

Solheim Cup

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Gainesville, Virginia, USA

Robert Trent Jones Golf Club

Team USA

Angela Stanford

Lilia Vu

Sarah Schmelzel

Andrea Lee

Press Conference



ROBERT TRENT JONES
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THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the 2024 Solheim Cup hosted here at Robert Trent Jones Golf Club.

I'm pleased to be joined by Andrea Lee, Sarah Schmelzel, Lilia Vu, and Angela Stanford.

Andrea, you came in clutch claiming the last spot in the team to participate in your first Solheim Cup. Talk about how ready you are for this year after that experience.

ANDREA LEE: I'm so excited to be back in the U.S. and competing on home soil in my first Solheim Cup game.

It's been a blast. Honestly last year I have such fond memories, and it was the most adrenaline I felt on the 1st tee in my entire life. I'm so excited to feel those emotions again. Just looking forward to representing our country with my teammates and our captain.

Yeah, it's been a really fun week so far and can't wait to get things started.

THE MODERATOR: Sarah, we'll pop it over to you. One of the rookies on the team this year. Just talk about the advice you received from other teammates heading into this week.

SARAH SCHMELZEL: I think the biggest piece of advice I've gotten is just to enjoy every single aspect and moment of the week. It goes by really fast, I've been told, and it is for sure. And to just really cherish everything.

It's such a special week, one that I'm sure is going to be at the very top of the list when my career is over. I'm just really, really grateful to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Lilia, you're known for being a very

fierce competitor. Just talk about what this format and this competition in particular brings out in you.

LILIA VU: I love match play. I feel like there's really no fear and no pressure. You go out and try to score the best you can. If not, just try again the next hole. I usually love match play. I don't get to play a lot. So I usually enjoy when we do.

THE MODERATOR: Lastly, Angela, this is your third time as assistant captain in the Solheim Cup. What have you learned from this perspective compared to when you were playing?

ANGELA STANFORD: I've always said I'm a pretty slow learner, so it took me three times. It's been fun. I got to go to Toledo and Spain. Toledo with Pat, Spain with Stacy, and back in America with Stacy.

I think there's so much that goes on on this side of it. When you're a player, it's about you getting ready for the team. For the assistants and the captain, it's about us taking care of the players. All of a sudden, you go from being worried about one to being worried about 12.

Q. This one's for Lilia and Andrea. Last time around there were so many new faces on the team. I'm wondering how different it feels in the team room with so many of you having experience now. And maybe if you see Stacy doing anything different this time around.

LILIA VU: I feel like this year's been really fun. It feels like a similar team. Also having Sarah on the team is pretty fun. We've grown really close.

There wasn't much time to assimilate all of us. We have really good vibes going. We have a lot of fun on the way to the golf course, and it's just good vibes all around.

ANDREA LEE: I think this year's team chemistry has been really great so far. I've never laughed harder this week than I have in any other tournament week.

Yeah, and Stacy's been awesome. Honestly, I don't feel

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like anything's drastically changed from last year. She's very level headed. She knows that we're doing our own thing, we're doing our best for our team and for ourselves out there, and she trusts us. That allows us to put a lot of faith in trust in her.

So I think she's a great captain. She's been awesome. Yeah, nothing's really changed too much.

Q. Angela, I'm just curious, how much pressure do you feel like the team is feeling given how long it's been since the U.S. has hoisted the trophy?

ANGELA STANFORD: I wouldn't call it pressure. I don't think they sense that. I mean, I don't want to speak for them, but it hasn't felt like that. It's been very loose, been very carefree, and a lot of times that's what you need.

I've been on teams where everybody's a little tense and everybody's on edge because you know that you need to do something. I think Stacy's done a great job of creating an atmosphere of, hey, you know what you're supposed to do, but I don't think you can do it without having a good time and being relaxed in the times you need to be relaxed.

So I've enjoyed it this week. It's been fun to watch. It's been fun to see how they're getting along. And they're right, the bus rides have been fun.

I told them this morning, can we just play country in the morning because I'm not getting country in the afternoon. I know it's a little slower in the morning. Can I slide my country in in the morning?

ANDREA LEE: We've got a couple of L.A. girls that don't like country over here.

Q. For Lilia, Andrea, so that Angela's not speaking for you, what kind of pressure are you feeling this week to come back and finish your team's unfinished business?

