

The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican

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Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

Linn Grant

Annika Sorenstam

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joining me here today, after The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican is our 2025 champion Linn Grant and tournament host Annika Sorenstam. Linn, what does it mean to be sitting here today as the champion?

LINN GRANT: Oh, I don't even know if I can explain that. I think for myself this season has been personally quite disappointing up until now.

I said in some interviews that golf is such a vicious game and how one day you believe you can win everything and then the next you don't believe in yourself at all. I think today was just a win for me. And I think especially with Annika and her event, I think it was maybe a win for little me.

It's just very fun to be sitting here with you with all the history we sort of have and with all the events that I played -- I think I played in all the events on like every level up until this one.

So I think it's a true full circle both personally and sitting here with Annika as well.

Q. Annika, this is the first time that a Swede has won this event. What does it mean to have Linn sitting here next to you as a champion?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I'm super proud. Super proud of Linn to be here. As you know this is one of the top tournaments on the LPGA, especially this time of year: limited field and everybody is ready to get some points for next week, you know, climb up the leaderboard or whether it's Rookie of the Year or Player of the Year, there is a lot at stake so we know the competition is really tough.

Like Linn said, hasn't had her best year but certainly stepped up when she needed to and wanted to I guess.

So goes back to like she said the full circle. If you think about what this tournament is about, one of the beneficiaries is The ANNIKA Foundation, and we have had several players that have played in our events, for them to be here is a big deal, and obviously to win is even a bigger deal.

So in a lot ways it's kind of cool because it justifies what we do, starting at the level of six year olds from the clinic yesterday to whether it's just teenage competition to college competition to professional. So it's really, really cool.

But it's all about Linn and what she did this week, and so exciting to sit here with her and happy for her. I think everybody who has watched Linn growing up knows there is a lot of potential in there and she has already won, as you know. Still, I think the pressure is always there when you come in knowing you're a good player and you come out here and probably want to get off to a really quick start.

It's hard out here, so you got to cherish every win.

LINN GRANT: I mean, I always felt that after the game of golf, once you're finished as a pro, there is not really any pressure for you to still be out here and do what Annika is doing. I always felt that like it's such a big role to take on and I think you do it very, very well.

Also like just the fact that you don't have to do that, I think that's really big. I don't think everyone is that sort of person. Like I said I think you do it very well. I've always loved to play in your events and everything you do.

Q. Linn, first win since 2023. Dana Open a couple years ago. How gratifying does it feel to get the job done here?

LINN GRANT: It feels very nice. I mean, like you said, like Annika said, just like there are weeks where you feel like everyone feels like their game is really good and there could potentially be a win. It's just really nice to like see it go all the way and to really walk off 18 and be able to pat yourself on the shoulder and feel like I actually did it this week.



Q. And for Annika, Linn is obviously our 29th different champion this season. As somebody that dominated when she was out here, what do you think that level of parity says about the depth of the LPGA right now and how cool is it to see it continue at your event?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, no, it's been an interesting year on the LPGA. I think after '24 I don't think people thought what we've seen this year would be what it is. It shows the depth of the Tour. I think we're in a little bit of a transition between some players and generations maybe.

So, I mean, I follow the Tour very closely, as much as you do probably, so it's interesting to see the young players coming up and establish themselves here. Some of them are getting out there in front a little more than others.

It's a good time to be an LPGA player knowing you have a new commissioner, there is a lot of events just growing and purses are getting better, courses are getting kind of the top notch courses.

A lot of reasons to be part of LPGA, and happy for players like Linn that are literally starting their career. We'll see what happens next year, but this year I think it's been a little different than we thought early in the season.

Q. (No microphone.)

LINN GRANT: Well, I was playing with Jennifer and she was obviously playing very well, too. I think both of us really pushed each other to make a lot of birdies today.

I was looking at the leaderboard, like looked over and I was like, okay, so we were at the top and then there was a couple shots down to the third place. I was like, of course it's going to be another round playing really well today.

But I think that's also -- it feels better now when I'm done to feel like, you know what, I felt like I almost beat her because she was playing so well. Yeah, it was a great battle.

