

The LPGA Drive On Championship

Wednesday, October 21, 2020

Greensboro, Georgia, USA

Reynolds Lake Oconee

Mariah Stackhouse

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to another LPGA Zoom pre-tournament press conference. In a few seconds we'll be speaking with Georgia native Mariah Stackhouse.

With that, Mariah, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us. First off, we had a week off since KPMG. Curious what did you do and did you see anyone social distanced?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Yeah. For the off week I went and had a lesson with my swing coach just to -- I mean, I've been hitting ball really well so just want to keep honing in on that.

Had a lesson with a new coach I'm going to work on my putting with a bit over the next career or so. So that was kind of what I spent the off week focused on golf-wise.

I did see two of my friends social distanced, and my mom always. I got to make sure I go get some of mom's cooking when I'm home.

THE MODERATOR: May I ask what your mom cooked or what is your favorite dish that your mom cooks?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: She's gotten really into seafood lately. She'll make different seafood dishes like shrimp, scallions, and kind of add stuff. So my favorite of hers is a pasta, and seafood pasta that she makes. I also really love her breakfast food. She can make anything. She's a great cook. She's one of those from scratchers.

THE MODERATOR: That sounds amazing. With that being said, you talked about seeing your swing coach. Is there anything you've been working on recently that you're particularly looking forward to testing this week?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Uh-huh, we've been working a lot on my impact, and so less impact focus and more so the things I can do on my takeaway to ensure I'm where I am at the top so I'm not forcefully trying to clear anything and can come down on a proper swing path and have that



good angle on the impact.

I'm excited to test that out this week. Grass is great, Zoysia, so you get some really great fliers on that. Depending on the grain a couple of the approach shots can be tough, and that's when it's good to have the consistent impact position. I'm excited to test that out on especially some of those shorter irons and see how tight I can get them this week.

THE MODERATOR: I'm sure players are always thinking about strategies for different courses. What do you think would be the hardest challenge for this week, pin locations or otherwise?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: I think the challenge this week is definitely going to be approach shots. A lot of the greens are really small, even a couple of the par-5s have some smaller greens than you would expect on a par-5. So I think iron placement becomes really, really important. I don't think Jack set this up to get you into a lot of trouble off the tee, so it's about knowing where the pin is, where the okay miss is, but for a lot of them just making sure you're in the center of the green and on the proper plateau with the pin.

Yeah, you're going to see approach shot placement is going to be huge. Once you're on the green they're not huge, so you have a lot of birdie opportunities.

THE MODERATOR: You're from Georgia. I'm sure a lot have been asking if you've played here before. What would winning this event in your home state mean to you?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Yeah, you know, I don't think -- I think this is the first tournament I've played in Georgia since turning pro because we don't have a stop in Georgia anymore. So I'm really excited. Definitely has a home course feel. I'm definitely sad that we don't have any fans out, but I can still feel it here with some of the guys that work at the course. I can tell like a couple of them have come up and say, Hey, Stackhouse, you're from Atlanta.

So I still feel like I got that I guess home team support from the locals here. I mean, a great performance this week would mean the world. It's always nice to hop in your car and have a short drive over to the tournament you're playing. Almost makes it feel like it's not as much of a



production, and you're kind of in an easygoing state. I'm looking forward to that this week.

THE MODERATOR: And speaking of having a tournament in Georgia, next year KPMG will be at the Atlanta Athletic Club, which I'm sure you played at many times. Just could you give us a little insight as to how excited you are about that.

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: I'm definitely really excited to get the opportunity to play the KPMG Women's PGA in Atlanta next year. Having a major come through Atlanta is going to be huge, and Georgia, Atlanta, is a huge golf city, huge golf state. I think everybody is going to be really excited to have a women's major come through, so I think it's going to help myself and the other women on tour feel very special and appreciated that week.

I have gotten a chance to play Atlanta Athletic Club growing up. It's a beast of a golf course. I know that the PGA will set it up long and it's going to be a great test, so I'm definitely looking to try to get on the course a bit over the next few months and have a great time.

