

NW Arkansas Championship

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Rogers, Arkansas, USA

Pinnacle Country Club

Brooke Matthews

Shauna Taylor

Media Day Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: Thank you guys all for coming out. We're super excited to have Shauna and Brooke here, and the tournament is less than two weeks away, which is crazy to believe. Back for our 19th year. Obviously Brooke, Rogers native, University of Arkansas Razorback grad and now LPGA professional for the last three years, Shauna a huge supporter of the tournament here and Brooke's college coach, so felt like it would be great to have them both here.

I want to share some updates for the tournament and talk a little bit about Shauna and Brooke and then we'll be able to do some individual hits with you guys and coordinate any one-offs for you guys with both of them.

We've talked a little bit about the tournament already with all of you guys, but I'm really excited to be back for our 19th year. What really started as a golf tournament has grown into so much more, and we like to say it's a week-long community celebration and it's so much more than golf. There's something like 40 plus events throughout the week, everything from the 5K race to the Wal-Mart Women's Empowerment Summit to the Bike Food Festival, so there's truly something for everyone to enjoy.

Something that I think is neat this year is that it is the 75th anniversary of the LPGA Tour so it's certainly a milestone year for the Tour, and then looking ahead to next year will be a milestone year for the tournament here in Northwest Arkansas as our 20th anniversary tournament gets here next year. It's really neat for us to be a part of the LPGA Tour for the last two decades and see someone like Brooke who grew up attending this event as a child and now is playing on Tour and just kind of see the impact that the event here has had on so many people in different ways.

It's shaping up to be a really incredible field, one of our strongest fields in recent history. Seven of the top 10 in the world are committed at this point, and 20 of the top 25,

which we're really excited about. Obviously all of our former Razorbacks like Brooke, but Stacy, Gaby, Maria Fassi, as well. But then also just some really impressive kind of fan favorites as well. Nelly Korda is coming back for the first time in several years; Lexi Thompson is playing, who's always a fan favorite; and then several of our past champions including World No. 1 Jeeno, which we're really excited about, too.

Then excited to announce today, too, also our sponsor's exemptions for this year, who are both former Razorbacks. Maria Fassi will be competing as a sponsor exemption this year and then Maria José Marin, which I know Shauna will talk about as well, who is a current Razorback and the defending national champion which is really impressive and we're excited to have her in the field. She played last year and played really well, so excited to see what she does this year.

Just some key initiatives for us throughout the week. Obviously the Bike Food Festival is coming back, the Wal-Mart and P&G Kids Confidence Club, which I know Shauna we can hit on with you and how that ties into your programming, and then sustainability continues to be a big initiative for us throughout the event week as well, so we can certainly chat on some of that further.

Mainly just wanted to chat with you guys and kind of preview the tournament a little bit, and obviously I know, Brooke, this is a really special event for you as your hometown event. Just wanted to kind of open it up to you and talk a little bit about what it means playing in your hometown event, how you grew up playing at Pinnacle and kind of what the week looks like for you as kind of the hometown star of the tournament.

BROOKE MATTHEWS: Yeah, it's really cool. Like she said, I was born and raised in Rogers, grew up playing out here at Pinnacle. My parents have been a member since I was like three years old, so really learned how to play golf out here. Found a love for the game. So this place is really special for me.

To get to play in this event again, I think I played it four times, twice as an amateur and twice as a pro. I didn't get the chance to play last year, so really excited to be back.



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It's a busy week for me, but it's all good things and all great opportunities, and it's a really cool thing to be a part of because I feel like this tournament is so much more than golf with everything that they have and all the extra things just for the community.

I know the community loves it. It's a really cool, unique kind of thing that we have going here because I feel like in Northwest Arkansas especially, we don't have a big professional sports presence. A lot of the other places we go, some big cities, while they're awesome tournaments and everything, it's just a little bit more spread out with the fans and everything, so I feel like the fans really come here for the whole field and obviously for some of us Arkansas Razorbacks, too.

I'm really looking forward to the week. It's going to be fun to sleep in my own bed, maybe drive the golf cart to the course. Definitely not something I get to do every week. It's going to be great. I'm looking forward to it.

RACHEL REECE: It's been a pretty good season for you so far. I know you've had several top-25 finishes. You had a T11 finish earlier this summer. Talk a little bit about your game and how it's trending and how you've seen the season come together.

