

The Annika driven by Gainbridge at Pelican

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Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

Lilia Vu

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome everyone here to the press conference center. Pleased to be joined by our defending champion here at The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican, Miss Lilia Vu. Welcome. Thank you so much for being here.

I want to start with memories from last year and returning here. Last year was an unbelievable year and this just capped off that year. Take us back, and how excited you are to be back this year.

LILIA VU: Yeah, so happy to be here. I love this course. It's one of my favorite courses to play year around besides the majors. Always happy to be here. Had good memories last year. I came into this tournament kind of needing to win to solidify Player of the Year that was on the table for me then. I was able to do it.

I saw the course for the first time Monday last year; fell in love with it and didn't really look back. Had a great time out there.

Q. I know you had some really big moments this year. Solheim Cup, winning at Meijer. It's also been a tough year. You've had to battle some things. What have you learned about yourself and your resilience as you've battled thought some things maybe quietly that most of us don't know?

LILIA VU: Yeah, I learned that I'm pretty resilient and even with my B or C game I can still be in contention.

I know I was able to finish second at the KPMG and the Open, so I know I'm not too far off. It makes me excited for off-season knowing I have a lot of potential to get better in all parts of my game, even strength training. I'm excited for that and just recovery time. Giving my body the rest that it needs.

I know I took two months off in the middle of the year and came out and won the Meijer somehow. I wasn't even



thinking about winning. I know my body does good with time off.

Q. For you, obviously you love major championship style golf courses. Is that what this feels like? Is that why you like it so much or is it just because it's so difficult and the greens are undulating and your putting is your strength?

LILIA VU: Yeah, I love a difficult course. I feel like you're so much more focused out there. I played my pro-am today and the greens were really fast. It'll be tough, but it's something that I always enjoy.

Q. Did the energy today seem a little bit higher than it normally is? Obviously probably a big factor to that is Caitlin Clark being here.

LILIA VU: Yeah, I wasn't able to run into her. Didn't overlap any tee timing. I saw some Caitlin Clark posters. I saw girls come out. I heard a large roar out there and I was guessing it was Nelly's group.

It's great. It's great when women's sports overlap, right? So cool that she even plays golf and takes time out of her busy schedule to come here. Yeah, super cool she's here.

Q. Have you paid attention much to what she's been able to do for the WNBA and women's sports in general? Do you maybe try to look at her and mimic some things that she does, how she carries herself?

LILIA VU: I haven't watched enough WNBA but I did watch her college championship and was rooting for her then. I think that's when she really grew the game of women's basketball. I know all she's done, she's a great role model. She's a Swiftie, too, so that's great.

Q. I assuming you are as well.

LILIA VU: Yeah, I'm a Swiftie.

Q. I'm not trying to insinuate anything here, but obviously been 11 players this year announced they're retiring. Ally coming off her best year ever; Lexi going



to part time next year. Have you noticed or have you got a chance to talk to any of those players? What are your thoughts on kind of so many players moving on, flipping to the next chapter?

LILIA VU: I mean, they're all people that I've looked up. Lexi, she's probably the greatest role model out here. She always takes time for the fans and she has done so much for golf. I think she really put golf, women's golf on the MAP.

Her and Nelly have the biggest crowds out here. She's a great person, great role model. Ally, Marina, Brittany, everyone. It's sad to see everyone go, but it's okay to take a step back and move on to the next part of your life.

Basically up until now they dedicated their entire lives to golf. It's now time to do something else that makes them happy, right?

Q. Does it get you thinking about how long you want to do something like this? When do you think players especially in your position, top-10 player in the world, when do you know?

LILIA VU: I don't know yet because I'm not there. I still feel like I have definitely a couple more years out here and I still love being in contention. It's something I look forward to in each event. Hopefully I can do it for a long time. And who knows?

Q. Angela Stanford, 45.

LILIA VU: Yeah, Angela is so great. I look up to her so much. I kept up with all here social media stuff last week in Hawai'i. It's sad to see her leave, but I know she'll be around. She's always a great person to be around as well.

Q. When you were starting out, who inspired you? What players or athletes inspired you as a youth?

LILIA VU: That's an easy one. Whose name is out there right now, Annika. She's someone I looked up to. I remember last year when I won here and she handed me the trophy it finally clicked in, oh, my gosh, my role model is handing me the trophy here at the highest level of women's golf.

That was a big moment for me. I was getting teary eyes and I didn't know where to put my emotions. I definitely do remember that. Annika is a huge role model and Stacy and even Morgan, Paula, everyone.

Q. What about the way Annika did it and carried herself made her a role model for you?

LILIA VU: Yeah, absolutely, she carries herself with so much pride and respect. Everyone around her knows she's the GOAT and someone to look up.

And she's done so much for the game and has her name out here on the LPGA and the then her ANNIKA Foundation as well.

In college The ANNIKA Collegiate was the toughest tournament of the year on our schedule and that was something to look forward to performing well in.

Q. I remember one of those ANNIKA's Patty shot like 61, made like eight straight birdies to close. Your career has followed an Annika type path. You won her award in college. You played her junior events. Do you have a memory when you first met her? Would it have been at one of those junior events?

LILIA VU: I didn't win her award in college. I wish I did. I was in the running but I didn't get that one. I did meet her at The ANNIKA Junior. I think the AJGA-run one. She did a clinic for us, and I distinctly remember she said, when you're warming up for your round you're warming up. You're not trying to find something.

