

Pelican Women's Championship

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Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

Annika Sorenstam

Elizabeth Szokol

Louise Rydqvist

Media Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: You have a majority of the world's best players coming to this event. A lot of this is because of you. How emotionally impactful is it to you to have these great players want to come play at your tournament?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: First of all, thank everybody for coming. This is great. It's still hard to absorb all this and have your name on a tournament that I'm obviously honored to do that, and I have a lot to say. Thank you to my husband, Mike, who's worked really hard with the LPGA to finally get this together.

But this is all teamwork. It really is. It's not about me at all.

I'm just glad to be associated with it and continue my passion, whether it's for the next generation or the current generation or whatever is next and just kind of bringing the community together.

I feel very fortunate to have some wonderful partners that started this really before me with the Doyle family and getting Gainbridge as a sponsor and then to have Marci have so much experience with tournaments and with LPGA, I feel like it's like a full circle.

Then one of the beneficiaries is the ANNIKA Foundation, and that's one of the reasons why Louise is here. It feels like all the pieces have connected and come together, and I think it's just fabulous to be here and to be part of it and I look forward to it. You look at the overall picture and see -- I look over there I see my name; I see my name there. It's really cool, but then again, it's overwhelming at times, but it's going to be a wonderful week.

Q. You mentioned the pieces coming together. Can you walk us through the process of the presentation to you to have this tournament (indiscernible) LPGA

event?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I think we've been talking about it for a while. I think when I stepped away in 2008, it was, yeah, step away from competitive golf, but it wasn't stepping away from the game, it was more what can I do to share my passion and knowledge or inspire the next generation, and it started with the foundation and then it was still working with the LPGA. We had the Rolex Annika Major Award, and then a few things kind of all connected, and I think it makes a lot of sense.

I'm still here, and I want to do things. I want to inspire. I want to grow women's golf, and all the things that this tournament stands for is things that I stand for personally, and again, to find the partners -- we see things the same, and it just makes things a lot easier.

I know for a fact that this tournament will be around for a long time, and to hear about the field, it's a good field. Obviously you want to have the best players here, and I think that the more they come here and experience it, the course and the people, the golf club is so friendly, the food is fabulous, and I have several of my partners that are part of this, whether it's Rolex or Callaway or LOHLA, you name it, we're going to continue to make this tournament great.

Q. Louise, welcome to Florida. I know you have a special relationship being from Sweden yourself with Annika. How much impact has she had on you?

LOUISE RYDQVIST: I played Annika Cup in Sweden and then I played her ANNIKA Invitational in Europe, in Sweden. Then I came to college and I played her intercollegiate event, and now all of a sudden I'm sitting here, and it's kind of closing the full circle.

It's very surreal, and I'm super, super thankful to be here.

Q. How would you describe your emotions as you get ready for next week's event, playing against the world's best?

LOUISE RYDQVIST: I think about it as a little overwhelming almost. First of all, my parents are coming



here to watch me, and it'll be a huge emotional support to have them here. They've been there the whole journey.

But also being in this field, as you said, it's a really strong field. It'll be a learning experience for me for sure. I'm going to do my thing, do my best to see how far I can go.

It'll be awesome to see where my game stands against this field, and yeah, it'll be an awesome experience.

Q. Elizabeth, you have many memories here; are you preparing for this tournament like you would any other tournament on the LPGA Tour?

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: I'd say so. I think I'll be preparing a little bit more just because I have family, friends, Justin, and I'm a member here and I know people out here. I definitely want to play well. So I'm definitely looking forward to it. So definitely preparing a little bit more. I was practicing earlier, getting a feel for the greens and all of that. I'll definitely do a little bit extra preparation.

Q. You know the golf course, obviously; how do you think this golf course will be received under championship conditions?

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: I think it's going to be great. They always have the golf course in amazing shape for us. I even said to Annika this morning that the greens were rolling quicker than they were about three weeks ago when I was here practicing, so I'm sure in four weeks' time they're going to be really good, and I'm sure it's going to be a great test of golf for us.

Q. You got your first win this year; how impactful has that been for you? What kind of optimism is that for you moving forward?

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: It's been amazing. Definitely a bit of a confidence booster and makes the end of this year and the next few years a little bit easier, which is great.

