

Women's Olympic Golf Competition

Monday, 2 August 2021
Saitama City, Saitama, Japan
Kasumigaseki Country Club

Gaby Lopez

Maria Fassi

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll start out with a welcome to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics press conference. A reminder that the USA just beat Mexico in the Gold Cup in soccer. (Laughing). We'll get started. Gaby, I think the first question is, the honor it was to carry the flag in opening ceremonies and if you could just your impressions and the feelings you had back with opening ceremonies.

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, for sure. It's the biggest honor every single time you get to represent your country, to play for the sport you love and play for the people, something way bigger than yourself. But being actually carrying the flag for the Olympics at the opening ceremony was just a dream come true. It taught me a big lesson that I was probably not mentally prepared to face it, which it was self validation and how much it means to me to be able to accept where I am and know that that spot I earned it and through hard work and being able to be good to myself has been huge.

THE MODERATOR: Your first Olympic games, what does it mean for you to be here but also what does it mean for Mexico and the growth of golf in Mexico to have golf be in the Olympics?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I mean like Gaby was saying, I think any time we get to represent Mexico and actually put the Mexican flag on our shirts and have Mexico on the bag it just adds a way bigger value than just playing for ourselves. For me, my first Olympics, it's such a joy to be in Japan and to be welcomed by everybody here and get the opportunity to do what I love. Like Gaby was saying, just do it for our country, do it for our people, have some fun and just very excited to be out here and to play my first Olympic games.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Both of you have been out here last couple days

following the men. Curious if, as a player, are you able to pull anything from what you watch and what that might mean for you as you play this week. If not, if why you were just out there supporting, did you really enjoy being out there and supporting?

GABY LOPEZ: For sure. I learned a lot. As a player coming and playing for such a big event it is way different from the outside and sometimes what I've learned is that sometimes we give too much value to a little mistake and when you put too much pressure on one shot you can carry on to the next one. From outside it just looks so easy, it looks really -- it just looks like have you 17 more opportunities if you bogey your first hole, right? But when you're the in the moment you just want to make up for the mistake and what I learned is just being able to stay patient, being able to truly be okay with whatever comes. So I think the guys have been unbelievable to me, to us I guess, Carlos and Abraham have been amazing, but just not them but everyone, I've been here for almost 10 days already and everyone has been so welcoming and very just appreciates that we are here. It's unbelievable to see that support from them and, yeah, I think just learning from the outside, outside of the ropes, it just makes it a different perspective when you play.

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, for me, I mean we were definitely out here supporting both of our guys and cheering them on and that was at least for me my main goal. But I think I learned so much more than I even thought I was going to be able to learn. I mean, I was even talking to our coaches like, oh, do you think that was the play, like could they have done this, could they have done that, things that I probably wouldn't have done, but from the outside I'm like, oh, that definitely wasn't the shot or that was a great shot or whatever it was. I think looking from the outside really makes you look at the big picture and we don't really ever get that opportunity. So it was very special, it was very special to see them represent your country the way they did and fight and it was a great learning experience and I was surprised for the better, for sure.

GABY LOPEZ: To be honest I felt as nervous as though we were playing. Carlos was just playing so good, just coming into the weekend, and Abraham as well, but when



he was in contention, I mean I could feel the nerves for him and I told, you can totally know what he's feeling because I've been in that position and being able to kind of just put yourself in his shoes and ask yourself, okay, what would I have done differently or how I would face that if it comes next week. So I think that's a huge learning experience for us.

Q. Going back to the flag experience, were there any nerves when you were doing that?

GABY LOPEZ: More than nerves it was just a lot of excitement, a lot of adrenaline. It was living a dream literally. I didn't think it was real. I thought it was okay, I'm going to wake up and I'm going to be back in Mexico, because I was at the closing ceremony at Rio 2016 and I just imagined myself how much special it would be if I would be carrying the flag and, yeah, taking a little piece of everybody, everyone's heart from Mexico with me in that flag, it just, it just got me chills and I was just extremely blessed and appreciate it for that opportunity.

Q. You guys stayed in the athletes village, right?

GABY LOPEZ: Yes. Yeah, we're currently at the athletes village.

Q. So Carlos stayed with a group of boxers. Who are you staying with?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, we got weight lifters and boxers too.

GABY LOPEZ: We got boxers.

MARIA FASSI: And a couple girls from rowing, I think. Yeah, so we're protected as well. (Laughing).

GABY LOPEZ: Yeah, we're the little girls.

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, don't mess with the Mexican team this week. (Laughing).

Q. Can you give us a state on what a medal would mean in Mexican golf. Curious if it's different from the men. I mean golf is still small in Mexico but the women at least have Lorena as somewhat of an icon and the men are still looking for that. Can you tell us how the country would receive a medal over say a major?

