

Solheim Cup

Wednesday, September 11, 2024

Gainesville, Virginia, USA

Robert Trent Jones Golf Club

Team Europe

Anna Nordqvist

Celine Boutier

Leona Maguire

Press Conference



ROBERT TRENT JONES
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THE MODERATOR: I'm delighted to welcome European team members Celine Boutier, Leona Maguire, and Anna Nordqvist into the interview room.

Anna, this is your ninth Solheim Cup, obviously a player and a vice captain again. What does it mean to you to play in this special event and also to be a vice captain?

ANNA NORDQVIST: I think the more Solheim Cups I've been part of, the more, I think, the more grateful I am because I know it's not going to last forever. I'm not going to play forever.

But it's been really cool being part of kind of both sides the last two years and understanding how much work that goes into behind the scenes.

Yeah, our team just keeps getting better and better. So it's just very honored and proud to be here this week.

Q. Celine, this is your fourth Solheim Cup, second in America. Do you enjoy playing over here, and what are you most looking forward to?

CELINE BOUTIER: I like playing either continent really. As long as I'm playing, it's fun. The last time I was playing in the U.S. was COVID, so there wasn't many European fans. It was a very unique atmosphere, very obviously biased towards the U.S.

But very looking forward to playing again on U.S. soil. Yeah, hopefully get a win here would be amazing.

THE MODERATOR: Leona, this is your third Solheim Cup, second in America, and an amazing start over in Toledo. Does that give you confidence heading into this week?

LEONA MAGUIRE: Yeah, obviously every Solheim is a new Solheim, very different teams on both sides and very different conditions. This is my favorite week of the year every two years.

Like Anna said, once you're part of one, you just want to be a part of all the rest of them. So excited for whatever this week brings.

Q. Anna for you or for any of you, the U.S. is the favorite on paper this week. They have higher world ranking and they're better in various statistical categories. But one thing they have less of is experience, both experience playing on Tour and playing in and winning the Solheim Cup. So how much do you expect experience to help the European team?

ANNA NORDQVIST: Yeah, I definitely think the U.S. Team is favored by quite a bit this year. We saw how strong they were in Spain last year, so I think we all expect them to come out really strong. I feel pretty confident we have a really good team.

I do think experience helps a lot, but we have basically 10 out of the 12 players played last year, and everyone has been playing really well. Yeah, there's some experience to it, but also we have two rookies this year, and they certainly don't feel like rookies because they've been doing so well.

Q. Has Europe figured something out these last three Solheim Cups, something like Europe and the Ryder Cup, where the European team is somehow greater than the sum of its parts?

ANNA NORDQVIST: I think us coming into this week, I think the team spirit is always one of our strengths, and it just feels very natural to us. It's only Wednesday, and we've had a lot of fun so far. So it's just nice to see everything coming together and a lot of the hard work.

I mean, winning the Solheim Cup, there's no better feeling. So doing it on American soil when you have the crowds against you, but we're all here as a team, and I think we're



all very excited for the challenge that's ahead of us this week.

Q. Anna, what did you learn last year about having a dual role that you'll maybe tackle things a little differently this year, if anything?

ANNA NORDQVIST: Yes, last year was pretty tough for me because I guess I wasn't in the best of places in my life at the time. But I feel like this year, given that we're basically the same captains team, we've added Mel Reid; part of the reason is because I'm playing vice.

But I feel like I'm a part of a lot of things going into this week, and this week I'm more as a player this year, so I think that's the biggest difference.

Suzann's just been really prepared this year, so I think just making a lot of good decisions and just kind of doing her thing.

Q. Does that mean from a practical standpoint you're in fewer meetings this time around during the actual week?

ANNA NORDQVIST: Yeah, I think that given that the team is basically the same as last year and kind of she's been doing all this work for the last couple years, I would say we have less meetings in general and she just came very prepared.

So a lot of things come pretty natural. I think Suzann, it's just nice to see her competitive spirit and her making some good decisions on her own.

Q. I guess same thing for Leona and Celine. How would you describe Suzann's style as captain, and has she changed much this time around?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I think Suzann is Suzann. She's been pretty similar. She obviously brings a lot of energy to the team, a lot of passion. She's very, very competitive, and nobody wants to win more than her this week.

I think she learned a lot from Spain. While we did bring back the trophy, there was a lot of things that didn't quite go right in Spain. I think, to be fair to her, she was very open to feedback, and she's taken a lot of that on board.

Yeah, she's changed a few things. Obviously Mel has come in, like Anna said, and we have a lot of helpers behind the scenes this week as well, which is nice to have them people involved again. A lot of the people have been involved in the Solheim Cups in the past, so nice to have sort of a few new faces and some fresh energy as well

behind the scenes as well.

While it's us 12 hitting the shots, there's a lot of people that go into making this event happen, and we're lucky to have them sort of in our team. Yeah, I think we're all looking forward to another go at it.

Q. Leona, you've played five sessions in each of the last two Solheims. The team has really leaned on you. What's the pressure like to be expected to go out for five sessions and have the team rely on you so much?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I've never been -- I'm not a big personality. I've never been the loudest in the room. I'm not going to be giving massive team talks. For the last two, my job is to get as many points as possible. That's how I can contribute best to the team, and that's what I try to do.

Again, every Solheim Cup is different, and whatever Suzann wants me to do this week, that's what I'll do.

Q. What are some of the things you've seen Suzann improve upon as a captain from Spain to this year?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I think she's a little bit calmer this time around. I think she's relying on her assistant captain. She's trusting her own instincts a lot as well.

Ultimately, every captain is different. Everybody is going to have an opinion what you did right and what you did wrong. Ultimately, I think she has to stick to her guns and go with what she believes is right.

