

NW Arkansas Championship

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Rogers, Arkansas, USA

Pinnacle Country Club

Stacy Lewis

Press Conference



Walmart
NW ARKANSAS
CHAMPIONSHIP
PRESENTED BY **P&G**

THE MODERATOR: All right, here with Stacy Lewis ahead of the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship Presented by P&G. Big announcement made earlier this week. Can you just speak to what went into with your decision to announce your retirement, and specifically do it at this event?

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, so it wasn't a moment. It wasn't -- I wasn't in a certain place when I said that, kind of decided that this year was going to be it. It was really just this spring. I kind of had a goal this offseason. My body had really been hurting a lot the last couple years, and so I kind of did some things the offseason. I found way to feel a little bit better on the golf course.

I just really wanted to see if there was still any good golf left in me. I was able to put together some good rounds earlier this year and just really put me at peace.

Just physically haven't been able to practice the way I want to the last call it probably two or three years. The amount of time and energy you got to put into competing at this level and play good golf, I physically can't do it anymore.

So I got other things that interest me now. I got a little one at home that wants me to be home a little bit more. I know there are times she's not going to want me to be around, so I'm -- I want to take in this time and enjoy that and give my body a break.

Q. You talked about not being quite sure what you might do. Can you kind of give us some hints there of what the future might hold for you?

STACY LEWIS: The last I call it maybe for, five years I've been pretty involved in what's going on behind the scenes at the Tour. I was on the LPGA board. I was part of the last commissioner's search. I was doing all the things I was doing with Solheim Cup for call it almost four years.

I learned about the business side of the Tour and it became more and more interesting to me. I hope to continue to make an impact on this Tour. I did it while I

was playing and I was able to bring sponsors and bring fans in and do it that way, but I want to continue to find ways to give back. I don't know exactly what that looks like. I don't have a job lined up for sure. But I want to find ways it help because I love this Tour. I love these girls.

It's been so much fun to play against them and I want to continue to give them help and the best opportunities I can.

Q. The physical part, was it at all related to what you had years ago or what kind of was hurting?

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, so in 2019 I qualified for the Gleneagles Solheim. I think it was a week before Solheim I hurt kind of like my right rib cage hitting a shot in Portland actually.

Really since then I've just had a lot of trouble with my right side. I think it's overcompensating. I got a part of my back to doesn't move and doesn't twist and doesn't rotate. It's just the compensation over the years.

To go back to how I felt coming out of surgery here my freshman year and not bending or twisting and not being able to swing a golf club, to think that 20 plus years later I would still be swinging a golf club at this level is really pretty remarkable and I am just really grateful for the opportunities that I've had.

Q. How are your emotions right now, knowing this will be the last time playing in front of your home crowd?

STACY LEWIS: Yeah. The last day or so has been a lot harder than I ever thought it would be. I had to speak last night at a dinner and I totally lost it.

It's been really cool the last kind of 24 hours I would say, all the messages I got from friends, fans, people that I don't even really know just telling little stories about where they met me and when they met me.

You know, just really kind of puts things in perspective of you're out here trying to win tournaments, but you're also able to impact a lot of people. That's really what I've been kind of reflecting on over the last 24 hours.



You know, I'm excited for the golf to start because that's what is more normal and what's easier right now. But I'm excited to get to do this one more time here. This was to me the only place to announce this. This was where my career started, so really was the only place to do it.

Q. So with that in mind, how cool is it for you to have that full circle? So few people get to start their career somewhere and end it in that place. How special is that?

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, it's amazing. I'm going to carry an Arkansas golf bag this week, too. We're going to throw it back to what it was when we started. This tournament has always been so special to me. Because no other players have had this. No other players have this hometown, have the crowd like that much on their side.

You know, I was telling Craig Kessler, our new commissioner, about the first few years of this tournament. Before Gaby came out I was the only Arkansas Razorback, and the players joke that they could find me anywhere on the golf course based off all the Hog calls.

So no one else has had this, so to start and finish it here is just really fitting.

