

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW:
STACY LEWIS
GABRIELA LOPEZ
SAMANTHA MARKS**



Wednesday, June 24, 2015

MODERATOR: I would like to welcome Stacy Lewis into the media center here with Arkansas' Gaby Lopez and Samantha Marks. Stacy, you serve as a volunteer women's assistant golf coach in the off season. How cool was that to get to play with Gaby on Monday and then come to find out that Samantha had qualified as well?

STACY LEWIS: Well, I love what that tournament has done over the years of doing the invite with somebody on the team. Obviously I got my start doing the invite for a couple of years and it was pretty big for me on learning how to handle these bigger tournaments like this and handling the big stage and playing in front of the crowds, so it's just such a great learning opportunity for these girls. And just to see how Gaby's game has gotten so much better over the last couple years, it's cool to maybe help her along a little bit. I think she's going to do -- her and Samantha have a chance of going pretty well this year.

MODERATOR: How about you two girls?

GABRIELA LOPEZ: Well, first of all, I want to thank Octagon, the University of Arkansas, Walmart and Pinnacle Country Club for the amazing opportunity again this year. It's just very exciting to play with Stacy and learn a lot from her throughout the year and here at Pinnacle Country Club is just an incredible experience. I can tell you I'm speechless and feel very lucky to be here this week again and thank you for everything.

SAMANTHA MARKS: Same as Gaby, I just want to thank everyone, thank the university for this opportunity, the opportunity to qualify on Monday, and I was really excited to play the way that I did and to earn my spot in. So I'm pumped to be here and I'm ready for a great weekend.

MODERATOR: I'd like to open it up for questions.

Q. You're defending champion. (No microphone.)

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, it's a little different. Everybody's kind of giving me a hard time because there's even more pictures of me everywhere only because I'm here defending. It's different but it's in a good way. I feel a little bit more relaxed this year just having gotten the win. I put a lot of pressure on myself the last few years to get the win. To do it last year and just coming back and seeing the highlights, seeing the videos, you know, it's probably one of the coolest wins of my career. I love this place, I love coming back, and I'm looking forward to a really good week.

Q. Stacy, I know you don't need any reminder that you haven't won since last year, but I'm kind of curious about what's your mindset like and the state of your game overall and also coming back this week, and secondly just about the course and how it is after all the rain?

STACY LEWIS: Yeah, my game, it hasn't exactly been where I've wanted it this year. But the look early in the year maybe wasn't perfect but I was still playing well, having good finishes, and the last month or so kind of caught up with me and so my coach and I kind of went back to the drawing board probably about two weeks ago and said what do we do well, what do we do well and let's get back to that. Made some good strides in West Chester, felt like I played a little bit better there and made some good work last week and into this week. So I really like the direction I'm going and that's all it is. It's really kind of just working on little things and building into it, but I'm making some better swings and making some putts.

The swing, swing-wise it was a lot of the takeaway to get the club a little bit lower at the top. The club tends to get high and away from me, so the body fires, drop it inside, goes all over the place, so it's really just getting a better place at the top again.

And the golf course, golf course is actually as dry as I've seen it the last couple years. We were talking about it when we were playing. I think last year we played it up every day and we had all that rain last week and there's no mud on the ball at all. So greens are as fast as I've ever seen them, so the golf course is in really, really good shape.

Q. As a follow up to that, how important is it to get back to No. 1? All these changes, it's to go immediately get back to No. 1 or do you feel like that's attainable right now?

STACY LEWIS: No. 1 is way back, way in the back of my mind. Goals like that, I don't like goals like that because I can't control a lot of what that is. I can control the way I prepare, I can control how I play, but I can't control how anybody else plays. So to get back to No. 1, that takes some help from some other people. So the immediate goal is to just get back to doing what I do best, get my golf swing in a better place and winning tournaments. That's ultimately what's going to end up -- that's what moves you up the rankings and takes care of everything else.

(Question and answer in Spanish for Gabriela Lopez.)

Q. For all of you, how has your time at the University of Arkansas helped you compete on this level?

STACY LEWIS: I just felt like my time at Arkansas, you're a kid and you're able to grow up and you're able to learn a lot. That's what I was able to do. I felt like I matured as a person and I felt like along the way your game gets better and you learn how to manage your time really well. It's a lot of fun because you're playing with your team all the time. I've said it before and I'll keep saying it, if I had gone anywhere else to school, I don't think I would be

where I am. This place and this town, the university was really important to all the success I've had.

GABRIELA LOPEZ: For me, the same. The University of Arkansas has opened so many doors for me and my family, and especially Shauna and Mike have impacted a lot of my life and my game. My short game has gotten way much better than it was at the beginning and I think it's one of the huge improvements I can tell from the beginning to now. And a lot of mentally just getting really tough every day is one of the keys and I think that I've seen a lot of improvement there also. Shauna has a great, great mindset. Pep talks are great with her every tournament and it's just always seeing the positive side of any tournament even though we're not playing our best. We all know that we have our game, our mentality and we have all the tools. The university gives us every tool, every resource to be successful in the classroom and outside, and it's just really exciting to see how much we improve every year.

SAMANTHA MARKS: For me, it's the same that they said. Being a transfer student, I know what it's like to see a different school and this university's changed my life. It's unbelievable the amount of support that we have in the community and just even on campus, the golf team itself. And like Gaby said, Shauna and Mike have taught us so much. Me especially, my game has gotten so much better since coming here. Shauna and Mike and this university are why I'm sitting where I am and I'm just so thankful for them and this town and this university.

(Question and answer in Spanish for Gabriela Lopez.)

