

ShopRite LPGA Classic

Presented by Acer

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Galloway, New Jersey, USA

Seaview, A Dolce Hotel

Linnea Strom

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Thank you, all for being here. Beautiful weather. For those that were covering Truist, saw a bunch of you yesterday. Thank you for making the trip over to Atlantic City for the ShopRite LPGA Classic.

Just a couple things before we get started. Everybody say hi to our defending champion, Linnea Strom. Glad you're here with us. We'll do a couple of questions. I'll do a couple of opening questions for and you then open up to the room.

ShopRite LPGA Classic, this year is year No. 31 of ShopRite as a title sponsor sore. They are the longest running by far title sponsor on the LPGA Tour. 37th year overall for this tournament.

You guys will see when we have the tournament in a month, there is going to be some pretty cool enhancements on the course. We're upgrading and enhancing several elements of the at tournament. You'll see that on 18 with some of the hospitality structures.

There is going to be food all over the course, as usual, which everybody likes. We will have hot dogs on the first tee that a lot of folks like.

We'll announce this later this week, but ShopRite is -- they're elevating and enhancing this tournament, so there is a few things that are going to be taking place that's new this year.

One is the entire tournament field is receiving complementary hotel, admission here to Seaview courtesy of ShopRite. So Linnea and the entire field are receiving complementary admission. It's kind of a few tournaments are doing that, but it's one of the things that ShopRite wants to do, is to just help support women's golf, right?

We can talk about this. Like their expenses are a lot week in and week out. This is one the things they're doing to support. This tournament has also donated more than \$40 million to charity. No other LPGA event that is donated

anywhere close to that. They will be continuing that again this year.

They usually do, on Fridays, a charity luncheon. Projected to donate between \$1.5 and \$ 2 million to local and area communities via this event during tournament week.

And then a few other cool initiatives and announcements that will be coming from ShopRite later this week. Also probably one the more important things media credentialing now open.

Enough of the housekeeping stuff. Linnea Strom our defending champion is here. Linnea, thank you for joining us. You had a heck of a year last year. Heck of a tournament last year.

I will do this start and then we'll open up with questions from the audience.

So that final day, 11-under par, 60, lowest -- largest comeback in LPGA history. When you were teeing off that day, what were your thoughts as you were teeing off and then how did your mindset shift as you started going into your birdie barrage that day?

LINNEA STROM: I just remember, so on Saturday I made a birdie on 18 to make the cut on the number.

That was big for me because I was like, okay, you know, make the cut. I had my dad here with me from Sweden. Two weeks prior to this tournament he decided to come over. Booked a flight from Sweden, was here.

When I woke up on Sunday I was like, okay, I put myself in the position where I made the cut so I'm just going go out and enjoy and try and put a good score out there. Just enjoy playing with my dad there.

That's kind of what I did. I remember I told myself I'm just going to try and move up the leaderboard and hopefully have a good finish. I don't think I could have ever expected to have the kind of day that I had.



I stayed with one of my best friends, Frida Kinhult, and she missed the cut. She said good-bye in the morning and she was like, okay, I'll see you next week in Grand Rapids. Okay, see you. Even when she left she had obviously no idea that that was going to come.

She felt horrible about not being here for my first win. But I think it's just golf. You never know what's going to happen. But that whole final day was just -- it's kind of a blur. It's nice to be back here today kind of to recreate some memories that I had that final Sunday.

But it was amazing. I think I never once during the round played and thought that I could potentially win. Because like you said, I was so far behind so I think that kind of helped me to just be in the present. I played one shot at a time, one hole at a time, tried to put birdies out there.

It probably wasn't until I finished on 18 and they interviewed me after the round. I think that's when it kind of hit me. Maybe I have a chance at even winning this tournament.

I think it for sure helped me to just stay in the present and enjoy it. I really did. It was probably, I mean, the best round I ever had in my life, so I think this place will always have a special place in my heart and brings back great memories to come back here.

So it was a fun day.

Q. So after you finished and you had to wait, you had that long waiting period.

LINNEA STROM: Yeah.

Q. How nerve-racking was that or was it not really nerve-racking to begin and then...

LINNEA STROM: Yeah, it kind of built up. As soon as I finished, I remember walking up on 18 and I think I even saw leaders on the second hole or something.

I knew it was going to be a long wait. I was kind of expecting to maybe stick around for one or two hours and then I thought, you know, someone is going to take the lead and run away.

But I know it's also golf and I know it's not easy to go out in a position leading a tournament on a Sunday, so I had that in the back of my mind either because they saw my score being posted on the leaderboard.

