

ShopRite LPGA Classic

Presented by Acer

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Galloway, New Jersey, USA

Seaview, A Dolce Hotel

Meaghan Francella

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Okay, welcome to the media center here at the 2025 ShopRite LPGA Classic presented by Acer. We are joined by Meaghan Francella. Meaghan, returning to competition this week here at ShopRite. Just talk about why this week and why this tournament is so important to you to do this?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, I think this is always like a home event. It's really close to home. Two hours from New York, so I had a lot of friends and family that always come down. Now with working at Philly Cricket, it's so close and a lot of people that are members there come down to the Shore a lot.

The membership and the club have been so excited about me playing this week. It just feels like home. That's really what I can describe it as.

Q. Just how are you feeling going into this week? How does the game feel? Where are you at right now?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Surprisingly it feels pretty good. I hadn't gotten cleared to take a full swing until May 13th. I was actually shocked how well I'm hitting it this week.

I think there is no expectations, so I feel a little bit more relaxed. I remember last time I played in it I really grinded. I was playing KPMG that year, too. Am I as prepared as I want to be? Probably not. I been teaching a lot and it's been raining a lot up here.

But I feel pretty good. I am taking care of my body and just trying to get some rest. This is a lot easier than teaching I think, just getting out there and playing. I've seen a lot of good friends this week, so it's been really fun.

Q. Following up on that, when did you decide that you are ready to fully give it a go here at ShopRite?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Memorial Day weekend probably. I played my first 18 holes the Saturday of Memorial Day. I walked 18 holes. First time I had walked

and played 18 since November pre-surgery.

Played the following day in a cart and really felt great. I think that's when I was like, okay, I think I can do this. Then I realized it was only ten days away.

Yeah, it was Memorial Day weekend. Figured I would give it a go and I felt healthy enough to do it and I worked really hard in PT to get here. That was a goal of mine, to be able to play.

Q. Talk about your back surgery last year. It's something that you needed to get done, and there is a lot of players from the LPGA and PGA TOUR that you talked about it. Just talk about having that surgery and now being back pain-free.

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, 2024 was pretty rough medically. I had three surgeries and two in March, abdominal surgeries within a week of each other. November 12th I had a back fusion.

Yeah, talked a lot to Stacy. She's had a back fusion and she came and spent like four, five days with me after the fusion. You know, she just said, it's going to be a really hard road.

I was -- I just couldn't be in any pain anymore. I was so uncomfortable. It was affecting my personal life and my teaching and my mood. It's crazy. Like I don't swing with pain anymore and I don't know what that's like. You wait for it to hurt and then -- I pay for it a little bit after in the evening, but during it feels great.

Q. Last one from me: As you mentioned, you're a teaching pro at Philly Cricket Club who just hosted the TOUR Championship. This tournament is basically the kick off for Atlantic City and Philadelphia in the summer. Just talk about, one, you played this event a lot of times, but also your experience at Philly Cricket Club, just the golf fandom that's here.

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, everybody loves golf in Philly, and New Jersey especially. You know, we have

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played a lot of events in this area. I know the PGA TOUR being in Philly at Philly Cricket was incredible. The fans were unbelievable.

We went into the merchandise tent on Friday, most the stuff was sold out. People can't get enough of it. It's a great market to play in for the LPGA too. Everybody loves it down here. We always get a lot of people here, a lot of fans. They know the LPGA which is great.

But Philly has hosted a lot of major championships and are going to continue to, so I think there is a great way to start it off right here: ShopRite.

Q. Been a long road for you in a lot of ways. I was watching an interview a little while ago, and one of the comments you made that really stood out was you come from a community of fighters. Sounds like you really didn't have a choice. If you wanted to keep going, keep working, playing, you had to fight.

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Uh-huh.

Q. Could I ask you just to touch on that part of your personality, character, that has allowed you to rise on a number of occasions, be it the battle with your mom, your surgery, and here you are sitting in front of a room of will people about to start an LPGA event.

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, last three years have been tough mentally and physically, you know, from a family standpoint.

I love this game so much. I said to my PT when I was working this winter, I said, I just want to play golf again. But also I said, I don't want to be in pain anymore.

But yeah, I didn't come from a wealthy family and we worked really hard for everything we had. I worked at a club to practice. So I'm very fortunate that golf has given a lot.

Yeah, I feel like I'm on the defense a lot and I want to start to play offense a little bit. So I feel like I'm finally starting to do that, which has been a lot of fun.

Q. Was there ever any notion to give up, to quit? I know you're still in the game, teaching.

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Right.

Q. I imagine that's very rewarding as well. I'm just getting to know you now so I can't say you strike me as the type that doesn't have any quit in you. Is that pretty accurate?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, that's pretty accurate. I retired from playing competitively because I didn't want to do it for a living anymore. I wanted to do something else that still I was involved in the game, but it never occurred to me that I was going to ever stop competing until I stopped playing in 2014. Yeah, there was always this part of me that wanted to go play competitively again, but it took me nine years to come back.

Now, once I got that taste of it I still want to keep doing it. I do it at a different level now. I play with the LPGA teachers. Everybody out there is really competitive. Former Tour players or just getting off mini tours, college golfers now teaching.

So, that has kept me competitive. To be able to get the opportunity to play in an LPGA event here and there is always great. The club, Cricket, loves me to go play. That's part of my job. My job is to go play events.

So we have a good playing membership and it's really fun. I get to play competitively at the club a lot. I mean, I play really hard and sometimes don't win. We have a great membership and I constantly compete.

So it's in me. Somebody asked me why I do it. It's just part of who I am. I can't quite describe it.

Q. One last one from me: How excited are you for this week? Are you coming in with any expectations? I would imagine you got a lot of friends and family packing the house. How much does that mean to you?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, I mean, expectation-wise obviously I just want to go out and have some fun.

