

# Pure Silk Championship Presented by Visit Williamsburg

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Williamsburg, Virginia, USA

Kingsmill River Course

## Paula Creamer

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Without further ado, we are joined today by Paula Creamer, making her first LPGA Tour start since the BMW Ladies Championship in October 2019. Exciting words. Thank you so much for stopping by.

PAULA CREAMER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Everyone wants to know what makes this the time for a return to LPGA competition?

PAULA CREAMER: Well, it's been long enough. It was time for me to get back out. My body feels great. Definitely needed that time to just heal and let my wrist and my thumb kind of get back to I guess where it should have been three, four years ago.

Unfortunately that means not playing golf, which is hard when that is your job and you do it every day. But I like Kingsmill. I like this place. I've had a lot of really good memories here. I've played some good golf; played some interesting golf here as well.

I thought it was a really good place for me to kind of make my first tournament back, kind of my start of my season. It's leading up into some big events as well, and like I said I'm very comfortable here, so I thought this would be a perfect spot for me to tee it up for my first tournament back.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. I think you joined U.S. Women's Open broadcast late last year and talked about getting into the swing of things. How did you specifically prepare for this moment, and what you do to get back into competitive form?

PAULA CREAMER: I didn't touch a club for a long time. I think people would be surprised if I even said it was a year. I started hitting balls probably the end of November last year, just chipping and putting, and then started working with my coach, David Whelan.



We got back together and been working really hard these last several months. But I also gave myself enough time where I didn't feel I was cramped with things or if I did have a little setback with swing changes and just how my body would react.

So we have been kind of really planning each step kind of with a purpose. It wasn't just going out to a range and changing swing thoughts and all this. There was a goal in mind. I feel like I'm rusty, that's for sure. Definitely not at the high peak of tournament level right now.

But at the same time, I know I can get out there and play some good golf, and it's going to take me a couple tournaments to obviously settle down and adjust to that.

THE MODERATOR: One more from me before we open up for questions. What was it like working to make a comeback and maybe get that taste back when you're on the course and see some old friends that first day of school kind of feel? Does it compare to anything else you've had in your career?

PAULA CREAMER: I will say I thought when I had thumb surgery that four months off was forever. Then I had wrist surgery and that was like seven months off, eight months. Now this one is 18 months, and I will tell you there has been many times today on the driving range where I looked over at my coach or my dad or my fiancée and said, What the heck is going on here? Like I cannot make contact. Is this really happening?

Taking a couple weeks off is one thing, but 18 months staying away from tournament golf is a whole 'nother. It came back quickly, but that first month I was thinking, My goodness gracious. It was embarrassing. It was bad. Definitely humbled me.

But at the same time, I was even more motivated to be like, okay, let's figure this out and wanted to work hard, and being able to not have any pain allowed me to do that. I saw Jane Park a couple times, and it was great to just be around your friends that you've competed with, but also just seeing your friends just in it general.

Played practice round with Jane, and it was nice to be able to do it out there with someone that you know and feel comfortable.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. Questions.

**Q. Kind of continuing on that theme, which area of your game are you most confident in going into this week, and which area carries the biggest question mark?**

PAULA CREAMER: You know, I would say I've been driving the ball decent. I think the big thing for me these next couple weeks will be my yardages. You know, when you're at home standing on the driving range or the golf course you play every single day they're a little than when you're at a tournament.

And when you play a lot you know that, Okay, Monday Tuesday you might be a half a club shorter. Right now we don't really know where I am with that, adrenaline, things like that.

So I would say my carrying distance with my irons will probably be a little bit -- kind of a trial and error out there. We got a gist of it obviously, but when you're working with one or two yards here to make a carry, that will be a little bit more interesting.

My short game is really good right now. I feel very confident with that. We worked really hard on my wedges. Just the whole short game aspect I feel is good. But I think the one kind of rusty part will be my actual yardages.

**Q. And then as you said given the fact you've been away from the tour for more than 18 months, what kind of showing would you be pleased with this week?**

PAULA CREAMER: I have -- I don't have an expectation right now. Not even a showing. I honestly, my goal, truly my No. 1 goal is taking what I've been working with David into tournament play on the golf course and not deviating from that just because I'm nervous or I want to hit it farther or I want to make something happen.

I really just want to stick to my game plan and continue working on that swing, because I'm in no pain right now with what we're doing, and a lot of the times I come -- I get in trouble with the pain because of my -- obviously my golf swing, but bad habits.

So that's one thing that I really want to -- if I can accomplish that this week, then we're good. (Laughter.)

**Q. Two questions: No. 1, the 18-month absence, so**

**was that injury related and nothing at all to do with COVID? And the second question is I was looking at the pairings tomorrow and I see right away they put you in primetime with Jessica Korda and A Lim Kim. Is that going to put pressure on you?**

PAULA CREAMER: I saw that too. Okay, here we go, welcome back. To the first question, no, I mean, there was definitely some COVID obviously precaution that I took with that. It was mainly my injury, and because of all the COVID restrictions and things it gave me that opportunity to take care of my body.

I don't -- I didn't like sitting at home watching the tournaments. I love playing competition golf. Even when you play bad you still want to be out there. It's hard to sit at home and watch. But I knew what I needed to do, and then with all the COVID, it kind of, I guess just made my decision, solidified it a little bit more knowing that, okay, this is kind of maybe meant to be, that I need to do this.