So I stuck around, had a longer lunch. My dad was there, my physio was there, my caddie, and then some of my

other friends that are coming in. Everyone came up and said, good round.

Yeah, and then I think as they started to make the turn I couldn't just sit and not do anything, so went with my physio to the gym, did a little bit of stretching, tried to keep the body moving a little bit.

And then as it got closer I kind of realized that I probably have to be ready in case there will be a playoff. So, yeah, just started to hit some putts on the putting green and there were a couple -- there were three girls standing by the putting green and they asked me if they could have a signed golf ball. I think there were three of them. I said, yeah, so I gave them away three golf balls.

Then my caddie goes, how many golf balls do you have in your bag? You can't give away all your golf balls. I was like, it's okay. I have two or three. If I lose a ball in a playoff, I'm probably not going to win.

It was fun. I just really enjoyed the moment. I haven't -- I had been in similar positions before, but it's always a bit different waiting around and waiting if there is going to be a playoff.

You know, it doesn't happen every week for me, so I think it was just very exciting to be in that situation and see how I would handle that.

Q. Unless things change in the next couple weeks, and I hope they do for you, you're coming back to Seaview in almost the same type of position you arrived here last year. Missed four out of five cuts I believe. What's up with your game right now?

LINNEA STROM: I think I'm in kind of a position where I think my game feels better than what my scoring is showing which is kind of the opposite from last year.

Like I was in a position where I haven't had a great start to the year, which in the past seems to be in I tendency a little bit. I think I'm still trying to figure out why.

Because I finished the year pretty good last year and I thought, you know, just keep building on this going into next season.

You know, it's golf. It's very mental sport as well. You know, two out of last four weeks I missed the cut by a shot, which is very frustrating and can be very hard mentally to deal with that and try and put it behind you.

But I think I'm just reminding myself that it's one shot. If you make the cut with one shot how I did here at ShopRite



last year. You know, if I wouldn't have made a birdie on the last hole. I holed a five meters putt on Saturday to make the cut and ended up winning the tournament.

I think I have that in the back of my head, so I think looking back at the last couple weeks, one shot and I might have made the cut and maybe have a good weekend and end up being a great tournament.

That's just golf. Some weeks you have the luck on your side and some weeks you don't. I think I'm just trying to stay positive. I know I have a very fun summer coming up, and two weeks U.S. Open.

So be U.S. Open and then coming here the week after for ShopRite. So I think I'm just looking forward to what's coming. I'm going to take the next two weeks, go home to Arizona, practice, and kind of figure out what can I work on in my game to prepare the best way for the summer that I have coming up.

And I know it's close. Sometimes from the outside you see a score and the result and you see missed cut, missed cut, but I think it's so much more than that. It's tough because in my head I see missed cut as well.

Q. Sure.

LINNEA STROM: So I think I just need to stay strong with that and I know I have a great team around me, a great family that's supporting me. I think I'm just trying to stay positive and believe in myself and my game for the next couple weeks.

Q. Earlier you talked about last year's final round being a blur, and I remember you said last year it hasn't sunk in yet. Was there a point it did sink in or you realized the magnitude of the comeback and shooting a 60? Just a little bit about that.

LINNEA STROM: I think it probably did and probably when I had that -- they were nice and sent my trophy all the way to Sweden. So I have the trophy at my parents' house in Sweden so I think that's fun considering my dad was here with me. I think it was kind of towards the middle was summer. I was home because we played some events in Europe, so I was there when the trophy arrived.

I think that was pretty cool to be at the home where I grew up next to the golf course where I learned to play golf and to have the trophy sent there. You know, just being in that home environment, I think that was when it sunk in, too. You know, show it to my coach and the members of my golf club back home, it was just very special.

I think it for sure took me a while to understand what I had done. I don't think I quite understood it the day it happened. That's a blur.

It's great memories and makes me very happy to look back at photos and creating the memories that I have from here.

But, yeah, it took me a while to understand what happened.

Q. You told that story about giving those three girls the golf balls. You could have told a million stories about a million memories that you had from that day. That one stands out to you.

LINNEA STROM: Yeah.

Q. In the last five to six years, there is a 41% increase in females golfing on the course. When you look at girls out there at these different outings and the girls you gave balls to and young girls that you are inspiring, what does that mean to you about the growth of women and golf and you're part of it?

LINNEA STROM: Uh-huh, I mean, it means a lot for sure. I think at the end of the day I think that's part of what I'm playing golf. I love it. It's my job and all of that.

But I think it's even more important to me to inspire younger girls and kids in general to get into the sport. But not only golf. Also inspire in a way what they can do whatever they want to do.

