The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican

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Belleair, Florida, USA

Pelican Golf Club

Nelly Korda

Press Conference

MALLORY KINAHAN: All right, pleased to be joined by Rolex No. 1 Nelly Korda ahead of the 2026 The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican. Nelly, you're no stranger to this tournament. Three wins in just six appearances. Could you just put in your own words what this tournament means to you? Obviously super close to home and you obviously love this tournament, so what is it like in your own words?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, I know it definitely helps that I've had so much success out here, but also being a Florida girl, being used to the bermudagrass. My home course Concession kind of has a similar vibe to the golf course here.

And then at the end getting the support from all my family and friends that come out is always another motivating factor.

So I think overall in general I just feel comfortable out here.

MALLORY KINAHAN: Questions.

Q. Nelly, Annika and her team have really worked to make this a world class event. What is it for you that has made this tournament into a must-play year after year?

NELLY KORDA: There are so many different aspects. Being so close to home, it's in Florida, and also it's just such a prestigious event. With the Doyle family elevating this event, with Dan Towriss as well coming in a few years after and joining in and now Annika being the host, just every year that I've played they just elevated this event.

Not just from a player experience. It's also how well the golf course is manicured. They really want to show up for this golf course and they want to make sure that they put on a really great event, and they do it from the inside out really.

Q. You're coming off an extended break. What's the benefit of taking that extra time?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, eight weeks. I don't remember the last time I took that long off. It was nice, but by the kind of middle of it was ready to get going.

There is only so many hours you can go out and practice and beat balls. Very excited to be back. I think it's more of like the rejuvenation of being really motivated to come back out, and sometimes when you play a lot and you travel a lot, you kind of start to get a little stagnant. Not saying you're not driven, but you just get a little tired, a little worn out, body gets a little drained.

When you do take that time to kind of have a little bit of time for yourself to reenergize your batteries, you're very motivated to come back and play against the best players in the world and test yourself.

Q. Is that why you wanted to take so long this time or was there another reason?

NELLY KORDA: I wanted to give my body a little bit of a break. It wasn't feeling too great. Last time I put myself into that position I ended up injuring myself and was out longer, so I would say that as I gotten older I've learned to listen to my body. Sometimes I just have to take that break. A lot of people may not agree with it. I have to really listen to myself and know what's best for myself.

Q. So before Mary Kate asks her question, we'll do the intro. So you're sporting some shoes today.

NELLY KORDA: Yes. They're very pretty shoes.

Q. As part of the Kicks for Causes program, young Mary Kate who designed your shoes is right out front here. So talk about the shoes, talk about the design on the shoes, and meeting Mary Kate this morning on the driving range.

NELLY KORDA: I feel like Mary Kate should be the one to talk about the shoes, right? So you'll join in with me. We have the waves for...

MARY KATE: When I was two years old I went snorkeling in 30 feet of water and saw a Goliath Grouper.

NELLY KORDA: Super cool. And then we have the rainbow in front. Why did you want to put the rainbow in the front?

MARY KATE: I really like that color.

NELLY KORDA: Me too. And then what else do we have here. Oh, we have the medal, and that is for?

MARY KATE: You winning the Olympics in Tokyo.

NELLY KORDA: Yeah. So she designed them really well. They're super cute.

What is this? And also the sun. You like the sun. It's pretty too. Yeah. So I got sport them today. MK followed me around the majority of the day and met her on the range and, yeah, it was a fun day.

MARY KATE: How many golf balls have you hit since you started?

NELLY KORDA: Oh, my God. I wish we had like a count, you know, that would come up digitally and say this is how many golf balls you hit throughout your entire life. Hundreds of thousands for sure. A lot. I can't even count.

Some days I'll go out and won't hit that much, but then there will be times where I'm out grinding for four hours and I am just beating balls. I don't even give myself a break. I don't like how my swing is looking, so it's almost a little angry too. But I'm just beating balls.

So throughout my life, hundreds of thousands of golf balls.

MARY KATE: Did my shoes help you today?

NELLY KORDA: Definitely. I almost holed out twice with them back to back. I had my putting coach out there and I think I hit it to one foot and he was like, well, I'm not doing much work today.

So definitely. Thank you.

MARY KATE: What's a prettiest course you ever played at?

NELLY KORDA: Prettiest golf course I ever played at? I have a few. I would say Pebble Beach is really pretty because it's right on the water, and then Kingsbarns over in the UK is also really pretty. There is this one Par-5 that is along the coast and it's just a really pretty view.

And I have to say Augusta, too. I mean, just walking on the grounds of such an amazing venue with so much history, I would say that's definitely my Top 3.

What's your favorite?

MARY KATE: I don't know. I never really thought about it.

NELLY KORDA: You're like, the Pelican today.

MARY KATE: Thank you.

NELLY KORDA: No problem.

MALLORY KINAHAN: Obviously you just clinched the Rolex Player the Year for the second time in your career. What does that honor mean to you and that all your hard work has paid off once again to achieve that honor?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, obviously it's not just me but it's my entire team behind me. I'm the one hitting the shots and grinding, but there is so much that goes on behind the scenes. So I have so much -- I'm very grateful and also so thankful for everyone that has been with me through the ups and downs.

Winning it in 2024 and having a little bit of an off year in 2025 and getting back to it in 2026, to me that's a testament of the people that I have behind me through the ups and downs just lift me up.

I'm honored to be on the list again of Player of the Year, and hopefully that continues to push me forward.

MALLORY KINAHAN: And then also, we are just one week from the last CME Group Tour Championship. How do you prepare this week in order to just achieve success next week?

NELLY KORDA: Well, I haven't played in eight weeks so we'll see. We'll see how in my game is right now. Obviously when you're playing at home and you don't really have too much pressure on you and you're just going out to play, it's much easier than competing.

So we'll see how this week goes, how my game holds up, and then if I need to make any adjustments going into next week I will be doing that.

Q. The LPGA is unveiling a new pace of play policy. Thoughts on the pace of play policy?

NELLY KORDA: I'm a big fan. Anything to get the game a

little faster for us players, for fans, for everyone, I think they're doing a really good job.

I mean, at the end of the day, no one wants to be out here for five-plus hours. No player wants to. Nobody wants to watch it. I think we're just moving in the right direction.

Q. And then during your time home, so you did Jonas Brothers Podcast and you did a few. So talk about those opportunities and the opportunities that present themselves and kind of you introducing, not only Nelly Korda, but also the LPGA Tour to kind of a different audience?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, it was definitely a pinch-me moment getting to meet the Jonas Brothers, because I was obsessed with them growing up. And then like being on the Podcast was really cool, but then watching them perform live was I think even cooler.

There was one moment where I was off to the side of their stage and Joe Jonas came up and pointed at me and I think I melted inside, my little 12-year-old-self melted inside.

But getting to put my name out on different stages, obviously trying to get the game of golf, women's golf to new viewership is always very beneficial for us.

But for me, also getting to meet some of the people that I kind of looked up to growing up was really cool, too.

MALLORY KINAHAN: Thanks so much for your time, Nelly. Good luck this week.

NELLY KORDA: Thank you.

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