

The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican

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Pelican Golf Club

Nelly Korda

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, joining me here today pre-tournament for The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican is Nelly Korda. Obviously this is a very strong event for you. You've won it three times. Talk about what it's like to be back as the defending champion again.

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, I love coming back here. It's so close to home. I have so many family and friends coming out during the week, so it's just a really feel-good tournament because I have a lot of great support behind me.

Yeah, a lot of great memories even on the golf course here, and then getting to play the past two years with Caitlin has been really fun.

So just this whole tournament has been a lot of fun so far.

Q. Yeah, do you want to talk about your experience playing in the pro-am with Caitlin? Looked like you guys were having fun out there.

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, I actually saw her last week for an outing. But she's great. She's so fun to be around. It's so cool to see how many people she brings to a different sport, how many fans she has what a different and how many of a needle she moves really.

It's really cool to see and just a lot of appreciation for her for coming out here and also supporting us.

Q. Is there a reason you think you play so well at this event or at this golf course? Is there anything you think you can point to?

NELLY KORDA: I don't know. No, I just kind of feel comfortable out here. I think just having like my family and friends in the crowd and this is kind of the turf that I grew up on, so there is also that level of comfort.

Q. Nelly, I was hoping you could just address the

period of time you took off for rest. How is your health? Were you in a lot of pain when you took the time, or was it more preventive?

NELLY KORDA: It was definitely very preventive, too. The thing with injuries and how many we travel and train, like you're never pain-free. If you go to any athlete across all sports and ask them if they're pain-free, they're going to tell you that they're not.

So last year was probably, I'm not going to lie, one of my worst injuries ever. I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to play the rest of the year. I thought I was out for the season.

And if I'm starting to feel that pain a little bit and I know that could possibly recur, I have to prioritize my body and say that, okay, I need to step back, take some time off, and make sure I don't go down that path.

Q. So did you put the clubs away for a while? What did you do in your time off?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, I put the clubs away for almost three weeks. Was doing two days in the gym, a lot of neck rehab. I actually posted it on my social media. It's called the Iron Neck. So I have this thing around my head.

I was doing a lot of strength training with that, making sure that my injury is really protected.

Q. (No microphone.)

NELLY KORDA: The Iron Neck. You can hook it up to a door, but it pretty much hooks up to a band and you're trying to hold the positions to strength train the muscles in your neck from all different angles. That's why it's kind of like round. It can be hooked up from the back, the sides, doesn't matter. It's almost like -- I think F1 drivers use it a lot to strength train their neck.

Q. Obviously it's the second year Caitlin has been here and played in this pro-am. You played with her last year. Did you notice any differences in her game from to last year to this year or is it more about having



fun for you guys?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, definitely more about having fun. Her teammates were out too. They were a lot of fun. I think she was maybe a little bit more comfortable. We knew each other a little bit more so for us chitchatting was a lot of fun.

I would say the same amount of people showed up this year as last year. That to me is really cool to see.

Q. You've had a lot of exciting things come out with obviously the shoes you have on today but also you were named the Forbes list Top 100 most influential women in sports.

NELLY KORDA: I didn't even know that.

Q. Yeah, news flash.

NELLY KORDA: Thank you.

Q. To have that kind of reach across -- really reach outside of golf, what does that mean to you and can you just speak to what it has meant to you to partner with Nike and have some recognition like that?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, this process has been cool. Like I can touch on it. When I was growing up I had so many amazing role models but they were in tennis. They all wore Nike. They all had their kits. At grand slams Maria Sharapova came out in her dress kit. You had Roger Federer, Nadal. We watched tennis a lot in our household, so I had tennis players as role models.

My dream at that point was I want to be a Nike athlete. That's now you know you made it, you are a Nike athlete. All the greats were wearing Nike.

So that to me is like a really pinch-me moment that I was able to sit down with a design team and go through what means the most to me in my life, family, tennis, golf, whatever. Those are what play a part in the charms.

And then the Leo energy because I am inspired by lions. I love lions. There is just so much that I pull from that to myself.

But I think that's like the coolest thing about what we do, is like the girls in the crowd right now, they're looking up to all of us. We're their role models. They could be dreaming of being a Nike athlete and doing what I'm doing right now.

It's really cool to see, and it's probably the best part of what we do, is kind of inspiring the next generation, hoping that

they love the game of golf or the sport that we love as much as we do.

Q. Sophie Cunningham mentioned she was planning on coming here to support Caitlin and also (indiscernible.)

NELLY KORDA: I didn't see that. Maybe it was too early in the day. Maybe on the back nine it will get a little rowdy.

Q. I was going to say, looked to me like there was coffee in that mug. It was early morning, though. How would you describe the atmosphere out there this morning?

NELLY KORDA: They're a lot of fun. Her and Lexie, that's the first time I've met them. You can tell that they all get along really well. I did ask them, you know, if the whole team gets along and she said yeah.

It's actually the best. Like our team this year, we all get along really well. And you can see it. They just have this really great energy around them.

Q. Caitlin has other things to worry about than practicing golf all year. When you see her play and a couple times the frustration, is it no matter how little she plays, do you see a competitiveness in someone like her even though she is not going to go out and shoot 72?

NELLY KORDA: For sure. I've been lucky enough to play alongside a lot of athletes and everyone has that competitive drive to want to play the best. I think they get into golf after whatever their sport is and some of them get really, really good.

You always have that competitive drive in anything you do, if it's from board games to other sports. Like we all kind of have that engrained in us by now.