In the last five years when I've been out on the LPGA, I feel like I have seen an increase in women's golf as well. I see more juniors out there at tournaments and I think the Tour do a great job in general with having a lot of junior clinics during the tournaments.

Doesn't take a long time after the round. If you see any kids, stop, say hi, take a photo with them, sign a golf ball, give them a glove, anything, something small like that.

There was a cool story, I think it was when Esther Henseleit, she played great in Utah, finished second. Mel Reid was commentating, and she said when Esther was younger she was shall watching Mel Reid at a tournament and Mel gave her a signed golf ball, and that kind of was the moment where Esther decided to turn pro; now she's top 20 player in the world, which is very impressive.

Things like that, you know, I think for us it's every week we do this, but I think from the outside it's so important to remember that this little girl might come to one single tournament and I might do something small that's going to

inspire her to do something in the future.

And I think that's pretty cool to be in a position where I can inspire young girls to play golf, or if there is anything else, just say hi to them and, yeah.

Q. If I remember correctly, I think on the same day Linn Grant came back from 11-down in Sweden to win the tournament she was in.

LINNEA STROM: Yeah.

Q. I think you guys went to the same college. What was it about that day -- I don't know how close you are with her, but have you talked with her about that massive I guess coincidence?

LINNEA STROM: Yeah, and I think we also have another one of those actually when I won on the Epson Tour a couple years ago. It was the same weekend as Linn won on the Ladies European Tour. So we've had two of those now, which is pretty fun.

But I remember because with the time difference I woke up here Sunday morning and I saw she had won on the LET. So that's fun. That could be part of it too. She inspired me a little bit that morning because I saw her coming from I don't know how many shots behind.

Q. 11.

LINNEA STROM: Yeah, because the Swedish guy was leading by a lot. She came back, and, I mean, Linn is a great player, very strong mentality as well. Obviously impressive, but I wasn't surprised she did what she did, which is pretty cool. And she's a great person as well.

So it was for sure fun to watch that in the morning and then I went out and had the day that I had. So I would say that she inspired me a little bit that day.

Q. Have you guys -- obviously seen each other since?

LINNEA STROM: Yes.

Q. Have you talked about it? What was that conversation?

LINNEA STROM: Yeah, we talked about our wins. I don't think we really talked about it being the same weekend or the same day, but, yeah, it's very fun.

Q. In last 11 months, how often does that day come up? You are just around, you see fans. Is it hard to get away from it? It's always going to be there. Do

people come up and say oh, my God, 60?

LINNEA STROM: A lot of people come up. They remember that I shot 60. You know, I think looking back at the day, it's not just the win but it's also the fact that I shot a 60 to win.

I feel like it's two big, history one of the biggest comebacks as well. So I feel like there were multiple things that happened that day. But for sure a lot of the people do come up and remember that I was the player that shot 60, which is very cool.

Q. Do you ever get sick of them bringing it up?

LINNEA STROM: No. (Laughter.) No. It's great. I mean, it's always fun to get reminded. Kind of what I said earlier, if you're struggling it's just nice to hear sometimes that people remember what you did and for myself as well, it's a good confidence boost to hear it.

Q. When you're working through something with your game, are you someone that primarily focused on swing, strategy? Do you look at your gear when you're trying to find something?

LINNEA STROM: What do you mean with...

Q. Equipment, your clubs.

LINNEA STROM: Yeah, a little bit I would say. I mean, I try and keep it a good balance between technical things and more targeted practice.

So I think I do have a good structure, especially this season where I make sure to keep my tendencies in place and keep my swing in place a lot as well because we do play a lot week in and week out.

I try not to look too much at the equipment. You know, I'm the kind of player that don't want to make too many changes, especially in-season. If everything is working how I want it to be working I wouldn't look at the equipment. I would look at my swing or any of my tendencies.

Q. When it comes to your bag, are you someone that is just set it, forget it, unless one my reps from PXG comes and brings me something?

LINNEA STROM: Yes, for sure. It can differ depending on the weather or course conditions, too. Like if we play Scotland British Open, it's windy. I probably change a couple of clubs in my bag. If we play somewhere where it's softer, then I might change some of the clubs as well.

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So it just depends on the conditions. Generally speaking I try and keep the clubs in my bag pretty much the same.

Q. How do you keep your confidence out there?

LINNEA STROM: Well, it's hard. It's something that I am struggling with every now and then. Because I think a lot of times confidence obviously comes from results, and what I said earlier about missing the cuts by a shot, that can pretty much ruin your confidence.

