

CPKC Women's Open

Wednesday, July 24, 2024

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Earl Grey Golf Club

Alena Sharp

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome everyone to the media center here at the CPKC Women's Open. I'm happy to be joined by Canada's own Alena Sharp. Welcome to the media center. We were just chatting, and this year is the 20th anniversary of your first start at this event. 2004 was your first start. Just wondering your thoughts on that and if you can reflect on your 20 years of experience here at this great event.

ALENA SHARP: Doesn't seem like it's been 20 years. That's really -- wow. I didn't realize that until you brought it up.

Yeah, my first one I was I think an amateur. Maybe I just turned pro. I know that it was at Legends of Niagara. I remember when they announced my name on the tee and there was a lot of people there from Brantford where I grew up playing. I was just so nervous I sniped it left into the rough and made a par on the hole.

So it got under way.

But, yeah, I mean, wow. I've played so many great courses for this event. Just really happy to be here back in Calgary. Last time I was here I had my best finish on the LPGA at Priddis right after the 2016 Olympics.

Yeah, Alberta has been good to me. I won the Canadian Junior here. Yeah, love coming here.

Q. What does the support look like for you this week? I know the Canadian players get such a huge following. Is that one of the reasons you come back to this event every year?

ALENA SHARP: I mean, doesn't matter where we're playing in the country, I always get great support. It's special for me this week. My aunt and uncle live here so I get to see them and spend some time with them. Staying for a few days afterwards before I head over to Paris for the Olympics.

So definitely feeling more at home here this week.

Q. This will be your third Olympic Games, right? How big of a goal was making the team again for you this year, and what are you looking forward to in your third Olympics?

ALENA SHARP: Yeah, 18 months ago, beginning of last year, I was definitely not in the running to make it. I made a coaching change and basically retooled my golf swing. Drew the ball my whole life; changed to a fade; started hitting more greens.

Just got more consistent and won a tournament last year on Epson. Decided to play Epson because I was in the top 10 on the Money List and then fell out at the end unfortunately.

Got my card. Lucky enough to get a sponsor invite in Seville, my home course; made the cut; got shuffled in and played well on Epson when I played this year. I had a third and fifth place finish. A lot of hard work went into it.

When June 24th came around and I was the second Canadian going, I was just so proud of everything I've done in the last 18 months to try and make the team. Tokyo wasn't my best showing, so ready to go back for some redemption.

Q. Seeing as how you finished fourth at Priddis, nearby Priddis, do you feel good vibes being here in Calgary?

ALENA SHARP: Definitely. I have a good track record in Alberta and the course reminds me of -- I grew up playing a tree-lined course, playing Brantford Golf & Country Club. Reminds me of that.

The greens are all tilted, so requires pretty precise shotmaking into the greens. It's playing long right now. Not sure if it'll firm up or not. Definitely not getting any run on the drives yet. A lot of mid-irons into the green so you have to have some good trajectory to stop them.

I think it suits my game really.



Q. The support from the fans, what will that mean in your quest to do well here?

ALENA SHARP: I think it's a different week because the Olympics are coming up and everybody has been congratulating me on making the team. Every Canadian gets a lot of support at the Canadian Open, so it's been an extra special week with that.

I feel like everybody is cheering for all the Canadians and always feel at home, regardless. Like I said earlier, wherever we are in the country I feel like I'm at home. You don't get that every week on the tour. We have a lot of support here and the volunteers are amazing.

Q. Was there anything specific that was really working well for you last week? Obviously a top 20 finish, one of your best individual results on the LPGA Tour in a couple years. Anything that was really working well for you last week?

ALENA SHARP: Well, I had a hole-in-one, so that helped. Started the week off with a hole-in-one on my 5th hole of the tournament.

I think I just lost some confidence, and I went and saw my coach the week before. Flew over the UK to see him because Phoenix is so hot right now. Worked on some stuff just to clean it up.

Just felt like I have good vibes in Toledo. It's basically my second family lives there. They take care of my dogs. It was a nice week to be relaxed. I think I just relaxed more and had some good results early and putted well, hit a lot of good shots.

I chipped in on 18 on Sunday when I was making the turn. It was nice to be in that position again. I just felt like I was getting momentum and confidence as the week went on.

