

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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LEXI THOMPSON
RICKIE FOWLER

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone, to the media center here at the Grant Thornton Invitational. I am pleased to be joined by Lexi Thompson and Rickie Fowler, our third team of the week. Lexi, coming back to Tiburón Golf Club where you've won before, how excited are you to play this course again and kick off this great team event?

LEXI THOMPSON: It's always great to come back to Naples. I love this golf course. It was unfortunate I wasn't here a few weeks ago, but great to come back here. The hospitality that we receive is always top-notch and to be able to be part of a team event and be paired up with Rickie and also play this golf course again brings back a lot of good memories and just really hoping for a fun great week.

THE MODERATOR: Rickie, after Jess had to pull out of the event, how easy of a decision was it to pair up with Lexi afterwards?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, my partner bailed. I tried to talk her into it like you can still do it. But yeah, she ultimately bailed. It was a pretty easy decision from there.

Jess and I, it worked out, we're obviously close and both GT ambassadors, so from there I got to choose.

LEXI THOMPSON: Here I am.

RICKIE FOWLER: Here we are.

Like Lexi said, she's played well here, not that that went into any decision making, but that's a bonus. We've played a bit together and being with Cobra Puma, as well, just thought it would be, one, fun. I don't mind Lexi from a little ways up. She gets to kind of send it out there, especially in the right format.

Yeah, we're going to have a good time and see if we can get some stuff going and roll with it.

THE MODERATOR: How do your games complement each other and maybe what's the strategy out there for the two of you?

LEXI THOMPSON: I don't know if we've talked too much strategy --

RICKIE FOWLER: I think Saturday is kind of the only strategy.



LEXI THOMPSON: Just play our own games, get it down there as close as we can, and on the few holes that we do have to lay back on, do that, and just give ourselves the best opportunity from the fairway to give ourselves a birdie look. He's an amazing putter, so when it comes to scramble day, you can just make --

RICKIE FOWLER: I was going to lean on Lexi a little bit as far as knowing the course a bit more and she's played here a lot more recently. We'll talk a little bit about alternate shot, whether certain tee shots she might like more or dislike and try not to overthink it.

It's going to be fun because we really don't get to do this at all. We'll play with Jess a little bit when I'm home. We've played a handful of times over the years. It'll be just interesting and fun to go tee it up together.

Q. Having played together in the past, are there any memories that come to mind of times that you have gotten to play with each other in the past?

RICKIE FOWLER: I usually -- when we are playing the same tees because there's been a few times Lexi has come up and played with some of us guys, if it's into the wind and whether you hit before or after her, just make sure you don't miss it too much because she'll hit it past you.

But she obviously, for someone that plays the LPGA Tour, she's on the longer side, and I think that's something that we can lean on, one, her having past and good experience this year at the golf course. We've seen that she can hang with the boys in Vegas earlier this year. I think she didn't quite live up to her expectations, but I think she exceeded everyone else's of what people thought was possible.

No, it'll be fun. I think that was probably the biggest takeaway when we've played before is don't miss it. You don't want Lexi to hit it past you.

Q. Do you think that's kind of a benefit to have that much experience playing -- you grew up with brothers, but playing alongside some of these guys in a recreational format, do you think it's a benefit?

LEXI THOMPSON: I guess it benefits a little bit. Growing up with my two older brothers and their friends, I've played a handful of rounds with these guys. I enjoy it so much. I just go out there and we joke around, but it's just so laid back, but we're also learning from each other, too. Like if I have any questions about shots that they hit or clubs that they hit, I know I can pick their brain about it.

It's super impressive to watch I think from both ends, on both sides of each Tour. It's great to be paired up with them this week, and it'll be great for golf and a lot of fun.

Q. You've played in previous iterations of this event, but to see Grant Thornton step up and put this event on, how cool is that for golf and how cool is it to see the men and women come together in this kind of way?

LEXI THOMPSON: I think it's truly amazing. I think it shows how much the game of golf is really growing, especially on the women's side. I think this is what golf needs is more team events, especially mixed men and women's, and I think fans will really love it.



We're very grateful for everything that Grant Thornton has done for us this week and brought this event here. I've played in it before it was all this and then it was just me and Nelly last year, so was trending in the right direction, so to have a fully mixed event, I think it's great to see on the golf side.

Q. You guys are both obviously players that have been in the limelight, are no stranger to pressure. I'm wondering an event like this where you get to let that off your back and have some fun, how much are you looking forward to this week?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, it's definitely going to be fun. Team events are always a good time just because you can kind of lean on each other, but it's also some added pressure, as well, because you want to perform and execute when it comes down to alternate shot. Yeah, we have a pretty strong field both on the men's and the women's side. No one has come in here just to enjoy December off-season. There's a lot of pride at stake, as well.

I know we're going to have fun. I think that's part of what's going to be good, and for a lot of people watching, whether on-site or TV, is just to see the camaraderie and the guys and the girls just kind of giving it to each other as well as kind of pulling each other.

We haven't really seen this in quite a while, so to, I think, from the trash talk to just I think how much fun because there's a few -- like Lexi and I know each other pretty well, but there's a few that kind of just met this week, as well. I think you'll kind of get to see the friendships that are already there or starting this week and just how enjoyable it'll be for all of us to mess around and have fun.

