

Meijer LPGA Classic

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Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

Blythefield Country Club

Leona Maguire

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, we're going to start with Leona Maguire. Happy to get things start with Leona. I know you just had on 18 hole pro-am out there today. What's it like to be back in a place that's so familiar and comfortable to you?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, this is always one of my favorite stops on tour. It's one of the events that I've probably played the most since my rookie year.

And, yeah, the people here are great. It's already a really nice atmosphere around the event. Weather has been nice. Food is good. It's all around just a really great event. Course is looking really nice again this year. Excited to get started tomorrow.

Q. Have you been able to kind of reflect on what last year was like at this event? And just in general when you look at your finishes here in Grand Rapids, it feels like a little bit of a home?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, the golf course is very similar to home. It's got a very Irish feel to it. Weather is obviously quite a bit nicer.

But, yeah, I can't really explain it. It's always somewhere I feel like I've played well. It's one of those things people say the course suits your eye or whatever, but yeah, it was nice to have the two seconds in a row, and then to go one better last year and get over the line.

I feel like it's always a very competitive field here. It always goes right down to the wire. Everybody is making birdies and eagles and it's always quite a dramatic finish.

It was nice to be on the right side of that last year.

Q. You talked a little bit about it, but to get your first win is obviously hard with the depth out here. To get the second win, what was that moment like for you when you think back to last year?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, it was obviously very nice. I

feel like in '21 I played some incredible golf and Nelly just played even better that year.

Then to get into a playoff the next year, it was kind of a case of what do I need to do here to get this done.

But, yeah, it's funny. I've done it some very different ways. I've gone out low the first two days. Last year finished strong over the weekend.

So there is a lot of different ways to do it around here. Scoring is always low, so it is kind of, yes, you have to -- you know you have to make a lot of birdies, but sometimes you have to be patient.

Last year it was sort of patience right down to the very end, and then on the last six holes went on that run and nice to finish it off in style.

Q. And thankfully didn't have to catch a flight moments after.

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah.

Q. You played great here for three years in a row. Is it kind of a statement of how tough is it to win out here when you played that way for three years, and what do you think last year pushed you over the line?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I mean, yeah, like I feel like in '21 it was I played unbelievably that year. Shot 20-something-under par and Nelly was just that bit better.

I think that sums up the LPGA. I think you can play as well as you possibly can and someone can just play better that week. You have to sort of take the positives from it. And, yeah, it was nice to sort of get that win last year, my second win, somewhere that I enjoy going back to.

I think that makes a big difference. There is always huge crowds here at the weekend cheering you on. I feel like every year I came back people were like, you've been so close, you've been so close. I felt like I had a few extra people rooting me on last year that wanted to see me get over the line as much as I did.



So that was extra nice last year.

Q. Do you actually get a different feeling when you're here?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Not -- I mean, not really. I think it's always an enjoyable event, like I said. Always have great pro-am groups, the people are really friendly, the food is good, the golf course is good. There is a lot to like here.

It's got a very similar feel to t back home. Yeah, it's somewhere I enjoy coming every year.

Q. Can you just talk about is there a little bit of a different feel this time around that you are the defending champion, and a little extra pressure, or are you enjoying that?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I don't think there is any pressure. I think if anything there is less. I've done it now. There is not that extra sort of -- not a chip on my shoulder, but I know I've done it and I know I can do it.

I know I've done it in a few different ways of going low out here. I think it's just a case of enjoying the week and try not to put too much pressure on myself.

We've obviously got a busy summer ahead of us, and this is always I feel like the event that kicks off the summer for us in a way.

Yeah, enjoy the week. Obviously have a fun pairing tomorrow with Nelly and Brooke. Excited for that for the first two days.

Q. Talk about obviously you are the defending champion. You have a good grasp of this course. What does it take to be successful on this very course to score very high and do great things?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think first and foremost you have to drive it well. You have to hit a lot of fairways. They're pretty narrow. And you can give yourself a lot of chances, and that's something that I've done quite well I feel like over the last few years, is really kept the ball in play and given myself a lot of chances.

