

Epson Tour

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Daniela Iacobelli

Press Conference

EPSON TOUR

Q. So just tell us a little bit about yourself, your background, how you got here, where you came from.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Oh, boy.

Q. Sorry, that's a loaded question.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: It's a loaded question. For Epson Tour?

Q. Like in life. Where did you come from?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Started in Detroit. Born and raised. Moved to Melbourne in '99. So I was 11, 12.

Went to FIT for school. Florida Institute of Technology. Graduated 2009.

Came out January of 2010.

So Epson Tour used to have a Q-School and it was here.

Q. Oh, wow.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: So it was one the four courses that we played at for Epson Tour Q-School before they redid it. So there was about seven holes that were different.

Yeah, and now I'm just -- that's it. I guess the rest is history, right? This is my 13th season. I've had three years on LPGA. I've graduated from Epson twice. So here we are.

Q. So why golf?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Well, my parents were a lot older when they had me. My mom was 38; my dad was 48. My dad was a plumber and owned his own company, and he would come home like early, like a couple days and get dressed and leave. I was like three years old and I would be like, dad where you going? He's like, I'm going play golf. I was like, what's golf?

And I guess -- he actually told me the story this winter, but he came back like the second time and he was like -- I was

like, where are you going? He was like, I'm going to go golf. I was like, I'm coming too. Like me too. So they bought me a plastic set of clubs, and that was the only thing we could do for a family for long periods of time just because of the age difference.

Somewhere between the ages of like three and ten my dad was like, wow, she's a little better than most seven year olds. Like this is kind of weird.

Q. Yeah.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: I just used to get the biggest kick out of it from what I can remember, and it just kind of seemed like the natural path to follow.

I'm just an addict when it comes to golf. I don't want give it up. I don't want to do anything else. Yeah.

Q. In 13 seasons, what have been some of your favorite memories out here?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: I mean, wins don't suck. Wins were pretty memorable. It seems like the older I get the more I remember just moments with people that I've met.

So like housing that I've had or pro-am groups that I've had or tournament sponsors, Mike Vidal is here for like the 55th tournament that he's playing in.

So it's more of like the memories that I've created, and I kind of have -- I mean, you could name a state and I could probably give you a 20-minute story that most people don't want to hear, but I've been part of seeing host families' kids go from junior golf to getting their driver's license to playing in college.

I got one that's in med school now. So I don't know. I really feel like I have seen it all.

Q. So are you like Aunt D to those kids?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Pretty much. Yeah, I mean, she calls me her sister. When she introduced me she's like, she's my sister. They're like, you guys look nothing alike. That's weird.

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But, yeah, I mean, I don't know. I just love it too much and I hate the off-season. I'm just weird. I'm the one person out here who is like that.

Q. So 34.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Yeah.

Q. You see all these kids come out, they're like 16 years old. What's the motivation for you to kind of keep coming out here? You say you love it, you're an addict, but what drives you is I guess what I should ask?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Because I've never seen my best yet. I've seen glimpses of it, and those are the weeks that I've won, but I've never seen -- I haven't had my best season yet.

Q. Uh-huh.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: And I enjoy -- as much as I hate the grind sometimes where you're just constantly searching and trying to find something that works, I love that. Like I'm going to go to the driving range right now and try to find something, because in my eyes, it's not there yet.

It's interesting to me when I do start seeing those moments. And like towards the end of last year; I go to Daytona and I shot like 61. I was like, cool. Can we do this all year? Can we just not do it for one round?

So I guess I just want to keep proving to myself that I am good enough and I do have better in me, and then just try to find the better.

Q. I think you've got -- from an outsider's perspective, let's be real, people fell in love with you after that Podcast last year. In love. Like swan dive, everybody is obsessed with D Iacobelli. We wanted to just hang out with you. Where do you see yourself in this game? You're hanging out with Sarah White and Bailey Tardy. You're obviously influencing the younger generation. Like where is your place in both of Epson Tour and you think in golf right now?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: I think that I love women's golf. I love when a women can tee it up with three guys and smoke 'em. I think that's so cool, because guys are macho and guys automatically think that they're better.

And when girls go out -- I mean, Sarah and Bailey, they blow it by me now, right? They got ten years on me. But I'm like, I can still keep up every now and then. Give me

some firm fairways, I got a chance.

But I really just want to be that person that makes -- not makes golf cool, but makes golf fun. I feel like there is just a lot of people in golf that are unapproachable, and I don't want that for me ever.

