

# Pure Silk Championship Presented by Visit Williamsburg

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

Williamsburg, Virginia, USA

Kingsmill River Course

## Jasmine Suwannapura

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good morning and welcome to the virtual media center at the Pure Silk Championship.

We are joined today by a very special guest, the latest LPGA Tour professional to share her DriveOn story, Jasmine Suwannapura.

Thank you so much for stopping by, Jasmine.

Before we get going with questions we will start with Jasmine's DriveOn spot. (DriveOn video played.)

Very powerful moving piece obviously, something you're proud of and your story is all that and then some.

Let's start in 2015. You were in Dubai for a ladies European Tour event, pain and numbness shooting through your leg. Your mom who was there questioned whether you should play and you responded, I'm a fighter. That is your message and your creed throughout your whole story. Very powerful.

What was your initial reaction as to what could possibly be wrong with your body when you were going through that at that time?

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: I really have no idea what's going on to my body. I never think that it's going to lead to a surgery or anything at that time. So after -- well, we been playing all four days and I been limping all four rounds, play with Shanshan Feng and she finished 10 stroke, win by 10 stroke and I finish second.

My mom, I think my mom, she's almost cry because she don't want me to play through the pain. It's very hard for her to watch, but she's still there with me. So after we done with the golf tournament I flew back to Thailand and we see some doctors. They only say that I have like a bulging disc on my back and kind of like recommend me to do some yoga or stretching a lot and take some rest with



not too much golf.

THE MODERATOR: Just a short time later in 2015 when you had an MRI in Thailand that showed a bulging disc, you wanted to maintain the steady LPGA schedule for 2016. You did yoga and stretching to make that part of your routine to stay out on the LPGA.

Did you have any fear or worry after the MRI or during the start of the 2016 season when maybe some pain flared up off and on off, or were you just focused on doing all you could to play golf?

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: I was more keeping my mind about stretching and do some yoga, and then the pain went down so I -- that's the reason why I didn't really look to MRI or the x-ray too much, because I felt like my mental right there, which is like, well, I have golf to play and I just do whatever I can to take away the pain.

Just keep playing until this week in Kingsmill in 2016.

**Q. Take us through that you week, the 2016 Pure Silk Championship presented by visit Williamsburg. That practice round that Monday was a practice round you'll never forget, a day you'll never forget in your life. Your worst fears of a back injury turned into reality. Take us through the day and experience and couple months after that.**

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: The first thing I notice is when I woke up in the morning was my leg is numb and -- well, I do the morning routine of stretching and stuff. Went to the driving range, hit couple balls, and I notice that my leg was shaking instead of numb. It was a little shaking, too.

So I just hit ball, finish the range, and went on the first tee. I thought that maybe I just woke up the wrong side of the bed. Maybe I just didn't stretch enough or -- I wasn't even think much of it. Hit the driver, not that far. (Laughter.)

And then had a second shot like maybe 6-iron, like a punch shot for the second shot, and then as soon as I hit that shot I heard pop on my back. It was the most painful thing I



ever experienced in life. All I did was just screaming and I was just went down on the floor basically just screaming.

And then I don't know what to do. I have to lay down flat and that's all I can do. So my caddie tried to get someone to get a cart to pick me up and I have to sit like pretty much almost straight up. Like I could not sit or lean on anything.

So it was very painful, and then on Monday the physio wasn't there yet so I couldn't really talk to anyone, but I did manage to get back to the house and call the physio to check on me, like what should we do, this and that.

But at the moment I don't know what happened to me, so I didn't -- as a fighter I didn't tell my caddie to withdraw anything until Wednesday. So I'm like, I'm just going to see what's going on and maybe I can play. So I did fight until the last minute before I withdrew from the tournament.

I remember I withdrew with Dan, I talked to him, like I have to withdraw from this tournament.

THE MODERATOR: When you have pain like that, you can't go on no matter how hard of a fighter you are.

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: I know.

THE MODERATOR: Take us through the moment when you met with doctors and what exactly was wrong with your back. What did doctors tell you before surgery? What did doctors tell you was going on and just made you aware of?

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: Well, first of all, I talked to the physio and they mention about taking painkillers first and see if I can play. By that time it's Wednesday and I had to withdraw, and I'm very lucky that it's only two and a half hour for me to drive back home.

So I took a very strong painkiller for three days. Basically lay flat on the floor, eating like a snake. I could not sit. So I had to lay on the floor and eating on the floor. It's very hard to use the bathroom for two, three days. So I look took a painkiller and drive myself back to the house during that week. I think I drive back on Friday.

So week later I got appointment with a doctor, the first one. He do an MRI and x-ray and he talk to me like, It doesn't look good. You know, and I'm not special on this kind of stuff, so he give me the x-ray and MRI and say, This is something that I see on your back, but I'm not specialize on this so I recommend to see a different doctor.

So the total of waiting to see the second doctor is probably a month after the week that I broke my back. So I see the doctor. I'm very lucky that I can get the appointment with

him because next week he like a long vacation for a month.

So I went in. As soon as he see my x-ray he just had a serious face on and walk in with four different doctors in the room. I was like, What's going on? And during that time I was only 23 so I didn't think anything. I'm 23 years old, right?

So he said, Well, this is what happened. Your back, this is broken, and he explained it real fast. This is going to happen. You're going to have surgery within four days. This is how you prep yourself. And he showed me the metal and the screw that have to go back -- go inside my back, like within an hour or two.