Yes, to answer your second question, when I saw that I was like, Okay, here we go, back in it. It doesn't surprise me. I'm always thrown little curve balls here and there. It'll be fun. Once again, I don't have big expectations. Obviously these girls are all playing really well and good golf. Jessica has won this year. Playing with the U.S. champ, that's obviously fun as well. So it'll be good. I'm actually looking forward to it. It's a nice group.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the special exemption you received, and I wonder how much sweeter is it given that you grew up in the Bay Area.**

PAULA CREAMER: Yeah, I'm really excited about that. The USGA, when they called and told me that I got that exemption I was thrilled. Being able to have missed last year, being able to have made it with my 10 years not having to qualify, and then not getting to play kind of was a bummer for me because I actually thought I would tee it up at the U.S. Open last year and use my last exemption. It didn't work out that way.

When I they called I was definitely excited, and going back to the Bay Area it'll be really nice. I haven't been there for a while now. Hopefully we got some of those fans of mine that got the tickets to come out and watch. I know my family is excited to see me back in that Bay Area, but I'm looking forward to the Olympic Club.

**Q. Can you share a little of the story of your roots in the game, getting started with your dad at a young age?**

PAULA CREAMER: Yeah, I grew up in the east bay in



Pleasanton, so about 30 minutes or so, maybe less from Olympic Club. I grew up on a golf course, Castlewood County Club, and lived on the 1st hole and didn't pick up a club until I was 10 years old, and stuck with it ever since then.

But the Bay Area, so many great golf courses, and one of the cool things about the Olympic Club for me, is that was one of the first professional events my dad ever took me to, the '98 Open there. I got to see just all the big grandstands and everything.

It was a men's event, but it was just so awesome to see so many golfers and how many people loved watching the game and loved the game of golf itself. That kind of pushed me in the direction of being where I am today in professional golf.

**Q. And just one more, if you don't mind. Can you remember a time at a young age where you kind of created the dream of playing professionally someday?**

PAULA CREAMER: It was probably when I moved to Florida when I was 14. I was just getting into the AJGA events and there were Aree and Naree Song, twin girls from Thailand, and they just dominated everything. I thought that that was one of the greatest things ever.

I did a lot of studying about them and what they practiced and how they did and I found out they went to the David Leadbetter Golf Academy, and I looked at my mom and dad and said, Can we go there?

I don't know if that's what triggered me to play professional golf, but it definitely triggered me to try to improve my game and take the next step, whether it was junior golf and then get into college.

But it really, if it wasn't for those two girls who know where I would be today. I ended up going to the academy six months later and we took our four suitcases and started my life there and was able to do that with my mom and dad.

**Q. I'd just like to follow on that. Did Aree and Naree ever know that, that they were the reason you showed up in Bradenton?**

PAULA CREAMER: I don't know if they ever knew that was the whole reason. We were so competitive, too, at that time. I don't think I ever said, Hey, you guys are the reason why I'm here.

Nowadays, now that we've -- these years even at the Honda LPGA tournament I've seen them there as well. They know now that that was one of the reasons, the main

reason why I went to the academy. Not when I moved there I didn't tell them. I was always like staring from afar and watching. We would --

I remember these days it was like 7:30 p.m. at night and getting dark. Every night we would Si Woo was going to be the first one to leave. Their dad would be there and my dad would be there and both of our cars. It was like a contest of who's going to stay later. Sometimes they won and sometimes I won.

It was definitely -- but we pushed each other. We definitely pushed each other through all that.

**Q. That's funny. I love that. One more. You mentioned earlier the bad habits that you were trying to avoid that perpetuate injury. What specifically are those that you stay away from?**

PAULA CREAMER: So ever since my thumb surgery I've had a really hard time with my grip. It's very hard for me to get my right hand on top of my left because I don't have much motion in my thumb. Most people, when they put the left hand on the club you can push your thumb down. I can't do that, so I always have a big gap in my hands.

We've tried building up clubs, I mean, you name it., we've done literally everything you can imagine. I've had to work on that scar tissue, but because of so many times I've hit balls where I'm afraid it's going to hurt, my right hand gets moving over, moving over to the right side which promotes a bad takeaway for me which makes me go inside.

And then you have to reroute and all of this, and that's when I get my big left shots. And that's something that we've really worked on is making sure my posture and my grip and takeaway is important. That also I would say the speed of what it is. Not too slow, not too quick. When you're nervous and you grip it too tight as well.

So those are things that happen before the actual club really moves. Those are my main tendencies right now that kind of create the bad habit which then affects my whole left arm.

**Q. Got you. Thank you. I appreciate that. That was very helpful.**

PAULA CREAMER: Thank you.

**Q. What was the course that your dad would take you to as a kid, and can you share any family members that still live in the Bay Area?**

PAULA CREAMER: Well, I lived on Castlewood Country

Club, and that was -- I mean, it was in Pleasanton, and that's where I did all my junior golf, where I practiced. Then with the middle school I went to -- they had a couple courses obviously around there in Modesto and different areas we would go and travel to.

Bunch of aunts and uncles. I have some cousins, and I have people that are in Vegas that are coming from -- to there because my parents live in Vegas now. They have a place in California but they will all be out there.

Then of course all the members at Castlewood that literally have watched me grow up and come to tournaments, they are all still out there. I still have my friends from elementary and middle school that I get to see.

**Q. And you mentioned a fiancée. Is there a date later this year?**

PAULA CREAMER: No, not this year. This year is a little packed right now.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you everyone for joining us, and Paula, thank you for your time and best of luck in the return.

PAULA CREAMER: Thank you. Thanks.

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