

# Solheim Cup

Saturday, September 14, 2024

Gainesville, Virginia, USA

Robert Trent Jones Golf Club

**Mollie Marcoux Samaan**

Press Conference



ROBERT TRENT JONES  
GOLF CLUB  
GAINESVILLE, VA

2024

**THE MODERATOR:** Hi, everyone. Welcome to the media center.

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAAN:** First of all, is it always this cold in here? Holy cow. I'm glad I brought my parka.

First of all, I want to start off by saying, I understand and we understand and appreciate that many of you are looking for more answers yesterday, and were wanting us to give you information as the day was going on.

We certainly weren't trying to avoid the questions, and we were trying to be transparent, but I think at the end of the day we really needed to move into sort of triage mode and figure out how to solve the problems and obviously I'm addressing the transportation challenges that we had yesterday morning.

We needed to move into planning mode to make sure that we were solving the issues for the egress yesterday afternoon, most importantly. We were thinking through the customers and we were planning for this morning.

It was really, I'll say, an all hands on deck with many of our senior staff to figure out exactly kind of where we were, what happened, and how we were going to solve the problem, most importantly.

So we didn't want to give you information that wasn't accurate and that we couldn't give to you at the right time. Just wanted to start off by saying that.

I think we diagnosed the situation. It wasn't terribly difficult to diagnose. I think most importantly, there weren't enough buses, and the staggering of the buses, we had additional buses coming on throughout the course of the morning, but they weren't at the right time.

There was more traffic than we anticipated, than our team anticipated in the morning, given rush hour, the staging and the loading out there was not efficient. It wasn't sufficient or efficient.

We just didn't have enough manpower out there to, first of all, load the fans but also to handle the questions and the comments as they were coming through.

I think all of that was -- with all of those things compounded, the bathrooms were a mess and those weren't being handled as time went on.

That's really what the fundamental issue was. Obviously the first tee experience was not what we had hoped. I think there were more fans waiting at the staging area at Jiffy Lube Live.

I think the energy was still great, and the players, their energy was fantastic, but it certainly was not what we anticipated, and we recognize that.

Last night I think hopefully you all saw and you noticed we added significant buses for the egress. We changed the staging, and I think part of it that was really important, we put a lot more bodies out there.

I was out there, our senior staff was out there, we were talking to customers, we were apologizing if they had any issues in the morning, but most importantly we were directing traffic.

I think our goal was to make sure that there were visible buses all throughout. Starting at 3:00 we were out there making sure there were buses coming in. We had a little glitch at one point where the buses were not staged out there, but otherwise all the way up until we were finished about 6:00 -- there were still people leaving after 6:00, but the lines were significantly gone by 6:00 and we were out there making sure the buses were coming in, making sure the customers knew where to go. We had different staging lines and we had sort of helped solve the problem to a degree in the afternoon.

Obviously for this morning, we moved the volunteers to a separate lot. I think we had heard some issues with the volunteers being in different lines in the morning, so we moved the volunteers to a separate lot. We put separate buses and shuttles over there, which I think helped quite a bit.



We started earlier. We started the buses earlier. We started at 4:30 a.m. this morning, and we opened the gates earlier.

Most importantly, we had many more buses just right from the beginning of the morning, and the staging was much more efficient. There were a ton of buses lined up ready to go.

I went out there this morning, a number of our senior staff was out there, and people just walked from their cars right basically on to the buses. And again, we're not -- we had manpower and strong leadership out there, as well.

Last night we also sent an apology to any of the customers who may have been affected. It's hard to tell exactly who was in what queue, but we sent out just an apology letter. We offered two general admission tickets to those who may have had their experience affected.

This morning was obviously a lot better. We're not up here patting ourselves on the back. I think that's the way it should have been yesterday. But we did feel like we accomplished our goals for this morning.

The first tee was electric, and there were very many happy customers coming in. We had lots of one-on-one conversations. I actually drove two women who happened to forget their phone and came back to my car and I drove them over here as I was coming back over, and they had been there yesterday. A lot of wonderful fans who were really excited about the week and were appreciative of the changes made.

But again, we're not patting ourselves on the back. This is what it should have looked like yesterday.

That's my statement. Happy to answer any questions.