BROOKE MATTHEWS: Yeah, absolutely. Game feels pretty good. It's such a long season. There's always going to be ups and downs. Had a couple of good finishes, came back from Boston just a couple days ago and had my second best finish of the year.

Obviously I was happy with that. Hopefully going to continue that and keep trending in the right direction.

But yeah, it's just a long season. I feel like the more years you play on Tour, the more you just kind of learn to take the good and the bad with a grain of salt. It's ever moving and evolving, and not to be too hard on yourself when you miss a cut. It's just kind of part of the game, it's part of the job.

I feel like I've done a really good job this year of just focusing on getting better. My first year on Tour I was really worried and stressed about rankings, about finishes, about this and that. This year I feel like my goal was just -- I just wanted to finish the season a better golfer than I was when it started.

The rest will take care of itself if you just focus on that.

RACHEL REECE: You obviously grew up playing Pinnacle; how do you think Pinnacle sets up for your game

specifically, and any insights from playing here over the years, how that helps you?

BROOKE MATTHEWS: I'll be honest with you, it's good and bad. You have a lot of good memories, but you definitely have some scar tissue, too. There's probably not a course I know better than this course, so yeah, just stick to my game plan and just try to execute the best we can.

I know what to do, just got to go out there and try our best to do it.

RACHEL REECE: You talked a little bit about the community support here in Northwest Arkansas. What do you think sets this event apart? How is it different from some of the other stops on Tour? You're traveling all year-round to different places throughout the country and across the globe. You're going over to Asia this year. What makes this event unique and sets it apart?

BROOKE MATTHEWS: I feel like it's easy for me to say it's a homey vibe, but I feel like a lot of the other girls on Tour agree. There's a big close housing presence here. A lot of the people in the neighborhood, just outside the neighborhood host golfers, so they stay with them through the entire week. A lot of these families have been hosting the same golfers for five, ten plus years, so it's a cool thing.

I feel like Pinnacle itself really gets to know the actual players and the Tour, and the Tour just falls in love with this spot. Everyone used to tell me, oh, Arkansas is one of my favorite events, and I was like, yeah, it's great, but once I got out on Tour and kind of saw the other stops, I was like, this really is a special one.

There's just so much more. Shauna's Confidence For Kids just does a really good job reaching beyond golf, and it's really so much more than that.

RACHEL REECE: For you, Shauna, obviously you've been involved in the event for pretty much the entire history of the event over the last 19 years, and we've seen so many great Razorback golfers compete in the event over the years as amateurs and then becoming professional golfers. How proud are you of the Razorbacks that have competed for you and now gone on to be professional golfers and have successful careers like Brooke?

SHAUNA TAYLOR: Yeah, for all 19 of them I've been here, and really cool to see how much it's grown, but a lot of our players come wanting to play the Tour as their goal, as their ultimate goal in playing professional golf. For them to have the experience this year as an amateur through our team through a little contest that we do, the Road to the Northwest Arkansas Championship. They've got to write a



letter, they've got a resume, have to be good academic standing, and our best ranking player at the end of the season gets a sponsor's exemption into this event.

There's a lot of development off the golf course, too, that goes into it, but it's so cool to see like a Brooke play as a kid, comes as a kid spectating to play for us as a sponsor's exemption and to get to do it as her profession now. Really proud.

It's an awesome week for our program. We get engaged with all community stuff as much as we can. We want to be a part of all aspects of not just the golf but sharing our community with everybody. I think it's something super special.

To have it on TV and have our fans and our recruits and people that are watching our program really see how special Northwest Arkansas is, it makes it a home run week for our program.

RACHEL REECE: I know you said you've been involved, obviously, since the very beginning. Talk a little bit about the community support because you see that as well, of how the community comes out and supports especially the Razorbacks on the 17th hole and throughout the whole week. They're definitely the stars of the week and fans coming out to watch the former and current Razorbacks.

SHAUNA TAYLOR: The Razorbacks are truly the rock stars of this week of golf, and it's so fun to see all the fans cheering for them and calling the hogs and getting to experience that because we don't really get to play at home very much when they're playing in college. To get them to come back and to play at this level, to have the community be able to see how much they've grown and improved and have gotten really awesome at the game of golf is truly a really awesome week for us.

