

The Chevron Championship

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Mission Hills Country Club

Lorena Ochoa Reyes

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome inside the virtual interview room here at Chevron Championship. I am pleased to be joined by the newly minted LPGA Hall of Fame member, Lorena Ochoa.

Before I open up for questions behind me from the floodgates of media so excited to welcome you here today, how does it feel to be back at Mission Hills?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Well, hello everybody. Thank you. This is a great press conference. I'm just really, really excited to be back at Mission Hills. It's a place that is very special to me. Not only me to my friends, my family, and we love this event.

This is for sure one of my favorite stops on tour, and it's nice to be back. A lot of memories. Early this morning I woke up and I saw the mountains, a little bit of now, and it was calm with no wind, sunny day, and I thought, wow, this is perfect for a tournament.

Almost make me want to play, yes.

Q. I love that. As we just mentioned, you are the newest inductee into the LPGA Hall of Fame. I know there is a little story of how you found out. Would you like to tell us what that phone call was like?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Well, for sure it was a surprise to me. We are living in town called Vallae del Bravo just outside Mexico City, and it was just to me a normal day. My brother said, Nancy Lopez is going to call you. I said, we don't get reception here. Does she know how to use the WhatsApp, and we were laughing about that, and all of a sudden I got the phone call.

I was just walking a little bit behind my house with dog around me and I said, Nancy, how are you? It was a surprise phone call, but I thought we were going to chat about golf or going to play in a golf tournament or exhibition.

We catch up a little bit about our lives and I was very

happy to hear she was doing okay with the COVID and everything. All of a sudden she said, This phone call is because I'm going to give you super good news. I have good news for you.

And it was very nice. Very special coming from her. She was very -- first emotional and very slowly talked to me through my career, you know, and how many years she saw me playing and my tournaments, you know, the time that I spent here at the LPGA and how the LPGA just with the time it becomes a family to you.

She was very emotional, and all of a sudden she told me. I was very surprised. I didn't know what to do, how to react. Knew husband was in Mexico; I'm in Vallae del Bravo. I was like, What do I do?

And actually I was like 15 minutes to go and pick up my kids from school, so I had I call Andreas, Nancy just called me and game this great news and I don't know what to do. I went and pick up my kids and then I'm there and I say, Okay, I got a phone call from my friend, a very special news. They didn't care. They didn't understand. (Laughter.)

Mom, can you please put music on? I said, Okay, this is not going to work. I'm not going to explain. (Laughter.)

Q. Just joined the Hall of Fame, but all they care about is the music.

LORENA OCHOA REYES: I'll tell them later. But it's been great. I was just telling Betsy that it's a great surprise to see her. She knows how important is to me. I been very emotional for the last couple days.

Like I said, just bringing back so many good memories of just being here and all the tournaments and my friends, so thank you. Thank you for this recognition. I'm honored and very humbled to be part of this special group.

I'm going to explain my kids later. (Laughter.)

Q. When you came in here, what was the sense of emotion that you had when you pulled in?



LORENA OCHOA REYES: Yes, well, Andreas, my husband, is like, Okay, should I turn left here? Yes, yes. You know, I think it's too much, you know, to really feel everything at the moment.

Very nice to walk into the clubhouse. The view that you get from the top from the restaurant to the putting green and see all players practicing and the flags, it's very, very special.

I told Andreas, you know, and Gaby is playing this week, so to be able just to also think a few Mexicans are playing is even more special.

Q. When you come into a place like this, how much have you followed this event and have you followed the tour since you left?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: I don't follow the tour every week. I have to say that. I mean, the majors, yes, for sure. I do check the news like Saturday night or Monday morning to see how the Mexicans are playing and my friends and Dave, my caddie. But not very close.

Actually, I was telling Andreas, I'm afraid walking into the putting green because I don't know players. They were so young and it's changing so much, so I need to -- probably need to work more on that. I'm a little bit ashamed to say that, but it's true.

I'm more relaxed. Very involved with the Mexican players because I try to help them as much as I can, and not only them here on tour but also the professionals that are now in Mexico trying to make it on the Epson Tour, or trying to make it to the LPGA.

But this is all a big surprise for me. I do admire every single player that is here, and as well as the caddies and the families. I know how difficult it is this life, but at the end of the day, everything is worth it. This is a beautiful sport, and I'm kind of like jealous not to be here 20 years back trying to play a tournament.

Q. You and I have talked about this before. When you walked away from the game because of your family and the priorities you had, there was no mystery that there was a ten-year minimum. You knew that.

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Uh-huh.

