

Ford Championship presented by Wild Horse Pass

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Chandler, Arizona, USA

Whirlwind Golf Club

Sarah Schmelzel

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome to the Ford Championship presented by Wild Horse. I've joined by Sarah Schmelzel, our famed local Phoenix resident.

Sarah, I just want to talk to you, how excited are you to be playing here this week and be back in Arizona at home?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, this tournament here has meant so much to me since I was a young girl, just hopes and aspirations of being here one day. So it's a dream come true being able to compete here at home year after year.

Obviously it's a few and far between where I can have a bunch of family and friends come out and people I've known for nearly my whole life. Just really excited to get the week started and share it with everyone.

Q. You lived here growing up; went to South Carolina for school. What made you come back to this area?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, I spent my first 18 years here and kind of took it for granted. You don't realize how amazing it is until you leave. When I was in school I think I always kind of knew I wanted to come back, especially if I was going to try and play professional golf.

There is really no place like home. Once I was a way from it for -- I spent my first year postgrad in South Carolina still, and then just had the itch to come back. There is really no place like home. We'll see if I ever leave.

Q. So being the local here, have you gotten asked for a lot of recommendation from players and things like that?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: No, not too much this week. I think everyone knows I live on the exact opposite side of town, so people aren't asking me for too much happy.

Yeah, any coffee recommendations you need, I'm here. Food tips. Might just have to drive a little bit.



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Q. Here at Whirlwind Golf Club this week, what are your past experiences here? What are your thoughts on this course in general?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, it's cool. Just some junior events here. Played here a decent amount when I was younger. Course is in amazing shape. I think it'll be a really fun test this week.

A little bit of a premium on being in the fairways just because I do think it'll play shorter if you're driving the ball really well, and you'll have a lot of scoring opportunities.

Greens are fast and rolling true. I think they'll be a good test with some of the tricky slopes and everything. Just hoping to make a bunch of putts this week.

Q. Here at Ford Championship. Second annual edition of this event. Can you just speak to Ford's support of this event and what you've seen over the past two years with this event?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, it's amazing. Ford has really bought into this tournament, women's golf, and supporting us, supplying us with the courtesy cars at the beginning the week, and really top tier event in terms of their support.

You can really tell their presence out here and how much they care about giving us really great week. It's awesome to have them on board for a second year in a row, and hopefully a really long continued partnership with them.

Q. I know this event last year was part of a really solid run of golf for that eventually led to you on the Solheim Cup. As you look ahead to 2025 with the schedule picking up, what are some of your goals?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, I mean, obviously I got in contention a lot last year. I would like to check off a win. Get back into contention is first and foremost and then complete it and be able to win.

I feel like I'm at a point in my career where that's kind of the next step. I guess some I guess non-win related goals are



really sticking to the process, trusting my team, really leaning on them for everything. I kind of have a tendency when things get a little hard to get into a little bit of a shell and try to take it all on myself.

So just really relying on my team, staying within the process with them, and being really goal oriented. I think that will lead to the bigger goal of winning.

Q. As the local, as the Phoenix native, what is it about desert golf that makes it more challenging or makes it less challenging for somebody of your caliber?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, I think it makes it more challenging because you just don't find golf courses like this. We don't play anything remote likely this all year. You see it really once a year, so can be a little intimidating.

You see green grass, that is your fairway, and then you just see desert off the side. I think that can be intimidating if you're not quite used to it. I think that can yield to bigger fairways; just can't have it all be desert.

So it's a little visually daunting more so than it actually is super daunting. But if you're not used to the optics it can be a little bit just kind of challenging to get used to.

Q. Any tips for having to hit it out of the desert? That could be a possibility at some point; hopefully not for you, bit for anybody in this field.

SARAH SCHMELZEL: A lot people would say you have a desert club. Everyone in town is traveling around town with 15 clubs in their bag instead of 14.

Yeah, I mean, just I guess don't pick the stupid shot. Just take your medicine, get out of trouble, and get back in play.

Q. Was coming out here part of your rotation at all growing up? Play here much?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: I think for JGAA stuff when I was younger. Just being in the Moon Valley area it's a little bit further away from home, so I would say high school college, not so much coming all the way out here.

I remember just the facility, coming out to play a couple junior events and stuff like that.

Q. How much do you think about winning? Obviously been in the mix a bunch the last couple years. How much does it consume you or not?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: You know, I think getting into contention maybe consumes me a little bit more than

winning. So much has to go right for you in order to win a golf tournament. You have to have a lot of stuff go in your direction.

Putting yourself in that position is really most important. The more you do it, the more you're comfortable with it, the more you're probably going to convert.

I really have begun to crave just getting under that kind of pressure where you're really fighting for a win. I would say this takes up more of I guess my mental.

Q. We have 15 alums from our Girls Golf in the field this week. Obviously you grew up as a member of our Phoenix chapter. Can you reflect on that experience and any memories?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, I think Girls Golf really instills both aspects of the game. It teaches you a lot about competition and also teaches you how to really enjoy the competition, which I think is -- it can be hard to come by.

Some of my fondest memories from Girls Golf was just how much fun it was, how many friends you made through it all while competing on the side of that too. So I mean, my best memories are the little 18-, 9-hole events where I was out there with my friends and we were having a great time and you tallied up the score at the end, but then you had a great time with your friends afterwards, too.

So I just think that was one of the biggest things I learned from going through the Phoenix chapter.

Q. Come full circle now. One of our new five new ambassadors. How cool is it for you to now be an ambassador?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, to be an ambassador, I mean, it's really a full circle moment to be able to be one of the people that these young girls look up to and have a role in the foundation and the program. You know, something I always dreamed, being able to be someone that could give back and being -- be a helping hand for younger girls getting into golf.

I think we owe so much to growing the game and to encouraging young players, so just to be able to be in that role, I'm very thankful for it.

Q. I know since becoming professional you've still been engaged with the program. How cool is it to be a role model and see all these girls out here this week?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, it's a full circle moment. It wasn't that long ago, at least it feels like it, that I was in

their shoes and out at the LPGA event. To be able to still have Cori involved, I was doing JGAA tournaments and she was working the events, and I grew really close to her from a teenager, maybe even 11 years old.

So to be able to see how far she has grown junior golf in Phoenix and around the country with Girls Golf, to see where I've gone, and to be able to kind of do that side by side has I'm sure been really fulfilling for the both of us.

I'm thankful we've been able to do it somewhat together.

Q. Questions about major championships and how it's different to prepare for a major championship.

SARAH SCHMELZEL: Yeah, major championships test every part of your game. Some I guess regular season events it's -- we got some events where it's maybe more of a putting contest or fairways are tight but greens are maybe a little bit bigger; whereas you have everything thrown at you during a major. Whether it's the mental toll it takes on you of just knowing how big the moment is, as well as the golf course just being really tough.

You try to treat it like every other week in terms of the mental side of it, not making too important, but you do realize you're going to have every aspect of your game from top to bottom, long game, short game, everything, tested.

So that's how it can be a little bit different and challenging.

Q. Erin Hills, do you have any familiarity with that course? Anything you're looking forward to playing there?

SARAH SCHMELZEL: No, I've never been there. Yeah, I remember watching it when the guys played it, so I think it'll be really cool to etch our little piece of history there as well being able to play a U.S. Open there. I'm excited to get there and learn the golf course.

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