But then equally can look at it another way where it's like, okay, I didn't have a great week but I still only missed the cut by a shot. Then you can kind of try and convince yourself and turn it around into something positive, which is hard because I think that's how we are as human beings, we're being affected by the result.

Obviously the win last year did give me confidence, but I also said last year it came very unexpected for me because I wasn't in a position where -- I hadn't had tournaments before leading up to it.

Kind of look you asked, I came from missing a lot of cuts and all of a sudden I got a win. So kind of a position where I'm in now, it feels better than what the results have shown.

I think it's -- that can kind of not ruin your confidence, but it's hard. You have to work really hard to keep that confidence. And I think it's kind of a little bit how -- I mean, any professional athletes will feel this. We are surrounded by the best players in the world and I tell myself that as well.

We play here week in and week out. It's the best players in the world, and you put a lot of pressure on yourself to be at the top week in and week out. No one is going to be at the top week in and week out. Nelly last year, yes, winning six tournaments in a row.

I don't think that's ever going to happen again. That's so impressive. Everyone out here knows how hard it is to win one time. So I think confidence is hard. You have to work on it a lot and just convince yourself that you are good enough and you belong to be out here.

But it's, yeah, I think it's the same for everyone. You really have to work for it.

Q. They talk about getting in the zone when you have a round like you did last year.

LINNEA STROM: Uh-huh.

Q. Were you in the zone or at any point did you know where you were? You're 5-under, 6-under, 6-under. Did you start thinking about 59 or were you just in the zone?

LINNEA STROM: I was for sure in the zone, especially after I chipped in eagle on 9. I was for sure in the zone.

I think going into the back nine -- and then I hit it close on 10, tap-in birdie. So after that I think I just told myself, I'm just going to try and keep going, just see how low we can go.

I was in the zone so I remember my caddie telling me that he was thinking about having a chat with me but he kind of noticed that I was in the zone so he didn't need to. So he never really stepped in. He let me do my thing. He was there supporting me.

We kept our routine the same for every shot. Then we came to 15, which is a long par-3, the one alongside the water, long par-3, kind of tricky in the wind as well.

That was one hole where the previous two days I hadn't really hit great shots, so I think I my caddie was kind of going between should I say something, do I not say anything.

But then I had just birdied 14 so he kind of just let me do my thing, which was great. I actually ended up hitting a great shot, like 15 feet from the pin. I think that shot was one of my best shots that day because that was probably the toughest shot I mentally had to do.

Q. Right.

LINNEA STROM: Because doesn't really suit my eye. Longer iron, probably 5-iron I would say. So that to me was something that I had to overcome. If you would've told me I'm just going to put the ball in the middle of the green I would've taken it every day.

That's kind of how I felt about that shot.

Q. So what advice would you offer the country club woman that's just starting to play the game, getting out there and getting better and better about scorecard watching? Just stay in the zone and not scorecard watch?

LINNEA STROM: Just stay in the zone. Don't get ahead of yourself. That's something that helped me a lot. You can't affect whatever you did last hole and also not going to know what you're going to do in three holes, so you have to be just in the zone. Just one shot at a time.

If I miss a shot I try and tell myself, okay, it happens. It happens to everyone. No one is going to, you know, hit every shot perfect.

I know it probably sounds easier than what it is, but I think everyone to remember that we go through that kind of stuff as well. It's so easy to think ahead of like what hole is coming next. Doesn't matter if it's an easy or hard hole.

And I think that's probably what I did so good that final round. I was in the zone. I did not think anything. I had all of a sudden we were on 18 and I think that was kind of when I had birdied 16, birdied 17, and then 18 probably got a little bit into my head. Hit a bad drive but then managed to make a birdie.

Q. What do you think it'll be like being the defending champion that week? Obviously you'll have some more things to do, bigger spotlight on you a little bit. How do you think you'll handle being the defending champion.

LINNEA STROM: I'm very excited. Obviously haven't been in this position before. I'm just very excited to come back here. I think I'll try and not put too much pressure on myself, but obviously I know what I'm capable of going on this golf course.

I think it's a very fun golf course to play. A lot of the opportunities out there. But it can also be tricky. The wind can be tricky. The greens can sometimes be a little bit hard to read.

I think that's what I heard from most players after the week. You know, they were like how do you hole that many putts on those greens because they are a little bit tricky to read. I remember that from previous years as well.

I think it was just one of those days where the luck was a little bit on my side and I hit some great putts and holed most of them that were inside 20 feet, which was amazing.

Q. And then you're the third Swede to win here. Other than you all being great players obviously, is there anything to that you think?

