

The LPGA Drive On Championship

Tuesday, October 20, 2020

Greensboro, Georgia, USA

Reynolds Lake Oconee

Gerina Piller

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome inside the virtual media center here at the LPGA Drive On Championship at Reynolds Lake Oconee. I am happy to be joined by Gerina Piller. Gerina, how are you doing today?

GERINA PILLER: I'm great, thank you.

THE MODERATOR: I've got to ask, is the little one here with you this week?

GERINA PILLER: He is. He was super excited to come. He loves his daycare friends and he always associates mommy's work with AJ gets a new friend. He was running down the hall this morning. It was awesome.

THE MODERATOR: I love that. We're coming off an off week as we head into this new week. Looking back at 2020 as a whole, what has the last couple months been like for you and how would you compare it to any other season you've had on tour?

GERINA PILLER: It's been very interesting. It's been tough on the golf course. Haven't been playing my best golf. You know, obviously getting adjusted to all the protocols and the week in, week out stuff. Since becoming a mom I feel like I've gotten a little more forgetful, so it requires a little more attention to not forget signing up for events or getting my test done or losing a lanyard or credential.

Other than that, I'm just grateful to be out playing. A lot of people in our world haven't been able to go back to work and they've lost their jobs, so to be given this opportunity I think we're blessed in itself just to play golf for a living, but especially in these times.

THE MODERATOR: We've talked to a bunch of players about what this year has meant to them. Sometimes it's hard to find that groove with this week in, week out kind of thing. Is it hard for you or just a hard thing in general when we have off for three weeks or two weeks or something like that?

GERINA PILLER: Yeah, it's definitely been hard for me to kind of get in a groove because I normally don't play as many tournaments in a row. I think I started the year with six in a row; normally I'm about a three-in-a-row kind of person.

But felt like I was ready to go back in January, February, March, and it was kind of waiting game. No matter how much you practice at home practicing tournament golf, you just can't do it unless you're at a tournament.

I think just getting out there and getting the reps in has definitely been huge for me. I feel like I'm real close. Just waiting to see, just pulling it all together.

THE MODERATOR: Were you able to go home this past off week and unwind a little bit?

GERINA PILLER: I was. I went back home and just hung out with my family, did some practicing. Our golf club in Fort Worth, Shady Oaks just re-opened. It was getting renovated. We got to go play that, so that was a treat.

And being at home is always nice. I know we had a lot of time back in the spring to be at home, but just taking every day for what it is and trying to look at the silver lining and be grateful and count your blessings.

THE MODERATOR: This week we take on a new course in Great Waters, but a lot of the players are just getting their first look today. You were able to get a look at this back in 2014 at the Big Break Invitational. What are some of the memories you remember from your first trip out here to Reynolds Lake Oconee?

GERINA PILLER: I just think the first things that comes to mind is hospitality. They welcomed us with open arms and it was just awesome. The course was great. I think we might have played some different tees. I know the greens were different. They had redone them. To be back at a tournament with past Big Breakers, that was kind of fun.

And believe it or not, to play 18 holes and not just do like a challenge of hitting a flop ball or one shot here and there, that was nice, too.

THE MODERATOR: You Ryann O'Toole, Jackie Stoelting,



all were a part of it, and Tony Finau, now a regular on the PGA Tour. Is it cool to look back and see how much you've changed as a player, and also to see so many people come out of an event like that?

GERINA PILLER: Yeah, you know, that was very, very new in my career. I think I was on the show in 2000 -- filmed in 2009; turned pro in 2008. So I definitely have matured more as a person and as a golfer. You know, it definitely helped my career in the aspect of just the pressure, the pressure of one shot or one putt or one drive, really emphasizing the importance of the shot at hand.

So, but, yeah, to see the success of other players like Jackie and Ryann, and Tony is an awesome player and a great guy, it's just really cool.

THE MODERATOR: And fellow LPGA mom in Jackie. Have you guys been able to catch up here at Great Waters?

GERINA PILLER: Not yet. I saw her son this morning at the daycare. You know, it is hard to kind of catch up because you're on different schedules and the babies have different schedules.

But I think it's great to have other moms that you can -- I can text her any time or she can text me and bounce things off. That's kind of like an extra support system. So it's been great for me. I know the daycare here is just top notch. I definitely wouldn't be able to keep playing and doing what I love without them and their help and the help of Smuckers.