Then it's just a case of being patient for when the putts drop. So my driving has been something that's been off lately, so definitely sort of this year coming back it's definitely a bit of an extra challenge.

Hopefully we can get that figured out sort of this afternoon and heading into the weekend.

Q. Going to ask you a little bit about recent form. What is it you see in your game that really lifted you to better heights?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Like I said, I haven't drove the ball particularly well, and that's definitely on a premium this week and next week as well in Sahalee. So really need to get that driver sort of straightened out.

Length isn't necessarily a huge factor out here. It's definitely more a premium on accuracy. The par-5s are really good chances. You just have to hit the fairway. There are a few holes like that you know you're going to have some short irons in.

The rough is pretty thick. You can get some nasty enough lies. And it's one of those things, if you get on a run you can go very low out here, but if you start missing fairways to get tough pretty quick when you start missing fairways and greens. So definitely a premium on hitting fairways and greens this week.

Q. You said this course has an Irish feel to it. What do you mean by that?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I think a lot of people associate Irish golf with links golf, primarily around the coast and things like that. But actually a lot of Irish golf courses are like this: A lot of trees, very green. That's mainly because of a lot of the rain we get. I grew up playing courses like that more than links golf.

Yeah, and I think just the people as well, the friendly atmosphere around I think the midwest is a little bit more similar to the Irish mentality in that way.

Q. Last year, getting the win after being so close for so long, was there anything you learned during your run last year that helped you get to that win?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I think patience I suppose probably was the big thing. It's coming, it's coming, just be patient.

That's sort of summed it up on Sunday last year. I played some great golf and no putts were going in. Then made birdie on 13 and opened the floodgates. Made eagle on 14. Yeah, just kind of came out of nowhere really.

Yeah, there is a lot of ways to do it round this golf course, and when you know people are going to be going low, it's easy to sort of force things. Definitely staying patient and knowing there are chances and just being ready to take them when you get them.

Q. Thinking ahead, Olympics this summer as well. Do you use this tournament to prep for that stage?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think all tournaments between now and August are going to be preparation for the Olympics. It's obviously going to be a very tough golf course at Golf National. Any time you have a good test like this off the tee and next week in a major, they're all great preparation for what we need later on this summer.

Q. How nice is it that the Olympics is in Europe?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, really nice. I think with Rio it was a little bit scaled back; Tokyo was different with COVID. So nice that there will be -- I'm sure there will be crowds and a lot of European support and a bit closer to home as well.

Obviously watched the Ryder Cup there in 2018, so nice to go to an iconic venue like that and be a part of a piece of history and be a part of a team as well.

We've got I guess two team events to look forward to this year in the Solheim and Olympics, so that's something I look forward to.

Q. When you said "we" earlier, is your coach there, Shane? Is "we" you and your caddie sorting out your driver?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I say "we" a lot of the usually means me and Lisa. Just my entire team trying to figure out a few things. It's one of those things, that's golf. There is always fine tuning to do.

We've tried to get a little bit of distance early in the year and it's kind of messed up with accuracy a little bit. It doesn't take much to click back into place, so building up the confidence again in knowing that I can hit those drives.

Q. Were you successful in getting that extra bit of distance?

LEONA MAGUIRE: The good drives are good, are longer. It's just a case of the dispersion got a little bit sort of more than I would like.

So just sort of reeling it back in of -- needing to hit more fairways. For me I feel like I'm long enough. I know I'm not the longest out here by any means, but for me stats-wise and all of that, I do a lot better when I hit fairways rather than when I hit it longer.

Q. When is your sister coming out?

LEONA MAGUIRE: That's what everybody keeps asking. I'm definitely not the favorite. She will be at Evian. Usually this is one of her first of the summer, but she's still in school, she's still a little busy, so she will have to just keep in touch with live scoring and TV this week.