THE MODERATOR: Quickly before we sway away from this topic, we have a question from the media. How many times have you played here at this course and has anyone asked you about the conditions of the course?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: This is actually my first time ever playing Great Waters. Never been here. Played a little bit of golf here in the area, but first time at this golf course.

I think one of the things that's going to make this week key is that the greens are new. It's going to kind of level the playing field in terms of who is comfortable playing on this grass and these greens. Because they're new it's going to be the same firm experience for everyone. It'll make it a great test of golf.

THE MODERATOR: We do have a question from Ophelia who's a member of Girls Golf.

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Hi, Ophelia.

OPHELIA BUNUEL: I'm Ophelia Bunuel; I'm ten years old and I'm from Girls Golf Miami. I know that you're from, used to be in Girls Golf. I just have to say it's an honor to get to speak with you.

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: I'm happy to speak with you, too.

OPHELIA BUNUEL: So even as a Girls Golf participant,

we all try to grow the game of golf. I had the luck to speak with Shirley Spork, one of the original 13 founders of the LPGA, and she always asked what we are doing to grow the game of golf. What do you think you're doing to grow the game of golf?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: That's a great question, Ophelia, and I feel extremely grateful to be a member of the LPGA Tour, to be living on the my dream. So that's all of our goals, right? To get more little girls interested in the game of golf and continue to grow it. So what I'm doing is I think promoting the game of golf on a public platform, showing how much fun it is and how much I love it. That's what I do in a public setting.

But then behind the scenes it's taking the time to speak to all the young girls who come out and watch us play. And the young boys, too. Being that face. I think it's important to be able to step away from your role as an LPGA player and sometimes just chat with the people that come out and watch us play on a personal level and about the basics of golf and just what it's like to travel on tour and be out here, and, you know, share the joy that I experience week in, week out, year in, year out being out here, and hopefully inspire you and everyone else coming up to want to be out here competing with us.

OPHELIA BUNUEL: You're really inspiring me. Thank you for answering that question.

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: And you inspire me. Thanks for that question, Ophelia.

OPHELIA BUNUEL: Best of luck this week.

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: I think before we leave that really nice topic, this week the LPGA is highlighting some nontour areas. We have a theme for each day. Who's someone that has coached and helped you in your journey of being on tour today?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Like who has hands-on coached me?

THE MODERATOR: Could be a teacher in school, just someone that you consider someone who has helped you.

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Yeah. You know, I would have to say that the person that's helped get here is the person who put a golf club in my hand, and that's been my dad. And our relationship with golf and each other has just always been really strong. I think my dad was one of those special golf dads that he definitely pushed me and

encouraged me to be better, but always made sure that I had a love for the game, that I had the choice to play, and that it was never forced, and to figure out a way to every year fall in love with the game more.

I credit him with for introducing me to the game of golf and helping me develop that love and passion that kept me moving forward. Even once I went school and he was no longer there with me 24/7, I had a healthy relationship with the game because he made sure that it stayed a game for me and not something that I had to do and I had to succeed at in order to be happy with myself.

And, yeah, just awesome.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for that. I think it's a good reminder that parents make so much of the golfers, boys or girls, their careers. Just curious, can you think back to any particular day or time when your dad was just really there for you? And going back to junior golf, was there a day that really stood out to you that he supported you?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Uh-huh. You know, there were countless examples of him supporting me, but actually I'm going to answer that a little differently than you asked. It's one of those things where I talked about how he never made me feel like it had to be the most important thing in the world to me to play golf. So I remember I played a junior tournament, and it was a tournament that would go to Mississippi every year when I was younger, and it fell in line one year with my cousin's birthday and she was going to Disney World.

I felt like I had to play that tournament instead of going to Disney World. That was the choice that I ended up making, going to the tournament, but I remember him sitting me down and saying, you know, you get to be a kid. You don't have to skip Disney word. I'm whatever, 13.

