

Pelican Women's Championship

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

Ally McDonald

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Happy Tuesday, everyone, welcome to the virtual media center at the Pelican Women's Championship presented by DEX Imaging & Konica Minolta here in Belleair, Florida.

Please to welcome the most recent LPGA Tour champion on the LPGA Drive On Championship Reynolds Lake Oconee, Ally McDonald.

Ally, thank you for joining us today.

ALLY McDONALD: Thank you for having me.

THE MODERATOR: Well unlike many champions, you had time to process your first win on the LPGA Tour. Just over three weeks now since your victory in Georgia.

What has the celebration and also the reflection been like for you in that span?

ALLY McDONALD: Well, I think that three weeks were -- that was really good for me to be able to -- I had like a whole week to have the media stuff taken care of, which it comes with it. It's great.

But then I had another couple weeks, which allowed me to then get back into prep work for our last few events of the year and to enjoy some time at home with family and my husband.

So, yeah, I'm obviously still excited about everything, but I've kind of come down off the high and now and I'm now just trying to get back into my competition mode.

THE MODERATOR: Well, in your fourth season now on the LPGA. Capturing your first title was undoubtedly a breakthrough moment for you. It has been said that often breakthroughs are a matter of belief catching up to ability. Do you think your win personified that, and why or why not?

ALLY McDONALD: Probably so because I definitely felt like I had the ability, but after I won obviously I said in multiple interviews I felt like I had the ability but definitely doubted whether I would win or not. There are so many good players on our tour that may never win.

So for it all to come together that week definitely feels like a breakthrough type moment, just to see myself do it and believe that what I've put into golf in pursuing this has definitely paid off. Hopefully it just builds more momentum moving forward.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. Well, how has life changed, if at all, for you since becoming an LPGA Tour champion?

ALLY McDONALD: It hasn't changed a whole lot. I think as a whole I've definitely had more people just reach out to me. Probably just a little bit more awareness of who I am. I know people were able to see my Type I diabetes story. I had a lot of people in that community reach out to me, so that's been pretty cool.

Just overall like being able to break through and have the outpouring of support from fans of the LPGA. Yeah, just to be able to pull through, it's been a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: You'll probably have a few more family members at the holiday wanting just a picture with the LPGA champion, right?

ALLY McDONALD: Maybe. We'll see.

THE MODERATOR: Well, eight top 25 finishes so far this season in 11 starts for you. Pretty solid. Been a great year for you. How did you prepare for the inaugural Pelican Women's Championship?

ALLY McDONALD: Just kind of same way that I have been for every event. I think this golf course is going to require good approach shots. There are some holes with water, so it's just going to be the type of golf course where strategy I think is really important, which is I think a strong part of my game, just being able to mentally look away from pins if I need to.

In prep for this week I was just trying to make sure that I did all the things necessary to be fundamentally sound and prepare just like I would for any other event. I've gotten 18 holes in on the course so far. I'll play nine holes tomorrow in the pro-am, and I'll tee it up on Thursday and just try to play my best and see where that gets me.

THE MODERATOR: Some of the members out here are part of the Masters tournament at Augusta. I heard rumors that Fred Ridley will be here later this week, and a lot of the course is something that they kind of want to replicate of almost a mini Augusta.

Is there anything of that feel out there?

ALLY McDONALD: I think it's a great quality golf course. There are some odd places on the greens. I don't know, Augusta so special. I haven't even been out there to watch a Masters, but I think it would be really hard to compare the Masters in Augusta. But it's going to be a great week out here nonetheless.

THE MODERATOR: It's their own little oasis.

ALLY McDONALD: Yeah, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: The first ever LPGA tournament was the Tampa Open in January 1950, and the last time the Tour played in the Tampa Bay area was 1989 for the St. Petersburg Women's Open.

How good is it to have the LPGA back in Pinellas County, and have you spent an extended period of time in this area before?

ALLY McDONALD: I haven't. Most of my time spent in the Florida area with me living in Mississippi, being from Mississippi, was just in the panhandle. I haven't done a lot of traveling this far south. I love this area. I'm a beach goer. Obviously not going to the beach this week, but I love being around the beach.

So being in this area is super exciting, and I know to have the support in an event on our schedule back here is really exciting for the years moving forward.