**Q. How many buses were in play yesterday morning, and then how many did you add?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN:** It's a complicated question, and again, we were writing spreadsheets and trying to figure it all out. We didn't have enough buses in the morning clearly. When we started the day -- the staggering was to sort of have three, four times more during the course of the day but they were scheduled to start later and then there were some delays.

The exact numbers, I can't tell you at every hour what we had, but let's just suffice it to say there were not enough.

**Q. With the first tee being the experience on Friday**

**morning, it's my understanding there were no buses there until after 6:00 a.m. How does that happen, first of all? And when you have record ticket sales coming in, I'm just at a loss for how you're not prepared for the number of people coming.**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN:** I think the buses started before 6:00 a.m. yesterday. There were buses there I think before 6:00. They were scheduled to be there before 6:00 a.m. I think they were scheduled to start at 5:30.

Again, if there were specific delays and they didn't get there until then -- again, as I said, all I can say is we own it. There were miscalculations and the planning was not sufficient for the day.

**Q. The damage has been done; how concerned are you about what this looks like around the world, negative headlines all around the world when the women's game is desperate for positive exposure.**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN:** Yeah, our goal of this week, we've been working really hard to bring in more fans to the sport, bring in more fans to the LPGA. We've worked very hard to do that and to market this event, which is a marquee event, so yeah, it was extremely disappointing that we had any fan that didn't have the perfect experience that we expect.

I think, again, once the fans got here and they all did get here, most of them got here, the experience was off the charts. The first tee at noon was hopping, and the players' energy was tremendous.

I think the fans when they got here, they had a great time. Yes, it was disappointing. We're not happy with what happened. I don't think it's going to be long-term damages to us. We have to make sure our fans know how much we care about them and how much we whiffed.

**Q. Will you have some sort of inquiry to make sure nothing like this ever happens again?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAN:** Yeah, of course. I think it's our responsibility to diagnose where the problems occurred, why they occurred, and to dig in. It's all you can do in life is make sure that you're fixing it and getting better and making sure it never happens again.

**Q. You mentioned the ticket offer for fans that were affected yesterday. That information was sent out initially in a release on X and then that release was deleted and replaced with another release. Does that still stand that folks who were here and affected yesterday will have that offer for the weekend?**



**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN:** Yeah. Yes. The letter was -- we sent the letter out first to the fans. I think they just -- I think the tweet went out for one second and had one thing that needed to be switched, but it was the same information. Yes, we sent that out, and we're waiting to see who takes the tickets.

**Q. This is a course that's hosted four Presidents championships; Tiger Woods' tournament was here, as well. Was this solely an LPGA issue, considering this is a venue that has experienced in hosting these major events with thousands and thousands of people coming?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN:** Yes, this was an LPGA issue.

**Q. When did the team diagnose yesterday that the shuttles were the problem?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN:** I mean, I think it was pretty clear right away that the shuttles were the problem. People were waiting and the buses weren't there and they waited too long, and we just needed more vehicles.

Obviously there were other compounding issues but the fundamental challenge was we didn't have enough buses out there early.

**Q. Most fans traveled to this event, they bought their tickets in advance. Why the extra ticket as a solution to any other alternatives including a refund?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN:** We spent time yesterday trying to figure out logistically what was possible, and it's challenging to figure out who was affected, who wasn't affected, how we could handle it logistically from all parts of the organization, and this is what we felt -- if they wanted to come back, they wanted to bring a friend if they were coming back. Many have bought tickets for three days, bring a friend, come for an extra day, and that was the best way we could find just to acknowledge that the morning was not what we expected, what we wanted, what we believe in, what we value, and if they'd like to come back again, we'd welcome them back.

**Q. You mentioned you don't sense any long-term damage, but I was hearing from fans who got to the course. There were numerous who left and have left for the week. Have you heard from any of them?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN:** Yeah, again, we don't have exact numbers on all of that. I don't think -- based on what we can see, we don't think that many fans left.

Obviously we know from some Twitter that some fans did leave. I think it's a small number relative to it.

Listen, we hope the fans will give us a chance and that they came back or they were here and that they had a great time. I think it was just hopping all day, and the golf was phenomenal.

But you always have to earn your trust. Every day you have to earn the trust of your fans. It's not a one-time thing and then it goes away and you do something good and it stays. Every day is a constant effort to make sure we're providing the very best fan experience.