LINNEA STROM: I don't know. I'm guessing Annika and Anna, right?

Q. Right.

LINNEA STROM: Yeah, because I remember seeing their names around the clubhouse and the hotel, which is very cool. I'm obviously very proud to have my name next to

their names here.

Q. Social media posts reveal a lot about who we are.

LINNEA STROM: Uh-huh.

Q. I believe after you missed the cut at Black River [sic], you posted something about being on the emotional rollercoaster; you remember that?

LINNEA STROM: Yeah.

Q. So to arrive here today to see this bubbly, smiling person, kind of doesn't match that post.

LINNEA STROM: Yeah.

Q. What kind of self-talk do you do and are you kind to yourself when you're doing that self-talk? Because the person I'm seeing now does not match that post. Were you in a different place then?

LINNEA STROM: No, I think I'm in the same place. I think I'm pretty good at trying to stay positive. I think what I mean with emotional rollercoaster, I think that that's golf. I think I'm getting better at separating Linnea the golfer and Linnea the person. Shouldn't matter if I shoot 11-under or 3-over. Like I'm still going to be the same person.

Golf is my job and I love it and I love to inspire the younger generation and all of that, but it's also a job. It's obviously emotional because we invest so much in it and practice every day and work hard.

You know, I plan my next couple of years of my life. I plan it after my golf. I schedule the whole year. I think that's why it is obviously emotional and it's frustrating when you feel like you are putting the work in and doing everything you're supposed to do but not getting the results.

And I think at Black Desert, the tournament you're referring to, I had a great two days and then finished with a double to miss the cut by a shot.

Obviously if I'm being honest, that's just mental to not be able to pull that off. But I think that's what golf is doing to you, where missed cuts two weeks before that and not being in the best playing mentally and putting a lot of pressure on myself.

But it's -- and that's why I call it emotional rollercoaster, because it is like this for everyone. You never know when it's going to be your week. Last year was an emotional rollercoaster as well because a lot of ups and downs.

After the win I had a great summer, played steady, and made a lot of cuts and put myself in a lot of good positions.

So I think it's just you need to remember that you don't know -- as quickly as it can downhill it can go uphill as well.

I think that's why I'm very happy. I'm happy with my life. I'm happy I get to be here and do what I love. Have I happy to have the opportunity to come here today and talk about the tournament in a couple weeks.

Yeah, just need to remember that it's just golf.

Q. And the last thing: You were such a great competitor in college, Epson Tour. If last year was your high watermark, you shot 60 and won a tournament, you be disappointed if that was your career, right?

LINNEA STROM: Yeah. Yeah.

Q. You want to do more?

LINNEA STROM: Yeah, for sure. I mean, obviously to win out here has always been a goal of mine, so for sure that was somewhat a checkmark in my career where I proved to myself I won out here, I belong out here.

But obviously you want to do more and I want to win again. Probably not going to retire until I win again. Even though it is hard and people are out here having long careers, ten plus years without winning, and I think that's important to remember. That you can still have an amazing career without winning because every year there is so many new players coming out here.

I mean, I don't know how many rookies we have this year, probably ten plus rookies that have the potential to win. You know, Ingrid Lindblad, a friend from Sweden, won in LA. Great player, great person. So I think every year is getting harder, if you're not getting better every year it's going to be tougher and tougher out here.

Q. With the growth of women in this sport, what's your advice for the young girls who might feel intimidated walking up to the first tee box and not knowing where to go?

LINNEA STROM: That's a great question. You know, because I actually have a funny story of when I played golf with a friend and we went to a public golf course and they didn't know who I was and the starter goes, okay, ladies you're playing off the red tees. We kind of laughed and was like, we know what tees we're going to play from.

I think it can be intimidating and I understand for someone

that's new in the game that it is a lot of men playing golf, but I think golf is the kind of sport that it is pretty equal. I mean, I play with a lot of the guy friends back home. I grew up playing with my brother who's two years older and his friends.

So I've always played with guys. I think you just need to put yourself out there, believe in yourself, and have fun. I think a lot of men enjoy playing with women as well, so I think you just need to be a little bit confident in the beginning.

But I hope it's not too intimidating. But it's such a fun sport and that's what I love about golf, too. That you can play at any level. You can still be out there and have a great time. It's not like any other sports where like tennis you need to play with someone that's equal to have a good game.

Golf, it doesn't matter. You can still go out there and have a great day with your friends. I think that's what I love about it, too.

THE MODERATOR: All right, everybody, with that, thank you, thank you. Linnea, thank you. Everybody thank you for joining.

LINNEA STROM: Thank you.

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