

World Golf Hall Of Fame Induction Ceremony

Tuesday, September 26 2017

Lorena Ochoa

Induction Speech

JULI INKSTER: It's a pleasure to be here tonight, and it's a pleasure to be presenting Lorena Ochoa to the World Golf Hall of Fame. Lorena exemplifies everything that the World Golf Hall of Fame is about. She is an amazing golfer, but her heart and her love of her family are what truly makes Lorena Ochoa who she is. So without further ado, it is a great honor that I announce mi buena amiga, Lorena Ochoa Reyes, to the World Golf Hall of Fame.

LORENA OCHOA: Juli, thank you for your nice introduction and for your nice words. I promise you, I'm not going to ask you any hard things to do. I invited her to play in Mexico, my tournament, the Lorena Ochoa Invitational for an exhibition, and I ask her to do this, and I think she doesn't like me anymore. Next time she's going to Mexico for vacation, promise.

Writing this speech has been the hardest thing that I've had to do lately, probably harder than having a baby, and this is true. I do want to start by saying congratulations to Ian, to Davis, to Henry's family, and my good friend Meg. It's an honor to be here and share this special time with all of you. I want to say hi to the Mexicans that are going through a hard time because of the recent natural disasters, and I send all of them my love and support.

To Gary, Nancy, Jack and Annika, thank you for the selection and having a Mexican in this beautiful place. I truly appreciate that.

I want to tell you a little bit about my history starting as a little girl in Mexico and how this Mexican girl is here today. At the age of five, Tru Sandoval was my first swing teacher. By six, I played tournaments in my state, and by seven I played nationals. When I was eight, my dad told me if I qualified to represent Mexico in the world championship, he would take me to California. To tell you the truth, I just wanted to go to Disneyland. (Laughter.)

We really didn't know much about my level of play. Mexican girls didn't play golf. That was a strange thing to see. So after the opening ceremony, I saw the previous year's results winner, and I said to myself, I can beat these girls, and that's how I became the No. 1 player in the world at the age of 8. And I did go to



Disneyland; it was fun.

I'm glad you are laughing because after your beautiful speeches, I'm 35, I'm Mexican, my English is so-so. Juli never understood me on the course. She looked at me as I said, English or Spanish? I think today she still doesn't understand anything. And I'm losing my voice.

Okay, Sami, a good friend of the family, gave me my first set of clubs, then my Uncle Santi. Whoever thought that you could see them now on this day at St. Augustine. We didn't have much money growing up and my family had to sacrifice a lot in order for me to play. For this I want to say thank you to Pai, Ale and Daniela for all the things you didn't do because of my golf and never complained. I can only remember love and support, and this is why we did it together, so thank you.

My childhood golf friends were and still are Chanti, Ale and Chofa. They helped me overcome so many obstacles. When I was 13, I lost my first national, and I felt so bad. I promised myself I would do everything possible to be the best, and they helped me to do this. We were a team. We practiced together all day. We would keep playing golf way past sunset. We played in the rain, we daydreamed of being the best, and together we accomplished our dreams of getting a scholarship into the United States. Chanti became the best teacher.

I had the support of the Ostos family. They treated me as one of their own. Their daughter Marta and my friend Ellie, who are here tonight, treated me as a sister. I felt like they adopted me. They would take me to the golf course. When I couldn't pay, they'd take me with them and travel to play tournaments and represent Mexico. It was truly a team effort. Thank you.

I was very lucky growing up because I had the best Mexican golfer as a member in my club, Rafael Alarcon. I would watch him practice, and it impacted me what he could do with the ball, his touch around the green, his little approach shots, he had it all. And one day, I sat him down and I told him, Rafa, I want to be the best player in the world, will you help me? And his first reaction and what he said was, okay, but you have to tell your family and your friends, everybody must know your dreams, and together with my parents we

formulated a plan. The first goal was to get a scholarship in the States and go from there. Rafa, you always looked for my best. For me as a woman and a daughter and now as a wife, thank you for your dedication and love, and also Adriana and your two daughters that are here tonight but your whole family for all the support.