THE MODERATOR: Yeah. Kind of comes full circle in the 70th anniversary season. Well, you were a Symetra Tour graduate in 2016. How did your experience on the Symetra Tour help you get to this point where you found the winner's circle on the LPGA, and have you perhaps changed at all on or off the course since that time?

ALLY McDONALD: So Symetra Tour for me was -- it was huge because I came right out of college. At Q-School I

missed having full LPGA status by one shot. I would've probably been able to get a few starts on the LPGA. I tried to Monday qualify into a few events the beginning of that year. When I didn't, I just said I was going to commit to a full year on the Symetra Tour.

For me, I think that full year out there was -- it was -- it gave me the ability to build confidence. Let me get my feet under me doing things on my own, just kind of all parts of the traveling, booking your flights, rental cars, all that stuff.

It kind of got me even more prepared for the LPGA rather than just diving in. So probably something that I didn't know then was right where I needed to be on Symetra Tour that one year to I think better prep me for the four years that I've had out here so far.

THE MODERATOR: We will open it up to questions right now.

Q. I know that in a COVID era whatever homecoming you would've had in Fulton wasn't quite the same. Have you been to Fulton, home, in terms of seeing your old cronies at all since you won?

ALLY McDONALD: So what is great is I drove home -- I followed my parents home that day on Sunday evening, and we had a warm welcoming by all four of my grandparents. It was around midnight, so they had paced floors long enough to hang around and sing happy birthday to me and everything when I pulled in.

So I stayed the night there. Went and saw them again and, yeah, I haven't done a whole lot of seeing a lot of people around Fulton area. Got back to visit my church that I grew up in. Other than that, it's just been kind of my family and some church members. Not any of my friends that I grew up with or anything like that.

Q. I'm sure if you went in the grocery store you would probably get a few congrats.

ALLY McDONALD: Probably so. Small town it definitely happens.

Q. Just showing up to an LPGA event this week, when you arrived, did you feel different when you stepped on property now that you're a winner?

ALLY McDONALD: Probably a little bit. I mean, our tour, I joke we're a traveling circus, but we really are. Everyone is so generous and so supportive of each other out here. Even though it was three weeks ago, the amount of people that have gone out of their way to say congratulations has been really special. Just tells you what kind of tour that we

have.

So I definitely feel like I have a little bit more confidence in my -- not necessarily more confidence in my ability, but more confidence meaning that if I'm ever -- when I'm in contention again that I definitely can win.

So I think that part alone, just being out here kind of settles me in even a little bit more than I was already settled.

THE MODERATOR: We have a couple holiday questions with Christmas and New Year around the corner. Can't ever forget about Thanksgiving. With Thanksgiving next week, can you recall any fun family traditions from your childhood or more recent memories that maybe came to fruition as you grew up?

ALLY McDONALD: So our tradition has always been we do like lunch with my mom's side of the family, dinner with my dad's side of the family, and that's just kind of been what we've always done. That's the main tradition.

One thing that I'm really adamant about is no pre Christmas music until after Thanksgiving. Has to be post Thanksgiving for me to listen to Christmas music.

THE MODERATOR: So the day after.

ALLY McDONALD: So the day after I'll start blasting the Christmas music. I just enjoy Thanksgiving. It's a holiday I celebrate with my family. Yeah, I just don't want to bypass it and go straight to Christmas. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. Well, eating lots of good food is a common theme obviously for Thanksgiving and the holiday season in general.

Are there any specific meals or unique family recipes this stand out that you might particularly enjoy?

ALLY McDONALD: I'm a fan of chicken and dressing, so that's something in my family is always done. We always have a big Turkey. Sweet potato casseroles is big.

But I probably have to say the chicken and dressing is the thing that I look most forward to every year.

THE MODERATOR: Why?

ALLY McDONALD: You know, some people really don't like it. I just really enjoy the flavor of it. My grandmothers make a really good chicken dressing, so it's just always been something that I eat and then I want more of and I want to take the leftovers with me.

So that's my favorite.

THE MODERATOR: So your grandmothers introduced you to it. Have you ever tried to make it on your own?

ALLY McDONALD: Oh, no. One day maybe, but I have a feeling I'm just not going to have the touch that they have on it.

THE MODERATOR: Awesome. Thank you so much for joining us today, and thank you everyone on the call for joining. Have a great week this week at Pelican.

ALLY McDONALD: Thank you.

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