I mean, I have a student who's a good friend of mine caddieing for me. She played at Notre Dame and some she's played some Mid-Am stuff, local Philly. She's a good player. I told her her job this week is keep me under control and calm.

But, I mean, I feel pretty relaxed. I know it'll be different tomorrow, but I just -- the expectation level is not not there from a sense of like, oh, I feel like I could contend this week. Hey, nine years ago I didn't think I was going to play professional golf anymore. Then I came out here and shot 68 the first day with no expectations. I don't know what's going to happen.

My expectation is just to make sure I'm having a good time. I worked really hard to play this week, and I just want to try to enjoy it.



I forgot your second question. Sorry.

Q. Friends and family?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, my mom is not coming this week, but like a lot of my cousins are coming. A lot of members from Cricket. I mean, they will be out in full force. Been texting me all week, which is really nice.

We have American Needle, who's one my sponsors sent me a bunch of hats with my logo and the Cricket logo on the side. You'll see like a sea of white hats when they're following me, so it'll be nice.

Q. How has the level of play evolved on the LPGA Tour since you stopped playing full time? And since you've come back to it occasionally, how much higher is the caliber of play since then?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: It's unreal. I watch it weekly. It amazes me how far everybody hits it now. It amazes me how good everybody is. I mean, the game has elevated so much. When I was playing there were -- I mean, I played with the Karrie Webbs and Meg Mallons and the Beth Daniels and the Juli Inksters and Annika at the beginning of my career, end of theirs.

Yeah, it's just everybody is getting younger and I feel like I just keep getting older. Yeah, the level of play out here is unbelievable. Always has been.

I just think the LPGA is in a great place. It's going to be in an even better place in the future with Craig coming in. I've heard great things about him. Really excited to see where the LPGA goes.

Q. Is there anything that you pick up from being on the range with these women and being on the course with them that you can take back to your club as a teacher and share with the people taking lessons from you?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Oh, yeah. I mean, if you don't learn something while you're around the best in the world I'm not doing my job. I feel like I can bring back a lot from just even a practice round standpoint, what people do on the range. I am watching everybody's swing, seeing what people are doing drill-wise. Hey, I can bring that back to so and so.

I was texting with a student last night. I asked him how he was doing, and he said, this is about you this week. I said, friend first, coach second, player third. So that's my motto. I'm definitely thinking about everything I can do for my students first because they're most important right now.

Q. That said, what would your members pick up or anybody pick up from watching the LPGA players on the course or just watching them hit balls?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, I think one thing I stress a lot to everybody is to become a setup expert. You look at the range, look at an alignment rod, see people on the range, nobody is hitting balls without any type of alignment aid.

And then also just routines. I think we stress a lot on fast play and pace of play, but it's important to have a good routine. I think that's one thing that everybody can really pick up on from any tour player, especially the LPGA.

But when you look on the putting green, we saw the members could not believe on the putting green, oh, that mirror, we use that in our clinic. They start to realize how important certain things are from a practice standpoint. They can get that from being in person for sure.

I learn a lot when I'm out here, too.

Q. Last question: What would surprise somebody who has never seen an LPGA event before? What would surprise and impress them about how good these players are?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: I think it's the interaction with the fans is the most impressive thing. I think the PGA TOUR is great, too, but I think playing in the pro-ams, the LPGA really gets it. The players get it. We don't have tournaments unless the sponsors are there.

Wednesday and Thursday this week, that's the day to really kind of interact with people. I think the LPGA does that better than any other sports organization I believe.

Lydia Ko, I just think of her. She signs every autograph after she plays. Nelly, same thing, Lexi. Everybody does it. I think that's where we kind of shine in the organization and with fans, making the fans happy and knowing how important it is.

There is a lot of little kids out there watching and setting a good example. I have a junior student coming this week. I think she's coming tomorrow. She's been really fun to teach and she's coming out here. I'm like, I better be on my best behavior this week, so...

Q. With going through rehab, the surgeries, do you think that has affected your teaching style or made you think of different things when teaching other students?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, from a -- I actually did go through level one TPI on my own. A friend of mine had it and I read through and watched the videos. They gave me their login to watch it.

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Thanks.

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I think from -- I remember saying to Stacy, I was with her in March. I understand now why you swing the way you do with tour back after knowing what I know about the physical limitations.

That's definitely something that I've kind of worked harder on from a physical standpoint. People just can't do certain things. You tell me to turn a certain way, I physically can't do it anymore.

I've definitely done a better job of that in the last six months. But I sit more than I would like to on the teaching tee. Physically I just can't stand for ten hours a day like I used to. The information is the same whether I'm sitting or standing.

From a physical perspective the limitations and understanding that a little more, I worked really hard on that. I think that's super important.

Q. When you arrived earlier this week, what were the emotions like? What was the reception from your fellow players seeing you for a first time in a while?

MEAGHAN FRANCELLA: Yeah, I kind of walked in like, what am I doing? Am I really doing this this week?

Yeah, everybody was like, oh, my God, you're back. How are you feeling? So it was more just a concern. I still keep in touch with a handful of people out here. Yeah, there has been definitely questions in my mind of like am I doing the right thing.

My doctor, when I went for my clearance appointment I said, oh, we got to play golf. He's a member up in New York and we know a couple mutual people. He like gave some dates and he said June 8th. I said, well, if he thinks I'm going to be playing 18 holes by June 8th, I think I could maybe play ShopRite.

When I asked him, he was like, you can definitely do it. It's going to be a tall order. You might not be prepping the way you're normally used to prepping.

But, yeah, I was excited. I mean, I can't -- I love it. Love playing, love competing. Love being here obviously. I'm excited.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your time. We appreciate it. Have a great week.