RACHEL REECE: We mentioned sponsor's exemptions, but Maria José Marin, who is one of your current players on the team, is getting a sponsor's exemption this year through the Road to the NWA Championship. Talk about her and her getting to compete and what you're expecting.

SHAUNA TAYLOR: Yeah, she's amazing. She's 5 in the world, so she is probably coming into school one of the best players that has come in as far as golf goes, and she's done an incredible job of playing a very high level. She is the defending national champion, so it's really cool to have our third one of those this year, and for her to get this experience again -- her ultimate goal is to play the Tour. Last year she made the cut and had a really good finish. I know she's expecting to do even better this year. She's very motivated.

At practice you can see there's a lot of intentional practice for her in what she's doing, and she's a really elite player. I think you'll see some special golf out of her during this week here at Pinnacle, and I'm excited to see her continue to grow and get better.

RACHEL REECE: We mentioned the Choose Confidence program. Talk a little bit about Choose Confidence and how that's a part 69 tournament here.

SHAUNA TAYLOR: Yeah, so I have a little girl named Grace, and we were stuck at home during COVID, so I figured what can I do to make things more fun. I developed a program for kids called Choose Confidence. It's been so cool. Basically I pitched the idea to Outlyr and then we came up with the idea of let's -- it sounds like something that Procter & Gamble would love to do. Partnered with them, and I created a curriculum for kids.

We are in eight elementary schools, about 1,500 kids total, and each month has a theme, and we basically want to teach kids about loving themselves first and making themselves a priority, and their self-talk and their confidence and belief in themselves is something that I think is lacking a lot of times. I see when the girls 18 to 22 come to see me, I think some of the difference makers is how much they believe in themselves. If I can impact young kids at a younger age through my program, it's really something that's been really special to see grow and get bigger.

We keep adding schools over the years, between 16 and 17. We have a Confidence Club that we do field trips for the kids during the week and we teach them all these things through art and STEM and golf, how to have confidence and what that looks like. It's been really special, and I'm so proud of it, to see the kids, and to watch them learn about the game of golf through a different lens is pretty special, and really blessed that Procter & Gamble has given me the opportunity to grow my program and put it out there.

RACHEL REECE: So much more than golf during the event week, and Choose Confidence is definitely an example of that. Do you guys have any questions for Brooke and Shauna before we do anything individual?

Q. I know you said that there are eight elementary schools. Where are those schools --

SHAUNA TAYLOR: All in Northwest Arkansas. We have Rogers, we have Farmington, we have Fayetteville, Springdale. We've tried to hit all the different areas of Northwest Arkansas to grow the program. It's been really



-- we started small with one or two schools and we keep adding one, and it's been really special to see the kids embrace it but also learn some cool stuff about how they can love themselves more and to make themselves a priority and be awesome and dream big and have big vision of what they can do with their lives.

Q. Brooke, you talked about what golf meant to you, Shauna's presence, seeing Stacy do it, and then you have some up-and-comers like Maria, what do you feel (indiscernible) future imprint does it make in golf?

BROOKE MATTHEWS: Yeah, I'll speak first on the impact it's made on just me. It was my dream since I was a kid to be a Razorback. I was born and raised a Razorback fan, going to football games, basketball games, you name it. When I started getting serious about golf my very first goal was to play for the Razorbacks. I was lucky enough to kind of get to know Shauna, and she gave me the opportunity.

I just feel like so much of my growth came from those years in college. It wasn't always pretty. I started out, honestly, kind of rough. I had a little bit of a rough freshman year on the golf course, but gosh, I look back and those are the years that I learned the most from.

I think that there's no way that I'm where I am today without having been a part of that program. It's really cool because to this day I'm still friends with so many people that I was on the team with. They were my best friends. I feel like I've been out of school now for a little over four years, and they'd still do anything for me, and the support doesn't stop whenever you graduate. It's kind of like a lifelong thing, and it's something that you're kind of a part of forever.

Anything Shauna asks me to do for the team, I drop everything to be there, too.

Q. Do you feel as though this event kind of gets more eyes on women in golf and kind of empowers them through the game of golf, and if so, how do you think it impacts them?

