

# The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

**Annika Sorenstam**

**Caitlin Clark**

**Lauryn Nguyen**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to day two of our pre-tournament news conferences for The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican.

We have a special one this afternoon. We have tournament host Annika on the left. We have WNBA star and Gainbridge ambassador making her second appearance at the tournament Caitlin Clark. And third, Northwestern All-American sponsor invite Lauryn Nguyen, who's Gainbridge and Caitlin Clark's invitation to play in the event. She is going to be making her LPGA Tour debut.

Ladies, thank you.

Annika, I'll start with you. Just a high level, just you played with Caitlin last year. You walked the fairways. You saw the excitement. For women's sports in general how big is this day for women's sports?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think it's amazing. I think I'm looking in this room and I think everybody else thinks it's exciting. No, it's great to have Caitlin here and Lauryn. Just in general what the tournament is doing and what Gainbridge is putting all these different athletes together from different sports, it's generating a lot of buzz as you know.

We've always said this, golf brings people together. Brings friendship and partnerships. I think today is a good example of that. Sorry I missed your golf today, Caitlin. Maybe I'll speak to the host next year.

CAITLIN CLARK: You said nine holes was enough. Never again. (Laughing.)

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, no, it's great to be here and

have players like these two here. As you know it's an exciting week.

THE MODERATOR: Caitlin, second year here. You turned in the basketball for the golf shoes. First question, talk about your golf today, how was the round today?

CAITLIN CLARK: A little messy off the tee. I need some lessons. I honestly haven't played a ton, but it was fun. I think any time you get to be out here and see these women do what they do really well it's really inspiring and really fun.

Obviously this isn't the environment I'm usually in, so it's kind of a challenge and something fun that I love that I get to do. Just really thankful that Annika and Gainbridge had me out here.

Yeah, just a lot of fun. The weather turned out to be pretty nice. Everybody was like, sorry it's kind of cold. I'm like, no, it was snowing in Indianapolis this past week, so this is great weather for me. It was a lot of fun, so just really thankful that I got to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Your second year here and your second experience with the fans and the crowds on the first tee. Just talk about that first tee excitement, nerves, jitters, everything.

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah. I mean, people always ask me like do I get more nervous for this or basketball. It's this and it's not even remotely close. I don't worry about basketball too much, but there is nothing like standing on a tee box and there is a bunch people watching you and this isn't what you're really good at.

But obviously playing with Nelly and playing with Lauren made it really easy. We just kind of took their tee ball most of the time and played from there, so...

**Q. We had two-time Olympic gold medalist Briana Scurry, NASCAR's Carson Hovevar, and India Fever teammates walking alongside with you. Talk about that. How cool that was?**



CAITLIN CLARK: Well, it was really fun to see them hit their celeb shots on the 10th tee. Carson came out of nowhere and just absolutely smacked one. I think he ended up taking his ball, which you don't have to tell people that I guess. I probably shouldn't have snitched on us. I don't know if that's legal. Sophie harmed somebody and Lexie topped it, so it was a wide variety out there.

I think it also puts golf in perspective. It's a hard sport and what they do every single day is hard and they make it look really easy. Like I said, it's just really cool to see up close how easy they make the sport look.

THE MODERATOR: You played your back nine with the lady to your left, Lauryn Nguyen, Northwestern All-American, reigning NCAA champion. She's Gainbridge sponsor invite and she was also your invite.

Lauryn, talk about the day playing with Caitlin today.

LAURYN NGUYEN: I mean, really it was so special. Really doesn't get much better than that. I was very nervous I would say. Caitlin and her teammates and Carson and Briana, they made it really easy, so honestly I had a blast. Hit some good shots, got some birdies, so what more can you ask for? (Laughing.)

THE MODERATOR: Last one from me and I'll turn it over to the room. What was the conversation like walking -- we saw you chatting as you were coming up to 18 green. What were some of the conversations like on the back nine today?

LAURYN NGUYEN: What did we talk about?

CAITLIN CLARK: A lot of good stuff honestly. We were talking about Chicago, Evanston, Big Ten. What elsewhere we talking about?

Giving me tips on how to become a better golfer, because obviously I need that. No, it was good. Like I said, it's fun to just bounce things off of each other. Obviously we are in two completely different sports, but that's what makes it fun and unique, is you're still trying to compete at the highest level and both doing that to the best of your ability. It was fun to be out there with her.