But, yeah.

Q. Understanding the injury situation and how hard it is just to win on the LPGA, we're coming up on one year since you last won a tournament. Does that creep into your thought process or emotions at all now that we're getting to the one year situation?

NELLY KORDA: No. I mean, I'm going -- I can control what I can control. I can't control what other competitors are doing. The only thing I can control is how much effort I put into each and every day, how I try and execute my shots.



At the end of the day that's all I can do. Obviously I'm very, very competitive and what I want to do on Sunday is hoist the trophy. Everyone in this field wants to do it.

It's definitely been a weird year, but I can't compare this year to last year because every year -- if you go back and not just talk about last year or talk about my years before that, like I've had years where I haven't won and I played great golf; then the next year I won a few.

So it's just sports. It's golf. You can't expect to win. You can expect to put in 100%: 100% into your body, 100% in your routine, % into your practice, have no distractions.

That's what I can control and that is what I will control. But everything else is kind of out of my control.

Q. Also, a little bit on the injury situation. You mentioned it really kind of affected you last year. Has your approach to trying to play through injury changed in the last year or couple years?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, definitely. Before I would probably push through the injury and then I would be out longer than if I was just like, okay, just take some time off, rehab it, and come back. I've just pushed a little too hard and I'm out for months, right?

I learned a lot about myself and injuries through my blood clot because I was feeling the symptoms for about three weeks before I actually went to see the doctor. I went to the ER. If I listened to my body right then and there that would've been three weeks I saved some time.

Instead, I was like, maybe it's just something weird. Maybe I slept weird. Right now I think I've just gotten a little bit more in tune with my body. Okay, I may have to sacrifice this tournament, but in the long run it's probably better that I'm doing that.

Q. Nelly, some other off-the-course news. GTI teams were announced. Jess is back. What has it meant to you to see her grind to get back to a place she feels comfortable playing in an event alongside the guys?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, I'm so excited for her. I went to Jupiter last week and played two times with her. It's definitely there. It's just how much time she's going to put in.

She has -- her joy has definitely come back in the game of golf. I think she was struggling a lot with injuries. To see her really happy on the golf course made me really happy.

And then I just have like a whole new appreciation for her

with Greyson now. She's such an unbelievable mom and she's just so happy and content, so I'm really happy for her.

But it'll be really nice to see her out on the golf course. And selfishly, I really miss my dinner buddy and travel buddy, so it'll be nice to have her back, hopefully.

Q. Did you make any equipment changes during your time off, or swing changes?

NELLY KORDA: No, not swing changes. Throughout the entire year I've been kind of struggling with a little bit of a laid-off look at the top. I did have some time to dial in on technique and not focus on, let's say, the execution of it, where the ball was flying.

Then I do have some new irons, yes.

Q. Are they any different?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah. I was playing the MC TaylorMades and now I'm in the CBs. Just have maybe a little bit more height to them so the descent angle is a little a little steeper and should land a little softer.

Q. Big storyline coming into the week is Kai Trump's sponsor exemption. Curious what your reaction was to the news when you found out she was in the field?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, I mean, I think it's a great learning opportunity for her if she is serious about the game of golf. There is no better way to test your game than to play alongside the best players in the world. It will be a nice and fun experience for her I'm sure.

Q. A little while ago you were on Golf Channel doing a quick interview talking about Caitlin, and one thing you said was she just enjoys everything she does. You said it almost with a tinge of jealousy in your voice. How much are you able to enjoy everything you do?

NELLY KORDA: Definitely no jealousy there. I enjoy everything I do. I love it. Like I love the life that I live.

Obviously sometimes with the travel and everything you can get a little run down, but that's why you go home for a week and recharge your batteries, spend time around the people you love the most.

There is nothing better than this. I love this so much.

Q. The Doyles and Annika have talked about growing this event every year and how important it is to them. Talk about some of the changes you've seen and the



growth and being in the third year with Annika how it's come to this level so quick? Talk about some of the things you've noticed, the changes and growing this event every year.

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, the Doyles have done an amazing job from the start of this event to what it is right now, you know, especially with Annika alongside. I'm sure that having her voice there has really helped, too.

But I would say from player experience it's gotten better every year. And then the golf course, I mean, I know that they really want to make it tough for us out here and you can tell.

I mean, every year it's gotten a little tougher. Last year we had the two storms come in a month or two before the event, so I would say that even with that the golf course was impeccable. Greens were lightning, and same thing this year.

The golf course is impeccable and I know that's their number one priority.

Q. Pace of play was a big topic last year. How has it changed with the new policy?

NELLY KORDA: I think it's improved a lot. I would say from last year to this year the improvement we've made is great, and I'm hoping we continue to do that.

I would say it's a step in the right direction. You can't be too greedy and expect to snap your fingers and everything will be 100%.

As long as we're making improvements, which I will always be very honest in that department because I'm a fast player and there is nothing more I hate than slow play, so I would say that it has gotten faster.

Q. I just wondered, how do you think you would do in a pro-am basketball game?

NELLY KORDA: Bad. I did play -- I occasionally play PIG and I lose every single time. Takes me a long time to really get warmed up.

But actually Caitlin and I were messaging and she's like, this is unfair. I need to take you to a basketball court. Why are we always on a golf course?

So maybe one day. I would definitely like to use some pointers. I don't know if it's the shot. I think it'll be more of the movement for me.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you so much, Nelly. Appreciate it.

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