

# Golf Channel Media Conference

Friday, June 3, 2016



## Annika Sorenstam Paige Mackenzie

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Good afternoon everybody, or good morning those of you on the West Coast. I'm Jeremy Friedman with Golf Channel Communications Department. We are here today to preview next week's KPMG Women's PGA Championship at Sahalee Country Club in Washington.

Joining me to preview the KPMG is Hall of Famer, Annika Sorenstam, who is going to be lead analyst for NBC's weekend coverage next week. And then also Paige Mackenzie, a Washington native who knows Sahalee Country Club really well. She will be leading us for our news coverage onsite at KPMG next week.

This call is being transcribed and will be provided to everyone following the call this afternoon. This call is also being recorded for replay. And all that information will be given out at the end of the call and also provided with a transcript, as well.

Annika Sorenstam, as everybody knows, she is a World Golf Hall of Famer, she's a three-time winner at the former LPGA Championship, now the KPMG Women's PGA. And Paige Mackenzie, for those of you who are on the call from the West Coast, she was all everything out of Washington, All-American at the University of Washington and is looking forward to coming back home for a week next week.

So first question for you two, for Annika and Paige. Annika, the first one to you. Tell me how excited you are looking forward to getting to Sahalee next week.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I am extremely excited. I think this is one of the highlights of the year, for the LPGA, obviously being a major championship, but getting a chance to come up to Sahalee and Paige knows it more than I do. But it's a terrific place. A lot of history. And again the goal for the KPMG when they started to joining up was three-fold, they wanted a big purse, they wanted national coverage, and then they wanted to play on classic, renowned courses.

And with Westchester last year, and Sahalee this year, I know the ladies are looking forward to it. And so am I. I think what the LPGA has done with the partnership

with PGA of America and KPMG to add the Women's Summit is just fantastic. It's really elevated women's golf. It's going to be a fun week in many ways.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Thank you, Annika.

Paige, how excited are you looking forward to coming back home next week?

PAIGE MACKENZIE: I'm so excited. It's just great to see the LPGA return to the Pacific Northwest in Washington. It's been, I don't know, goodness, almost, I think 20 years since they hosted a LPGA event in Washington state. And I know how great of a golf community the Seattle area is and how excited they are to kind of welcome the LPGA, especially the Women's Championship. I'm thrilled for the golfing community that they're going to have the opportunity to see the best women in the world compete.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Thank you, Paige. Annika, really quick before we open up to calls from the media, talk a little bit about the Women's Leadership Summit that's next Wednesday there at Sahalee.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Yes, the Women's Leadership Summit is all about inspiring the next generation of women to be able to get good positions, providing successful women in the business world, media, pro golf and athletes, really sharing their stories, their experience, and again, inspire them to take the next step and not be afraid to get in those high positions. And certainly with the leadership from KPMG, it really motivates people to do this. Last year at Westchester we had over 300 participants, and the atmosphere and the stories that were shared, makes me proud that the LPGA is kind of the platform to put this together. It doesn't get much better than Condoleezza Rice starting out this summit. It's going to be a really terrific addition to the event.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: We all agree. Everybody on the call, the Women's Leadership Summit will be Wednesday, June 8th out at Sahalee. Golf Channel and CNBC are both going to be streaming this Leadership Summit on GolfChannel.com and on CNBC.com.

Also really quickly, for our coverage for next week, Golf

Channel and NBC, we're combining to do more than 40 hours combined news and tournament coverage next week. Golf Channel will have Thursday and Friday coverage. And then on the weekend will be both Golf Channel and NBC with the majority of that coverage in prime time.

We are ready to open up to the media.

**Q. Annika, obviously it's a big week for Inbee, clinching a spot in the World Golf Hall of Fame. Could you kind of retrace the week leading up to you clinching and some of the things that happened to you that week and some of the emotions and feelings that you have that she might be feeling coming into the tournament this week?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: You're right. It's a big week for Inbee. And hopefully she's healthy enough. I know she's been struggling for the last month or so with an injury. So you certainly don't want to limp through the finishing line, if you know what I mean.

But it makes you -- you start thinking about what you have achieved. You start looking back. For me it was quite surreal. It was like, wow, is this really happening, and I feel like I'm too young for a Hall of Fame induction.