**Q. Caitlin, heard that you got a pretty cool gift from Nelly Korda this morning. What does it mean -- you're both obviously Nike-sponsored athletes, but what does it mean to be able to reach outside of your game and come into this game and for her to do the same on your side?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, well, I remember last year I was

here talking to Nelly about her shoes. In the basketball you wear the team uniform, like it's your shoes that are the cool thing, so I was like asking her about the shoes.

She's like, oh, yeah, she's are kind of basic. It's been cool to watch her over the course of the last year. She put in a lot of time to create her own PE and very unique to her and what she's passionate about in herself and obviously somebody that very, very deserving and been at the top of the sport for a long time now.

So I've played a few rounds with her even outside of her for some other stuff, and it's really fun to get to watch her do her thing up close. Like talk about making it look easy. Like it just is so easy for her. At the same time, she's just a good person. She's chill. She has fun with you on the course.

Yeah, her shoes are pretty cool. I'll make sure they get home safe. I'm going to be rocking them.

**Q. Caitlin, we know you can take Steph Curry in a three-point contest. Do you think you can take him on the course?**

CAITLIN CLARK: No. Wouldn't even be close. He would destroy me in both.

**Q. Caitlin, coming to basketball games and seeing you for these fans is one thing. For them to come out and follow you for 18 holes and watch you play golf, what does that mean to you? And then a follow up on that for your caddies, who was the better between Lexie and Sophie would you say?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Oh, gosh. I think first of all, it's always cool when you see the amount of people that come out and want to support not only myself, but just women's sports in general. Obviously we're in a very exciting time where all sports across the board are seeing more and more viewership and more people buying tickets, more people buying merchandise, whatever it is. That's a really exciting thing.

I've always been a fan of women's sports, whether it's basketball, but honestly more so other sports because I grew up playing all of them. So I think that's just a really special thing. That even though this isn't my main sport, I'm not that great at it, people still love the opportunity to be out here and support you. They get to know all these other golfers as well and they continue to follow them. They come and stay for the weekend and they support these women. I think that's just a really cool and special thing. It's not anything you ever take for granted.



And Sophie and Lexie, I mean, I was hanging out with them last night because I haven't seen them. We kind of go our separate ways during the offseason.

I was in my little villa over there. I'm like, Sophie, go grab that club. I want to see your swing. I don't know what I was expecting, but it was a lot better than I was expecting.

But I would probably -- I don't know, I've seen Lexie golf, too. She's pretty good. She's better than she did on the 10th tee box today. She tee'd the ball up too low, was using my driver, so you got to give them a little room for error.

I think they would both be pretty good if they practiced a little bit at it. I think they were fine just drinking their drinks and walking around, so they'll probably just stick with that.

**Q. Caitlin, I don't know how much you know about Lauryn's story and her family background, but what about her make her the perfect exemption for Gainbridge to compete this week?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think obviously me and Gainbridge worked together to be able to decide that. I think any time you can offer somebody an opportunity to do something really cool and fulfill a lifelong dream, like I feel like I'm that same kid that is kind of on the same path and living that same story. Like I feel like that's something really special, and you want to give people those opportunities.

I hope today was a special moment for her, and not only her, but her family too. That was one of the first questions I asked her when she got on the 10th tee box, like, is your family here? Have they got to be here and share the memories with you? And even her coaches, her college coach es and then her coach was caddieing for her.

I know this meant a lot to more than just her but all of them, and honestly special for us too, the people that were here. Like I said, she hit a lot of really good shots. She put it to eight feet out there. She was incredible.

And more than anything, after spending nine holes with her, just a tremendous person. That's what you want in this situation. So just really special and I'll be rooting her on for many years to come.

**Q. Annika, what's it like for you to have Caitlin be here in the tournament drawing this attention and really making a great day here today?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, super thankful. Thank you. Thanks for being here. It's cool. Again, thank you to

Gainbridge for putting all this together. I love sitting here listening to the two of them. That's what sports is about, bringing people together, and golf especially.

You know, we might be doing different things outside of ropes, but we come in here and we're athletes and competitors, but still want to want each other well. Kind of a mixed generation and women's grow, so super proud to be part of it.

Thanks for choosing to be here when I'm sure everybody else was pulling left and right. We love having you here, and I hope you feel like you can come back any time. And obviously wish Lauryn the best.