I think she's doing it this time around. I think she did that from Friday afternoon onward as well. She obviously has an incredible Solheim record as a player. Yeah, she wants to add to it as a captain, and we'll do our very best to help her with that.

Q. Much was made last year about the Americans really leaning into analytics; Europe maybe not having as much. Has there been any more analytics brought onto the European team this year?

ANNA NORDQVIST: I think we've gone very similar to what we did last year. We have a lot of knowledge within the team and a couple of helpers that have really been helping us out.

I think you can look at stats and dive really deep into that. I think you see that more going into Solheim Cups and Ryder Cups like in recent years, but I think at the end of the day it comes down to when you're out there, whoever you get paired up with. Some days you can have chemistry, and you've just got to get the job done.

There's obviously the strategy or the stats aspect of it, but whoever you get paired with, you've just got to figure it out together and do the best you can to get your point on the board.

Q. You've been around a lot of European Solheim captains over the years. How would you compare Suzann's approach versus some of the others you've been around?

ANNA NORDQVIST: Most of the girls on this team hasn't actually played with Suzann like on Tour. I don't think they quite understood how intimidating she was and what a great competitor. I think she's the best competitor I've ever had the privilege to play with.

I got to play with her as my best ball partner in 2009, my first one, and that was kind of a dream come true because that was my first one and I ended up playing on the same team as basically all of my childhood stars like Sophie, Helen, Laura, Suzann. So it was really cool to kind of be part of that.

I've known Suzann for many years, and she's one of my best friends. Just being able to see that passion that she always used to have on the course inside the ropes, and now she kind of brings it in. I think she's been a little bit more comfortable as last year went on, and then going into this year, just being her authentic self.

I think we all kind of miss her on Tour, and it's just been really great to be part of that, just as a vice captain and as a player. I think most players are getting to really know Suzann and kind of draw energy and all her experience that she has from the Solheim Cups over the years.

Q. Anna, a lot has changed in professional golf since you turned pro, especially in regard to purses, TV coverage, and popularity. Not just on the LPGA Tour, but in women's golf across the globe. What do you attribute all that growth to, and has that surprised you?

ANNA NORDQVIST: I think it's nice that women's golf is finally getting the recognition that we deserve. I think there's -- obviously we've still got a long ways to go with TV coverage and TV times and certain things, but I think we've come a long way.

I do think people are probably maybe understanding how good all these girls are out here. I mean, you get to see 24 of some of the best players in the world this week.

It's just cool that everyone is getting the recognition and we're getting shown on better TV times and the better

channels. Yeah, it's just a lot of work. You can see it on the LPGA Tour where the majors been pushing each other; sponsors are coming in and raising the purses, and they all kind of feed off each other. So it really has come a long way.

I've been part of this Tour, and in my first year, it was 22 events on Tour. Now I think we have a good 30-plus. So it's been fun to be part of, and I'm looking forward to seeing the continued improvements in the future.

Q. Could you have envisioned all that growth when you first started?

ANNA NORDQVIST: I was just a young girl with a big dream of doing this for a living or giving myself a chance to have professional golf as my job. To be able to do that, travel the world is an amazing opportunity, and I'm just excited that there's going to be a lot more girls in the future having the same opportunity and being able to do this and live their dreams in a similar way that I've done.

Q. With the team rooms being housed side by side, what's that dynamic like being right next to the U.S.? Has there been any kind of awkwardness between the two sides?

ANNA NORDQVIST: Yeah, us coming on the U.S. soil, the U.S. get to pick their team room before we do. I don't know if they're happy with their choice, but we're obviously very happy to be right there on the range.

The European team has done a fantastic job, the way they put our team room and everything together, and it's just been such a good atmosphere with all the helpers and caddies and players and everyone involved.

I think at the end of the day, this is a friendly competition between the U.S. and Europe. Yeah, we're going to be wanting to -- really want to win, but I think that's what so great about the Solheim Cup is that win or lose, at the end of the day, I think women's golf wins coming Sunday afternoon.

Q. Anna, this might be -- anyone else can chime in on this too. This might be Lexi Thompson's final Solheim Cup. I'm just wondering, you guys have had especially a great clash in Iowa. How would you describe her legacy in this event particularly?

LEONA MAGUIRE: I played Junior Solheim with Lexi back in 2009, and Curtis Cup with her in 2010. She turned pro the week after that. It is amazing to see her journey and to see her growth.

One of the questions earlier, Lexi has been a big face of the LPGA for a long time. I think we all as players owe her a lot. She carried a lot of the weight for a long time of American hope for the Tour and she shouldered a lot of the media pressure and expectation. She handled it with a lot of grace, a lot more than a lot of people would have.

She was very generous with her time, both in terms of sponsors, Pro-Ams, media, fans, and there's a lot of people that could learn a lot from Lexi. All of us included. I think she could be incredibly proud of what she's achieved over her career.

ANNA NORDQVIST: I've obviously had the honor to play with Lexi in quite a few good battles, and the one in Des Moines, the first match, and then also the first match in Toledo just a few years ago. I think those are some of my best matches, and I think we ended up tying both, which seemed like a fair result in both.

Yeah, Lexi is an amazing athlete, and she's been around for a long time. I think she won her first event maybe when she was 16. So she's probably been on the Tour just as long as I have. She's done a lot for the women's game, and I think she's going to be a little bit of a crowd favorite this week, as she should.

It's going to be cool to see what she can bring. Obviously not knowing how many more Solheim Cups I'm going to play myself. I think you embrace it even more when you know there might not be many more that you're going to be a part of.

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