short hitter out here, which I really appreciate. The par-5s are gettable for everyone. There are three of them, but it's nice we can hit them in two, and if we're not, we're just in front of the green with a pitch shot, so that kind of like seems like a fair balance between the whole field.

And then there are so some really strong par-3s and 4s where if it gets windy, which it often does, it's not totally simple and straightforward.

You do have to play a little bit of that what I would say links style golf where you're just like using the contours of the fairways and the greens and managing the wind and flighting your golf ball.

So I do think it's a fun test of golf for three days.

Q. We were talking about Celine yesterday about No. 18, which is the Aon Risk-Reward Challenge hole and how that's quite a unique hole for though course.

MARINA ALEX: Yes.

Q. A finishing hole at best. We've seen eagles win it, we've seen birdies win it on that hole. What are your thoughts and strategy on a hole like that this week?

MARINA ALEX: It's a cool hole and it really is wind direction dependant. Crazy, ten years now here, but I've played it in so many different wind directions and I think that really can be the determining factor of the scoring of that hole.

Yesterday I played it in the pro-am. It was whipping into

the wind, and I've played it plenty of times where I hit driver and 3-wood and I'm still not on the green. I probably like have a 30- or 40-yard pitch shot.

Then I've played it in years where I remember hitting like 6-iron or 5-iron in, into, and having putts for eagle.

So it really can vary, and it's just weather dependant. I think that's what make it super exciting, that the eagle opportunity is there to try and win the tournament or get into the lead.

I think one of my years out here I had a crazy cool finish. I want to say like I went birdie, hole-in-one on 17, and then had a putt for eagle to like -- I don't think it was to tie for the lead, but it was close.

I ended up finishing and I made a birdie and finished third.

Q. Third, yep?

MARINA ALEX: It's cool. Like it just can build a lot of excitement, 17 and 18 can.

Q. Absolutely. Just curious, how cool is that that there are birdie opportunities on 17 and 18? On the back nine if you're two, three back there are opportunities ahead of you to make something happen. How cool is that?

MARINA ALEX: It is, it's great. I feel like if you get through that stretch of what would be 12, 13, and I believe -- well 15 -- 13, 14, 15, so two pretty nice par-4s and then the long par-3 up the hill.

If you get over to 16, 17, 18 you have some opportunities for birdies you can make up a little bit of ground there, and that's a really -- it's just fun to know that, Hey, if I hit some good shots I have a chance to pick up two or three birdies to finish off my round over the week and leaderboard climb the best you can.

Q. With 18, too, it sort of the runs parallel to Route 9 there.

MARINA ALEX: Uh-huh.

Q. Ever have to watch out for the diesel truck coming up the street? The sky boxes are there, can be a festive atmosphere around the --

MARINA ALEX: It gets a little loud for sure. Countless times you hear people screaming from their cars as they're driving by just to be funny. No, it does get a little loud and there it always a lot of bustle around that grandstand area

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

on 18 green. You have to usually get people to kind of quiet down.

Oftentimes get a rowdy group on 17 in the grandstand, too. They like to make signs and root for players. It's a fun environment. I feel like the crowds here really do get into enjoying and watching the golf and they're very loud. It's a nice thing.

Q. And how is the course this week? How does it --

MARINA ALEX: Good. I think we might've gotten a little bit of overnight rain. I haven't been out there today, but I played the pro-am yesterday, pretty dry. Greens are in good shape. Fairways are fine. I think it's just going to be another good week out here.

I haven't seen anything kind of out of the ordinary.

Q. And last thing from me: 18 is the Par-5. You talked about the par-5s before. How important -- you almost have to take advantage of those, don't you, if you want to play well?

MARINA ALEX: 3, 9, and 18 are the par-5s. I feel like if you're not making two out of three birdies on those holes you're definitely losing shots to the field in that way.

I would say out of all of them, 9 is probably the most difficult from like a green complex standpoint. You know, you can be short but it's not a simple chip. If you're long that fescue comes into play over the back. You have to chip back up.

I think it's the most severe of the three as far as the green goes. That may be the one that doesn't give up as many birdies, but 3 and 18 will definitely be the prime scoring holes.

Q. Congratulations on your win earlier this year.

MARINA ALEX: Thanks.

Q. One of the nice things was you came back from injury to do that.

MARINA ALEX: Yeah.

Q. Would you mind describing a bit what were the conditions you had to deal with with that injury and how you changed your conditioning a practices or the way you practiced to overcome the effects of injury on your performance?

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, I think it just had me to just have to

manage even better my time and the amount of balls that I hit and how many holes I play and how I practice, which is not a bad thing.

It's just made me a lot more efficient and mindful of what I'm doing in the gym and what I'm doing even on my off days and off weeks. Just simple things. How you sit, how you stand, how you pick things up. Just a lot of little lifestyle changes to keep your body feeling good.

Other than that, it's been a while I feel like. We're going on two years since like the initial of me not feeling all that great with my back. I feel like now I can comfortably say that I'm in a really good place.

Q. Great. Heard about the par-5s. I'd like to ask you about hole Nos. 2, 6, and 14. They go out to the Bay.

MARINA ALEX: Sure, yeah.

Q. And, again, the wind conditions are highly dependant on how you can play those three holes.

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, I think for years I've known them to play pretty long and into crosswinds, which it's difficult because they're super exposed. There are no trees kind of guarding you. You do go out right to the Bay, so you get hit with that wind pretty hard.

And in years when the wind is not blowing as hard or in a different direction, they play a lot easier from a scoring average standpoint. I think that that combination really dictates like the total scoring of this event. You have years where the scores are quite low and I think that that is the wind has died down or maybe it's not -- those holes aren't playing into the wind.