LEXI THOMPSON: Yeah, like Rickie said, of course it's a fun different format being part of a team and having the different formats at play for the three days. But we're all golfers. We're very competitive. So we don't want to go out there and not care or just have a fun time. We want to hit good shots. We want to make birdies and be the best partner for our teammate alongside us.

We're out there to play some good golf and also have fun doing it.

RICKIE FOWLER: If you hit it in the weeds, I won't be mad. It's fine.

LEXI THOMPSON: No sorries.

Q. Have we decided on a team name or motto?

RICKIE FOWLER: Might have to get back to you on that.

LEXI THOMPSON: Need a moment.

RICKIE FOWLER: We've got about 16 hours or so.

LEXI THOMPSON: We'll have something maybe.



Q. You both have kind of had comeback arcs this year in kind of your own unique ways. I was wondering if you've talked about some of the low moments in golf and shared that with each other, any advice that you've both had for each other?

RICKIE FOWLER: Nothing necessarily directly. We've played with each other a couple times over the last two, three years or so. I think it's just more knowing that we're there, like Lexi was talking about. She can always -- whenever we're playing together or whoever else it is asking, it's more just knowing that we're there and knowing that you have people around you to lean on if there is something.

Outside of playing golf, we're around each other at some of the Cobra Puma shoots and stuff like that.

I would say it hasn't really been anything directly, but it's just knowing, hey, if you need something, call me, text me, I'm here, and it's a two-way street.

LEXI THOMPSON: I think that's the most important thing, just knowing that you have somebody there to lean on if needed. No direct conversations, but always having somebody is nice.

Q. Rickie, there's a lot of news in the golf world about Jon Rahm and LIV. If it is true, what do you think that means for the PGA TOUR going forward and maybe a potential domino effect happening there?

RICKIE FOWLER: Honestly, I don't know. The amount of information that I have is the same, maybe less than everyone else has. I've been a little bit out of the loop. My pro-am guys mentioned that there was something that broke today on Jon Rahm.

His decision doesn't affect me necessarily, but it'll be interesting to see how things continue to play out. Timelines of things with the deal deadline being end of the year, it's hard to really think that goes through just with the timing of it and how much would have to get done between now and then.

Ultimately down the road, division isn't a good thing. I'm hopeful things will continue to work in the right direction for the greater of the game. But what that is, I don't know. I wish I could tell you. We're kind of all on this ride together and kind of figuring out and learning as we go.

Q. How useful is this off-season to keep yourself sharp for your 2024 season going forward?

RICKIE FOWLER: For me, since our season ended in August and then we had Ryder Cup, I've only played up until last week I played once after Ryder Cup. It's kind of a nice time to see where things are at, what needs to be worked on a little bit more or what needs to have a little bit more time or emphasis on over the next few weeks to get ready for our West Coast Swing, our schedule and where our timelines are are a little bit different from the LPGA Tour.



For me last week and this week has been nice to maybe try some new stuff. I'm going to do some more testing next week and see if I can kind of keep fine tuning to get ready for January. That's kind of where I'm at.

LEXI THOMPSON: Yeah, I didn't really hear the question. But yeah, this is kind of mid off-season for me, but I played my last time about three weeks ago there in Tampa, and I've been practicing ever since. I've played in a bunch of pro-ams since then and just been still practicing because I want to play well here. I'll have a few weeks off after this. I'll start up third week of January.

I'll take a week or so maybe off after this. It's hard for me to put the clubs away, but it's definitely important to get that rest time and kind of shut down and reset coming into 2024 and make sure that I'm fully ready, but it's definitely nice to come here and put my game to the test and know what I have to work on in the off-season.

Q. Rickie, the news coming out today obviously is big, but it seems to be a pattern of it, of coming out at a time when it's really overshadowing a great opportunity for the LPGA and the PGA TOUR. Being a Grant Thornton ambassador, as well, is it a little disappointing to always see this news come up at a time when other things should really be being highlighted?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, yes and no. News is going to break kind of whenever. Sometimes things aren't necessarily planned. Some stuff gets leaked. Like I said, I wasn't necessarily aware of it until someone else told me about it.

I'm here with Lexi this week enjoying what's a fun week, and it's only going to get more fun when we get to tee it up tomorrow. Yeah, we'll go out there and put on a show and show that we're having a good time.

As far as all the other stuff that's going around in golf from LIV to the TOUR to golf ball stuff, USGA, R&A, we'll worry about that away from the golf course or next week over a little bit of a break.

There's always stuff going on, but yeah, we're going to go tee it up, have fun, and we'll figure out the other stuff later.

Q. You had mentioned before that a lot of the teams are just meeting each other for the very first time, but you guys have the benefit of knowing each other. Do you remember the first time you got together, what brought you together, what that was like?

LEXI THOMPSON: I don't remember the first time.

RICKIE FOWLER: I actually don't even remember.

LEXI THOMPSON: It was probably a Cobra Puma photo shoot. Had to have been. Or PGA show maybe?

RICKIE FOWLER: I never did the PGA show. When did you sign with CBG?



LEXI THOMPSON: I've been with them since 2010.

RICKIE FOWLER: So it would have been a Puma shoot. Yeah, it had to have been a shoot early on in like 2010 or '11, and we've played over those years a handful of times but been around each other a lot more at shoots. But unfortunately it must have been very memorable for both of us because we don't remember.

LEXI THOMPSON: I wish we had a better story but we don't.

RICKIE FOWLER: Luckily it's both ways.