LILIA VU: I feel like playing in this is always an opportunity to win back the Cup. I don't feel too much pressure to performing well. I definitely am a little bit of a perfectionist myself on my game. I'm just trying to get my game in the right direction and do what I need to do and then have fun on the golf course, because that's what I play my best. And also enjoy being around my teammates, assistant captains, and captains.

ANDREA LEE: Like Lilia said, I personally don't feel too much pressure. I feel like this year we kind of have to go into it as like with an underdog mentality almost, like there's nothing to lose. I can feel the fire and the determination in

the team room. Of course we all want to win that Cup back, but obviously we've got to make that happen.

We just do that by playing our own game and trusting in ourselves, trusting in our teammates and our captains. I think the work that we put in will show for itself this week.

Q. Angela, you've been around the Solheim for a while. Could you compare how Stacy is approaching being a captain versus some of the other captains you've been around?

ANGELA STANFORD: Yeah, I've actually been really fortunate to see a lot of different personalities. I think Stacy fits kind of right in the middle of she's not like a Juli that is kind of outgoing and will be dancing on the 1st tee, but I've also had somebody like Betsy King who is very serious, and Betsy did a great job in Sweden.

But I think Stacy is right in the middle. I think she knows how to loosen up and she knows how to be serious, but she doesn't stray too far from the middle of that.

I think it's good. I think she's kept a very calm demeanor. She's kind of told everybody what she expects, and then she kind of lets everybody do their thing. I think that's a great way to go about it.

Q. Sarah, I know you set yourself a lot of goals to get into this team. Have you set yourself any goals for this week, and are you trying to absorb everything that's going on around you and learn from everyone right now?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, definitely. I mean, goal golf-wise is just to go out firing, be super committed, be super determined. As long as I'm staying within myself and doing everything that I can control, that's all I can really do.

I would say in terms of the week, I'm really trying to take in every moment, taking every day day-by-day and enjoying every single aspect of it. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity kind of thing. I hope to be on many teams down the road in my career, but I'm trying to enjoy every day with my teammates and captains.

Q. Enjoying it so far?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Absolutely.

Q. A question for Andrea. You had such a brilliant junior career, so all the juniors that are wandering around here watching you this week hoping to become professional. When things aren't always going to plan, what advice could you give to some juniors out there?

ANDREA LEE: I would just always tell them to remind themselves why they started the game in the first place. Golf is a game full of ups and downs, and I've certainly had my obstacles and lows with the game.

At the end of the day, I truly love this sport, and you just kind of have to remember where you came from and how you grew up and loved this game. Just to have fun with it and not to try and burn yourself out too quick.

Yeah, just to have fun, I think, would be my biggest advice to all the juniors. That's what I always say.

Q. A really great message. Just finally, Angela, have you chatted to any of the Junior Solheim Cup team and celebrations with them?

ANGELA STANFORD: That party last night was fun.

ANDREA LEE: I thought so.

ANGELA STANFORD: I don't know what to say. I don't speak their language. I simply sit back and enjoy the entertainment.

But it was awesome. They came in and -- you know, I think that Junior Solheim Cup is really important. I've been around teams that the European team will win the Junior Solheim Cup and it sets the tone for the week.

The Americans played amazing the last couple days and they've kind of set the tone for us, and it's great.

Then they came in and celebrated. We got to celebrate with them. It was fun. It was fun to be around, fun to watch.

Q. Despite not understanding what they say?

ANGELA STANFORD: I know Taylor Swift.

(Laughter.)

Q. On paper the U.S. is the favorite, if you look at the World Ranking and other stats. But there are only two other players on this team who have won a Solheim Cup before. Does that make you feel a little more like an underdog?

LILIA VU: I guess so. I haven't thought that much into it. I feel like we all kind of showed up, and we're all really good players. I think, as long as we play our own game, everything will show on paper, and you'll see it on TV when we're playing.

I think we all have a fiery spirit and we all want to win, so I think that should be more than enough.

Q. As far as Europe goes, since they have a bunch of people who have won before, do you think they have done something similar to what Europe does in the Ryder Cup, where their team becomes greater than the sum of its parts?

LILIA VU: Yeah, we definitely have to give them respect on their end. They show up to match play events. It's not going to be easy out here. We definitely have to have our best game, and we're going to fight till the end.