I want someone -- now, mid-round, like back off, you know what I mean? But I want someone be to be able to come up and say -- Hey, you want to go -- like every time we go to a new course, I try to find a member on Monday, like, let's go play golf.

I met some great people in Albany last year doing that. I just love meeting people and hearing people's stories and how they got to where they are. But I just want people to enjoy golf and make it -- like it's perceived as stuffy, right? I don't want golf to be stuffy.

Golf is really, really fun, even if you suck. I just want people to be more aware of that and have the option to just play it -- go play with your shirt untucked, hat backwards; have fun.

But at the same time, when I look at like the women out here, the ones who are starting, like I look at the girls all the time and I'm like, don't beat yourself up.

Q. Uh-huh.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: There is plenty of events. Maybe not this year, but next year, the year after that.

It's stuff that I've learned growing up, growing from the game, that I just, I don't know, I just want to make golf fun again.

Q. Yeah. And personally, from an external and still-kind-of-learning-about-you perspective, you got to like John Daly vibes.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Yes. I have big John Daly vibes.

Q. Can you elaborate, explain that? I love it. It's great.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: So people who meet my family, they're like, I get it. Because, okay, we're -- my dad's side is Italian. From Italy. We are very loud.

Cussing, like you didn't get in trouble cussing as a kid. You got the kind of like, relax. You can't say that word in front of these people, you know what I mean?

But my dad and my brother and my brother-in-law all smoked inside the house. I smoke. Sorry mom, sorry dad.

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It was inevitable, right? And no one in my family was ever health conscious. We ate pasta six days a week for 15 years. Like that's our family.

But if you go to another Italian household they're equally as loud, there is so much food. You'll leave not fitting in your pants, and that's just how we go.

Then I grew up around older people, right? So they were always telling stories about their heydays and I grew up wanting -- like just wanting all of that.

And now sometimes when I take a step back it's like jeez, D, you're really living it. Because I do have all these stories at 34; whereas my dad was 60 when he had these stories, you know what I mean?

When I meet up with him we start talking, and I mean, the things we tell each other and how we talk to each other, I mean, the normal like country club conservative person would just be like, oh, my gosh, that's how you talk to your dad and he's how you talks to you?

But in our family it just makes sense. That just how we are. We're just big and loud, and, yeah -- I mean, yeah, just out there. Right in front of you. We don't hide anything.

Q. Do people, especially pro-amers, do you feel like people balk at that, or are they like, Oh my god. You're just like me. You're chill; you're cool.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: That's what it is. So even like the Fore the People Podcast, I think I got to like three sucky people on Twitter that keep giving me grief, but then everyone is like, she's the type we want out there. That's what we need to be, like Fore the People, this and that.

It's like people want to resonate with people -- I don't get it. They're very new here. They want to resonate with people that are just like them but can do something better than them, you know what I mean?

Like I can go sit at a bar and hang out with anybody at this club and throw down, but then they take me out to the course six beers deep and they're like, Holy shit; you can still hit a golf ball. That's kind of weird. You're just like me.

I don't know. Maybe I have the wrong perspective on it.

Q. I don't think so.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: But I love seeing that face. Like if I shotgun a beer and go hit a ball, and they're like, wow. All right, so you're just like us. Do you want to come on guys'

weekend?

I've been invited to so many guys' weekends. I haven't gone yet.

Q. We'll work on that.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: The whole season thing gets in the way.

Q. What's it like for you to watch these kids come out that have trainers, that have coaches, and you're just like, I'm just going to show up, light a cigarette up, and go play some golf?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: It's so hard for me, because I didn't have coaches, right?

Q. Yeah.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: I didn't have formal instruction. I have people in my life that I can talk about golf to in an instructional way, but no one who's putting a club at a certain angle in my golf swing, you know what I mean?

So when I come see that I almost feel bad for the girls because I don't think that they're recognizing the gift that they have in both the skill and the job.

I'm like, you really -- I mean, you can grind. I get that. But you play golf for a living. That is your job. Like we got here the first day and I couldn't find a smile.

I was like, are we already there -- this is literally day one and no one is smiling. Like you have to -- because I was. I mean, I had plenty of days in my life where I would grind it out on the range and I'd get so frustrated, and then I would go play like trash.

Then there are weeks where I don't even go to the golf course except for maybe nine holes, a pro-am, and I don't see the range until I got to warm up Friday morning and I shoot 65. I'm like...