Q. Stacy, I'm just wondering if you've had a chance at all, I'm sure you have sometime this year, to play with Inbee and just how she's playing this year overall?

STACY LEWIS: Well, Inbee is playing -- she's always been playing well but what she's been doing better I think over probably the last six months or so is her ball striking. You look the last year or two, she rode her putter a lot, she would make everything she looked at and ball striking wasn't always that great, but now the ball striking's catching up with the putting. That's what you saw especially at Westchester, she hit it really good there. Didn't put herself in any bad situations so she's not really doing a whole lot wrong right now.

Q. This question is for Samantha and Gaby. Can you guys talk about the influence Stacy has had on you, what you've learned from her?

SAMANTHA MARKS: Just having Stacy around, she's come around a few times during the year and just having her talk through even like a few different shots, like how to hit different shots and just hearing from her like reiterating the things that Shauna says just kind of really reinforces it. She talks about having patience and like she was talking about the things she could control and things she can't control, that's all really important. I mean, what a great person to look up to, and even coming from the same program, it's really awesome to have her around.

GABRIELA LOPEZ: For me, I think she's not only our assistant coach but she's a close friend and I think we can come to her and ask her a lot of questions and she'll answer all of them. For me, she's shown me a lot. She's a role model to follow and she's shown me that what seems impossible can be possible. She came out to the University of Arkansas, she had back surgery, she came in -- she overcame all those obstacles and she just showed me that working hard and a love for the game can take you to No. 1 in the world. So it's just that little hope and keep working hard to get where I want to go and accomplish my goals on the LPGA in the near future.

Q. I guess both for Gaby and Samantha, was this tournament at all a factor in recruiting? Did they talk about this tournament would be something available to y'all?

GABRIELA LOPEZ: Yeah, for sure, it was real important for me at the beginning. Coming here as an official visit, I came here and it was actually the time for the LPGA and Shauna brought me here and it was pretty impressive to see what the university offered to me. It was just -- I think it's a really good point that you can come here and get to know the arena, the environment, and it's just really playing as a recruit and all the opportunity the university can offer for you and I think it's just a really important point.

SAMANTHA MARKS: I agree. I think this is a big point in recruiting for Shauna and Mike and for the university. I committed to come here, to transfer here about a week before this tournament last year and I was like, well, dad, I have to come. So I flew up and I was here all week and it was just amazing to see the support for Stacy and the support for Gaby and everybody out in their Razorback gear and I think it's incredible beneficial for Shauna and Mike and our program.

STACY LEWIS: There's no other tournament we have on our schedule that offers this opportunity, especially specifically for one team. There's other tournaments that provide opportunities in the Monday qualifier, but to provide an opportunity straight into the tournament, nobody else can say that. I think that's what makes this place special, what makes this tournament and the university so special.

Q. Stacy, did the eagle at 18 get you into the prizes and how much does course knowledge help you in this tournament?

STACY LEWIS: I don't know, that eagle in the pro-am, my team got a little nervous the last three holes. They started looking at the leaderboard and I tried to get them to stop looking at the leaderboard, but it didn't work so we probably finished second. But course knowledge is huge on this golf course, just knowing what ways the wind blows, when they kind of swirl in your face. Tried to share some of that with Gaby. There's certain trees you look at on certain holes to get the wind direction. So the course knowledge here is huge. The greens are tricky so it takes a lot of time to learn the little bumps in them, and being comfortable with the lines off the tees.

Q. (No microphone.)

GABRIELA LOPEZ: Well, as I look back, I was really nervous. My brother was on the bag and I was just really nervous. I was playing with Michelle Wie, it was a new experience for me. I think she was like six feet tall and it was just really, really crazy.

But looking back to the next year, I felt a little more comfortable with the arena and I've played the U.S. Open in 2012, I've played the LPGA -- I've played two LPGAs in Mexico, now three. I don't know, I think it's just having a lot of LPGAs on the bags. Just a lot of experience. Looking back to last year, I made the cut so I think that's an improvement. So being really nervous and not making the cut and making the cut last year, I see myself climbing the ladder and just really excited to see the process and how we talked about the improvement of our games is just really cool to see what the University of Arkansas has helped me a lot.

SAMANTHA MARKS: I mean, I'm extremely excited to be here. I was excited to get the opportunity to qualify on Monday and then even more excited to play the way I did. Honestly, I wasn't surprised with the way I played. I started off bogey-bogey, so that was interesting. I was so nervous. I was telling Gaby, I don't really get that like physically nervous, but I felt like I was going to throw up. But I was really, really excited and I ended up playing well after those two bumps in the road at the beginning. I'm ready for a good week and I think my game is where it needs to be so I'm excited.

(No microphone.)

GABRIELA LOPEZ: It was really, really cool to play Nationals. I was just talking to Shauna about the throwback it meant to me. Stacy played in Florida, she won in Florida, she went to Saturday morning that year with Shauna. I went to Florida and coming to the last round it was really special, Memorial Day and I played for a guy that died on my birthday. So it was really special for me to listen that this guy, we were going to represent him. So he died on my birthday and I knew in that moment that was going to be a special week, a special day. And I played so relaxed, I felt that I was protected and shot 66 like Stacy did in the last round, came one shot short. But still it was pretty special and my game is where it needs to be and it proved that. Four days later I qualified for the U.S. Open this year. So it is where it needs to be and I'm really confident about my ball striking, my putting is getting so well and my short game is impressive right now. Not to be cocky, but...

STACY LEWIS: I like it.

GABRIELA LOPEZ: But just really exciting to see the process and all the improvement that I've gotten in the last couple years and months.

MODERATOR: All right. Thank you guys for coming in, appreciate it, good luck this week.