But it just shows me I can compete with the best in the world, and I'm looking forward to doing that at this event, my next event in a couple weeks.

Q. Lexi Thompson is competing on the PGA TOUR this week, and of course 20 years ago, Annika, you were at Colonial, which was inspiring for sure. Is there a singular moment, a thought that you have from that event at Colonial that you take with you today?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: That's a good question. That experience was so much more than the golf, so it's hard to say that that particular moment or that incident. But I do

think now when Lexi is playing, certain things come back to my mind because we're talking about it. But overall I look at my career and I would say that that was one of my highlights.

It wasn't necessarily my score; I saw something on social, I guess I shot 71-74, I had forgotten about that because it wasn't so much about the score, it was about the memory, the journey and the experiences and the people that I met.

It was just being in that position, testing myself, just like Louise, she's talking about this tournament, that she's going to test herself. Those are the moments that I think are important because then you know what to work on and where you are, and it helps you -- just your dream. That was a dream of mine and obviously a dream of Louise, and I know listening to Lexi and her interview, this is a dream of hers to be able to play with the men.

I think it's just opening up ears and eyes and just saying, this is what you want to achieve in life; you set a goal and you achieve it. I would say to me it was just a rare opportunity, getting a chance to test yourself against the very best, and it made me a better player.

Q. How would you describe the support from the fans, family, friends leading into that tournament at Colonial? How would you compare it to when the tournament was over? Do you feel like you inspired kids (indiscernible) compared to before?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I would say that the support was really good from the beginning. There was a few, and I know they've been discussed, we don't have to bring those names up, but I would say that once the tournament started and once we got into it and then the tournament kind of went and we reflect on it, I feel like the support was -- it was more. I think people understood the reason why I was playing. Every time somebody does something a little different, something that's a little bit unusual, it's easy to just say, well, I don't like this and that's weird, rather than maybe just looking at the big picture.

I think once they saw it, that I wasn't out there to make a statement about myself or women's golf, it was more about just this golfer wanting to be a better golfer and reach different heights, and I think that people embraced that in a different light than maybe prior.

I think the same thing -- I know Michelle Wie has done it, Suzy Whaley has done it, Brittany Lincicome has done it, and now with Lexi, I think people are starting to see the big picture. It's important to inspire the next generation, and it's not just about golf. I think it's just life, right.

We need some positive stories. We need some motivating stories about achieving new things, and I think these are those opportunities that we -- especially from the ladies' Tour. Lexi is one of the prominent players. She's very popular, and I think that it's a good thing that she's there. I think we all wish her good luck. It's a hard thing to do, but just go out there for the right intentions.

Q. From a player's perspective and from a fan's perspective, what do you hope those individuals who watch this tournament, compete in it or attend it, what do you hope they take away from it?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think collectively our goal is, it's all about the experiences. We have a little saying within our company, it's either inspirational or experiences, and I think that that's really what we're looking for. The venue is fantastic, the people are great. I just want people to walk away with like, I want to do this again; I want to be part of it, whether it's the community, the players, the sponsors, organizers. They do a lot of tournaments out there. We know there are 30, 35, 40 tournaments a year, but how can you stand out, and it's the experiences, the memories that you walk away with, whether it's food or the course, and of course the players all want to walk away with the trophy and the big check, but I think we have so many opportunities in life, and the ones that we do are the ones that we have the most fun with. I think for me, that is what I want people to walk away and say, hey, how do we sign up for next year.

Q. Along the lines of forward thinking and improving the tournament and women playing with the men, I know you've got a mixed field event at the end of the year, of doing something like that here at this tournament, having the LPGA and PGA TOURS together?

MARCI DOYLE: Obviously the plan regarding the mix of both PGA TOUR and LPGA here, and we would certainly support and want to do something like that. Has there been an official conversation yet? No, but it is very close, and again, as we see, we've already got a couple of those that are happening, and the goal is to have more of those because I think it does nothing but elevate both PGA TOUR and LPGA.