Q. You were really applauded at the time for having your priorities straight. How special is it now to have this significance knowing you had made that decision back then?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Well, that's why it's such a big surprise, because I did made the decision regardless the rule or the opportunity to be inducted.

So I guess this is just something extra special. It's going to be -- in a way, you know, it's like a present, like a nice feeling knowing that, okay, I complete like the whole circle.

Some of the media as well, or my sponsors or fans, golf fans in Mexico, they always ask me about this all the time, so finally I can say, That's it. I'm in. I think I complete my career with this great honor, so in a way I feel relief and relaxed and happy, and just this is going to be great.

I can't wait to go back. My parents, they are also very surprised. They told me, Okay, so now what is going to happen? This means so much. So just, like I say, just going to take a little while to really sink, but this is great. Thank you again for though wonderful day.

Q. What's the best piece of advice you received during your career?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: The best piece of advice? Only one? (Laughter.) You know, Betsy is here and we become good friends with the time. I think what I most treasure is the opportunity to spend time not only with Betsy, but with other players and just to be able to sit down and talk about how is the life on tour.

You know, you should really don't forget about people you love back home and your family and spend time with them. Even if we have to do so many traveling and sacrifices, at the same time it's very important to go back home and spend time with them.

Betsy helped me a lot through my career. And I told her, Betsy I'm not going to be here forever. I want to do so many other things back home, and I'm not going to play many, many years. She told me, No, it's going to be impossible. You are going to be here for many years, because then you get in a mode where you feel comfortable, you play, you practice, travel, it's a beautiful game, and they treat you so well.

But to me was a little bit different. I could really tell that it was the right time to stop. That's why regardless the rule, I say this is not going to change my mind because really what I felt in my heart was different, and I was ready to start a family.

And even today I always say thank you to God because I was strong enough to made the decision. You know, I was very honest to myself. It turn out to be the best decision in

my life, because now I wouldn't change myself for anything, and the opportunity to have a family and my kids and the foundation.

So I still have many plans and dreams and I'm very active. I like to do things. So we'll see. We'll see what we do next.

Q. Lorena, the No. 1 player in the world right now is marching her way towards getting enough points for the Hall of Fame and could get it well shy of ten years. Could you talk about the significance of this rule change for other players as well?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Uh-huh. Well, I think I just -- that's why they change the rule, you know. The life or the game or the tour is changing, you know, all the time. We're all changing like humans.

I think it was just right in a way, because if you get the points you have proof that you are at that level and at the top. I guess it doesn't matter the time.

I think it's also important for more players to be in, because if you give so much of yourself not only to the game but the LPGA and you become such a family and work together and help each other and being involved truly for so many years, seven, eight, nine, or ten, or 20 or 25, because there are players been here for many years, if you get the points, I guess you deserve to be there.

So I just want to say thank you. I feel honored to be the first one in, and I wish not only me, but for many other players from different parts of the world to get into the Hall of Fame LPGA, because I guess you deserve it if you get the points.

And also it's important to have other players from different countries and recognize all the hard work for many years.

Q. And then I know you just played an event and played well. Can you tell us a little bit about your golf game, how much you play, and will we ever see you in an LPGA event again?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: I did play okay, 3-under. I felt like I left so many shots out there, so I was a little bit frustrated because we are very competitive. You always try to do better and better.

In a way I was really happy to see that my game is there. I was responsible and I did practice a little bit before because I knew I needed to travel and play and I wanted to look okay.

No, I don't -- I enjoy it a lot. It was a tournament that we

didn't get a lot of press or have a lot of crowds, didn't have any media right there. I was still nervous. Saturday playing I was nervous.

I started thinking, I cannot imagine being in an LPGA tournament, like a big one or a real LPGA tournament crowded with the media and me trying to play good.

Too much. (Laughter.)

So I don't think I'm going to play. Gaby Lopez, she always asks me to play the couple tournament. I think I'm going to tell her again this year that, sorry, I'm not going to play. Maybe she find out with the interview. (Laughter.) And I have less pressure.

So I don't know, Beth. I don't want to say no because maybe two, three years I will come and play with Gaby and have a good time. I do see maybe playing in the senior, you know, in the Senior Tour, just coming back and playing couple tournaments just to enjoy.

My kids are going to be older and maybe they understand a little bit more than today, so we'll see.

Q. I was just going to ask if Annika coming out and playing in an LPGA event and making the cut and then obviously winning the Senior Women's Open, if that inspired you at all?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: No. I'm very different than Annika. Super different. She's more involved, been always around. She's there with tournaments and practicing and she lives right there by the golf course.