Q. So missed four straight cuts, you bounce back, and then miss three straight, then you bounce back again. Can you tell us about how you persevered or what was going on, how you managed that?

LINN GRANT: I don't know, to be fair. Like I feel like golf and this lifestyle is always a rollercoaster of trying to figure out how to get better. Sometimes it's just about taking a step back and maybe look at yourself and be like, am I happy? Am I making the decisions that make me happy?

Sometimes that is what makes golf easier. You have to be kind of strong and confident in those decisions to be able to say, maybe I'm not playing this week because I'm not feeling it because it doesn't make me happy, or changing just your plans or how you do things more for yourself to be true to yourself.

For me this year I think that has been really big. Like I've had to change a lot of things in my routines, things that I thought was just things that were good to do because other people were doing them instead of thinking like, what do I actually believe in it? What do I think makes me a better person and a better player?

Q. Did you change anything this week or no?

LINN GRANT: Not specifically for this week. But, no. (Smiling.)

Q. 52 holes, consecutive holes without a bogey. When is the last time you had that kind of stretch in tournament golf?

LINN GRANT: I don't think I've ever had that kind of stretch maybe. It's been really fun to play this week. I really love this golf course. I had a good feeling walking into it just the feeling of wanting to play golf. That's not every week.

I just really wanted to go out and play and play as well as I could.

Q. You also touched on kind of the peaks and valleys that go along with a competitive year. What, if anything, might have changed since you got back from Asia to get ready for this tournament that gave you confidence?

LINN GRANT: Oh, I don't know what changed. I think for pretty much the fall I feel like I've been doing things that I more so believe I should be doing: not stressing too much over my results or like feeling like I'm not as good as I should be or I should have been more successful in ways.

But just believing that whatever path I'm on is for me.

Q. When we're looking at the fact that we have 25% of women who are golfers right now, 38% of junior golfers are little girls as of this year. How do you feel about those statistics? You guys are very much living proof of this. Maybe? Annika, you retired in 2008. Those numbers were probably very, very different. How do we make sure that those junior golfer numbers keep growing? And of course that goes into women golfers, female golfers, as they become adults?



ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, when I stopped there were 17% of junior girls, so we know those number numbers quite well. I'm glad they're 385.

But, yeah, of course. We can continue to grow. At one point I would love to see 50-50. I think this is a sport for everyone. It takes time and it takes role models like Linn here to play the way she did.

I don't know if you were out there, but see all these young girls with their little balls they have and visors and pencils. They're so excited to be here.

That's what I think sparks the interest and hopefully more young girls will play.

Also the Women's Summit is a way to bring people, women into the sport and have them part of the tournament, the atmosphere. Many of them that were here Tuesday came out Saturday and Sundays and watched.

I think just including them and making them feel part of it and come up with initiatives that's exciting for them, and we just got to keep on going.

But the LPGA is a great platform for that because these are successful women that are inspirational in a lot of ways and there are so many takeaways you can take from a professional golfer into just regular life.

So I think it's a great combo and we're going to continue to do that.

Q. Being such a strange game, you don't know what you're going to have day after day, when did you feel "it" today? When did you feel comfortable you had a good enough game to compete?

LINN GRANT: I think I've been feeling like that all week, which has been very relaxing. And just today, like I walked out and just kept telling myself the mantra of like whenever I rushed my thoughts I would just go back to thinking that my only job today was to play like as well as I can, to do my very best. If that's not enough, that's fine.

And I even said to Pontus, I mean, if we don't win today and I still manage to do as well as I can, I'm really happy with the week because I've been playing really well. If someone sneaks up behind and shoots a low round, that's their win.

Q. Was there a shot today that stood out that was particularly pleasing?

LINN GRANT: I mean, on 9 today I looked at Pontus and I said, well, I'm not playing with this pin. I'm just going to keep it left, keep it safe. I'm not going to hit out there. Then I pushed it a little and it turned out to be really good.

But I just said I almost had a heart attack because it was just like take deep breath in when I saw the shot come out. It's one of those days where whatever I did it just worked out.