We can say now that a Mexican made it to the Hall of Fame, but not only one, two Mexicans made it into Hall of Fame. Thank you, Rafa. Gracias.

I want to thank all my relatives, the Ochoas, the Reyes, my grandfather Lolo. He would be so proud to have me here tonight, my Uncle Foy, mi tembla Laura, Memo, my Banco, El Mudo, people who couldn't come and especially the ones that had always a nice word of love and support, my friends at the Guadalajara Country Club, thanks from the bottom of my heart for all your help and love.

I was fortunate to get a scholarship in Tucson. I was ready to play for the Wildcats, but the problem was my English. It took me four times to pass the SAT. I will never forget when I received the nice envelope and I added the numbers and I was able to play college golf, and being a golfer at U of A really changed my life. It was an amazing experience, the facility, the school energy, my teammates, my coach, and more important, my friendship, like

Cristina Baena, which whom I shared everything. Vicky Miles, I love all of her never-ending talks at night. We dreamed about the future. You guys were always there for me and when I needed a kick in the butt, you gave it.

I also met in Tucson my second family, los Echevarria, and because of the support of these people I was able to become the best woman NCAA player and achieve my dream as a Wildcat. Thank you.

I played as an amateur in a few professional tournaments. They were in Tucson, in Phoenix, and in Palm Springs, and I faced the best in the world, and this is when I realized that I belonged there.

My game was good enough, and I could do it. In my second Nabisco, the Kraft Nabisco in Palm Springs, after I made the cut, I called to find out my pairing for the weekend, and they told me that I was playing with Annika Sorenstam. I couldn't believe it. I told my friend Chanti, she was there with me, I think they made a mistake, please call again and make sure I'm playing with her.

I admire her a lot. I decided to write Annika a letter that night. I didn't sleep anything, and she ended up

winning the weekend, and I got the top amateur.

My life changed after that week. This tournament not only gave me confidence, but I met the Mahoneys, my really good friends, and the Micelas that are here today, so thank you for the support.

I actually almost killed Annika on No. 9. I'll never forget that, and my family, either. I hit a really bad 3-wood, it went up and high and almost hit her.

My cousin Andreas, el Guero, caddied for me at the U.S. Girls, the U.S. Amateur and as a professional too, and my last event of the Futures Tour. Our second place in Spain in the World Match Play was for me my biggest check in my career, just before I started playing the LPGA, and the funny thing was that we were so tired from traveling and playing that we couldn't add distances. It was hard because they have meters in Europe at the golf courses, and after 36 holes of the final, plus the traveling, the pressure, even the 17th hole was pretty much uphill, I kept saying, okay, what is the distance, I don't know, I don't know, wait, they are meters, and you add 10 percent and you are tired, this is the 37th hole, I don't know, I don't know, let me think, so we couldn't even make the right number to hit that shot, and we ended up in second place. It was a great event.

And a few things happened to me when I made the decision to become a professional. We didn't travel much, and for me, I needed some money to play, and we went to a bank and we asked, and we said we needed a credit card or a loan to give us an opportunity to rent a car or to make a hotel reservation, and of course they said no. No, it was impossible, we didn't have any income, we didn't work. It was funny.

I've been very lucky, blessed, to have a really good friend, my first manager, Rocky Hambric and his wife Mary, they are here today, and they gave me a loan of \$50,000 for me to be able to start this adventure.

My brother Alejandro with his job told me he was helping me until I got going. Thanks, Ale, for your courage to stop your life at that moment and join this adventure, which we are still on. He's been my manager for all my career, and the idea was to buy a car and to hit the road.

Twelve tournaments in 13 weeks, it was something that we needed to do so I could qualify to the LPGA, and we did it. My dad also came with us, and we had this car set up great with all the clothes hanging in the back, and we carried everything, a cooler in the front with our sandwiches and everything. And one night my father is like, I have a lot of pain in my arm, in my left arm, in my chest, in my shoulder, and I said, okay, just

rest today, I'll go to the golf course. And I was practicing with Candy Hannemann, and she told me, oh, no, your dad is having a heart attack, go to the hospital right away.