That's what this tournament is about. You got an old person like me and got young players, so it's all coming together. No, it is really cool. It's nice to see that women's sports is really in good hands.

**Q. Lauryn, you played amateur golf against a lot of golfers out here. What's it like seeing some familiar faces but on a very different stage?**

LAURYN NGUYEN: It's kind of crazy. You walk into the locker room and Nelly's locker is two doors down. It's kind of wild. You see the people on the range. It's really cool being inside the ropes to see kind of the routines. Even at this level I'm still learning from them, so I think it's really, really cool opportunity I've been given. I'm really willing to take advantage of it.

**Q. Caitlin, great job out there today. Wanted to ask you if you and your teammates got to do anything fun in the St. Pete/Clearwater area, and what you think of this beautiful place?**

CAITLIN CLARK: So, I mean, I got here late last night and I'll be leaving once this press conference ends, but I actually grew up vacationing here. This is the city that my family always came, and I have a couple family members that own places on the beach here in St. Petersburg.

This place is really special to me. I was flying in and I was making Lexie look out the window and see everything. She's from the west coast so obviously she didn't vacation on the east coast.

This place is honestly really cool, and I looked it up, it's like 30 minutes from where I have family and I grew up coming here. I've been here many, many times, and it's a really special place, so it makes it even more fun coming back here and knowing that.

**Q. Caitlin, can you describe your best shot today and**



## **how that feeling compares hitting a clutch shot in basketball?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Probably my putt on 10. Lauryn was like about to pick her ball up. I'm like, no, you still need to putt and practice for tomorrow. But yeah, I had a great caddie. He was awesome.

But I mean, honestly it's pretty thrilling, I think especially when you don't make as many good shots in golf as you maybe do in basketball. It seems just way harder, so a little more thrilling I would say in golf.

But probably that putt on 10 was pretty right nice.

### **Q. How long was it?**

CAITLIN CLARK: I don't know. You'll have to go out there and check or ask somebody. I don't know. Like 35 feet.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It was a bomb.

CAITLIN CLARK: I guess you haven't seen the video. Come on. Lock in.

### **Q. Lauryn, touch on your initial reaction to getting the exemption and your feelings ahead of competing this week? Any nerves? Any pressure?**

LAURYN NGUYEN: I don't think I had any words. I hopped on a Zoom call and I had no idea this is what was going to happen. They were going to ask me about Q school, some Annika events I played at.

I really had no idea. They put the clip of Caitlin on and it was just insane. I was with my coach and I literally had no words. After soaking it in I really appreciated the opportunity that Caitlin and Annika have really given me, and Gainbridge.

Even now, like I still need to relish this, soak it in. If you can ask me three days later, maybe I'll tell you.

### **Q. Caitlin, you appeared as though on your tee shot at 10 was kind of a relief after a couple of slices on the front nine.**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I would say. (Smiling.)

### **Q. How much of a relief was that?**

CAITLIN CLARK: I mean, I don't really care. I wouldn't say it was relief. But I don't know, like golf is a hard game. Like I said, they make it look really easy. I think that's the fun part.

Like when you're an amateur you go to the course and some days your putting is something really good and some days your putting is really bad, and some days your driving is really good and sometimes your driving is really bad.

You never seem to have everything working all at once, but you just kind of figure it out and have fun. I don't take golf serious. I have fun with it. Like my family and friends, whatever, we go to the golf course and make fun games.

That's what keeps you coming back, is that one good shot or drive. That's what makes it fun and makes you want to get better and be competitive with it.

### **Q. Just curious what was it like to have the competitive juices running through you once again and putting on a show as someone who knows the fans are here to see you?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I mean, these are the things that you love. Being competitive, and even when I go out and play with family and friends or whoever, like you make it competitive. You don't just go out there and hit the ball. You make a game out of it, you have a 2 v. 2, you do whatever.

I think that's the fun part about golf. Really with anything I do in life I'm pretty competitive, so I probably wouldn't play golf if I didn't feel those competitive juices flowing. I think that's certainly part of it that I love.

THEM MODERATOR: Lauryn, you have been here for almost a month now. Lauryn came down for media day and has stayed in the Belleair community for the past month. Talk about being here in the Belleair community and how that helped you ease into making your LPGA debut?