Q. One last one from me: Looking ahead to the KPMG Women's PGA, I know you weren't at Sahalee in 2016, but this is the 10th anniversary of this event. Just as someone who has KPMG on their hat, what do you see behind the scenes in terms of what they do to elevate the game in a specific way that maybe other people wouldn't know about?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I think they've been a huge partner of the LPGA. I think they put a huge investment into growing the game, growing women and golf, women in business. Everything they do with the leadership summit, I mean, I'm particularly excited to listen to Kara Lawson this year, the Duke basketball coach and some of the speakers there. Obviously with the Insights program as well, the statistics and data helped a lot of the girls tailor their practice and preparation and their games.

I know it -- maybe it's not a good thing it helps Stacy quite a bit with the Solheim and her pairings and all that. She was sort of filling me in on the things she could predict and things she could do.

Yeah, they do a lot behind the scenes. They obviously have brought us to some iconic venues as well, like getting to play at Baltusrol last year, going back to Sahalee, another really nice venue. They are really trying to push the envelope further and further, and obviously with the prize fund as well they are pushing the ball the out for a lot of sponsors.

They have been doing it for ten years. That's a big commitment. Thankfully doesn't seem like they're slowing down any time soon. For me personally, they were my first sponsor when I turned pro. They believed in me straightaway before I had an LPGA Tour card, before any wins, before any Solheim Cups.

So, yeah, it's been a pleasure being a part of their team. Yeah, exciting to see them keep building and keep growing.

Q. We would like to know what the Solheim Cup means to you and about it being on U.S. soil this year, and also if you have any thoughts or anything you've noticed about the U.S. team this year?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, second time around in the U.S.

Obviously last time the crowds were heavily American. We had no European fans. So hopefully be a few more Europeans this time around.

Our team actually went to RTJ a few weeks ago to have sort of a little team get-together and we played the course. It looks fantastic. I think it's going to look great on TV with all the water and everything. You can see they're already putting a lot of preparation and everything in and everybody is excited there.

So, yeah, I mean, get used to having people cheering again when you miss putts and things like that, but it's a fun week.

I think the American team will be very strong, and obviously knowing they haven't won the last three times I'm sure Stacy is going to leave no stone unturned to try and reverse that this time around.

I think we are going to have a really tough task on our hands.

Q. Obviously Monday night Padraig getting inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame. How much he's helped you? Were you able to catch the ceremony, and what does that mean to you specifically?

LEONA MAGUIRE: No, it's incredible. It's fantastic to see him honored in that way. That's really the pinnacle of golf, to get inducted into the Hall of Fame. He's meant so much to I think everybody in Ireland. He's one of our greatest ever sports people and greatest ever golfer arguably.

I grew up watching him win his majors and he was a huge inspiration to me. I know some of the other guys. It was nice to see Shane sort of there supporting him on Monday night. Looked like they had a great time.

Very fortunate to have got to know him in recent years, and he's been very gracious with his time and giving back to the game as well. It's always impressive when someone is a great golfer and winning majors, but when they're an even better person it makes that bit nicer and that bit more special.

And he's not done yet. There is still plenty of things he wants to accomplish on the Champions Tour and win again on the main TOUR.

It's still always impressive to see how hard he works and continuing to try and get better every day.

Q. 50 days from the Olympics today. How much is that on your mind? You talked about it earlier. What

does it mean to you to continue to represent Ireland on one of the world's biggest stages?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, grew up watching the Olympics. This is a European Olympics, so it will have a very different feel. Even just looking at the Olympic Rings going up on the Eiffel Tower, it seems it's going to be a really big production this time. Won't be there for the opening ceremony to go down in the boats on the Seine and stuff like that, but it's still going to be a really cool experience.

Watching sort of social media some of the Irish athletes qualify and see how much it means to them, and I think it's a special week. It's a special event. It's always, like I said, nice to be a part of a team and part of something bigger than yourself.

So I think it'll be a tough golf course, a tough test, but that's exactly what you want for an Olympic Games.

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