And so I remember going to the tournament and I think I won that year. I remember being sad afterwards, right, because I didn't go to Disney World. He had that talk with me coming back and he was saying, You know, you're not a professional right now. I know that that's what you want to do one day, but next time an opportunity like this pops up, if it's not like a national championship or something like that, remember to be a kid right now. You got golf in front of you for your whole life.

So that was one of those good dad lessons he taught me.

THE MODERATOR: I hope Disney is listening and they bring Mariah and her father out.

Questions.

Q. So as a child of Georgia I have kind of a deep question for you. I was wondering how you think we should look at Augusta National's old south roots in the context of the racial reckoning and awakening that our country is going through right now?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: You know, are you talking about Augusta itself?

Q. The Masters, Augusta National, the whole kit and kaboodle.

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Yeah, so you look at, you place it in terms of the national conversation that we are having, and I think that's all about progress, right? So you can talk about everything that has happened and it definitely -- that discussion has to be had, but it's about what we're going to do moving forward to change that.

So I take a look now because it has just been exclusion based on race in the past. It's also been gender. Now we've got the amateur tournament for the women out of Augusta, and I think that creates a huge platform, an eye on amateur women's golf and the young girls coming up.

So it's about taking those kind of opportunities to see, Hey, we might have missed this in the past. What can we do now to promote progress in the game of golf. So I think that's an example of how some of that can be remedied and work on inclusivity moving forward.

Q. Can I just ask a follow? You were really eloquent in an ESPN piece recently talking about how golf is sort of tough to even have this conversation because the diversity isn't where it could be. What kind of reaction do you get from people on the outside? Do they seem like they're looking at the game in a different way now, or do you think golf sort of exists in this realm that is not really -- people aren't really thinking of it in any way, good or bad?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: You know, I can't say that it exists in a realm anymore where people aren't thinking about it, because I think pretty much every major golf organization so far this year has made a statement of some sort that has caused a conversation.

And regardless of what the reactions have been, that conversation is going. So I think we're going to see a push just to figure out how to grow the game of golf, make it more inclusive, how to make it as welcoming in a way that has allowed me to love the game, but for people outside of a competitive area to also have that experience on the golf

course, right?

So I look forward to it, and it takes that push from the governing bodies, and I think we're slowly seeing that happen.

THE MODERATOR: I might go back to your Girls Golf days. Question we have for media is, can you talk to us about your Girls Golf days and how integral that was for where you are today? The Girls Golf organization is so impactful. Can you maybe give us a couple memories of how has Girls Golf helped you?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Absolutely. So I think my parents focused a lot on not only developing me as a golfer but wanting me to enjoy golf socially and competitively, too. So they would always put me in like the local junior programs around the Atlanta area, and the goal was for me to meet a lot of other girls my age playing golf and have fun.

So I think that that is how Girls Golf was integral to my experience, is taking away it just being something competitive but somewhere we can go and work together. You have the instructors out there giving everybody games, but most importantly you got a big group of girls loving the game of golf and having fun together and making friends. Then now we're really excited to go practice and then see each other again at the next day of camp are summer program.

So I think that's how the Girls Golf program was huge for me. And like you said, we are trying to figure out how to grow the game, and you grow it by making it fun and making kids want show up again the next day. I think that's how you do it.

THE MODERATOR: I think that's enough said there. Last question is this year has been crazy and crazy stressful.

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: What are some ways you unwind and relax and reset? Can be Netflix related or just eating your mom's amazing food. What are some ways that you just relax?

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Yeah. So I relax a couple different ways, both of those that you mentioned are included. Always find a Netflix show to binge. Like while I was at home pretty much I think every weekend I was going down to my mom's house either Saturday or Sunday for a brunch. We would always relax, watch something, or just chat.

Something else that I would do is find a trail around Georgia. Georgia has a lot of really great nature trails, so go with a friend or two on nice social distanced outdoor activity where we can socialize and have fun and get away from city life and just be in nature.

So those are like some of the things I liked to do to decompress and take some time off of the golf course and out of the gym to just relax and have fun.

THE MODERATOR: We hope you have a lot of fun here this week. Thank you so much.

MARIAH STACKHOUSE: Thank you. Good talking to you.

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