We got really scared. My brother just left my bag and he went and took my dad to the hospital, and they said that he was having some pain in his neck and his arm because he was doing all the ironing for the family. So no problem, he was okay.

I was very lucky to have many offers from different managers when I decided to turn professional. And that was you have to come and live in the States, you have an apartment, an American swing coach and free clothes and whatever you need, and this is important to say because I had an idea, Rafael, my family, and we have an idea, and we said, okay, what I wanted is to live in Guadalajara, stay with my swing coach, with Rafael, and be close to my friends and family so I could be happy, and Rocky Hambric, like I mentioned before, believed in my vision and began managing me in the U.S., Alejandro my brother helped him in Mexico, and that's the way we built the best team for me. We always have my happiness in mind, and Rocky, thank you for believing in me and for that alone, that kept me playing through the summer.

Did I pay you, Rocky? I was worried about paying that money. I did it right away, I promise. And look where we are today, Rocky, so thank you.

After my first year on Tour, I won the Rookie of the Year award. During my speech, I mentioned Annika. I told her that whenever she wanted to let go of her No. 1 spot, I would be honored at that spot to go for a Mexican, and that No. 1 position, I want to say thank you because when that moment came, I felt so much respect from you. You always been there for us as an example, and more important, as a friend, so thank you, Annika.

I remember after my first year on Tour, I returned home crying and complaining. I said, I didn't want to play anymore. I told my sister and friends that the Tour life was too difficult. I felt a lot of pressure, and the funny thing is that after three days without playing, I got up, put on my golf clothes and go to the golf course. Anyway, when you know that this is your life and this is your passion, you grab strength from anything. I have a group of friends in Guadalajara, and we call ourselves la quadra, and they give me the strength to keep going. They are also here tonight. Thank you so much for your friendship and all of your support during the hard times. There were times at the beach, fishing, Tapalpa and so many trips and history made me who I am today, and that is what I most treasure about their friendship, because I cannot imagine my life without

any of you, and you always treated me as only Lorena, not the golfer. Gracias, amigas.

Juli, Meg and Betsy, Karrie, as well, is here, and Nancy, just like any other friends and other players from the Tour, you were always helping me, advise me, let me cry on your shoulder, and we dreamed together for this. I'll always be thankful. It's an honor to be your friend and to be next to you forever, and Betsy especially, she always showed me the right way, to have faith and to be humble. You were there for me and you were an inspiration. Today we are good friends, and I admire you, all your hard work especially helping underprivileged kids. Thank you, Betsy.

Talking a little bit about Juli, when I announced my retirement, she was not going to Morelia, she was not playing there, and she was so nice to change her plans, her schedule and was there in Morelia to celebrate my last week. I still owe Juli a mariachi, but that vacation in Mexico, I promise I will bring the mariachi.

The best thing that could happen to me was to have on Tour my friends Riley Rankin, Candy Hannemann, Marisa Baena. They are here tonight, and they are friends that always make me feel like I was at home. Everything happened to us, our trips, our adventures, laughing and also tears many, many nights. We shared it all. It was a Tour family. With you guys I was always myself, and you treated me as a regular friend, and I thank you always for reminding me who I am, for treating me as a real friend and not caring about the other stuff. I love you all very much, and thank you for being part of this adventure. Together, we made it.

I had the opportunity to learn from the great defeats. I even -- I was so close to winning a U.S. Open, and I managed -- I only needed a par to win, a bogey to win, a 6 to win and a 7 to go to a playoff, but I managed to make an 8 in the last hole of the Women's U.S. Open. It was really hard, and I remember my brother taking the hat, I hate this game, I'm never coming back, it's terrible, and we're all here tonight, so we came a long ways.

