

LPGA MEDIHEAL Championship

Sunday, June 13, 2021

Daly City, California, USA

Lake Merced Country Club

Matilda Castren

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, everyone, welcome inside the virtual media center here at the LPGA MEDIHEAL Championship. I'm happy to be joined with now hopefully a much warmer Matilda Castren. I just want to start off this was such a nerve-racking day. I just want to know your mindset heading into your first final grouping of your LPGA Tour career.

MATILDA CASTREN: Well, I was definitely nervous, so my mindset was just going in thinking one shot at a time, one hole at a time, and see what happens, and just trying to enjoy the day because it was my first time in the final group.

And, yeah, it was -- I thought it was great for experience no matter what happened. It just turned out I had a great day on the course and got the trophy. (Smiling.)

THE MODERATOR: You had a phenomenal front nine. Take me through the consecutive birdie streak and then that eagle.

MATILDA CASTREN: Yeah, it was a little bit unexpected. I was just trying to hit fairways and trying to hit greens, make some good swings and hit good putts.

So I was just staying really patient and that paid off. On that par-5 I had a really good number for my hybrid, and I knew if I hit a good shot it would be perfect. It turned out maybe five feet from the hole and I made the putt, and that just gave me kind of like really good energy going in and I figured I have a chance to win.

THE MODERATOR: I feel as if it really solidified your momentum heading into the rest of your holes. You had some incredible par saves on 10 and 11. How much do you think those really helped kind of settle any nerves or your mindset as you continued through?

MATILDA CASTREN: I mean, it helped a lot. Gave me some momentum making those important par saves. If I had maybe missed one or two it maybe, I don't know, could

have put some bad thoughts in my mind. I knew I was putting great and made those putts, so that was a really good feeling.

THE MODERATOR: As we got to the 18th, what was going through your mind as this is one of the first times I feel like you've been in this situation on LPGA Tour?

MATILDA CASTREN: I was very nervous. I knew I had a two-shot lead and Min was by the green with two shots and I knew she had a chance to make eagle. So I was just telling myself, Okay, you got to birdie this to win. So I hit a great shot three feet from the hole and made the putt.

THE MODERATOR: I know you were quite emotional on the green with Kay Cockerill. Just what were some of the immediate feelings and thoughts you had as you made your final putt today?

MATILDA CASTREN: It was just hard to grasp and hard to believe. It's been a dream of mine to win since I was a little girl, and to see it happen and just to win, it's such an amazing feeling. There is nothing that compares to it.

One of my thoughts was, Well, I don't have to go to Q-School this fall. Because it's always a little bit stressful as a rookie. You have to kind of earn your spot on tour and, yeah, it's definitely a huge weight off my shoulders.

THE MODERATOR: You are a rookie. You are in just your 15th start I think I heard from Golf Channel. Just what does it mean to you to be able to pull out a victory like this on a course like Lake Merced, and also to become the first Finnish player in the history of the LPGA Tour to do so?

MATILDA CASTREN: I'm just very proud of myself how I handled today, my mindset going in. I have matured a lot in the past couple years, and to be okay beginning of the round, whatever happened today was going to be fine with me.

So that put me in a really good mindset and kind of took the pressure off. I knew it was just going to be a great day no matter what happened in the end, but it's a huge honor

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to be a winner as a rookie, and especially first one from Finland. That's a really big honor.

Q. You said on the green that you didn't really think that this moment would happen this early. What were your goals coming into this year and last year as an LPGA Tour rookie?

MATILDA CASTREN: Well, last year gave me a really good opportunity to kind of practice and see what the courses are like and see what the tour is about.

I thought I did pretty well last year, and obviously this year was a little bit more pressure with like the status can change however you play. So in the beginning of the year I was kind of thinking, Okay, well, I need to keep my card, and I was going over goals with my coaches and they always tell me to aim higher.

I was like, Okay, I want to be top 60 this year, go to Asia, do that last swing. And, yeah, it just -- I'm one step closer to that goal, so I'm very happy.

THE MODERATOR: I would think a win is definitely one step closer. COVID-19 was a crazy year for you as a 2020 rookie. How do you think you matured since your first start here on the LPGA Tour?

MATILDA CASTREN: That year gave me a lot of good opportunities to see where my game is at, and I had a couple good finishes, so it kind of gave me peace of mind going into this year. I knew I could do it and I could play out here.

