

# HSBC Women's World Championship

Thursday, 2 March 2023

Republic of Singapore

Sentosa Golf Club

## Elizabeth Szokol

### Quick Quotes

**Q. So what a fantastic round today. You started off with a bogey and then never looked back.**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Yes.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about how you felt out there?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Yeah, after that bogey, I just kind of focused on making birdies and made a few longer putts, and then got a little more comfortable and started hitting some good iron shots in and had some closer looks. So it was a fun day.

**Q. So you're out here on a medical exemption.**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Yes.

**Q. Can you tell us a little bit about why that was and what you'd done?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Yeah, I had a back injury. So I was planning on coming here last year but made the decision not to and take some time away from the game, which was a good decision looking back, and really focused on getting better and feeling healthy. And just happy to be back playing and especially here.

**Q. So what was the actual diagnosis or injury?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Herniated disk.

**Q. And then how long were you out for in total?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Four or five months. I didn't touch a golf club for I think 12 weeks.

**Q. Did you have an operation on it?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: I didn't. Just injections and rest.

**Q. And so last week in Thailand, was that your first rounds back?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: No, I played the second half of



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the season last year. So I think I played maybe 12 events, 14 events, something like that. So I missed the first nine. So I'm playing my nine off of my medical now.

**Q. And obviously feeling really confident. So last week I think you were about -- were you 44th or something?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: I think so, yes.

**Q. What did you find between last week and this week with your game?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: My irons just weren't the best last week. I was putting well and hitting it pretty good off the tee, just irons weren't super sharp. Just had to knock all the rust off from the offseason, I think.

**Q. And then obviously this course has taken a huge amount of water in the last couple days. But it looked like it was playing great out there. How was that suiting you? How were you finding the conditions?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Yeah, it was pretty soft. The greens were quite soft. So I could definitely attack a few more pins.

This is my first time playing here. And people had said usually it's a bit firmer. But the rain definitely softened it up. So I could be a little bit more aggressive with some pins today.

**Q. And then obviously you're ahead of the field at the moment. What is about the course particularly that is suiting your eye?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Big greens, and that was good. But I hit my irons well and gave myself some good looks. And I really like the greens. When I played my practice round on Tuesday, I liked the greens a lot. They were rolling great. And it's a great golf course.

**Q. So you managed to get 18 in?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: I got 16 in. I actually hadn't seen 8 and 9. So I played 16 holes. So yeah.

**Q. What do you do differently today, and what areas**



**of the game were you most pleased with?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: I was happy with the improvement in my irons from last week. I made some good putts, which was great. But irons were a big improvement from last week.

**Q. So I looked at your background, and everything then is softball when you're younger. So I think it's a bit of a difference to start golfing when you're 14.**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Right.

**Q. So how is it like picking up golf and becoming a golfer?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: It's great. It's a lot of fun. I'm glad I played other sports when I was young and kind of found golf a little bit later. So that kind of worked for me. But happy to be here and playing.

**Q. Great. So was it like your parents who inspired you? Or what made you pick up golf?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Not really. It was just kind of always around. And I played tennis and always had to have someone to hit back to you, and I just really liked that golf I could go out on my own time whenever I wanted. So that was a big appeal.

**Q. So I believe golf is a very up-and-down sport. So sometimes you're at the top of the leaderboard, sometimes you're at the back. So how do you manage your ups and downs?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: I guess trying to stay as neutral as you can and try and not ride those highs and lows, and just stay pretty neutral, as best you can.

**Q. Is there any experience you've had out here that you're going to draw on as you sit on the lead tonight? Is there any particular sort of thing you'll think about or experience that you've had that stands you in good stead?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: I had a few final groups two years ago. But I think just doing what I usually do, and I really try and get away from golf once I leave the golf course. So go and have dinner with friends and explore Singapore and do just about everything else than think about golf.

**Q. And have you seen anything fun in Singapore so far that you're loving? It's your first time here.**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: It's amazing. I can't believe it. It's really cool and a great place to be. I walked around a little bit. The party was at Marina Bay Sands last night, so just the view up there was a lot of fun.

**Q. Yeah, you look out and think, gosh, I'm going to go and visit there?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: No, not quite yet. But we'll see. We'll see how the week goes.

**Q. What a round. I know last season wasn't really the one you were looking for, playing through, playing this week on a medical. But 8-under today. Those pins, people were not seeing that score out of those pins. How did you figure it out?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: I actually started my round with a bogey and kind of had a 50-foot putt, and I had a lot of long putts last week. So I just wanted to kind of get after some pins. And the greens were receptive enough. So my irons were feeling great and made some good putts.

**Q. What have you been working on in the offseason to get ready for this year and hopefully be fully rehabbed and ready to go?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Yeah, that was really the main thing, was just coming out here for the first few events and feeling good and feeling healthy and feeling pretty good. So that was probably the thing I worked on most.

And then my driver just didn't cooperate that well last year. So really working on that off the tee. And pretty pleased with that work so far.

**Q. Highlights in particular for you out there? Obviously a lot of birdies on the card. But any of them stand out in particular?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: I made an eagle on the par-5, 5. I hit a good -- they moved it up and hit a good hybrid in and made the putt, probably 15 feet. So that was a fun way to kind of keep the round going.

**Q. It's not a short golf course out here, especially with it being as damp as it is. Are you player that, like, has a lot of carry? I know balls probably aren't releasing like you maybe would have seen in a practice round.**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Usually, yeah. So usually I have a good amount of carry, not a ton of roll anyways. So it didn't really bother me too much. And, yeah, I was just happy being in the fairway on a lot of holes.

**Q. Tell me a little bit about the injury. I know obviously back. Just kind of the timeline of everything and where you are now and what you did maybe in those weeks off to fix things.**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: Sure. So I stopped playing before last week's event a year ago, so a week before, a

few weeks before Thailand, had just a back injury for about a year and a half lingering and really wasn't getting better. And made the tough decision not come over here, which was really hard at the time. And I think didn't play, didn't touch a golf club for three or four months. Came back after five or six months.

But looking back, I'm really glad I did. Feeling a lot better, and glad I took that time to get healthy.

**Q. And to see a round like this, I mean, 8-under 64s don't happen all the time. What does it tell you about where your game is at, and what's your mindset the next three days?**

ELIZABETH SZOKOL: It's great. I'm really happy about the start. Great way to start the event. I'm just happy I was hitting my irons better than last week. I felt like I was shaking off a little rust last week from the offseason. So very pleased with the start.

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