That's something that's stuck with me all the way to now. You're warming up; that's it. Don't get too in your head if the shot is not turning out the way you want it to. Sometimes I've had great practice sessions on the range and then I go out there and play poorly. Sometimes I have the worst ever and I'm on the verge of having a breakdown and I shoot 65.

You just never know with golf.

Q. You talked about taking some time off, getting the weight training and working on your body. How do you go about resetting mentally for the next year, setting goals?

LILIA VU: I think first off, usually at the end of the season I check back on the goals that I've written and put away for the year and see if I hit any of them.

Q. Is that on the board?

LILIA VU: I'm not sure because I put them away. I think I made them pretty easily attainable. Last year I was able to achieve all of those.

So I'll look at those first and see different parts of my game and what my team thinks we can improve on and they'll help me get there. I'm excited about the off-season, but

still have two tournaments left and see what I can do with that.

Q. Lilia, you mentioned -- well, you won this. You mentioned the intercollegiate, the junior event. Curious, if you add them all up, how many ANNIKA events have you played over the course of your lifetime?

LILIA VU: I'm trying to think. I think at least five or six. I know one year -- I think it was the year that I got Player of the Year in college. I think I was -- I started other the year with a slump and coach didn't take me to a tournament because she's pretty fair. If you qualify into the tournament, you qualify.

I think I missed ANNIKA and I was broken about it. I was able to regroup myself and somehow in the middle of the season I won four individual titles in a row. Just happened to do that.

I think, yeah, The ANNIKA Collegiate was a big deal for me. I wanted to play well there and that was a biggest event. Yeah, five or six events.

Q. The one you were left out of, was that a kick in the pants?

LILIA VU: For sure. That was a wake-up call to get myself together and try to get back out there and just make the team at that point.

Q. And I guess when you've played a half dozen or so of these events with Annika's name on it, does playing in an event branded with her name ever get old?

LILIA VU: Definitely not. She's someone you look up to and you want to emulate her, a good role model like she's been. Just makes you sit up straighter, act more proper, and interact with the fans. This is a great community. I love everyone that comes out to watch.

It's really huge for the community, but at the same time it's really intimate. I feel like I met a lot of members out here. Played with members in the pro-am. It's nice to come back and see familiar faces.

Q. Has she changed much from the first time you played the junior event to today?

LILIA VU: No. I think she's who she is. That's who she is. She's not faking it. She's just Annika, the GOAT.

Q. How well do you know Zoe Campos?

LILIA VU: Oh, I haven't gotten to know her well. I think we just never overlapped in college. I know she's a great player.

Q. She'll be out in January.

LILIA VU: Yeah. I think she's teeing it up in the final stage maybe. Not sure.

Q. Going to leave mid-season kind of.

LILIA VU: Oh, okay. I didn't know that one. I think they had to decide today or tomorrow if they're going to do it, so I'm not sure.

Q. Yeah, this week. So as well as the site of your third or fourth win of the season last year, this was also the site of the famous safety Texas Roadhouse interview.

LILIA VU: So funny.

Q. How many times you going to eat at Texas Roadhouse this week or eat steak?

LILIA VU: I think I have to go at least twice. I'm saving it for the tournament rounds and not trying to overdo it. I definitely overdid to last year to my benefit. I went three times. I think I went Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Yeah, that was just crazy.

Q. Are you old enough to remember Texas Roadhouse peanut shells?

LILIA VU: Oh, yeah, for sure. We've been traveling a long time. Junior golf, that's our spot.

Q. I know Rhone announced their campaign. They are great partner of the LPGA here and now a great partner of you. How excited are you to see that Rhone campaign launch and be a part of that?

LILIA VU: Oh, my gosh, it's so great. Rhone is a great company. Everyone within the team though just cares so much. I quickly felt part of the team. They listen to you and want what's best for you. Not only that, their brand mission is amazing as well.

Q. Their mission is especially supporting mental health athletes on the LPGA Tour.

LILIA VU: Yeah.

Q. What does that mean to you?

LILIA VU: That means everything. Golf is basically played



within your brain, right? Sometimes you can not have all your stuff, but if your brain is mentally strong you can go out there and get together a good round, maybe like 4-under, and be in contention.

Q. I know this is a bit of a whirlwind year for you getting off to the start you did, having a setback with the injury, and returning with the win in amazing fashion. Curious, when you look back on the year as a whole, what are you most proud of in terms of your resiliency getting through everything the way you did?

LILIA VU: I think I'm proud to perform the way I did with what I had. I think I was just going out there hoping that I would play without pain. I don't play with pain now, but I've definitely lost a bit of strength, and that's something that has to be done in the off season.

I know I'm not too far off. I finished second at two of the majors I competed in and was able to give a good run couple times. I think I've done pretty well with what I have, and hopefully I can regroup myself and come out swinging beginning of the season.

Q. What does that off-season regimen look like? Who do you game plan with?

LILIA VU: I have a lot of different people on my team. I think we're all going to come together and figure out the best solution to gaining strength. At the same time not getting sore and being in compensation with my normal habits.

I know I have a good team around me. I'm not thinking too much about it right now because I have two more tournaments to play. I'll be in a good place to start the next year.

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