Again, we're going to just keep working on it. That's all we can do.

**Q. You explained that you diagnosed the problem, and I was wondering in that diagnosis, did you figure out why this happened in the first place? Was it a pure miscalculation? Was it to cut costs? What was the actual stem of the issue?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN:** Yeah, I think a miscalculation. It wasn't trying to cut costs. It was trying to do what was going to work for the tournament.

**Q. Was that the LPGA operations team who exactly is responsible for the planning issues?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN:** Yeah. I don't want to get into exactly who, the details of the responsibility. At the end of the day, I'm the leader of the organization and I have to own it. We have a tournament team that runs all of this, but I'm sitting up here in front of you as the leader of the LPGA, and I need to own that.

**Q. You mentioned that the experience wasn't what it typically is on the first tee yesterday morning. What were your conversations like with the members of the team about that being so different than what they're used to?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAN:** Yeah, the players are phenomenal. They brought the energy. I think some of them, they just got out there and played. There was energy on the first tee. I think it wasn't as strong an energy as we had in the afternoon, but there was certainly energy. There were great fans there and they were cheering like crazy and it was fun. The music was great, the athleticism was great. I haven't spoken to any players specifically about the experience.

**Q. To my knowledge the first statement didn't come out until after 9:00. Why was there such a delay in**

**communicating with fans who were in the parking lot and then subsequently later in the day a lot of people didn't find out about their free ticket until they had already driven home or made other plans. What took so long?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAAN:** Again, we were trying to solve the immediate problem. It takes a lot of effort to get there. We don't have a huge team, as you can imagine, but we did pull people together.

We wanted to get it right. I think you don't want to go out and do something that's going to compound the problem afterwards. It's always good to take a step back, figure out where you are, what happened, and then find a solution moving forward.

We were super focused on making sure that the afternoon was where it needed to be and that we knew what the issue was in that moment.

We had to solve some things right in that -- that were happening in real time, too.

**Q. Given that people were queued up and waiting from 5:30 on for hours, do you think there should have been more posted on social media or given out to fans, an acknowledgment or update of some sort earlier?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAAN:** We had some staff out there and we were trying to communicate to the people that were there. I think we thought that was more important than getting something out more broadly on social.

We tried to get it out as quickly as we could. I think we were -- again, we finished at the first tee and then we moved right into trying to figure this out.

**Q. I have a non-parking question for you. Women's sports arguably has been more popular now than at any other time, but it seems like golf has been trending that way for the past five or ten years. What do you attribute that growth to?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAAN:** For women's sports?

**Q. For women's golf.**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAAN:** I think, as you said, all women's sports are trending in a great direction. I think mindset has really shifted to realize that these are the best athletes in the world. The product is amazing. It's a great fan experience.

I think golf is becoming more popular. Women's golf has become more popular. I think 1.4 million female golfers have joined the sport in the last couple years. The percentage of women playing has escalated over the last several years. Young girls playing golf has continued to grow.

So I think the popularity of the sport, the popularity of women's sports. I think our team is working really hard to grow the game. We're not just a futures, we are also -- we have a very significant Girls' Golf program which we're growing every day.

We hit a million girls last year. We hope to have a million more by 2030 and we're really focus on that. We are growing our amateur programing, growing our LPGA professionals, working on bringing more fans into the sport.

I think it's all just working towards that growth.

**Q. To that point, this event is a crown jewel for the LPGA, a big opportunity to continue growing the sport. How disappointing was it for you that fans' first impression of this event was that shuttles weren't able to get fans to the course?**

**MOLLIE MARCOUX SAMAAAN:** As I said, we've worked really hard as a team to continue to have this be the crown jewel. The energy and the excitement and the new fans that come into the game by just what happens on the first tee, what happens throughout the venue, the excitement of team golf. So yeah, it was disappointing.

We care deeply about our fans, and we want to make sure they see how great our athletes are but also how fun it is to come to an LPGA event, and this event, as you said, is a great way to do that.

I think they're having a great experience. They had a great experience yesterday afternoon. Many of them had a great experience yesterday morning. They will have a great experience throughout the rest of the weekend, and we'll continue to work on this, make sure that we do everything we possibly can to focus on that fan experience.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.