BROOKE MATTHEWS: Yeah, definitely. I think we have a really cool following for women's sports. They call it the Caitlin Clark effect a little bit. But what Natalie did last year and what kind of so many women are doing on Tour this year and just all the women in sports, I feel like there's a lot of eyes on it. There's a lot of opportunities for sponsors and everything else.

Obviously our main goal is to inspire the next generation. I was a little girl here. When I was eight years old, getting all the players to sign my hat, we had a couple golfers stay with us. It kind of lit it up in my eyes and kind of sparked

that in me. If I can be any part of doing that for another little girl or a lot of them like that, you just can't beat that. That's the ultimate dream.

Q. From your transition from Shauna's program to the professional circuit, I'm sure that was a challenging transition. Just talk a little bit about that. You were still early on in your pro career, but I'm sure that was a transitional period going from playing to the Razorbacks to going to traveling across the globe. Talk about that transition and how you've grown over the last couple of years as a pro?

BROOKE MATTHEWS: Definitely, yeah. I'll be fully transparent; my rookie year on Tour was probably one of the toughest years of my life. I left school kind of on a high, playing really good golf. I had won a couple events, set the NCAA record. I was honestly a little bit on my high horse. As soon as I got to the Tour, man, was I humbled. I don't think I was completely ready.

But I feel like getting yourself in position so you're not completely (indiscernible) is kind of where you grow. I had a really tough year. You go from kind of everything being done for you and having this amazing support system, and when you don't play well you still have all these people that love you and are trying to make you better and everything, and when you go out on Tour, you're kind of on your own.

Luckily over the last couple years I've kind of learned to deal with -- made a lot of friends out there. Just got a little bit more comfortable in my transition. But yeah, that transition was tough.

Golf-wise I feel like the program really prepared me, and we have really tough qualifiers. I was on a couple really good teams during my time at Arkansas. Fortunately I had Maria Fassi, I had some of the other girls that were playing at a really high level that I got to ask advice from, and they really helped me through that time.

I'm grateful that I could still have them to rely on during the transition.

Q. What was the record?

BROOKE MATTHEWS: 25-under for 54 holes.

Q. Still standing?

BROOKE MATTHEWS: Yes.

Q. What are you most looking forward to during NWA Championship week?



BROOKE MATTHEWS: Yeah, I think kind of having a week at home is really cool. Since May, I've only been here two -- this is my second week at home since May --

SHAUNA TAYLOR: She's a homebody.

BROOKE MATTHEWS: I'm a homebody. I don't know how I ended up in this job really. I don't know if I thought it through. But yeah, just having support of the community, getting to see all the people that I'm friends with that never really get to see me play and everything is cool.

I go on Tour, and I'm in all these different tournaments, and I always say I'm not necessarily one of the big names, so it's kind of cool to be the big name here, I guess, and kind of have the support of everybody and have all my family out there. Like I said, I get to stay at home, so just looking forward to -- there's a certain comfort to it.

Q. Where is your current home base?

BROOKE MATTHEWS: It's in Rogers. I spend my winters in Florida, but yeah.

Q. I was curious, as somebody who's been around the tournament or participated in the tournament in some capacity for a long time, I know that one of the things that I think is really neat about this is that there's a lot of other community events going on, too. Do you guys have a favorite community event outside the actual tournament that you're looking forward to?

SHAUNA TAYLOR: Choose Confidence for me, but just simply because I love to see the kids come. I know from being in the schools in our community that a lot of them don't know anything about golf or that this country club exists or the LPGA Tour exists. I think just to see their faces when they get off the school buses up here by the Confidence Club and get to be just wowed by the players but the golf course and the things that they get to learn while they're here is truly magical to watch.

I love a good bite. Northwest Arkansas has some yummy food to try out. That's one of my favorites, too. You can't go wrong with any of them.

I'm going to be a part of the women's leadership summit this year - I'm excited about that - for the first time. I've not done that yet. There's always something fun and new to try. I love how they keep expanding their reach with biking and all the cool stuff. It really showcases Northwest Arkansas. There's a ton of awesome stuff.

BROOKE MATTHEWS: Yeah, I agree with Shauna. I know Fassi's Friends always has that event, and it was

really cool to get to be a part of that one. It's special what she's doing with that.

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