It's so much more enjoyable when you can just relax. Like the girls that just beat -- I'm like -- but they're young. That's what golf is now.

Q. Yeah.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Like it's different. That's why I like John Daly, JoAnne Carner, right?

Q. I frickin' love JoAnne Carner.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: I would love to play golf with JoAnne Carner. If someone can make that happen...

Q. I'll mention that to somebody.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: I would love to have whatever beer she's drinking, and I want to even smoke one of her cigarettes. I just want to even play like three holes, I don't care.

But I love the old school golf because that's what I grew up watching, right? Lee Trevino, all these guys that they didn't have -- you know they would waggle the wedge until they felt comfortable enough to pull the trigger. It wasn't, I got to get it to 3:00. I got to get it to -- it wasn't any of that, so that's just how I grew up playing.

My dad made my golf clubs. He bent them. He cut his clubs down. I still have them.

Q. That's amazing.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Yeah. He was a plumber so he cut everything down, put a little grip on it. It was, I don't know, a little janky version of golf.

Q. Just because I'm on the obsessed with JoAnne Carner.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: I love that.

Q. Did you watch her play when you were growing up?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: She snubbed me once. And I don't remember this because I was too little, but apparently there was a U.S. Open in Indianwood in Detroit. We lived in Detroit, and my dad took me. So this was early '90s, like '91, '92, '93. So I was a little peanut, right? I'm like five. I was waiting off 18 and collecting autographs, and JoAnne Carner, for whatever -- I don't know if she made a bogey or if she missed -- I don't know what she did, but I was waiting for autographs and she just walked right by me.

I looked at my parents and my eyes started watering, because that was like the first woman that walked by that didn't sign anything. I think there was a rookie playing with her from what my dad said, and she gave me her hat and her glove and then I was happy again.

So, I mean, I didn't know the difference. You could have put whoever you wanted in front of me, I wouldn't know who it was. But I've always wanted to meet her and be like, you snubbed me, so the least you can do is smoke a cigarette with me. Bare minimum.

Q. Is she someone who's game you've read up on? She's known as Big Mama. I feel like you got like Big D vibes. Like the older sister of everybody.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Big D vibes, yeah.

Q. Is she somebody you aspire to be like?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: I think maybe on the -- that's a tough question. I don't know, because I grew up really watching like Nancy Lopez and Laura Davies. JoAnne Carner was a little older, so I really remember Laura Davies and Nancy Lopez. I remember the first time I met Laura Davies. She held open a door for me and I like came back to my caddie and I was shaking. He's like you're going to need to get over that. You're going to see her every week. Like focus. Like go make a putt.

I was like, she held open the door for me, you know what I mean? Like I just -- so I'm just that kid. Like I'm just -- I can't say kid anymore because I'm a grown adult. Like Tin Cup. Like I'm just Tin Cup. I'm used to just -- what did he have? He had the Salome Bey, I'm going to Waffle House. Like that's just me.

But that's what you get. No one gets any different version, I can promise you that.

Q. I love that. Switching gears a little bit, being out on Epson this year -- let's get the Epson stuff out of the way.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Yeah.

Q. For you, you've seen it all, man.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Oh, yeah.

Q. You've seen LPGA different purse sizes that were 10, 15 years ago that were nothing; now we're at where we're at there, but the Epson wasn't the Epson, and now you have -- you're playing for \$200,000 every week. What's that like?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: I went up and I fist bumped Mike Nichols last night because I probably had maybe three or four years before he came out. I fist bumped him and I said, good work.

And I was like, it's so awesome to kind of think of where we were 13 seasons ago where we had 15 events a year, purses were- our biggest purse was 150. That was South Bend. We had \$100,000 purses, people were making \$15,000 checks, and the travel was still the same, the entry fees were still the same.

And to see where we are now and to see the opportunities we have. We have physio, we have -- I mean, everything that Epson is doing, there is no words to thank them for that, you know what I mean?

That's just so huge for women's golf.

Q. Uh-huh.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Because mini tour life is brutal. Women's mini tour life is more brutal. For them to just take that step and say, hey, we got your back, that's huge. So huge.

And it's so neat to see -- I mean, 13 years now feels like yesterday, which I hate to say. But it's cool to see the progression. At no point in the 13 years have we regressed, and now I feel like we jumped a flight of stairs between last year and this year.

