

# Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Tuesday, January 16, 2024

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

## Mardy Fish

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Mardy, obviously as defending champion, talk to us a bit about kind of what that means and kind of your excitement about being back.

MARDY FISH: Yeah, always excited to come to this tournament. One of the best weeks of the year and most fun.

You know, the guys, Hilton, Mack, Aaron, put on such a fun event, great event. I always love playing with the ladies as well. Like it's just so fun to kind of be in a tournament setting with them. It's different to -- I've played a lot of golf with whether it's PGA guys or LPGA to be honest, and just practice and having fun and whatever and messing around.

But to see them in tournament mode in a big event for them is super cool for me. So, yeah, again, always look forward to this week. It's kind of like how much golf do you play over the holiday break and with the kids and all that stuff being out the school. It's usually less and less golf. I grew up in Vero beach, so not too far away, so I try and go see my parents for a couple days.

We've got my foundation stuff that we do yesterday and the day before, and we usually try and time that all up so I get to -- so it's a special week for me or trip for me because I get to go see Vero, which I don't get to see often, and my parents, and they get to come and watch. Yeah, it's a special one for me.

#### **Q. Looking back at past tournaments, do you have any favorite foursomes or folks that you played with?**

MARDY FISH: I mean, it's always fun to get paired with Nelly and Jess, the tennis thing. Jess and I won three or four years ago together over at the Four Seasons over there. Saw Nelly yesterday and said, it's your turn to win. You and I can do it, another Korda sister.

Talked about Seby and what he's up to down in Australia. Yeah, it's always fun, and then obviously two of the best in



the world, Nelly certainly, and Jess is almost going to pop, so we're missing her here this week. Excited for her and, yeah, that one kind of jumps off.

Yeah, I played a few rounds now with Brooke. Winning last year with her was super fun. TaylorMade connection there in the clubs we play.

But, yeah, it's just always -- I follow along throughout the year their schedule and tournaments and stuff, and so there is always new ones that kind of come up. Excited to see Celine, to congratulate her. Played some golf with her. Haven't seen her miss the fairway in like the three rounds of golf I played with her. She's impressive.

Yeah, Danielle Kang was fun to play with. Super feisty and fun to watch. Yeah, ton of them. Get to play with Lydia Ko in the first round. Never played with her or met her, but have seen a lot of her game so it will be exciting.

#### **Q. Coming back to the defending champion, what kind of approach do you take to celebrity tournament golf and will that change as you come back to defend?**

MARDY FISH: The approach I take is to try and win for sure. We don't get a lot of kind of our competitive juices going anymore, those of us who are retired. I use these to kind of get my juices going a little bit.

I really enjoy playing Florida golf. I grew up in Florida so grew up in these types of conditions, rainy, windy, humid, cold. Supposed to cold this weekend I guess. A lot of different conditions. I grew up in this stuff so I enjoy playing in this.

Living in California you can feel like you're in a dome at times with the conditions, weather there. So it's much more challenging play playing in these types of conditions.

I really like the golf course. Beautiful course. Always in phenomenal shape. They do an amazing job here in Lake Nona getting it into perfect condition for the girls and us internally.

So it's always a great week.

#### **Q. How is your game and are you ready to defend?**



MARDY FISH: Thursday I'll be ready. I'm going to play nine holes today, try and just see the course again. We've gotten quite a bit of rain so haven't had as much as practice. Been in Florida for a little bit and rained out for quite a few days now and rained all day yesterday as well.

So it's nice to see some sun out there. Get some real Florida golf in.

**Q. Could you talk a little bit about the course, playing here at Lake Nona compared to Tranquilo before?**

MARDY FISH: Yeah, completely different courses. Tranquilo had a few holes there where kind of how they set it up on the back nine made it kind of exciting. A drivable par-4, par-5, and then a par-3 to finish. It was kind of an exciting finish.

Lake Nona is tougher by score I would think overall, but it's a beautiful club in here. Had some friends over the years and still have some friends that kind of live in here or did live in here, so I've played in golf course for a long time.

First time I played it I thought it was incredibly challenging. Sort psyched myself out a little bit with it. Now having played, I don't know, maybe 12, 15 rounds on it, I have a nice feel for what to hit off tees and things.