Q. What do you have planned the rest of the year? Next week and is that it?

LINN GRANT: That's it, yeah.

Q. You've won somewhere every year as a pro. I guess you can include the Nordic Golf League as an amateur. How proud are you to extend that streak?

LINN GRANT: Very proud I would say. I didn't think about it until now.

Q. That's what I'm here for.

LINN GRANT: Thank you. Yeah, I think my dad is a man of good words I would say. He's always said -- when he looked at someone else's career he always said, if you have a win every year that's pretty solid.

I guess that's what it is.

Q. One for each of you. On a bigger spectrum question, first one: Couple days ago you were nice enough to go over for Amy Bockerstette's clinic that she was giving. When you do stuff like that, does it give you an opportunity to kind of take a step back and look at the bigger picture of how, A, great the game of golf is, how inclusive it is, and also give you perspective about the game of golf?

LINN GRANT: Yeah, 100%. I think you nailed it. I think just walking over there and seeing how happy they were and how excited they were, it just brought all my focus just to them for those like ten minutes I was there.

Then I was hitting some balls on the range and I was watching them all hit and Pontus and I were both very impressed with how good they were.

So I for sure think that that helped me for the week truly to just get a step back and see golf for how, yeah, like you said inclusive and for everyone, how it can include everyone.

Q. And Annika, cute moment earlier this week.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Overheard a little girl seeing you walking around among the general public. She was like oh, my gosh, mom, there is Annika. I wonder if she's lost. She's out here in the middle walking around everybody. You have obviously been everywhere, this week especially. A lot going on. When you go back tonight, catch a breath, kind of assess everything, just a few comments on your feelings about the week from the Folds of honor to Amy Bockerstette to everything that was going on this week.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yeah, no, I think words that come to my mind is proud, satisfied, and then just excited. I don't know, there is a calmness just because I feel like the week just went kind of what we had hoped and planned.

You know, a lot of things just kind of aligned beautifully this week, you know, just from -- well, starting the day with the winner, the weather, people, the initiatives, engagement, everything. All the different activities that were planned with sponsor invites, with Caitlin Clark.

It's just a lot of -- I just had really a good feeling. I know that the Doyle family felt the same way. It just feels good.

And, no, I wasn't lost out there. I've been walking around every part of the course just because I love to be here. Also to be able to connect with whether it's sponsors and players or caddies or fans or whatever. Just walking around here with the members, and that's the best way to get a feel for the tournament.

So, yeah, I'll be putting my head on my pillow with a smile on my face. I do know I'll be sleeping well tonight, I can tell you that. The alarm will not go off that early tomorrow.

Q. Linn, the phrase full circle has been used a few times today. How old were you when you first met Annika and what do you remember about that encounter?

LINN GRANT: I think I played The ANNIKA Cup.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Uh-huh.

LINN GRANT: I remember we had like a wedge session.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Uh-huh.

LINN GRANT: Do you remember that?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yes, so ANNIKA Cup, they're like ten, 12 years old. So, yeah, I do a lot of wedge sessions with the young girls. I would like to hear what you remember.

LINN GRANT: Yeah, I remember playing in that event. It's like a team event and I just remember getting so many new friends from that week. It was so much fun. I remember your clinic specifically. I think Mike was there with the glove. Yeah, we were all -- I was so impressed with how can you hit a wedge and then just have someone stand there and just catch it.

I started doing that with my dad, so thanks for that.

And then also either that week or the Invitational there was always these fun like get-togethers. Either it was cooking food together or listening to someone speak about a certain subject, things for us to learn. I think everything outside of golf was so much fun so that the tournament, like it didn't matter how it went if you won or played well because you always looked forward to these events that Annika hosted.

Like it felt like a tour, like a pro event even before it was.

Q. Did you get tongue-tied the first time you met her?

LINN GRANT: Probably, yeah.

Q. When you were going through and stopping by the I Got This Foundation and now you're obviously an inspiration, especially in Sweden as you continue to win, what sort of thoughts have you put behind the legacy you want to leave in golf?

LINN GRANT: Oh, I think that's something that I think about each year. I feel like it changes so much. I mean, just a couple years ago it was like I can't even think about that because I was so into trying to get better in my own golf.