This year just I kind of realized this is where I want to be and I want my game to be good enough to win out here. Like I said, it's been a dream of mine since a little girl winning on tour, and I didn't think it was going to happen today or so early.

But I always knew one day I'm going to be a winner.

Q. We come into this stretch of two incredible golf courses like Olympic Club and Lake Merced. What had you been working on recently that you think got you to this spot?

MATILDA CASTREN: Recently I been working a lot on my short game and putting. I played in Kingsmill and I felt like my putting wasn't where I wanted it to be. I was hitting a lot of greens and a lot of fairways, so I knew that was going to be good at the U.S. Open, at Olympic Club.

But I needed to improve my putting, and I worked on that on my off week after Kingsmill, and I felt like my game was

a little bit closer to where I wanted it to be at the U.S. Open.

That was a great prep week for this event. The course is kind of similar. Obviously the rough is not as high here, but the course is similar with the hills and the trees and the fog and the wind.

So it was a great preparation for this week, and today it kind of all came together.

THE MODERATOR: Tell us a little bit about kind of golf back in Finland. What do you think a win like this does, especially as you prepare for potentially the Olympic Games?

MATILDA CASTREN: Yeah, I hope it inspires a lot of the younger girls to reach for their goals and just aim high, the sky is the limit. I think I'm a perfect example of that. I'm the first one to win from Finland, and I bet a lot of people didn't think it was possible. I had my doubts myself, too.

But I just want to send a message that anything is possible and just to reach for your goals.

THE MODERATOR: Did you have before you started today any family or friends back in Finland say they would be watching?

MATILDA CASTREN: Yes.

THE MODERATOR: Who was watching?

MATILDA CASTREN: I think a lot of people couldn't sleep tonight because I tee'd off I think 1:00 in the morning Finland time.

THE MODERATOR: So we had some people pulling all nighters back in Finland?

MATILDA CASTREN: I think so. I can't say for sure, but I know my coach for sure wasn't sleeping tonight, and I don't think my parents either could sleep. So, yeah, I think it was a really big night for them.

Q. Who is your coach back in Finland?

MATILDA CASTREN: His name is Petteri Nykky. He was here last week for the U.S. Open.

THE MODERATOR: And so he went back to Finland.

MATILDA CASTREN: Yeah, he just left on Monday Monday.



THE MODERATOR: What a great week he missed.

MATILDA CASTREN: I know.

THE MODERATOR: I know you haven't been able to check your phone in a little bit. We've been a little busy.

MATILDA CASTREN: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: What did it mean to see some other LPGA Tour players coming and celebrating with you on the green, some friends of yours on tour? I know we don't have a lot of fans out here through COVID. What did that mean to you?

MATILDA CASTREN: It's really nice. It's a really nice feeling to have people come and put some champagne and water on you. I've always looked at these videos of other winners and thought of myself in that moment, and, I mean, it was an amazing feeling. It's kind of hard to describe.

But, yeah, it's just amazing?

THE MODERATOR: You are the fourth Rolex first-time winner of the season. I know you just saw the Rolex over there. How much does that fill with you pride and how satisfied are you with that knowing that you've been able to push turn around and win so quickly?

MATILDA CASTREN: Yeah, I didn't think it was going to happen this soon, so I'm just incredibly happy and it was just such a relief for me. I'm so excited to what's coming next.

Q. Back in 2018 you were at stage one; in 2019, stage two. We always hear from players how much work you put in. What for you would've been the transformation of going from those points in your career to finding the winner's circle less than two years later?

MATILDA CASTREN: Yeah, I mean, 2018 was definitely not the best year of my career, but I learned so much going through that time and kind of struggling a lot with my game.

Those two years on Symetra Tour gave me an opportunity to work on my game and gave me an opportunity to compete and just mature. I think if I had started out here I probably wouldn't have done that great. Those two years, they just gave me an opportunity to learn more about myself, the tours, and learn more about my game.

So that was -- it was not a fun experience when I was going through it, but I definitely learned a lot from it.

THE MODERATOR: One more from me before we wrap it up here. You win today on the LPGA Tour. We had another Seminole win on the Symetra Tour, your friend Morgan, who you played with. It's looking good for FSU today.

MATILDA CASTREN: Yeah, it's great. I didn't know she won until someone told me, but I'm super happy for her. I know it's just the beginning for her. I hope she's going to join me next year here.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you, Matilda. I know we have to go fast, but thank you and congratulations.

MATILDA CASTREN: Thank you.

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