And I was just in shock because I wouldn't think 22 years old girl was playing golf had a back broken and you had to do surgery. Someone going to cut me open. When I'm 23 I would never think that.

So I was in shock because I had to do surgery within four days. He said, Don't even think that you're not going to do it or try not to do a surgery, because as soon as -- after today if you don't do the surgery at all, within a month you will be in a wheelchair for the rest of your life. You have no chance.

And he said like I'm 99.99% you'll be fine, he said just very confident. So I was in shock and I was crying. I get out from the office and call my dad. I mean, they were very worried and -- because they were in Thailand. They could not do anything. He was trying to fly here but it was just so rush because, yeah, like I say it's very rushing and everything.

So they stay in Thailand and I'm by myself and -- so the next thing I do was calling my sponsor Singha (in Thai) in Thailand. So he was my main sponsor. I call him like this is what happened and I had to do surgery.

And he said like, Don't worry about anything. Just do your surgery and take care of the money, whatever you want. How much it is? Yeah, the next day he just in my account.

So, yeah, I'm just very grateful for him to help me and my family.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously like you said the first step to recovery was surgery. That's always daunting for anyone, especially a young girl in an unfamiliar country without her parents. In your first-person piece you mentioned saying just a Good Samaritan act and how much they cared for you in a time of need.

How greatly did that signify what your relationship with their

team and their whole company means to you?

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: Well, it just prove to me that no matter what -- because I grow up playing golf in Thailand and Singha, it's always there, like supporting the junior golf and the professional golf. You know, they the main sponsor and probably the main reason I'm here is because of them.

So it's proof that sponsor like them, it's -- I don't know if I can be any luckier than that. Like I say it's truly show that they still believe in me. They never leave me even though I'm the worse point of my life. Like I couldn't walk, couldn't do anything, but they still give me the hand and help me.

THE MODERATOR: That's special.

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: Uh-huh.

THE MODERATOR: After the procedure the doctor told you no golf for three months. Stubborn Jasmine, you were pitching and putting just over a month after, some shorter swings a couple months after, and then you went through a complete swing change to ensure that you had longevity as a professional golfer and a healthy back.

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: Uh-huh.

THE MODERATOR: Then it led to winning at the 2018 Marathon Classic less than two years later. What was that moment like when you raised the trophy and looked back on the last couple years in your journey to see not only the adversity you faced, but all the hard work that you did to make sure that you got to the peak and where you wanted to be?

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: It's very hard. After I had a surgery I'm still stubborn to go do chip and putt and went to Top Golf and 7 irons 50 yards, but that's make me happy.

So after that like I say, I went -- actually I went back to Dubai again as like a testing tournament. Like before actually -- because I had medical, so it's like a testing medical tournament in Dubai, and I notice that I use the same swing back then and it's still pain the same spot that I had surgery.

So that's the time that I decide that, okay, I need to change my swing. I need to change something to not feel the pain in the same spot. So the 2017 is very rough year. You know, I finish 101 on the Money List, yeah. So 2016 and '17, both years I finished 101, believe it or not. So a little rough year.

And then I have my caddie, she's still out there with me

even though I had surgery. She's still there for me. I know she notice something is going on because I hit left right, left right, left right. It's been hard, but we still together as a team. She still believe in me.

Once we hit 2018 everything seems to get better. My swing gets better. The moment that we win the Marathon is just -- it says a lot. You know, it prove that I can do it, first of all, and also prove that don't give up on your dreams.

Just, yeah, I'm glad I'm a fighter. If I'm not a fighter I wouldn't have today. I wouldn't be on the tour having a trophy for myself and have today.

THE MODERATOR: I really liked that message. If you're a fighter, keep fighting.

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: Uh-huh.

THE MODERATOR: To be part of DriveOn and the campaign, what does it mean to you to associate yourself with others who have had challenges? Everybody has had challenges, but to be able to share that, and it takes confidence to be able to share it. What does it mean to you to share your story so that others who might be going through something similar can have that confidence to carry on in their life?

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: Well, I believe everybody go through some thing almost every day. There is hard time, there is good time, but when it's a good time, I just want everybody to enjoy it. When you had a hard time, just remember it's not permanently. Hard time is not going to be there all the time.

So if you have a dream, you just have to believe in yourself. Just keep doing what you have to do to follow your dream. Keep fighting, because one day you're going to be able to make it if you believe in yourself and keep fighting it, you know.

I just want to give you an example of if you fighting and believe yourself, you will make it one day.

THE MODERATOR: When you come back here, when you go through the gate at the front entrance and you just take the drive in to Kingsmill five years later, how much better do you feel with your health and your golf and just life in general?

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: Well, five years later it's a lot change. I mean, there is no pain at all in my back, which I'm very grateful to. It actually remind myself that I was down there on the floor on the first hole, before how much

pain it is, and now I still have opportunity to come and play and be on the tour.

It's like, yeah, I'm very grateful to be out here and still follow my dreams and play golf, even more happier every day, you know, knowing that life change so much in a good way. (Smiling.)

THE MODERATOR: Did you walk by that spot on No. 1 during your practice round?

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: Uh-huh, because it's towards the fairway just past that little hill on the left.

THE MODERATOR: What was that moment like just to see the faint ghost of your past and experience that walk?

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: Well, it's tough to see the spot that I was there on the floor knowing how much pain it is. But like I said, I'm very proud that I'm a fighter and I'm here today because of that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for sharing and good luck this week.

JASMINE SUWANNAPURA: Thank you.

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