

# RBC Canadian Open

Saturday, June 1, 2024

Ancaster, Ontario, Canada

Hamilton Golf and Country Club

**Bryan Crawford**

**Laurence Applebaum**

Press Conference



U.S. Women's Open, so we're thrilled for her to be playing this weekend and putting herself in a really interesting position for the second spot on the women's side. Obviously Brooke Henderson is holding a very good spot on that, on the women's side.

On the men's side it's going to be an incredible battle right to the finish for our men's players. It's great to see Mackenzie, who obviously was there in Tokyo in 2021, Corey as well, and then Taylor Pendrith, obviously making a real push to make that squad. So going into the summer we are also very excited, Bryan will talk about some of the more details, but we're very excited about the three open qualifying spots that will be awarded at the end of the tournament.

Our friends from the R & A are here on-site and we're really looking forward to seeing three more players who now, if they have made the cut, the top-3 players otherwise not exempt will be going directly to the Open at Royal Troon this year. So very excited all the components that are coming on and seeing the tournament in the place that it is, in the state that it is, we could not be more happy. We have Alan Carter here in the room and Alan, the newish general manager and CEO of the Hamilton Golf and Country Club, to Alan his team, to his board, they have been an exemplary partner, host, friend, and this was really exciting when Alan joined the team. So they have done an amazing job. So we're so thrilled. Bryan has deep, deep roots within the community living here in Ancaster, but not only the town, but the city of Hamilton is world class. They are best in what they do in hosting events from the municipal support, from the tourism support, from the mayor support herself, we just feel very welcomed and we could not be happier with the entire package that we get when we come to Hamilton. So, I don't want to steal any more of Bryan's thunder, which I probably did, but I'll turn it over, Bryan, for a few comments about the tournament.

BRYAN CRAWFORD: Well thank you, Laurence and thank you all once again for coming out today. Obviously the weather has been absolutely phenomenal. I like to say that I have a say in that, but I definitely do not have a say in the weather. It just seems to like to help us out from time to time. So, we obviously can't put this event on without RBC and their tremendous support that they

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Very pleased to be joined as we get into the weekend we have our tournament director Bryan Crawford, as well as Golf Canada CEO Laurence Applebaum. Just to recap, the first part of this week and what to look for as we move forward, maybe I'll just open it up Laurence for an opening comment.

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Thanks, Dan. Maybe I'll just start in sort of reverse order is by thanking the media for your time and energy this week. So many of you have come out, some from a long way, and I know that this time is precious and the coverage and the content that has been produced this week has been exceptional. So, on behalf of Golf Canada I just want to say thank you to the media for your time and energy this week.

Overall, we come into Saturday morning and we are so excited about the weekend ahead. Weather-wise, it was a tough start and Bryan and his team have done an exceptional job in shepherding the better weather as it's come in and given us a glorious weekend. It is slightly thematic of the time we are having in golf right now. It is a special time in our country for this game in so many ways. Many of you covered and saw some of the activities on National Golf Day and our economic impact study that was released by the National Alliance of Golf Associations. 74 million rounds of golf were played last year by just over six million Canadians. And it continues to be the game played by people from 8 to 88, by more women, by younger people, by more diverse communities than ever before. We are seeing an exceptional number of rounds being played and we are also seeing an increase so far in our numbers in 2024. We're already just the beginning of the season, obviously, for so many, but we're already eight percent up in 2024 over the number of round played in 2023. So we're excited about that. We are very excited about the timing of the RBC Canadian Open. In two weeks we will close the qualifying for the Paris Olympics closes. So it's wonderful to see so many Canadians playing so well and striving towards making that Paris Olympic team. Maude-Aimée LeBlanc made the cut in Lancaster at the



provide for golf across the country in all levels of golf in all the work that Golf Canada does. Certainly this tournament and our sister tournament down at Hilton Head Island and all of the team RBC players and our Canadian players. We had a lot of our TOUR friends out this week, including the commissioner that was here. They come every year and support this event and support Golf Canada. They are tremendous partners for us in helping us achieve the vision that we have for what this tournament can continue to become. Certainly thank both of those two groups as well.

