

Diamond Resorts Tournament of Champions

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

Lake Buena Vista, Florida, USA

Tranquilo Golf Course

Gaby Lopez

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to Wednesday's press conference here at 2021 Diamond Resorts Tournament of Champions.

With that, thank you Gaby for joining us this afternoon. How does it feel to be back here one year after such an amazing win?

GABY LOPEZ: It's very special to me to be able to come back to Orlando, to be able to come back to share with the celebrities. I think we have an amazing opportunity to learn if huge minds that we don't get to ever speak to directly this often.

So to me, it's such a blessing to be back.

Q. Speaking of blessings, how was your Christmas and New Year's? How did you spend it and what did you do?

GABY LOPEZ: I was at home. I was in Punta Mita, which is one of my sponsors. It's amazing destination place in Mexico to be able to play golf and relax a little bit. So I was there with my family. I was able to do my off-season work, work out, and, yeah, have a good time with them.

Q. Did you put any new year's resolution in place by chance, golf or nongolf related?

GABY LOPEZ: Yes, I think the only one that I was hoping for, not to me only and me family, but everyone, is just health. I think the priority number one is being able to have a healthy staff, healthy community, and at the end of the day healthy world to be able to move forward easier and go back to I guess our normal, which everyone enjoyed. To be able to have fans out here. Sometimes the golf courses, the tournaments, they feel a little empty on energy, so to me, to be able to have them back will be probably the biggest win this year.

Q. And you're super healthy. You have no injuries to



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worry about this week. You have a couple things to worry about. What would you focus on most this week?

GABY LOPEZ: I think this week I'm going to try to focus on be present. It's been probably four weeks since we last played in competition, so to be able to get back into the mentally game of staying present and staying in the moment and not getting ahead of myself. I had really good memories from last year, but that doesn't mean that this year is going to happen the same thing.

At the end of the day, I think just being as mature and cold when I miss and even when I make a putt or a good shot.

Q. It couldn't be much more different this year than last year when you were here: 40 degrees and it was just freezing. And obviously we don't have as many fans this year and as long a break this year as we had last. So how do you gear yourself up for all those differences to come back and try to defend?

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, it's been a different year. To me, I just didn't stop playing this off-season that I had. I was coming off a good momentum the last tournament that we had at CME, so to me was just kind of a continuation of that last season.

Of course I did take some days off. I took it lightly. I didn't want to beat myself up and get tired before we started the season.

So it was more time off, keeping short game sharp, keeping my putting, swing mechanics, being on top of them. So at the end of the day, I think after this week I am probably going to take five days off or a week, and then go back to working hard again.

Q. Do you feel good about the momentum that you have from carrying over?

GABY LOPEZ: I do. I feel probably the strongest I've ever felt in my career, so that's probably the biggest advantage in me. I've had two injuries. I've ended in the hospital twice, so to me that has been tremendous.

To have this year healthy, stronger, and a little faster in my



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club swing I think is such a blessing as well.

Q. One last one from me. 18 is playing shorter this year. You want to take credit for that?

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, it's playing shorter, a little bit. I think the pin positions are going to change the distance tremendously, so it's a little -- kind of sweet and sour taste for me, because I have really good memories on the back tee.

At the end of the day, of course having a shorter club is going to be able to have more spin and stop the ball a little quicker to those aggressive pins that you can't really be aggressive, but you can probably be a little more aggressive with your target.

Q. Yeah, unique opportunity with Annika Sorenstam. What excites you the most about that pairing?

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, I'm really, really excited. She's a really good friend with Lorena Ochoa, and both of them, they probably inspired me the most growing up playing golf.

So to me to have this opportunity is a huge deal. It's a very -- just such another blessing. I've met her before. I remember playing her tournament the AJGA invitationals and then college, so she's done an amazing job keeping up with women's golf and growing the game in Latin America.

That's another huge advantage for all these Latin girls that want to come to play the British Open and they have major spots for them. So it's really cool.

And to be able play with her and John Smoltz is going to be fun. I'm going to enjoy it. I think I'm going to laugh a lot with my caddie on the bag. Yeah, I think we'll do just fine.

Q. Do you think you'll talk to her that much or will you pay attention to her routines? I know obviously she doesn't compete all that much anymore, but she is still probably going to be Annika tomorrow.

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, of course you're going to always have this mentality of her being world No. 1 back in the days. At the end of the day, the way I see it is we are all the same, we are all humans, we all make mistakes, we all make birdies at the same time.

To me, to have this opportunity to just learn from her mind, to me that's probably the biggest takeaway. I'm going to try to sneak in and peek at her mind tomorrow.

But, yeah, I am just going to take it cool. I'm not going to

think that she's world No. 1 today. Whoever she is right now is the amazing person that she's built over the years. She's going to always be probably one of the biggest players the tour has ever had.

So just being open in my mind, open to learn from her, it's going to be the coolest thing tomorrow.

Q. After your win last year, the Mexican Olympic committee president Carlos Padilla Becerra offered you to hold the flag for Mexico. Can you bring yourself back to that moment and think how you felt when he asked?

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, there is this opportunity that is coming up, and being able to be the banner woman would be such an honor. It's not official yet, but it's a good opportunity for me and a good chance. If I can do it, it will be probably the highlight of my career.

I mean, being able to play Olympic Games, being able to wear the Mexican colors, which I do every week, it's going to be extra special and extra exciting.

Q. And last question, I promise. To my knowledge, no player in 2020 defended their title, but you have the opportunity to kick 2021 off as defending champion. How do you feel about that?

GABY LOPEZ: Well, I haven't thought about that. I think you just got to take every week as a different week, independent week. I don't think you can -- playing golf is not much about relating yourself to the past and how you're going to play based on the past results you've made.

I think it's more about how you're going to go forward, make yourself a little better in your chipping, in your putting, hitting the ball. At the end of the day, it's a different year. To me, it's like starting from scratch. You know, we haven't even started this tournament. I'm not going to let myself think ahead of the trophy, or anything.

At the end of the day, golf is such an unknown sport and you don't know who is going to win. That's the beauty of it. Last year I didn't think I could -- I was probably going to have a (indiscernible) position because I was just coming from an injury.

So it's really cool to see how golf turns around in so many ways, and being able to stay in the present is going to payoff whatever result comes up.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much and if anyone has any questions...

All right, we're good. Good luck this week.

GABY LOPEZ: Thank you.

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