But I feel like a week like this, even meeting the players the other day, it puts it in a very big perspective. Also the question about young girls playing. Like the older I get the more you want to help people get involved. It's funny how that changes, and I'm very happy it goes that way and not the opposite.

I really look forward to the time when I'm done to see what I'll be doing. I'm not sure what it is yet, but I hope it will be something that helps the game for sure.

Q. I want to talk about the butterfly effect or also the Caitlin Clark effect. When we are talking about having such a spotlight, this Avengers collaboration between women in sports, but also the impact in the Tampa community that we're able to have such a front row to Linn, to you, Annika, to Caitlin Clark. What does that



mean when we're talking about the impact on the front row to Tampa and women's sports in general that we're now making so much of this so accessible that little girls can just see you Caitlin Clark or Linn walking around? Where do we go from here to make sure this keeps happening? And of course, just speak to the fact that we had a very cool collaboration happening earlier this week.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: You want me to take this one?

LINN GRANT: Yes.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I got this? Okay. You're right, how do we capitalize on this and how do we grow on this? I think what we have seen is when somebody like Caitlin Clark comes here there is an extra buzz. She brings more people into this event, more people watch. Pro-am was on TV or Golf Channel. I don't think you could do that before.

Just a lot of effects with that. When you look at media numbers for this week in general I think we're all going to be extremely happy and excited, because I think I know they have doubles and tripled some of the numbers they're tracking whether it's tickets or just expressions, et cetera.

But I think that the key for us is like how do we do this more often? How do we carry it from Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, into Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday? The players can only do so much.

The interest is there. Those are questions that are on the table for sure. We don't necessarily have the answers, but we would love to continue that. When you bring in other female athletes like Gainbridge brought in Caitlin and Sophie Cunningham and Lexie Hull, you could see it. It was different type of people but they were like, oh, I want to try golf. They never come here for that reason, but now you open their eyes. I hope we can do that more in different ways.

I think it's really important for female athletes to help each other. I think this elevates some of the WNBA as much as the LPGA. So I'm all for partnerships and collaborations and making fun for everyone.

Q. Linn, just wanted to end on this. When do you this for a living, is it easy to fall into the trap of happiness being connected only to good golf scores?

LINN GRANT: Yes. Yes.

Q. How do you deal with that or...

LINN GRANT: I feel like for me, like this year specifically

has been -- I wouldn't call it a setback at all. I would just say like it has put my thoughts in a different perspective.

Just thinking, you know, there are so many days you walk off the course and you're always like, I could have done that better or I could have putt better. Even if you walk off and you're a couple under par, you feel like I could have holed that putt or you're never really truly 100% satisfied.

I think that's what's really tough about this sport, to feel like you can always do more than you do and you can always do it better. I think it's an ongoing process for me specifically. I think for everyone I guess.

But you just learn sort of that's like the lifestyle and you learn to be a little bit kinder to yourself and be more proud of the small wins.

Q. Annika, when you shot 59 was there any part of you ever that said, man, that should have been 58?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I did have a putt for 58, so yeah. Why didn't it go in? Yeah, I mean, I echo what Linn said there. You follow a lot of golf, Doug. You become your score sometimes. That's what we live for. If we don't play well you're not seen and heard. If you play well people see you and you're heard.

It's just that correlation that puts lots of pressure on every player. Especially if you don't play for a longer period of time. You start doubting yourself and start looking at am I making the right decision? Is this were I want to be?

Then when play well it's sunny every day and bounces are great and putts go in; life is easy. But I would say that's just life in general, especially in golf. I mean, numbers is what we talk about. You compare yourself to numbers. Sometimes you don't see the whole picture. I think that's what Linn was talking about. The clinic here and especially now when I stepped away, I see it a totally different way because I'm not playing. I'm not measured by my numbers anymore.

You look at more the numbers I'm looking at is how many people come here and how many girls are here. So different numbers that give you satisfaction knowing you're doing the right thing.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you Linn, thank you Annika.

LINN GRANT: Yeah, thank you.

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