Q. Annika, curious if Lexi picked your brain at all about what happened 20 years ago that she might be able to take from or any players, even if they're not at that level, what they ask you about that experience?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I mean, as you said, it was 20 years ago. I can't believe it's been 20. So throughout the years I've spoken to several players about my

experience and what I learned, et cetera. I've reached out to Lexi, and we have communicated through the phone and wishing her good luck and so forth, but not like a real sit down and pick the brain.

Lexi has a lot of experience, as we know, and she's not a beginner on Tour at all. On the contrary, she has a lot of -- she's bringing a lot to the game, as well. I'm sure that she has talked to other people, her brothers and people that she's close to, but yeah, more just wish her good luck and have fun and enjoy. I told her, just play your own game.

I think the hardest thing when you do something like this is you try to -- I wanted to hit it like the guys, right. You want to do everything so that you fit in, and you just realize that I just don't have that. Lexi has some of those attributes, but she doesn't have -- she just has to go with what she has and trust that that's enough and play from A to B.

Once you start realizing that what you have could potentially be enough, then you've just got to go out there and trust it.

In my case, I knew that I was going to hit first into the greens because I was the shortest hitter in my group, so once you get used to being the shortest, you just go about it. It's just more being comfortable in the situation you're in and not trying to do something differently.

It's very similar to someone who's in the first group -- I'm sorry, in the last group in a big tournament for the very first time. You think you have to do things differently.

Like it's U.S. Open and I'm in the last group; what do I got to do, and they start changing things, and that's when I think things don't go as well. So go out there and trust yourself, and hopefully she can do that, but also enjoy the moment. It's so easy to get caught up in all the things you have to do than just enjoy the atmosphere and the people.

But it's a tough combo, but hopefully she doesn't walk away and it becomes huge success.

Q. The ANNIKA Foundation will be benefiting financially from the tournament for years to come. Are there initiatives that you have as goals to what you might be able to do with the money that you earn from this tournament to do new things and greater things with the foundation?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I have a long wish list of things I want to achieve at the ANNIKA Foundation. Just a quick background, we started the end of 2007, and I feel like here we are 15 years later with seven global tournaments. Louise mentioned a few. We



are in different parts of the world, we do different initiatives, whether it's six year olds to 12 year olds to 22 year olds.

We started already with different initiatives this year. It's a development program for young players who just left college who are now turning professional.

We have lots of things in the pipeline, and this tournament is really helpful for us. It's a lot of money that they're going to support us with. For us it is. Having shared my passion here, we're going to be able to bring some young girls in to be part of the tournament, and being able to watch their role models is just going to inspire them.

So the answer is yes and yes. I mean, that is kind of one of the main reasons we wanted to do this together because our goal was obviously for ANNIKA Foundation juniors to be here one day, just like Louise. Here is an example of the tie that we have with the upcoming players, with the LPGA, and what we're trying to do.

Q. You mentioned how unique it is or strange to see your name all around and just be so out there for this tournament. What has been the reception that you've heard since this was announced from people on the Tour, everyone involved, and do you feel that this is kind of a trailblazing type of thing that could lead to similar Senior PGA Championships or partnerships in the future?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I feel like it's been tremendous. It's been very, very positive. We really don't have that on the LPGA. It's the first time, and I know Marci has come from Arnold Palmer, and they've been doing it quite some time, and I think it's something -- I am enjoying it, but it's not just good for our foundation and the community but kind of the partnerships and getting people together.

This is how you're going to elevate events is if you include some of the legends or the old players like myself to bring a little bit of that experience and knowledge into the game, and also I think it shows that even though I don't play anymore, I want to be part of the game. Hopefully players -- like you see right here with Elizabeth and Louise, it's fun to be part of that generation.

I like to be relevant with what I do because when I work with young players -- Louise is young, but then we even have younger, and I want to be able to talk about what we do and inspire them to do that, and to be part of this event helps me to do that.

We'll see if it's something that will continue. We've got Casey here from the LPGA; I'm sure he's working with a lot

of tournaments and maybe there will be some other opportunities, but hopefully we can set an example in a lot of different ways and I can maybe be one of those.

Q. Would you consider hitting the first tee shot as a ceremonial start to the tournament?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I don't know if they're going to do something -- I am playing in the pro-am. I'm committed to that. I look forward to that. But I'm a host and I'm up for anything to make this tournament great. I mean, to a reason, I guess.

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