She's promoting a lot of the game with the different tournaments and junior events, and as well as it's more in her blood. Plus she's already 50, so I don't know if I'm going to start doing the same when I'm 48, getting close. Right now really happy where I am.

I don't see myself practicing, and like I said, if you do it you have to be responsible. You have to get in a schedule and you have to, again, make a lot of sacrifices. You have to talk to your kids and Andreas, my husband, and just agree for this goal, because we all have to make sacrifices.

And if I'm going to do that, I like to do it right. So I don't see myself practicing for the next six months, five, six hours a day, because it's not what would make me happy right now. I have other priorities, and it's time to spend as much time with my kids and continue working with the foundation while I have the energy and strength.

We can have this talk in eight or nine years and we'll see.



(Laughter.)

Q. You mentioned you're working with Mexican professional golfers. What kind of work are you doing and what advice do you pass down?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Uh-huh, well, the association is called IGPM, Impulsando al Golf Profesional Mexicano, which means we have a group, it's only for women. We have this year 14 different players, so some of them are already at the Epson Tour; the other ones are just professionals trying to first play the Epson Tour and then Q-School and trying to qualify for the LPGA.

We do at least three or four tournaments a year to raise money for them and we help them with caddies, expenses with the coach or traveling. They need new equipment or they need to make some changes. They have maybe injure and they need to get rehab.

We're very close to them, because all of them are so particular, so they have different necessities. Once a year we get together for four or five days. I invite them to my home and spend time with them to see how are they feeling, how are they with their families, if they are happy, what are their goals for the year, how are they going to start the year or the changes that they're making, if it's working or not.

And they call me and we keep in touch and they ask me. I try to help them a little bit to make I guess less mistakes and be a little bit easier, and in a way to feel that they belong to something. They were part of the family, and all the Mexicans get together and support each other.

Because it's important that they don't feel alone during this difficult time. Once you leave college it's a lot of the stress. You're on your own, you don't have money, you have all these expenses, and you're playing every week trying to win a tournament, bet in the top 10 just to get money to survive.

So we wanted to take a little bit of that pressure off for them to be more relaxed and just really concentrating and practicing and practicing and getting better. We also help them find sponsors.

So it's a way of me to promote the game, to help them. Gaby, she helps us a lot. She's part of IGPM, as well as Maria. So we already have few players that they have done well, and we want to continue that.

Q. Has your time away from the game given you a greater appreciation of what you were able to accomplish out here?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Yes. Like Gaby mentioned, like I can't believe how many tournaments you won. This is so difficult. My career was really short, and because I was the first one, it was difficult for people to realize I guess that it was good in a short time.

So I was the first one and I arrive and play just few years and then left, so I guess today the game of golf is growing so much in Mexico. I am very happy to be part of that and to help and to see it, because it's really amazing.

There is hundreds of little kids playing different golf courses, and it's a problem right now, you know, what do with do with so many kids playing?

So it's great to be able to see that. My career I think with the time also we are all understanding how explosive it was and it was short, but I was able to accomplish my dream of being the No. 1 player, and I understand how difficult it is.

That's why we are supporting all of the new players, not only Mexicans, but Latin Americans, Hispanics, all of them. I always tell the media and the families, everybody is different and it's okay to have different goals. I think the worst thing we can do is to compare the careers. Everybody is unique, and like Gaby is playing right now on tour and she only deserves admiration and good words and support, because it's not fair that they compare her career to mine.

So let her enjoy her life; we're all trying to do our best.

Q. Looking back on your career, your win here particularly, what do you remember about the victory here and what did it mean to you in your overall career, particularly this win?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Well, like I said, this tournament has been very, very special to me. For sure I remember jumping in the water. (Laughter.)

Actually my kids, that's the only video they really enjoy. I told them, look, all the friends are there. We broke the record of many friends, and especially Mexicans swimming there.

Also the memories with the grounds crew, the members, the workers, and the Mexicans, Mariachi, it was great. Great, great memories. I like to always keep that memory.

Every time we get together, all my girlfriends or I go back home and spend time with my friends, we always end up talking about this beautiful tournament, the memories. It really was hard on me because I lost in a playoff with

Karrie Webb a few years back. She made it from in the middle of the fairway 110 yards and I was ready to win that time.

It was not meant to me.

Then I continue trying and trying, and I got so close few times, and finally when I did, it was extra special. (Laughter.)