Q. Anything about this golf course really stand out for you? What do you think it's going to take to have success here a little Earl Grey?

ALENA SHARP: Well, the rough is up, so driving it well is important. And then the greens, they're not really flat. They're all tilted. So just being aware of where you're landing it to give yourself the best chance at making the putts.

I think it's going to be a -- it'll be interesting to see what the scores are going to be like because everyone is learning it for the first time. Yeah, just want to hit a lot of fairways and give myself some chances at birdie to see how the week starts.

Q. A lot of impressionable kids out there. I saw a couple that wanted your autograph. Can you speak to what it means in terms of being that role model, seeing the women's game grow from your time?

ALENA SHARP: Yeah, I mean, when I would go out and watch, the Canadian PGA and Lorie was there and I got to meet her when I was a young kid. You know, now I'm out on the tour being that role model.

I love it. I love signing the autographs and seeing all the little girls and boys out watching and cheering us on. I think it's pretty cool to see that, because I was there at win point when I was younger.

So, yeah, I really enjoy -- like the 17th hole is great. I wish we had a hole like that every week on tour.

Q. Can you speak to that, maybe perhaps seeing the growth from the women's side of things, and not only Brooke, but the future of Canadian women's golf?

ALENA SHARP: Yeah, Golf Canada has a great program in place. There are so many good juniors and amateurs coming up. I think golf in Canada is in a great spot.

You see -- I think there are 17 Canadians in the field this week. That's pretty amazing. They're really good and they hit it far. It's just a different -- I think it's just changed a lot since when I was a kid.

So it's nice to see that. Hope they have a good week this week. It's an amazing thing to be able to play in your national Open.

Q. I know it will cool off in the week, so mid to about late 20s. That suit your game and what do you think of perhaps the smoke?

ALENA SHARP: Yeah, today is a little smoky. I could feel it in my throat. I don't know, we've had this happen before at other events so doesn't bother me too much.

The heat, I mean, I don't mind playing in heat. I would rather be hot than cold. Yeah, it's been pretty warm here in Calgary. I was pretty shocked. Yesterday was pretty hot at the end of the day.

Living in Phoenix now I'm used to the heat.

Q. In regards to the Olympics, you've been to three of them now. You were in Tokyo obviously when it's closed down with COVID; not much to do. Do you feel like you're going to celebrate this one a little bit more

as opposed to maybe even 2016 just because of what you had to go through the last Olympics?

ALENA SHARP: Oh, definitely. We're getting there a little early. We already got some tickets. We are going to go to the beach volleyball; it's under the Eiffel Tower. We are going to try to be tourist for that day, like watch the beach volleyball and then kind of go around Paris.

Unfortunately, Tokyo, yeah we were secluded to the hotel and golf course. Even in Rio we weren't really allowed to go out much because it was the Olympic bubble. They were worried about security. I think this one is going to be pretty amazing.

Q. Do you happen to remember what course you won the Canadian Junior on in Alberta?

ALENA SHARP: Does Stony Plain sound familiar?

Q. Yeah.

ALENA SHARP: Okay.

Q. This will go with some of the questions you've been asked about the impact of having the kids out here and some of the up and comers. Having played before Brooke and now having played at the Olympics with her, can you just speak to what she specifically has meant to this tournament and golf in this country?

ALENA SHARP: Well, yeah she's elevated golf in the country. Even the guys say she's an inspiration. Yeah, for her, when she won in Regina, that was amazing. We were always talking about the drought, right? Jocelyn Bourassa was the last one to win and then Brooke broke the drought, and then Nick Taylor last year. So it's pretty cool.

Yeah, I think she's an inspiration to everybody. Her career has been amazing already in this short time. I foresee more wins in the future for her.

She's a great ambassador for the game of golf in Canada.

Q. Something new to this tournament this year is the Audi Precision Award, which will provide a nice bonus to the player with the most greens in regulation this week. Speak to that initiative and how important it is for growing the game and providing more incentives to you players out there.

ALENA SHARP: Yeah, I think it's amazing. We've never had something like this before. Thank you Audi for doing that. Definitely maybe not pin seeking on certain pins to make sure it stays on the green.

I mean, it's great to have something like this for women's golf. We're lucky we have the Aon Risk Reward and then something like this to get more incentive in the tournament, I think it's an amazing thing.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much.

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