Laurence mentioned the club already and Alan and team is, they are fully invested into this tournament and committed to seeing its success and are so very proud of being a host of the tournament. We're very, very proud to be here and certainly Laurence mentioned my bias to being here in Ancaster, but it shows, I don't think we have to even say too much, people walk on the property and see right off the bat why it is so special. So, that said, moving forward to some remarks about kind of where we stand for the week? Awesome.

So going, again, we knew that we had a great opportunity to have an overwhelmingly successful event obviously the play inside the ropes and the chance for our Canadian players to tee it up against the best in the world and support our young players and their pathway to becoming full-time TOUR players is a big, big part of that. Driving the charitable support to community support that is at the heart of everything that we do at Golf Canada and at the RBC Canadian Open. Of course, it's a commercial endeavor for us to continue to raise funds and revenues to support all of the initiatives, from grass roots golf all the way through our high-performance programs, membership services and so forth. So, going into the week we had already had a record setting result in our hospitality sales. That's evident from the build out there, over 200,000 square feet of space, well over 400 individual clients, 9,600 hospitality guests per day on-site. So the corporate community just continues to lean into this tournament and we have seen incredible results every year.

On-site general admission attendance, we have already surpassed what was our best year, our second best year all time last year, and are definitely trending towards breaking our all time record at St. George's in 2022. So, with a relatively good result in GA walk up today and tomorrow, this will be the most attended RBC Canadian Open in history. We anticipate announcing a sellout by the end of the day today. We're trending towards that at 25,000 people that will be on-site for the event. So that puts our GA sales up nine percent on aggregate for the week. So some incredible results.

This Hamilton community, southwestern Ontario, Niagara

region, they support the tournament, they come out. If you have to look at how the immediate community supports this event, just walk about a hundred meters up Halsen and check out the bike valet and the 500, 600, 700, I'm not even sure how many bikes are in there, that people have ridden their bikes to the tournament from around the community. Prior to the event when we talk about corporate Canada, that's of course our partners as well with a record number of 32 partners on-site. You can walk around and see all of those activations and activities that they're doing, all of the things that are happening across the golf course, the energy that's been created in the Fairway Fan Village, the concert series which many of you had a chance to see Our Lady Peace put on an absolute rocking show last night to a really, really great crowd. Things got started on Thursday night with Loud Luxury, I think I saw a tweet that the Hamilton Golf and Country Club and Ancaster had never been more lit, as the young people say, than it was on Thursday night with Loud Luxury out there as well.

So we're expecting an even bigger crowd tonight for our country night with Josh Ross and Lindsay Ell, so just continuing to show that this event is a true sport and entertainment property and connecting with more and more fans. Once again, the overwhelming majority of people that were here yesterday were here some time way earlier in the day, which was really, really exciting to see that they're taking part in the entirety of what we have to offer.

As you all know, because you're the ones doing it, the media coverage has been extraordinary across all sorts of platforms from coast to coast. I just joined our friends from British Columbia just prior to this, and we've done interviews and media hits with all sorts of outlets from all across the country. TSN, Bell Media, with wall-to-wall coverage, to be able to turn on this golf tournament at 6:30 in the morning on Thursday and Friday morning, turn it on first thing this morning and watch every single round, multiple streams of this tournament is pretty special and not something that many tournaments on the PGA TOUR are able to do. So we thank all of you for the local story telling and for the opportunity to continue to purvey our message.

We obviously are really excited about wrapping up what is an extraordinary tournament this year and starting a new day for the RBC Canadian Open at TPC Toronto in 2025. So we're, we've been working on that one for quite some time. I think we did our first site plan for that property all the way back in 2019 was the first time that I visited it to start to think about it as a potential host venue. Obviously what's happened between then and now is extraordinary and it's a property that together we're going to grow together and create something that is really fantastic for



golf here in Canada. We continue to work with all of our partners, including the Hamilton Golf and Country Club to talk about when we'll have the opportunity to return to this property and continue to break the records that we have been setting.