And Annika, if you could go back to when you had your sponsor's exemption at Arizona.

Lauryn.

LAURYN NGUYEN: Yeah, no, it's been amazing. Back tracking a little bit, after I came out of college and turned pro, it was a really big adjustment. Financially I had to grab everything out of my pocket. Even coming to this event for media day, I didn't have a place to stay or practice. Chief Doyle was fortunate enough to come up and make smalltalk, but he got me a place to stay. I'm staying with some amazing members here. I got a place to practice. Been back and forth between here and Belleair.

Everything that I needed I got to taken care of and more.





I've had people make logos for me. I've had sponsors, like Devoted cosmetics has really taken care of.

But the whole community of Belleair. I'm looking at places down here, so a little sneak peak.

THE MODERATOR: Wink-wink, nudge-nudge.

CAITLIN CLARK: Someone give her a discount or something. That was a good plant. I like that. It was great.

THE MODERATOR: Annika, go back to when you were at Arizona and got your first sponsor invite and the nerves.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, it was a few years ago obviously. No, I do remember. It was -- I mean, it's exciting, you're thankful. It's like, what an opportunity to go out there and play with the players you've been watching for years, players you've been looking up to, and all of a sudden you're standing on the range hitting ball with them. Maybe the locker room you mentioned.

I don't know, juts so much things to soak in and just watch and learn. You know, I think I was paying more attention to them than my game, but Tucson was my hometown at that time so I was familiar with the golf course. But, yeah, there is nothing like it.

Caitlin said it the best: When you get an opportunity like this it's like a dream come true. That's what these sponsor invites are all about. You're recreating something amazing and you're going to carry on this -- it's going to kickstart your career.

I remember it did kickstart my career, so therefore I can look back and say, you know what? This is what it takes. We're doing something good here.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking of kick starting or kicks, I'm going to do a cheesy segue. The shoes that you two are wearing, just for everybody, so Gainbridge and the tournament are announcing today, it's called Gainbridge Kicks for a Cause. These are specially made shoes from pediatric kids at Bay Care Appear her in town.

So Annika's shoes will be auctioned off, so they are designed by Hazel. I believe she's seven years old. So the kids are here today. They're on 18. Caitlin took a photograph with them. They're going to take some photos with them. Another special initiative that Gainbridge is doing, one of many. One of the big initiatives with Gainbridge this year.

In years past it's been called Parity Week. Gainbridge

paired up with Parity for different initiatives because sporting events happened on the same week.

Last year and this year it's now Gainbridge Assist. They're awarding grants to local organizations that help support women through sports and education.

So 32 grants have been given. We're going to announce 33 today. So with us, Dan Towriss, CEO, we have a 33rd check that's going to go to Caitlin Clark. It's going to go to the Caitlin Clark Foundation for \$22,000.

(Check presented by Dan Towriss. )

And that's not the last check, by the way. Gainbridge and Dan, this is one of Dan's initiatives that he wanted to do just hearing Lauryn's story, hearing about how she's making her LPGA debut. Like she said, Annika, you were there. You make your debut and you're just trying to make ends meet.

So Dan also has a special check for Lauryn to Lauryn's foundation.

(Check presented by Dan Towriss).

Lauryn has her own foundation, it's called the Duck Foundation is Seattle. She has an amazing backstory behind her Duck Foundation. She also runs a junior tournament in Seattle with her brother.

So it is a big passion of hers and playing here this week, playing next to Caitlin, she was telling me this earlier, it's inspiring for her.

So on behalf of Gainbridge, \$5,000 to the Duck Foundation.

**Q. Caitlin, are there any takeaways from golf that you use in your mental game for basketball or vice versa?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Hmm, I think the biggest difference is when something is not going your way in basketball you got four other teammates on the court with you. You can kind of figure it out. And if you don't have it one day, that's okay. You got people to lean on.

In golf, like you got to figure it out if it's not your day. Like it's only you. So I think that's what I honestly enjoy about it, that mental challenge and mental aspect of when something doesn't go your way, how do you respond and how do you bounce back.

Obviously there is a lot of that in basketball, too, but it's such an individual sport and basketball is not that. I kind of



like that challenge in a way.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Annika, Caitlin, Lauryn, thank you very much. Lauryn, good luck tomorrow. Caitlin, thank you for being here.

CAITLIN CLARK: Thanks everybody. Appreciate it.

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