Q. And you mentioned sort of the golfers that came up under you, watching you grow. How special is it for you to understand and know how much you influenced that next group? We talked to a couple yesterday and their eyes got really big when they found out you were retiring.

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, and that's kind of what I've been reflecting on over the last 24 hours, is you do realize the impact that I've had. I'm really proud of the number of players that have come through the University of Arkansas and have gone on to play professionally and play pretty darn good, too.

We really created kind of a way to show them how to do it. This is a blueprint and how you go do it. Show them it's possible. This tournament has helped that.

But I had older players take me under their wing when I first came on Tour. I tried to do that for other players because I think it's the right thing to do.

If Maria or Gaby or any of the other players, if they go play great golf it's great for our Tour and going to make me better and push me to get better. I always wanted my competitors to be better because I knew it was always going to help me.

Q. Tomorrow when you come to 17, what are your emotions going to be like?

STACY LEWIS: I'm just going to take it in. You ask every player out here what's where you favorite hole, they all say 17. It's so fun. It's so loud. I'm assuming P&G and Walmart are letting people off work again. I hope everybody is ready to go.

Yeah, just going to soak it all in, get a couple more Hog calls. I can't wait.

Q. One, you're playing with Nelly.

STACY LEWIS: Uh-huh.

Q. How big a thing is that for this tournament to have her back here? What's that going to be like tomorrow?

STACY LEWIS: I'm excited. I love playing with Nelly. She plays fast. She plays great. It's fun to watch her play. She's one of those -- I mean, if you haven't seen her play in person you got to come watch her swing a golf club. It's pretty impressive.

And Lauren, too. I mean, two players I really admire. I admire Lauren's grit and her toughness to get where she is. It's taken her a little longer than most.

So two people I would call my friends and I got to captain, so looking forward to playing with them.

Q. And then over the 20 years, what are some significant changes you have seen with this Tour and then maybe going forward what would you like to see on the LPGA Tour?

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, gosh we kind of been through the ups and downs of the Tour. When I first came out things were pretty good, and it kind of went sideways for a little while with the economy. I look at our stability of our majors right now and the amount of money that is in our major championships is huge for this Tour.

Events like that that continue to push the purse and that they really push what the experience of an LPGA event should look like. And so we've come really far and probably more in the last -- you've seen the purse boosts more in the last five or six years. We're making a lot of strides.

I think going forward I would like to see more TV coverage. Get our players more well-known outside of the world of golf. Like Nelly's run last year, I kind of wish she got more recognition for that run she went on, which was pretty darn

impressive.

It's really all about getting our players seen a little bit more and improving the experiences on site. I've got a little six year old myself that we got to get more kids out here. That's what produces the next generation of talent.

Q. Congratulations. We've kind of already talked, but really happy for you. For you what's been a player reaction maybe this week, maybe even last week at the Kroger Queen City Championship you've had that really meant a lot to you in terms of what you have done for the organization?

STACY LEWIS: Well, they're all just really sad, which I guess is a good thing. I said it's better than the opposite. At least they're not like, thank goodness she's finally done.

All just sad and giving me hugs. I think I was talking to Anna Nordqvist about it and she said, yeah, when you're out here for so long they get used to you always being there.

So Andrea Lee was pretty upset. Couple Solheim girls were pretty bummed. They know I'm here for whatever they need. I want to stay involved in the game so I don't think I'm going to go too far.

Q. I think there are few players in the modern generation, modern era, that have acted like a Founder more than you have. What advice and wisdom would you impart to your younger counterparts?

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, just to really take ownership of this Tour. That's what the older generation told to me. This is your Tour. It's nobody else's. You have to go be the salespeople. You have to take care of it. Take care of the places we're playing, take care of the golf courses.

The way we leave a golf course is a reflection of our Tour. It's a reflection of you. I encouraged players to take ownership. Answer all the questions and do all the media you can and let's go take women's golf to another level.