A few just final pieces, which are just indicative of what's happening on-site here, the merchandise tent's up 20 percent on aggregate, so people are buying merch like never before. Supporting this tournament with wearing the brand and obviously we're incredibly excited about that. That's without it even being open Monday and Tuesday, which is the first time that that's been the case that we haven't been open early week for both days. The even more whopping number, 84 percent, or sorry, excuse me, I read that backwards, 48 percent up on concessions year over year. So, people are having a good time out there and I think it's reflective in the attitudes of the fans following all of our galleries and supporting the event.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you Bryan, thank you, Laurence. We'll open it up to questions from the floor. If anyone has a question, please raise your hand and we'll bring a microphone.

**Q. With the official announcement of TPC Toronto, do you have a better understanding of what your long-term venue strategy is going to look like now that you're officially going there?**

BRYAN CRAWFORD: Yeah, I mean, I think that being able to add TPC Toronto into this rota that we've worked hard to build with our other partner courses just gives us a little bit more stability in having another great property into the rotation to in all likelihood host more than just one in the coming years. So, we certainly are going to start with 2025 and go from there, but we intend to return to St. George's, we intend to return to Oakdale, we certainly hope to return Hamilton Golf and Country Club. So all of those venues have voiced their interest in hosting again, and for the most part it's just a matter of figuring out the proper cadence that works for the membership. Because this is a big lift. It's a lot on a membership, it's a lot on the staff at the club, it's a lot on the communities that host them. I think if we can find the right duration of time between events that you can kind of have a chance to breathe, recover, rebuild the energy and get ready for the next one. So that's really what TPC Toronto does in having a partner there that is invested in the success of the event and is mutually beneficial. That's what we sought to do with all of the host clubs that we've gone to.

**Q. So, basically in an ideal scenario if everything goes well at TPC Toronto and the course is well received and everything, it's one of those, maybe three or four**

**years there and then somewhere else and back, that sort of the of cadence, is that what you're referring to?**

BRYAN CRAWFORD: Not necessarily. I think that it certainly could be host for a couple years in succession. It could be a couple years out of every five, eight, 10 kind of thing. It isn't necessarily intended to be a permanent venue or anything like that. We, I think, have found a really great mode in having some of the best properties in our country and the best clubs in our country be part of hosting this on a regular basis. As we have seen from the success of being here in 2019 and now being back again here this year. So, I think it just provides us a little bit of an additional sure answer in many ways to have another club in the mix. Because the challenges, while there's tons of great properties inside the ropes, there just are not as many he properties that have the right mix of everything else that you need, and that in many ways is the toughest challenge of finding all of those sorts of pieces.

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Maybe I could just add a comment. It seems like when it comes to our long-term venue strategy that the timing and the right seams in making these longer range plans has come back to us again. We had it just prior to 2019, actually made some decisions in 2018, which allowed us to lock down two different venues in multiple iterations and start to plan it out. We actually had a really good cadence going when we did the program with both St. George's and Oakdale. And then through the lack of having those two tournaments in 2020 and 2021 it compressed us back up, and we do realize that timing required in between events at some of the signature properties, that we really need to continue to maintain. So we're at that moment again now with 2025 and coming to TPC Toronto. I think we had talk about TPC Toronto as one of the anchor properties in the rotation. I think it adds so much of the things that we're looking for, we've probably said it before, but maybe the hard part of the success that the tournament has had is the grandeur of it and the scope and scale. So that takes a few people out of the mix. But we're at this moment now, hitting June 1, that posts the tournament, Bryan and his team can really get to work on laying out some real good dates and some cadence for really a mid-long-term rotation.

**Q. Because you brought up Oakdale, several of us have been told that Oakdale is not an option for 2026 because of the club. There was an option. Do you have an official comment on Oakdale for 2026?**

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Yeah, sure. Oakdale came to us, has come to us as a new hundred-year-old golf course that was a new Canadian Open venue, a new RBC Canadian Open venue, and we had, as we all know, an incredibly memorable championship. What happened with



our situation at Oakdale was a multitude of factors that allowed for that compressed schedule to be too quick to come back to Oakdale that really made it mutually beneficial to both the golf tournament and the membership.