Q. Obviously the Solheim Cup is a big deal wherever it's staged, but to be here so close to The Pentagon, today the 9/11 anniversary, does that raise the stakes even more when you're representing the United States given all that that's going on?

ANDREA LEE: Yeah, 100%. There's no better place to represent our country this week and wear the red, white, and blue, knowing that today is 9/11 and we're thinking about those that have lost their lives and their loved ones and families that were affected.

I feel like this week we're definitely honoring them and we're thinking about them while we're playing on the golf course. It's super emotional, I think, for me and for everyone on the team, to be able to represent the U.S. this week and honor them.

So, yeah, it's definitely a special week, and we're definitely thinking about them today.

Q. Angela, I wonder if I could please ask you how this event itself has changed and grown since, I think 2003 was your first playing experience. How has the Solheim Cup evolved since then?

ANGELA STANFORD: I try to be careful not to compare generations, but I will say I think the depth of each team has gotten better and better.

I think the strategy is changing. I'm starting to see a shift in -- you know, the Americans used to think about Solheim Cup a certain way in their strategy, and we've always seen how the Europeans have gone about it. But since the Europeans have become deeper, I think the strategies have been changing, and I think we're in the middle of that where we can do some different things that maybe we haven't done in the past.

I think that that just shows the level of play in women's golf.



To see how many people showed up -- slowly, it's going like this (indicating upward). And to see how many people showed up in Toledo when the European travelers couldn't travel.

I expect that this week will be even bigger. Each time I leave a Solheim Cup, it's like how are we going to beat that? How do they keep making it better and better? I just think it's a testament to these ladies, it's a testament to these next generations that they care about it and they love it. They show up, and they're the best in the world.

It speaks more about women's golf and what they're doing and the trajectory of that.

Q. This will likely be Lexi Thompson's final Solheim Cup. What's her legacy in this event?

ANGELA STANFORD: That's kind of a loaded question, don't you think? How am I going to answer that in all the ways I can answer it? I've been very fortunate to get to see her play in all of her Solheim Cups or be around her.

Even today I got to watch her group, and I just kind of caught myself like, wow. Like, one, how do you replace Lexi? I don't want this to be her last one. How do you replace, not just the way she plays, but the way she interacts with fans?

I was trying to drag her to the tee box because we need to get going, and she won't say no. I just think the way she goes about her business and the way she enjoys the fans and the way she wears red, white, and blue, it's been awesome and very grateful that I got to be a part of it, got to watch it.

She's helped us. She's taken us to that next level. So we're very grateful and happy for Lexi. If she wants to move on, then we'll be happy for her.

Q. Just kind of following up on that, Angela, what has Lexi meant to the growth of the game overall in her time? Not just the Solheim Cup, but the game itself.

ANGELA STANFORD: I think you take the personality and a person that relates with juniors, just across the board with anybody of any age. She loves the fans. She relates to everybody. Then you throw on top of that, she bombs it.

Like even today, I was like girl hits it so far. You all know that?

So I think she's just exciting to watch, and I think that's what people turn on the TV for, and the women's game needs that. Then you put on top of that that she loves the

fans and she treats people the right way, that's a pretty good makeup for a superstar.

Q. It's been an exciting week so far. There's been a lot of content put out, a lot of giggles it seems like, and you talk about the vibe as well. I know it's only Wednesday, but what's one of those things you'll each remember so far this week, one of those memories you'll have?

LILIA VU: Sarah wearing an eagle suit last night.

Q. Can you talk about that Sarah?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: I bought an eagle onesie, a bald eagle onesie. Not many things more American than a bald eagle. So I thought I'd come in hot to the team party last night with the Junior Solheim Cuppers. We just danced and sang all night.

For me those are the moments that have been so fun is we come out to the golf course and go about our business and get our work done, and then we just really enjoy each other at the end of the day and all those in between moments together.

I'm just so grateful to be around this group of girls. It's awesome to see their competitive side but also let loose with them.

Q. Anything else you can think of, Andrea, that you wanted to add on?

ANDREA LEE: I think just all the karaoke. There's been a lot of that, in the bus rides and in the team room. Yesterday we had a karaoke battle with the juniors, so that was interesting. And they were not afraid to take the mic either.

LILIA VU: They even did a dance.

ANDREA LEE: They did a dance. We made them do the --

LILIA VU: The Whip and the Nae Nae.

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