I'm forever grateful for that.

THE MODERATOR: Now that you're back here at Reynolds Lake Oconee, what do you think of the course now? What are some of the changes you've seen now that you're back? Have you been out there yet?

GERINA PILLER: Yes, played 18 this morning. It's tough. It's definitely playing a lot longer than I remember. The greens are firm and they have a lot of undulations. It's definitely a second-shot golf course. You got to position yourself off the tee to get a better angle into the greens, more accessible pins.

And, you know, you want to definitely be in the right quadrant for the greens. I know No. 11 is really, really big, but there are some that you just want to divide into quadrants and keep it in that area. So it's going to be a great test. It's in phenomenal shape. Just excited to get started.

THE MODERATOR: All right, hand it off to questions. Steve?

Q. Walking the range this morning a lot of people were surprised by how good this golf course is. I think they were thinking this may be a resort course or whatever. I think there was a lot of surprise that this is here. I know it's been a long time. When you came back were you pleasantly surprised and what would you say about that reaction?

GERINA PILLER: I mean, I didn't remember a whole lot -- I remembered more of the back nine, but I was really surprised with how difficult the second shot is playing and the greens. I know with them being newer greens they're not very receptive as far as they run out and the slopes, you got to definitely know where to land it and where the slopes are and use those to your advantage.

But when we played it was in awesome shape. I don't think I ever played in Georgia. I think we played a Symetra Tour event outside Atlanta. I can't even remember the name of the course. But hadn't played much here, so it's a like fabulous area. I haven't seen the other courses, but with it being on the water, you can definitely get those winds and the big trees.

It's an awesome course. I really like it.

Q. I'm going to turn this over to the more difficult correspondent that's up here. This is Ophelia.

OPHELIA BUNEL: Hello.

GERINA PILLER: Hi, Ophelia.

OPHELIA BUNEL: Hi, my name is Ophelia Bunel. I'm ten years old, and I'm from Girls Golf Miami. I will be the on-course junior reporter this week, and my question is about the Solheim Cup. Many girls love watching Solheim Cup, and you participated in the Solheim Cup three times. To little girls who have big dreams to be in the Solheim Cup someday, do you have a piece of advice or words of inspiration of how they can DriveOn?

GERINA PILLER: Absolutely. I think just keeping those dreams big and chasing and working hard, really controlling the things that you can control, and that's your attitude, work ethic, and your dedication.

So I was a little girl coming from a small town in New Mexico and I always wanted to be a professional athlete. I didn't think it was going to be a golfer, but here I am. Once I achieved that goal, you just keep setting new and higher goals. My first year making a Solheim Cup I was a

captain's pick, so my next goal was I don't want to be a captain's pick. I want to qualify on points. I did.

The next year I don't want to just squeeze in, I want to be a shoe in. So I did that. Just setting new goals every time, setting your bar high, working hard, and just believing in yourself.

OPHELIA BUNEL: Thank you. Thank you so much.

GERINA PILLER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Well, good to know that Ophelia can take my job one day when she grows up. That was spectacular. To wrap up, if anyone has any questions, let us know.

As a wrap up from my end, Ophelia is a perfect example of our LPGA USGA Girls Golf site back in Miami. This week we're highlighting a lot of our nontour areas, including the Girls Golf the scholarships that we raised for the LPGA Foundation. How important are organizations like Girls Golf for young people looking to get into the game?

GERINA PILLER: I think it's very important. When I grew up playing golf - I didn't start until I was 15 - I didn't have those opportunities, and so to be a part of that and support that, I think it's huge, giving the little girls those opportunities opening their eyes. Whether they choose to be a professional golfer or not, whether they want to use it to play for the high school or try to get a scholarship or just learn the game of golf, you can play for the rest your life. It's a game of life, I think.

Golf has a lot of integrity in it, and whether my son decides if he wants to play professionally or serious, I still want to teach him how to. There are some life lessons you can teach on the golf course, whether it's respecting the golf course, respecting others, etiquette, patience, goals. So many things you can teach on the golf course.

So I'm very grateful that I can see the growth of Girls Golf and support that. It's just a great thing.

THE MODERATOR: All right. I think that'll do it for us here, Gerina. Thank you for joining us today.

GERINA PILLER: Thank you.

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