The other factors at play is we've also realized that hosting this event in a centennial year sometimes adds a little bit more complication that maybe than we would have anticipated before. 2026 is the 100-year anniversary of Oakdale. The club is very eager to have it come back soon after that date. It will not be in 2026, but we hope to have it there soon afterwards and we're working very closely with the club.

**Q. You mentioned in your opening remarks about the Olympics. Just curious your thoughts on what it would mean to have a Canadian golfer on the podium in Paris.**

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Yeah, I'm, I continue to be amazed by how much of a talking point it is with the athletes, especially our Canadian athletes. I think that pride is certainly there with the Canadian athletes, but also on the range with the both the PGA TOUR and LPGA Tour golfers, it matters a lot. The best in the world have been playing the Olympics and I think it will continue to be so. So, I think it would be a huge honor to represent your country. Often the golfers will say there's a flag beside my name every week-in, week-out, but the Olympics are a different thing. Our partner at the COC, the Canadian Olympic Committee, has been, they're rabid golfers themselves. They love the sport, they love it being in the Olympics, they know the history, and so they have been very involved. We dream about things like a Canadian winning a medal, and I've had conversations with the Henderson family about wouldn't it be just incredible a part of Brooke's career to have her win. We dream even further about a Canadian golfer being part of the flag ceremony, either opening or closing. But sometimes schedules don't permit that. So, a little bit of a plug for Brooke there. But I would tell you that it means a lot and it's a busy summer of golf with everything from The Open Championship, the Olympics, the CPKC Women's Open and going through into the FedExCup playoffs. So it's a big summer of golf and Paris is a big part of that.

**Q. The research on the economic impacts on golf published last week on the press conference. Golf is doing really great across the country. For many founding sponsored purposes this tournament seems to be locked in the GTA forever. What would you answer to golf fans, Golf Canada membership across Canada, on the west coast, the west coast, and the east coast, would like to see the best golfer in their region?**

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Well, I do empathize with the, with their feeling of wanting to see the best in the world come to their area of the country, and in particular also in Quebec I know is a really important part of your question. First, it's an opportunity for me to talk about Presidents Cup a little bit and to talk about the really the spectacle that will be in Quebec in September. The team from Presidents Cup who spent the whole week here, they have been hosting, welcoming new corporate partners, providing awareness has been awesome. We will put all of our energy and weight behind supporting Presidents Cup in Montreal and looking forward to seeing the Royal Montreal Golf Club.

As far as going around the entire country, a lot of it does come back to the scale of operation. This is a behemoth of an operation and to have a golf course like this with not only 18 holes, but an additional nine holes and a practice area and an incredible clubhouse, and just the logistics operationally, it allows for to us do what we've always dreamed of doing. There are less properties that can do that nationally.

That said, it's also an expensive, a really expensive endeavor to do that. It's an opportunity for me to remind that we run this event for many reasons, but the biggest reason we do it is to raise the profile of golf in our country. Everything we do flows through the RBC Canadian Open. Our program with First Tee, we have the First Tee Pavilion, teaching life skills through golf. Our Team Canada program, having more Canadians on tees, our membership services hosting people. So, we understand that we're trying to try and pay for a lot of our programs and our assets through the RBC Canadian Open.

I would pivot to the CPKC Women's Open, which does make it around the country. Last year being in Shaughnessy and then this year being at Earl Grey in Calgary, and we're hoping to bring the CPKC Women's Open east of Toronto, back to Ottawa, hopefully back to Quebec and maybe even one day in Atlanta, Canada.

**Q. Follow-up question. Can you discuss if there's any negotiation with RBC for the next year or it's like silence?**

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Yeah, so we're having, we continue to have great conversations between RBC, the PGA TOUR and Golf Canada. We know that they are, they continue to be the most engaged partner for us in the golf space. They have been amazing partners, we've had an incredible week here, spent a lot of time together with both RBC and the PGA TOUR and we know that those discussions will continue in real earnest.



