

# World Golf Hall of Fame Media Conference

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

## Renee Powell

### Award Acceptance Speech



RENEE POWELL: Wow, thank you very much, Chris. First of all, I want to thank the World Golf Foundation, the World Golf Hall of Fame, the Southern Company, and the selection committee for honoring me with this extremely important award. And a special thank you to the Sifford family for allowing this award to be named for your dad, who really you shared with the entire world.

I'm not only honored, but I'm also incredibly humbled to be the recipient of the inaugural Charlie Sifford Award, and for several reasons. It was as a child of 12 that I first saw Charlie when we were competitors in the old UGA National Tournament, he in the pro division and me in the girls' junior division.

Over the years the Sifford family and the Powell families have become very good friends. I was sitting in the audience 17 years ago, along with my dad, and listening and crying as Charlie made his acceptance speech, and it was simply from the heart.

Charlie was on a walker and not in the best of health when he and Charles Jr. arrived and walked up the steps of the church at my dad's funeral on a very cold winter day in 2010. Five years later I spoke at his funeral in Cleveland, Ohio.

Although I am standing here receiving this honor, I would be very remiss if I did not tell you why I accept this award on behalf of my entire family.

Bill Powell was stationed in England and Scotland during World War II, where he was able to play golf by borrowing members' golf clubs and playing the golf courses. Upon returning home to the States, even as a soldier fighting for his country, he was not welcome at golf courses in his own country because of the color of his skin. So he felt that the only choice he had was to create an opportunity for all people to play this game and to somehow find a way to build a golf course.

So he did what he thought was almost -- and it really was almost an impossible task, with no money, but with a creative mind and a strong will. In 1946 he began building

a golf course by hand and seeding the entire first nine holes by literally walking back and forth and back and forth with a hand seeder around his neck, seeding the entire first nine holes of the golf course. In 1978 he actually added a second nine holes.

Lessons learned from my parents and brothers have also taught me how to overcome unfair barriers which one finds in life and which is the main reason that I am here this evening. And if Charlie would not have made the sacrifice to break barriers in joining the PGA, there would not be this Charlie Sifford Award.

After leaving the LPGA Tour, I realized the significance of what my dad created and why he felt it was so important to make a difference in our society and why Clearview is such a significant part of our American history.

In 2001 Clearview was placed on the national registry of historic places. In that same year, the Clearview Legacy Foundation for Education, Preservation, and Research, a 501(c)3, was formed. I feel an incredible legacy and responsibility to ensure that Clearview is secure for the next 75 years and beyond after we're all gone.

The Charlie Sifford Award here, and what I believe is so important to our game, is a continuation of diversifying our sport and the sport that we all love, and to that end at Clearview, we are currently in the process of building a small educational building. And the lessons that people can learn will make such a positive difference in the world of golf.

I would personally like to thank those who have made donations to allow us to begin this process and the many more of you who are in this audience and those who may and probably will become future contributors allowing us to complete this important initiative.

So I am sure that some of you had never heard of Clearview or Bill Powell or even me this evening. So I did want to share with you why this award here is far more about my family and lessons than about me alone.

So Charlie Sifford and Bill Powell loved this game so very



much that they were willing to make incredible sacrifices to create opportunities for all to play our sport. So our sport really can only remain healthy when we are indeed diverse and inclusive of all people.

My mom also taught me lessons. My mom taught me the importance of giving back to make this world an even better world. Everyone has a platform, whether large or whether small, to make positive changes in our society, and I am happy to see so many faces that I know and even more that I don't. So if you have any questions later, please do not hesitate to come up, introduce yourselves to me, and say hello to me this evening.

There are a couple of additions that I would like to say. I would like to, first of all, congratulate all the honorees this evening. It's such a special evening. And a special thank you to my brother Larry, who made so many incredible sacrifices to stay and work -- he's a superintendent at Clearview. While I went out and played the game and was able to travel the world, he stayed there so that Clearview would remain because my dad needed him there. So he gave up everything that he really wanted to do outside of golf and outside of Clearview to be there. So I'm very grateful to him and very thankful to him.

I mentioned about the educational building, but another thing is my brother and those who he works with, one of the things that we are also working towards is creating and building an irrigation system. So in all the years, the 75 years that my dad built the golf course, there's not been an automatic irrigation system, but we have some of the best greens around. I think you could probably ask people like Betsy King, who has been there many times.

But he drags hoses from green to green. A little bit antiquated, but it gets the job done. But one of the reasons we're working really to raise the funds to do this is so that later on we can look down, we can see that Clearview is still there.

And the other reason is looking to build an endowment, again, so that 75 years from now Clearview will be there.

I also want to take this time to thank a couple of other people who have been very, very loyal supporters. I want to thank our former LPGA commissioner, Mike Whan, when he stepped up to move the needle forward to help support Clearview and also our current commissioner, who is continuing to do the same thing and follow through.

I also want to thank the Golf Course Superintendents Association for honoring our entire family with the Old Tom Morris Award, which is very special.

This evening there are some special people who came here from, mostly from Ohio and the neighboring state, and I want to introduce them because they've been loyal supporters of Clearview. One is Hollis Burks, who was my first veteran in our women veterans program, which is a year-round program for our military veterans called Clearview Hope. It's been based from PGA Hope. It's a year-round program that is cost free for women veterans. So I'm happy to have Hollis here.

Andy Moock and Lisa Furlong, who are members of our board of the Clearview Legacy Foundation, and Dana Harris and actually her husband, by the name of Franco Harris. So I would love to thank all of them for being here this evening.

And also to thank everybody here for allowing me to be here to receive this amazing award this evening. So thank you all very much for again allowing me to be a part of this incredible evening. It's truly an honor.

Charlie Sifford was a very good friend, as his entire family is. So this really means a lot to me in a very personal way. So thank you all very, very much.

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