Q. Why do you think this is the one event that you and your friends always come back to talking about?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: I had the great opportunity to play as an amateur, so when I was playing golf at the University of the Arizona Tucson I got the invite, and to me, I still have those memories. I arrive. I was so nervous. Just practicing here and then when they call your name on the first tee, and actually I was paired with Annika the third day because I played so good the first two days.

I'm never going to forget that phone call. Yes, you go tomorrow at, I don't know the time, like 9:45 with Annika Sorenstam. I have to call in to confirm I'm playing with her. So there are just memories.

It's close to Mexico. It's easy. Everybody is flying to L.A. or driving. I always have a big crowd. Always, always. So this has been to me one of the most special places, and not only as a professional, because I played two years as an amateur.

That really changed my perspective and my dreams, because I was -- I played good as an amateur so I thought, Okay, I feel okay. I'm doing okay. If I could finish in the top 10 I think I'm ready to be a professional and be at a good level as a professional.

So helped me to make my decision. That's why I turned professional after my second year in college, because two years of playing here really changed my timeline and I was ready to go.

Q. What's your reaction knowing this is the last time here at Mission Hills?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: For sure it's -- like I said, it's very emotional. If you start thinking about that, not only me, but I could speak on behalf of the all the players. I'm sure they want to say thank you, thank you, thank you, because this place gave so much to us, but as well as the LPGA in general.

And so many good memories. I do want to say thank you. This is one of the first times I come back, so I guess it's

extra special to me to have this last media here, to do few interviews, visit my friends.

So it's nice also to have this induction here in this special place.

Q. You had the same caddie on your bag for a very long time, most of your career, and currently with the current No. 1 again.

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Yes.

Q. Can you talk about what Dave brought to your game that helped you the most that maybe Jin Young is experiencing as well?

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Dave knows how much I appreciate his company for so long. We become such good friends. He's very unique and very special, so positive. Like I guess when you are trying to win a golf tournament and you're on the 18 fairway, you know, and you see or you feel somebody with you that say, Okay, 185 yards and we're going to win, okay, let's hit it a 4-iron, it just gives you that confidence, you know, that strength.

He also has a special feeling. He's really good with women on how to be patient when you need to be patient and how to let you be on your own.

For us it was so natural. It was very simple. I remember we met in a parking lot in Ohio 6:30 in the morning. Hey, Dave, hi, I'm Lorena, thank you for coming out. We start even in the practice round, okay, this is going to work, because right away we felt a really good match.

We won that first week that we worked together in Ohio, I mean, by four or five strokes. A good, easy win. Okay, we're a good team, and we started winning and winning and winning.

So you need so many things to click to be at the top, and for you to feel comfortable and start playing better and better and better and to feel that confidence, Dave always gave me that.

Plus we think the same way, have same values. We are a happy person, you know, we respect others, but we have a good time and we are relaxed. We are really good at analyzing things. Okay, what happened or where was the mistake, and just work on that right away and be ready the next day.

We are really good both to just the bad experiences or the bad holes, just to grab them, put them behind, and continue. It was a perfect combination. I want to say thank



you to him. This is very special because this award is not only for me and my career, like I said, it's the whole team and my family and Mexico, so thank you, Dave.

Q. I wanted to connect this with the end of women's history month.

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Women what?

Q. Women's history month.

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Okay.

Q. So there is something that your impact carried more than the women golfers? You earned the respect and the admiration of men in Mexico, even Latinos in the U.S. How do you feel about that? That's not an easy one. And what it means for you.

LORENA OCHOA REYES: Well, you know, thank you for the nice words. I think I always try -- even when I was playing today I'm the same inside and outside the golf course.

I always try to give a good example, you know, for kids, for the new generations, for not only for golfers but just for kids in Mexico.

And so thank you. I mean, I always say that it's a big responsibility in a way, you know, but it's also the biggest motivation. They know or I know that they are watching me and they pay attention to the things I do.

I always try to do things the right way or the best way I could do it in every way, like I said, inside and outside the golf course.

Thank you. Thank you for the nice words. I promise I will continue doing that. I think what you do by example is very important. I try to do that with my kids. They struggle a little bit with me traveling or being away. Remember, this is for the right reason and I'm trying to help the kids in the foundation, the underprivileged kids, and give them the opportunity.

Right away they understand. Okay, mom. When they see the kids and they see the changes, when they go to school, wow, mom this is why you travel. So I think it's important also not only to talk about it, but to give a good example.

So that's my main motivation to continue doing the right things. Obviously we all make mistakes, but in a way it feels very nice to hear that. I promise to continue being help and a friend. It's more important to be good friends and they feel me close. I admire them a lot and we will

continue.

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