Q. What was Chesnee's reaction or does she fully understand what mommy is doing this week?

STACY LEWIS: Oh, she's ready for me to be home. She's been a trooper these last call it six and a half years traveling the world with me. I went home for one day before I came here to Arkansas and she was having trouble with me leaving. She said, I'm ready for you to be done. I said, I know. I am too. So I think she's looking forward to having mom home.

I don't think she quite understands we're not going to be traveling as much and seeing our friends on the road as much, but it'll be good for all of us.

Q. Thank you. Good luck this week?

STACY LEWIS: Thank you.

Q. Stacy, congratulations again.

STACY LEWIS: Thank you.

Q. I was hoping you could take us back in time a little bit to when you were a junior and deciding to go to Arkansas. Describe your game at that time, what your goals were in the game, and how you ended up there.

STACY LEWIS: The goals at the time were just to go play college golf, get a scholarship to go play in college, get an education. There was really no thoughts of professional golf.

When I made the commitment to come to Arkansas I had just -- I was out of my back brace. I assumed I was done with all the back stuff and wasn't going to be a problem. After I committed I found out I was going to have to have surgery, which then the goals really shifted. The goals became I just want to swing a golf club again.

But I came on a visit here and fell in love with it. I fell in love with the people. The town felt like the right size for me, the school felt like the right size. I just remember flying home from the visit and I told my mom -- we had gone on two other visits prior -- and I said, this is where I need to be. That was the extent of the conversation.

Q. What will you miss the most?

STACY LEWIS: The people. And that's everybody: our staff to the other players, caddies, the various people that I know in all the towns that we go to. You know, you come out here trying to win golf tournaments and that kind of becomes the singular focus. Then you're out here for so long it just really becomes more about the relationships.

I think that's what makes it so hard stepping away, is the unknowns of not getting to see those people again and things like that.

But sometimes you got to just do it and sometimes things that are scary end up okay.

Q. Thank you.

STACY LEWIS: Thank you.



Q. Congratulations on your remarkable career.

STACY LEWIS: Thank you.

Q. Over your 17 years on the LPGA, what are the moments you're most proud of both on the course and off?

STACY LEWIS: On the course, I mean, on the course I think you never top winning at St Andrews. Really proud of the Vare Trophies and the Player of the Year awards. The season-long races. You can throw a world No. 1 in that, too.

Those season-long races take playing good golf for an extended amount of time, I think those are the things I think I'm most proud of on the course.

Then off I think just the way I've been able to impact these tournaments and bringing sponsors on board; probably more specifically with the KPMG Women's PGA Championship and be able to elevate that event that pushed our majors to the level they're at today.

Proud of the maternity policy changes we have been able to make. I'm also at times more proud of the things off the golf course we've been able to accomplish in the last call it ten years than sometimes the things I did myself.

So I'm just really proud of where this Tour is at. The players before me said, leave it better than you found it, and I feel like I've done that.

Q. Yeah, for sure. What are you most looking forward to once you're no longer competing full time? Are there other hobbies or interest you might want to get into? Family time?

STACY LEWIS: Honestly, maybe sleeping a little better and not so worried about what my back is going to feel like the next day. I think I look back and really for the last 22 years I've gone to bed every night, I need to go to the gym tomorrow, I need to do this, I need to do these things to make sure I can swing a golf club. I'm just looking forward to not having to do those things so much.

Q. Last question: We all know your remarkable journey. What advice would you give young golfers who may be facing adversity, whether it is physical challenges or just barriers in general?

STACY LEWIS: Patience. I kind of said that my little letter I put out. You know, to get to No. 1 in the world, win major championships, it doesn't happen overnight. We want to --

as athletes we want to practice good on Tuesday and play good on Thursday.

But it doesn't work that way. You have to have patience in the process, enjoy in the process of some days will be kind of bad and some days will be good. Hopefully you can just kind of keep climbing the mountain.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much.

STACY LEWIS: Can I just say something? I just want to thank all you guys in this room that have followed me over the years. We've grown up together with this tournament and you guys have helped make this tournament possible. Just appreciate all you guys.

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