But it's a great week to reflect on your achievements, and I hope that she can enjoy it. She's worked so hard, and her record speaks for itself. But I hope she can enjoy this and absorb it and come out there and have a good time. And that's the thing sometimes, you get in a competitive mode, you kind of forget and you just think about the event, but it's a historic moment for her. She should be proud of what she has achieved. And this week, too, being the defending champion makes it very special.

Q. Was it difficult for you to focus on the tournament and then kind of balance both that week? Did you have a rhythm that was just not going to throw you off your game?

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: A little bit, yeah. I mean you have to look at the big picture. But then of course once Thursday comes you've got to make sure you're prepared and ready to play. As a competitor, that's all that matters. There's nothing more frustrating when you get distracted and you know that you can do better. But you have to focus on what you have to do. She's very good at that. But kind of finding that balance of enjoying it but still staying focused in the moment and playing well. It's a big tournament, you want to get back to No. 1 and defend the tournament. There's a lot on the line, as well, just other than just going out there and enjoying what's happening.

**Q. Following up on the Inbee question, the ten year rule, in the LPGA Hall of Fame, Inbee has amassed 27 points. Lorena Ochoa has amassed 27 points. But the ten year rule is a bit of an issue for both of them. Lorena doesn't have that, and theoretically she might never get into the Hall of Fame, because she didn't play ten years, although there can be exceptions. With Inbee it seems to be an issue now that she seems to be in a rush to get that 10th start in the ten years. What do you both make of the ten year rule? Is it a good rule?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I do like the rule. I think that it's not just about performance. I think it's about the commitment to the game and there's very few locations where a player is able to do it in such a short period of time. I do think that Lorena will get in one way or another. And I'm not so worried about Inbee, either. I think we need to have that commitment rule. And a lot of times you don't get inducted until later in your career, anyway, but it's more of a voting and not necessarily a point system. Keep in mind women's golf, the Hall of Fame, is still one of the toughest out there. I don't think the ten year rule is so difficult, I think it's more the points.

PAIGE MACKENZIE: I just look over the career, and I am disappointed that after all she's accomplished that she didn't earn her way in while she was still playing, because of it. So in some ways, I completely understand where Annika is coming from, because it is, it's a commitment to the Tour, and it's based on a career, and there's longevity in careers. But I just think it's a shame that there's players, potentially more players like Lorena, but Lorena in particular, that has qualified but not yet in.

**Q. If I could just follow-up, Inbee right now, you know, she's only 27 but she's been at No. 1, she's been battling Lydia, she's been battling Stacy. It's hard to stay at No. 1. Annika, you went through that with Karrie, then getting it back, being the top player. How much does that wear on a player and can it shorten a player's career to just be battling that, trying to top yourself and everyone else all the time?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think so, yeah. It is tough to be at the top. It's tough to be on Tour in general, but it certainly has the extra obligations that come with it, and the responsibilities every week, the demand and expectations.

A lot of times players' goal is to be the best in the world, and once you achieve that, it's like, okay, I've done it. And not many players have the motivation to keep on going. It's almost like they reached their final destination and then they're happy.

In my case I was extremely motivated. And even when I was No. 1 in the world, in my mind I felt like I could be better, and that's what motivated me. It wasn't to be top on the money list, it was more I knew I could get better, let's see how good I can get. And I think you have to have that to keep on going for a longer period of time.

**Q. Annika, about one month out from the Olympic qualification deadline. Certainly among the South Korean players it's going to be a real battle to see who earns the four spots. Do you think this is going to create a lot of interest over the next month? I know you're a big supporter of the Olympic golf. What's your take on the way things are shaping up?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I'm a big supporter of golf in the Olympics. I think it's going to be really interesting that some countries look upon it in a greater way. Korea is one country that does that, and China is another. It seems like some countries, it doesn't matter as much to them. But I love that NBC has kind of attracting, I think it's more exciting. And I know it's becoming a very close race on the Korean side. But other countries in general, focus on some of the Swedes, they're really excited. And it just adds more to the event and more things to track. Keep in mind, this is really a historic moment for golf to be in the Olympics. So why not? Let's just get the hype up, and get the athletes ready.