**Q. A question to both of you. Six months after the Grey Cup here in Hamilton the Tim Horton Field, where all signage and logos were in English. Hamilton, all signage and logos are only in English on the golf course. I would like your comment on the situation, please.**

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Yeah, I think we know our friends at the CFL pretty well, and we know it was a regrettable situation that they dealt with at the Grey Cup. Bryan knows it quite intimately with his background at the CFL. Our team really made efforts to try and use our two official languages as best we could in the environments that we could. We think we have done a decent job, but we know we can be better. We know we can be better in our announcements on the first tee. We know we can be better with our players, and we will continue to strive to be better in both languages, and that's a commitment from Golf Canada. So thank you.

**Q. You mentioned we saw Jay Monahan here earlier in the week. Curious if either of you actually spoke with Jay either about the event last year or any updates for going forward, curious if you had an update on your conversations with him, if there were any?**

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: So I saw Jay. Jay was, Jay was in here in Hamilton and I can tell you how much he loves being here. It has been a tough 10 days with the pasting of Grayson and so I think that Jay was here really primarily to support the players and be there for his membership. It clearly was a very hard week for him personally as well. He's here. He wanted to let our team know and in particular Bryan holds a position within the Tournament Advisory Council, Bryan's the vice chair of that group. So to let Bryan know he had, he was supportive of our tournament, of Bryan, and all the work that we've been doing. So it was really nice to see Jay. We had over 35 PGA TOUR team members here and they support us in every area, from tournament operations to media to communications to ops, to on-course officials, and we're very, very lucky to have partners, the PGA TOUR, who really lean in. They love this event. They love being here. I would call out one employee in particular, a gentleman by the name of Stephen Cox, Stephen's a Brit who works for the PGA TOUR for a long time. He's a lead rules official, he also is responsible for a lot of the component of the layout of the golf course and his team. Stephen has just been so instrumental in working with Alan his team and in for next year working with TPC Toronto and doing the things that we need to do to make the golf course outstanding. So, it's really a great partnership we have with the PGA TOUR and maybe you want to comment on that at all.

BRYAN CRAWFORD: Yeah, no, I actually just would highlight that Jay and the senior leadership team has been to the RBC Canadian Open every year that I've been tournament director. So I know they get some attention from having been there last year, he was scheduled to come prior, and was here in 2019 and was at Saint Georges, of course. So, while there had been some, you know, moments the last couple years that probably diverted the attention, he was scheduled to come every year and has come every year that I've been here. So and that's not just Jay that's other members of the senior team and are certainly incredibly supportive of our success, and they're also have very much recognized what we have started to get going here in Canada with this event. So, Laurence mentioned Stephen, Stephen is kind of a part of a new wave of officials that kind of transferred over to take over leadership (Airplane noise) -- the Lancaster's daily flyover, I guess -- that include Stephen Cox, Pete Lis, Pete Lis is the advance official, that now have this tournament in their portfolios and are as invested as anyone, want to see The Rink grow, and want to see it be, you know, something that is beholden of a true national championship. So, yeah, we've got some really great people assigned our event, that's for sure.

**Q. Just wanted to ask about next year the Women's Open is going to be at Mississauga Golf and Country Club. Is there any consideration for the RBC Canadian Open to go there as well?**

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Like a back-to-back.

**Q. Not a back-to-back, but at any time is it in consideration? Like 2027, or 2028, down the road?**

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: So one thing that maybe a little bit of history for many of you who know, the two tournaments, Bryan obviously is the captain of the RBC Canadian Open here and we have a tournament director, Ryan Paul, who oversees the CPKC Women's Open. So, we were thrilled to bring the CPKC Women's Open to Mississauga Golf and Country Club next year. Their whole team, a delegation from the club has been here every single day, seeing the ins and outs as we grow it. The city of Mississauga has been here, their tourism department. It's not on the short or midterm plan to bring the PGA TOUR event to Mississauga, but I would say that long-term that it might be an option.

**Q. So wait and see how the tournament goes next year and then go from there?**

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Yeah, I mean, there are, it's well known from our operational side, some of the challenges of space, land, evacuation and things like that,

the bridges and things like that, that make Mississauga somewhat of a challenge, but it's a gem of a property, we would love to consider it one day.

THE MODERATOR: Any further questions? Laurence, Bryan. Thank you very much.

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