It's one of those courses you can't just carry around your driver. There is a lot of courses you just carry it around and hit driver off every tee, par-4 or par-5, and you can't do that here. You got to use a lot of -- 14 clubs in your bag, you got to use everything. That's what makes it really majoring and fun.

**Q. Anything feel different come into this tournament as defending champion compared to last year?**

MARDY FISH: Well, last year I wasn't the defending champion. The year before I was. I mean, I've won this one a few times. Again, I enjoy playing this style of golf, this grass, and just these conditions.

So yeah, nothing too different. You know the guys are going to be gunning for you, guys and gals. I just really enjoy playing with the LPGA girls and watching them. They play a different, almost like a different course they're playing in where they're hitting their shots from.

My shots off the tee and stuff like that and how they're so much better and get it in the hole quicker, it's really fun to watch up close. That's the most fun for me certainly on the golf side.

**Q. The celebrity tournaments you're always up near**

**the top the leaderboard, this one and Tahoe.**

MARDY FISH: Yeah, we have the Invited Celebrity Classic as well in Dallas.

**Q. Steph is not here so you have to wait a full year before you get your next shot at him.**

MARDY FISH: I know, get my hands on him.

**Q. Is that disappointing?**

MARDY FISH: I get to see him. We've had a nice friendship for a few years. I get to see him. I live in LA so the Lakers and the Clippers are in the same division. He comes to LA quite a bit for games and things.

I get to see him and I put my hands on his neck, but I can't get him on the golf course until he usually shuts it down for the season, until his season is over.

So, yeah, I'll be looking forward to getting back out there. Tahoe certainly, that was a tough one to lose, but he was awesome. It was his week. All those eagles and hole in one.

That was a fun week regardless of whether you won or lost. Fun one to remember.

**Q. In the beginning of this you rattled off a lot of the people in this field. I know that you are a hard earned fan of the LPGA Tour in general. After participating in a tournament like this and following along, how is your appreciation for the women's game and also just watching the tour kind of on weeks that you're not participating in this event grown over the last few years?**

MARDY FISH: Yeah, it's great. I didn't mention one name, Charley Hull. Got to play with Charley twice last year as well. It's a four-day event. Others are three-day events. Gives us an extra round -- me an extra round to play with them and stuff.

Charley was really fun to play with. They just play a different style. Andrea Lee lives in California as well and brought her to Bel-Air Country Club last week to play with her. She had never played at Bel-Air.

It's fun to strike up friendships with them and have her come over here and play this event, too. Yeah, I mean, I just -- I'm so blown away by just how well they how well they hit -- the one thing that jumps out at me is how well they hit their metals, like driver, 3-woods, 5-woods, hybrids, are just like wedges for us -- for me. Even straighter.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

So it's always fascinating to watch how they get around the golf course with the length that they hit it. I remember there was a few times where I would get a drive or something and turn around and 70, 80 yards difference and they're making threes and fours easily and I'm making fours and fives and not figuring out how the heck they're so much better at those distances and stuff.

Obviously they chip and putt as good as anyone in the world. Seen some stats where guys and gals, 125 and in on the PGA TOUR, LPGA, there was a couple LPGA players that were better than almost all the male pros.

So I have a ton of respect for how they play, how good they are, and it's just cool to kind of watch up close.

**Q. Last one from me. Obviously the Olympics are a huge storyline for a lot of women out here. As a former Olympian yourself, what does it mean to get to that stage and what do you think it means to the women here fighting for their chance to represent in Paris?**

MARDY FISH: Yeah, what people don't understand too is you only get four per country. In America that's really tough to make, certainly in golf. There is a lot of male Americans and female Americans that are so good. Going to be a few left out that don't make it.

There is a premium on making and being an Olympian in golf and tennis. Tennis is the same. You get four singles players and two doubles teams, but one of those doubles teams has to include two of the singles players, so really five or six athletes who get to go from each side.

So it's not easy to make clearly. It's something that I always love the golf on that, just in the Olympics just because it's new and kind of can watch friends and friendly with some of the guys and girls that can play in that. Paris will be cool for sure.

My Olympic experience was in Athens, Greece. No golf then obviously. But, yeah, it's a tough thing to make. Really is. Just making it, you know, once every four years, Nelly getting the gold there, Xander getting the gold there, it's cool. Something they'll never forget and something they'll always have over the rest of the field. That's for sure.

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