**Q. My question is a little different than everybody else with Inbee. It's moving toward Ariya. What do you think about her coming into this tournament? She's won the last three. What do you think she has to do to win again?**

PAIGE MACKENZIE: It's extraordinary what she's done the last three events. And with the Sahalee Country Club, it's very, very narrow. And she's -- she has the distance that she can use driving iron off the tee. And I think that's a huge advantage for her. If she can keep that in play, I don't see why this golf course would not suit her. She's got power. I know it's very lush right now in Seattle, she's got the power to get it out, if she were ever to miss a fairway. It's just -- she's on such a roll right now, it's hard to see that momentum stopping.

**Q. This question is just about playing a venue that has hosted major championships in the past that have a history of majors. And the women are getting to more of them. We've seen Oakmont, St. Andrews. It's starting to happen more and more. How important is that to play on these big events that fans are very familiar with and that have a lot of history? How important is it? And why is it important for the women to do so?**

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: I think it's terrific, I really do. I mean I always tell people, women love tradition, too. We respect the courses that have a lot of history. And I think it's elevating the game in so many ways. Obviously the last eight years I haven't played in any of them, but at the end of my career, we had a chance to play -- started with the British Open, playing some of these events, St. Andrews and Lytham, it was terrific. I feel like for golf fans, it makes it more exciting. I think it really does. So I think it's a step in the right direction. And again, that's what the objective of KPMG Women's PGA Championship was we want to elevate, and to do that you've got to play these courses.

PAIGE MACKENZIE: I think it's one of the best things that events can do for women's golf. Primarily because the fans are so familiar and they know how the men do play it. And you can compare. And you can stack it up, and you can realize that women's golf is not a different sport. It's the same sport. And it's played the same way on the same venues. I think we got a great taste of that at the Eugene Country Club, watching the women succeed on the golf course and then watching the men play it, as well.

I think it's incredibly important that as we talk about different tournaments that we visit history. The fact that men are going to Oakmont, and we've had Women's US Open champions there, as well, I think that's equally as important, to build the context of our sport. It's great because it does put it in the same sentence as the men's game.

**Q. If I could follow-up for both of you. Paige you know Sahalee a little better than Annika, but Annika, obviously you're familiar with what's coming up. Could you talk about, you said that Ariya, you like Ariya's chances there, but who else do you see on this set up, a narrow, kind of a classic Major Championship set up with tough rough, who do you see as maybe the favored players?**

PAIGE MACKENZIE: I said from the beginning, as soon as they announced it, I knew Morgan Pressel, I don't know what her form is going into this week, but I always felt like she played very well in classic style golf courses, very precise and keeps the ball in front of her and in play. So I always felt like this kind of suited her. I'm trying to think of other players, there's obviously other players that are very precise as well. But that was always my first pick when I thought of Sahalee.

ANNIKA SORENSTAM: Well, I think Paige, that's a good pick, Morgan this kind of fits her game. It would be great. She's won a major before, even though it was a long time ago, she knows how to do that. You've got to grind, and especially on this type of golf course.

You cannot lose your temper. If it's hard to hit some fairways. You need a lot, a lot of patience. Obviously Lydia Ko. This is one of the straightest hitters out there, fitting literally every category. I think you can't rule her out, especially now when she has won two majors. And I know there is pressure for three in a row, she might have to deal with that. But I think the golf course suits her very well.

There are some players that I think are playing well. Same thing with Ariya Jutanugarn, like Paige said. Put an iron in your hand, that's quite the benefit. I would love to see Anna Nordqvist, she's very consistent, she hits a lot of fairways, she has a good short game. Maybe it could be her week, as well.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: If there are no further questions in the queue, ladies, thank you very much for joining us today.

As I mentioned earlier, Annika and Paige will be a part of a large contingent of Golf Channel, NBC folks that will be at Sahalee next week. Annika will be with play-by-play host Dan Hicks, and then Judy Rankin will be in the broadcast booth with Terry Gannon. Paige will be handling our news coverage, with Cara Robinson and our Golf Channel analyst Brandel Chamblee. We will have a big cast next week at the Sahalee Country Club.

There will be a transcript sent out following this call, and also a replay number will be a part of this call, as well. If you'd like to dial in and listen to the call once again, it will be available for a week.

Paige and Annika, thank you very much. Paige, again, congratulations to your Huskies for winning the Women's NCAA a week and a half ago. And we will see everybody out in Sahalee next week.