We literally -- we didn't; not one step. We went above and beyond. That's thanks to Epson and Mike for sure.

Q. What are you looking forward to this year? I know you're kind of just enjoying it, but what are some of your goals?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: I have them written down in my notes.

Q. Yeah.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: And if I get to them, I will gladly share them. I think this year I just want to take things slower and take things in more.

I've created like a small United States Bucket List of things that I want to see on our way around. And that's the stuff I've really enjoy, the traveling. I love going to small towns. I love going to the town dive bar, meeting the people, talking to them.

Like that stuff is so fun for me. You give me a five star restaurant I'm like, I'm out. One set of silverware is fine, thanks. No silverware is better.

But I really just want to keep building relationships. The guys I met today in my pro-am were great. He just invited me to Bay Hill; the other one is like, take my number. Let's go play golf. So I love that.

So the season goes by slow, but come October you're like, it went by in the blink of an eye. I want to make sure that I enjoy it and I take my time with it. I don't know. Just

literally smell the roses.

Q. I love that. Couple just random questions.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Yeah.

Q. What's the tattoo about?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: This one?

Q. Yeah.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: So this means faith, hope, and love. I got this after I won in Sweetgrass.

This one I got after I won in Tullymore.

So the next win, sorry mom, there is going to go one right here. So whenever that one wants to show up.

Q. Well, let's talk this week. If you win the Floridas Natural Charity Classic, what would you get? Would you get some sort of orange?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: No. So I actually want to get -- this is so cheesy, but whatever. I actually want to get an arrow like pulled back, because I would say since COVID, just before COVID, it's been like a trying two years personally.

Q. Uh-huh.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: And it's so cheesy and cliché, but I want to remind myself that in order for an arrow to go forward it has to get pulled back.

I want to do something here hidden because I'm not really big on big tattoos. Something to just remind me that when you're kind of struggling and feel like you're not going forward, it's because you're getting ready to leap forward.

So if the win happens here, which I hope it does. Because we would close this place down, like I'm sure. Yeah, that one would be pretty special. There is going to be a lot of people around from home if that happens. There will be a lot of tears.

Q. Being local, too, does that -- in these kind of weeks when you're around home, does it kind of make it more fun for you to play when people can come out and watch you play?

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Yeah. Still gets you in the nerves though. I mean, 13 years later you're still like, I don't want to mess up. Don't mess up. You just do this every single day for your whole -- don't mess up.

So it's still -- pressure is just what you put on yourself, but it's really cool to have my friends back home come out and watch and see the game face, because they always see Funny D. Like, oh, run in the water? Cool. I'll see you on the next hole.

And now they see the game face. They noticed it the last few weeks. They're like, you're really different on the golf course. I don't love this. I'm like, relax. It's fine.

So it's neat, yeah. There is going to be a few people out here this weekend.

Q. Last question: Sarah White, Bailey Tardy, and you went out on a practice round yesterday, and I'll be honest, it makes sense, but it is not -- I didn't know that the three of you were like that tight.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Yeah, we're the three musketeers.

Q. What's the -- they're what, I mean --

DANIELA IACOBELLI: They're ten years younger.

Q. I was going to say, they're ten years younger than you.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: We're all very similar. And then especially with golf, we all hit the ball a long way so it makes a lot of sense for us to practice together.

But we're all really willing to help each other. Like if I went up to either of them and was like, hey, I need you to stop what you're going doing to help me, they're like, yeah, I'm right here.

Our friendship off the course, we're just crazy hooligans together, like but we know when is the right time to start and stop. We know when it's time to play and work. The line really doesn't get blurred and we all get along really well.

It's nice. That's something I learned and I try to tell them, like this job gets really lonely. Really, really lonely. So when you have people that you can go to and not feel embarrassed to ask questions, it's almost like a weight gets lifted off your shoulder and it helps.

Sarah and I have been hanging out for two weeks and trying to learn new shots together and trying to help out. Now we got Bailey back so we feel complete. It's just the three of us. It's like, hey, do you want to have a putting competition? Yep. Do you want to chip together? Yep. Do you want to do this? Yep.

It really makes a difference. It probably took me ten years to realize that.

Q. Yeah.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: So if I can teach them that, that's super cool, too. It's weird that I'm a teacher. That's so weird. I still think I'm 19, so...

Q. You're like the coolest sub ever.

DANIELA IACOBELLI: Yeah, right?

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