And the years that they do play into the wind I think that the scoring average is probably a bit higher. They're great par-4s. Really are. If you get through those with pars you're, again, picking up probably a shot on the field. So between that and the par-5s, those are I think the best ways to kind of get through the golf course with your best score.

Q. Finally, I know when I play with my glasses on instead of my contacts I have a horrible time dealing with the change and how I see the ball. How has the transition to wearing glasses been for you?

MARINA ALEX: They're not prescription glasses. I still wear contact lenses. They are a -- Maui Jim makes a very cool kind of special blue light, UV light lens, so that's what I use them for.

I really don't love tint in sunglasses, but it's really helpful for my eyes to be protected like all the time, because I've been struggling with like vision decline recently and just a few other things. So my optometrist was like, you really need to start wearing at least sunglasses all the time.

This was a kind of a good medium for me but where I'm still getting some protection from sun exposure, but I'm not feeling like I'm sacrificing a ton of what I see on the golf course, reading the greens and just even looking down at your golf ball and looking up at your target.

Like I don't necessarily love what certain lens tints, like how you see them, so this is perfect. It pretty much is as clear as you would -- it would be without these on. There is just a tiny like change in the color. Not much. It cuts a ton of glare out.

For me it's been working really well.

Q. Does it effect how you perceive the color of the greens?

MARINA ALEX: No, not at all. For me it's extremely straightforward to read greens. It would be pretty much the same as me not wearing my glasses. I mean, the only times I've noticed any differences in really low light settings, if the sun is starting to go down or if it's like first thing in the morning and maybe it's a cloudy day and the sun hasn't quite risen all the way. That would be probably the only time I would not wear them.

But beyond that, I have them on all the time when I'm playing and practicing.

Q. I have a question about the course as well. When we were at Upper Mont Clair we talked about how that was a traditional New Jersey course, tree lined, thin fairways. This is sort of different from that, yeah?

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, it has a much more links feel. It's funny, because there are two courses here at the resort. There is the Pines and we play the Bay, and the Pines is very much traditional, tree lined, all of that.

And the Bay just really has that opportunity to kind of get a little links-y because you're just right there out the water.

And then you have the tall reeds, and all of that kind aesthetically creates the feel of it being a links course. When the wind is blowing you can use downwind off the fairway to kind of run the ball up onto the greens.

You can use the contours of the greens to kind of bring the ball in. So it is definitely different than I would say a

traditional New York, New Jersey golf course that's tree lined.

But there are I think a couple pockets of courses in this area that are kind of similar to what the Bay is.

Q. There is also some unique wild life. I saw you saw a turtle crossing the fairway.

MARINA ALEX: Turtle day yesterday. It was wild out there. There were like a lot of turtles. And I think I made the mistake -- I don't think you're supposed to touch them at all. I don't know if there is a couple weeks where it's like turtle weeks that you have to just let them go. They're like GPS homing to go somewhere, so I think they get disrupted if you like pick them up and like put them somewhere because they get disoriented and then they have to re-orient back to where they were trying to get to.

I'm assuming that there will be baby turtles soon, so I think that's kind of what's going on. There were so many out there yesterday.

Q. I know I saw there's the eggs in the bunkers sometimes, something we have to deal with in this springtime date.

MARINA ALEX: Yes, and you have to just kind of let them do their thing.

Q. Yeah. Just one or two more. We had Meaghan Francella in here yesterday about her DriveOn story. I know you were able to share it. I know you're pretty good friends with her as well.

MARINA ALEX: Yes.

Q. Karrie talked about her as well. Just your thoughts on being able to see how her story has been shared over the last day, and being a friend to her and seeing her journey as well?

MARINA ALEX: Yeah, Meaghan is the best. She's one of the first people that I had met coming out here on tour. Actually we have a funny story. She was probably kind of in the later stage of her career and I was a rookie and trying to do Monday qualifiers, and her and I got paired together at a Monday qualifier, and I think it was for Kia.

We were playing off site somewhere, and I know -- knew who she was. She grew up in the Westchester area; I'm from New Jersey. Just a funny story about how her caddie, he could not catch the golf balls when she had hit it in a hazard, so she was dropping, and he just kept whiffing, like catching them after they crossed the hazard line, and

she lost like three brand new golf balls right into the water trying to take this drop.

Me and the other girl in the group were crack --we couldn't stop laughing, and I didn't really know her that well and didn't know the other girl that well either, and just could not stop laughing. She was getting so annoyed.

And we had lunch after that we were kind of just chit-chatting, joking about it.

That's my first time really ever meeting her, and we were close friends. She caddied for me for I want to say maybe six months when she got into caddieing post playing career.

You know, I've just been close with her since I've been out here. It's amazing to see. She had a tough time with her golf game. Kind of lost her way there a little bit, and is now in an incredible place, working out Philly Cricket Club. She's really excelling as an instructor. Worked at Dormie Club up the road here for a while. It's just really good to see that.

And then obviously everything that her mom has been going through these past six, eight months has been tough. I'm happy to see that they're both doing great and they've kind of come out of that like much stronger and better.

I'm really happy and proud of Meg for where she is in her life.

Q. She talked about the support that she's going to probably have in the galleries this week.

MARINA ALEX: I know. It's great.

Q. Will there be friends and family of the same sort?

MARINA ALEX: Similar. It's a little further from where I grew up, so I don't know how many people will be out. My parents will be here, my brother will probably be here for Saturday, and then maybe a few other of my high school friends will come out.

You know, I usually just get some local support. I know she's going to probably have a ton.

Q. There is apparently shirts. I don't know if she showed you the shirts.

MARINA ALEX: No, nit I don't expect anything less. I love that.

THE MODERATOR: They'll be in full force. Thank you for

coming in and best of luck.

MARINA ALEX: Thank you.

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