

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Thursday, January 19, 2023

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Annika Sorenstam

Quick Quotes

Q. Annika, great first round. Annika, you were in a playoff last year and had a strong round today. Talk a little bit about your round.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Obviously I'm very pleased. Mike told me after I finished, it was the first non-bogey in a long time, which wasn't on my mind, but I am obviously very pleased to play here without a bogey.

No, I'm happy. I got off to a little shaky start but made some good putts on the first hole and the second hole and the third, and then I found the rhythm a little bit more and was enjoying being out there and kind of settling down and feeling more comfortable, then hit some really good shots coming in.

Yeah, it was a great start. Obviously there's a long ways to go, but at least I did what I could today.

Q. You mentioned that you had new clubs and that you had just put them in the bag. How is testing and putting new equipment in play different for you now?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, before I knew what I liked and I knew -- I had confidence with them and I had success with my club. I really didn't want to experiment too much. I've been with Callaway for so many years. But now it's like now I need a little extra. Anything they have that I can get my hands on to help me, and obviously I got the Paradigm driver when I was in Vegas in early January, and then I asked do you have any other clubs because this one is going further, so on the range -- actually they sent me a set of clubs last week, but the loft was off, so I was not hitting it well at all. It was actually bouncing, and I said this is not for me. But then they measured them and realized they were a little upright, and then they tweaked it a little bit, and all of a sudden it fit me perfectly, so now I've got the Paradigm iron and the 3-wood Paradigm, so yeah, it's really helped me.

Like I said, I'm searching for things to give me one extra



mile an hour of club head speed, one extra yard, whatever I can get, and right now they're doing it for me.

Q. How much prep work did you do coming into this?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Not as much as I would like. Also I played in PNC, and we literally darted to Tahoe directly, was there for three weeks almost, so I tried to play the last few weeks but been busy with the ANNIKA Foundation event here, Invitational, and just not as much, but today felt like I was coming into a little bit of rhythm. I told Mike I'm really looking forward this afternoon to having a quiet, just hit some balls and find that rhythm, which is really what I need.

Q. How much extra yardage did you find with that driver?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think at least eight. I mean, I really feel like -- I'm sure I can ask Will, you'll get exactly the right numbers because he was with me the day we were testing it here, and I was hitting mine, and it was early in the morning and I was a little tight and everything, all the excuses I can find, and then I hit it and all of a sudden I was carrying it over 220 something. I said, well, the wind is into, and they kept saying, the TrackMan has already counted that in, and I felt like, bummer.

Of course we went home and that was the first thing he told Mike, the yardage has been already adjusted, Mommy. Yeah, he put me back there. But I would say eight at least.

But I also need to tee the ball higher. When I play -- just the way clubs are changing and the way everything is working, I need to tee it higher now, and I need to launch it a little bit higher so that the ball stays in the air. Before staying in the air, it had a lot of spin, now it's just -- that's what I'm really working on. If I can get it up in the air, it's actually staying up there a little longer, and that's what I need. Then I can feel like it's almost 10 yards. That's the goal, yeah.

Q. Is there a shot out there that you hit that really felt like old times?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Actually thought the 9-iron on the last. I hit it really good. I was shooting for carry 125, it



carried 133, which is obviously too much, and then it released. It was probably one of the better shots I hit all day, just kind of stayed on, and it was one of those kind of careless, relaxed shots, and that's really what I need.

I try too much to hit it further to keep up with the players, the LPGA players or even somebody like Brian that actually just put more tension and just don't really get the club head speed. I go out there and relax, and you think with all the experience that I have that that would be easy, but I don't care how much you played or whenever you play, you still have to work on things.

Q. Talk about your competitive golf life now. You're having so much fun out there and the family is with you. It's a lot different than in the old days. How do you approach it now?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: It is. Like I said, I'm not as prepared as I should be, but also, again, I don't really feel any pressure. I'm just out here to try to have a good time and inspire the kids who are our here, my kids, and just play in front of my parents. My dad walked 18 holes today, and my mom I think walked 14, and then Mike's mom is here.

Everybody is in town, so it's a nice -- for us it's more than just me playing. It's everything around it. The concerts and everything, it's just a gathering. The golf brings us all back together, and that's another reason I want to be here.

Q. Ashleen is leading the amateur division, too.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I was going to add that. Thank you saying that. As you know, she made a long putt to make it in here and then she qualified through the pro-am yesterday, now she played so well. Yeah, it's fantastic. She's only 17, and it's a great day for the ANNIKA Foundation for sure.

Q. Do you find yourself by nature looking at the LPGA side of the board?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I do. But it really doesn't matter much. Of course, I'm competitive, but it's not like I look there and say, I wish I was there. I'm very happy where I am.

But the competitive part doesn't go away.

Q. Can you expand a little bit about the ANNIKA Foundation and what you've had for the junior tournament earlier this week and kind of how Hilton Grand Vacations is a part of that now?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, I mean, first of all, like Gemma said, she played in our event, and we tried to figure out when she played, it was that long ago. She said I was pregnant with Will, so we go back -- this year was the 15th of the ANNIKA Foundation invitational here, but it was a great finish. Ashleen made a 40-footer downhill, an eagle to win by one, and then to come here, and Hilton Grand Vacations for them to support us and bring her in here. It's an amazing experience for her.

I saw her this morning, and her dad is like joy. That's what we want to provide is amazing experiences that they won't forget. Very happy for her.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about your red ribbon?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, what can we do to say thank you to Kathy Whitworth. It's hard to express in words, other than maybe show emotion and show a sign that we really care what she has done. What a trailblazer. Really set the path for all of us. It just kind of happened so suddenly unfortunately. I wish we could have seen her a little bit more. Anyway, she's in our thoughts, she's in our prayers, and I think she brought on this weather, so thanks, Kathy.

Q. Can you get to spend a fair amount of time with her?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: You know, not really as much as you would think. A few times I've been lucky, and I treasure those. I really do. That's what kind of keeps it going.

Q. With this being your home course, was there a little bit of a difference with playing today than even last year or the times you're just swinging?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, I mean, there's no doubt I have an advantage being home. I'm out here every day. I actually live on the 16th hole, and to get to our house, you have to drive between the back tee and the regular men's tee, so you could say I'm on the golf course every day. But our son is certainly on the course every day. It's great to be out here. The support for the members, and this is a great community. I'm proud of it, and it's nice to play in front of everybody that's here. It adds to the experience for sure.

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