GABY LOPEZ: To me personally I would probably be willing to share my emotions and transmit to younger generations the importance of a medal over any major championship, in my opinion, because one of my goals as a player is to be able to grow the game of golf in Mexico

and very little people relate to a major championship or the LPGA or the PGA. But the whole country relates to the Olympic games. That is just a huge impact into what are these kids looking at when they grow up. It doesn't matter if it's golf, tennis, rowing, archery, it's a matter of impacting the next generations and being able to grow the sports world in Mexico. We don't have that many athletes as in the U.S. or Canada or Australia, but the very few that we have I think we have a lot of quality. You can tell we don't have that many golfers in Mexico, but we still came with a really strong team, two boys, two girls, and that says a lot about how much it's growing the game after Lorena left the Tour.

Q. It's been hot all week and it's going to be hot this week. Curious if you use anything, do anything in particular to stay cool out there.

MARIA FASSI: I mean just of course really making sure that we're hydrating, not only during the day but at night and eating properly and fueling our bodies. But I saw a few of the guys with cold towels over their heads and as silly as it looks it really cools you down and just keeps you in a good mental space, keeps you without complaining about how hot it is and all that. So umbrellas, I mean anything and everything that we can do I think to keep ourselves in shape and keep ourselves rested, it's key, because it's going to be a long week, it's going to be, like you said, very hot and humid. So we got to make sure we stay sharp, both mentally and physically.

GABY LOPEZ: To me I think it's just being able to practice smart. When you really practice smart and you write down some goals for the day, you're not spending eight hours, like I was at the beginning of the 10 days. And I learned that just spending two quality good hours of 30 minutes of putting, 30 minutes of short game, 30 minutes of ball hitting and just manage yourself around, it's probably key just coming into the week as it's going to be really hot.

Q. Wanted to ask you about the state of your game right now. How do you feel your form is and what are your thoughts on how to play this golf course from what you've seen of it?

MARIA FASSI: I'm very happy with where I'm at. I think that everything that's happened this year has been for a reason and the good and the bad have taught me different things that I needed to learn about myself, about my game, and I really trust the group of people I have around me. Not only my caddie but with my coaches and having Gaby as well and being able to practice with her and stuff, like everything's just in a good space. I'm in a good space mentally as well, which, how can you not when you're in the Olympic games. But I feel good. I have nothing to

prove, I'm just going to go out and play golf, give it my best and come Saturday we'll see what happens. But I feel good, I think I've had a couple last few weeks where I've seen a lot of improvement and I, from what I've seen of the golf course I like it. The greens are very good and I'm just happy and excited to get going.

Q. I wanted to ask you if you saw any benefit to the women playing the week after the men, for one question, and going forward would you like to see a team element to the Olympics and how do you think it could or should work?

GABY LOPEZ: I came here just before the guys were here and I was walking the golf course and I played a couple holes and I saw the rough very thick, like I was thinking this is a U.S. Women's Open, that's because it's narrow off the tee and the grass is a little spongy and the ball can just dig into the grass very easily. So you saw a couple guys chip out with a wedge because it was just so thick. And, yeah, the benefit is that they cut the rough a little bit down for us because we don't have the same strength of them, of course. What was the second question?

Q. The team, the format, team format.

GABY LOPEZ: Right, yes. Yeah, I feel that also probably we're going to, if we get lucky and we don't get any rain we're going to play probably firmer greens and I think that's going to be a little more challenging, but it's going to be, as well as it's great, just watching them play.

Q. Would you like to see a team format?

GABY LOPEZ: Oh, for sure. Yes, I think a team format would just be more appealing for everyone. I think I've talked to the International Golf Federation about that and they say that you can't use one competition for two medals individual and team so you probably have to make two events and that's going to be probably a little challenging bringing 60 men and women for two weeks. But I totally agree that the team element is going to be more exciting, it's going to bring more energy, it's going to make more people engaged with the game and I think that also ourselves, the players would like to just be part of something a little bit bigger. When you have that backup of your partner and you just enjoy being here as well, but, yeah, the team element I think is key for something that is a country, you're playing for your country at the Olympic games. You see so many different sports that are playing with team events and golf should definitely be one of them.

Q. What did you think of the seven-player playoff with, not just a seven-man playoff, but seven countries for one medal. What was that like watching?

GABY LOPEZ: That was unbelievable. I think it just brings this extra sauce to the plate. All those guys are playing and trying so hard to not only win but also come third place. I mean it's really hard to come solo third and being in a seven-man playoff it's not an easy thing, you're going to be able to, you know, make birdies as soon as you can. But it's exciting that that many countries were in the hunt because the tournament was really tight. That just tells you how much depth there is in the field and the best, the very best players of the world are coming.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