But the decisions that I made, and especially how lucky I was having a few great, great caddies and good friends today like Tom, Lanz, Tony, Bambi and Greg at the end of my career, but I was extremely lucky to find Dave Brooker, a duo meant to be. Our first tournament together we won in such a natural way, and since that moment we knew we were going to be the best. He helped me to reach perfection and also helped me to reach the best level of my game. I'd like to tell you that you always keep me happy and motivated, and also we dream together of winning the Women's British Open at St. Andrews, and we did it. So now we can tell

this wonderful story to our children, so thank you, Dave, or David, like my father call you. Gracias, Dave.

I want to thanks Carlos Olivos, Catherine Lacoste, John Solheim and the Rolex family for your endless support. You believe in me, and you thought, you know what, it sounds good, a Mexican playing golf, and my dream of being the No. 1, you always supported me, and thank you for that.

I started dating a handsome man after my U.S. -- he's still handsome today. But I have a good story because 10 years ago, exactly 10 years ago, he went to Orlando to watch me play a tournament, and he told me, I have a surprise for you on Tuesday. So we drove a couple hours, and I was like, Andres, where are you taking me, I'm pretty tired, tomorrow I play the pro-am early. No, no, you're going to love this place, and I was thinking this guy is crazy, he bought a land or maybe a ranch or maybe some horses or maybe we are going to the beach, and I didn't know what to think, and we stop at St. Augustine. I had no idea the place was there, this beautiful museum and this beautiful place for all of us. I didn't know it was there, and we entered, and I saw the golf course, and I said, how can we go to a golf course, and he's like, no, no, no, this is special, and it was my first time that I saw the beautiful museum and the building, and he told me, I wanted to be with you 10 years from now, we're going to be there with our family together and with our kids, and all of it came true. So thank you.

The problem is that people in Mexico still blame him for my retirement (laughter), but it's okay, he can handle that. I think people with the time understand that this is why I have to thank God for giving me the strength and clarity to announce my retirement at the perfect time. Now I feel like I'm the luckiest woman in the world. We have three incredible children, Pedro, Julia and Diego. I wouldn't change it for the world, and my life has changed a lot, and I have new friends. I have a new quadra, too, in Mexico City, and they are here, los chilangos, gracias.

So now I'm getting all confused with my speech. They told me not to be too long -- I had a dress for tonight, and I found out two days ago that I was supposed to wear a blazer. I had to go shopping.

I guess I'm just going to take a little bit of time to -- I did get lost and confused here, so I'm going to speak a little bit in Spanish for my parents. They don't speak English, and I would like to say thank you to them.

So the good thing that I got confused is that I finish, I guess. (Laughter.) I told my parents that I don't think you understand how much they do for you until you become a parent on your own. Now that I have three

kids and you have to take them to soccer practice and be there with them and they cry at night and you have to be happy and take them to the tennis practice or whatever you do with them, you understand or realize how much our parents have done for us, so that's why I wanted to say thank you to them. My father promised me to learn English. He never did. And I told him yesterday, he's like, one day he told me, it's better not to understand English because then they will come to me and I will say, thank you, thank you, and then just watch some golf and be quiet, you know, and I said, well, Dad, it's your decision, and today we made the best team. I also have a new family, Andres' family.

My trophy, like Ian said, is for all the Mexicans, for all the Hispanics and for all the fans also in the world and here in the United States, I always felt so much support and love, and thank you also to the Mexican media. Because of them, I was able to share all these great stories and adventures with my friends and people in Mexico.

I have a foundation that I love, and today I'm very proud to say that we have more than 4,000 kids that already finished school in la Barranca, and it is a team effort. We have a lot of support and a lot of friends. Gracias. Many people helped me through the years, and they still do today. So I want to say that I'm sure -- I played golf and I played good golf because the more I help, it seems like it happen together. You win tournaments, you feel comfortable, you are getting all this attention, and the more you win, the more you can help and give back, and I think it's a responsibility if we can do it. That's my motivation still today. I travel, I play tournaments, I do exhibitions and everything is for these kids so they can continue their education and we can help them and change their life. So I guess that's it for me.

Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you to the World Golf Hall of Fame. Muchas gracias.