

CPKC Women's Open

Sunday, July 28, 2024

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Earl Grey Golf Club

Laurence Applebaum

Ryan Paul

Press Conference

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Thanks for joining us. And acknowledging Mike, thank you, Mike, for the work you've done this week. Our fearless leader in to the comms side, Dan Pino is deep into badminton competition over in the Olympics in Paris. Mike, thank you for all you've done this week. (Applause.)

First of all, it's been amazing for us to be back in Calgary. We were here in 2016 and that was the last one that -- I was not able to participate I should say. I started in 2017. So first time in this role being in Calgary, and it has been nothing short of exceptional for us to be in Calgary, in Alberta.

I just wanted to introduce a few friends here from the club who played fundamental roles in this. The co-tournament chair -- there are two tournament chairs of the CPKC Women's Open -- Kendra Koss is here and her partner, George Hardisty couldn't make it, but it's really nice, Kendra, to have someone from the membership who has taken such an active role at the event and Golf Canada and Alberta Golf.

So Kendra thank you very much for all that you've done.

And then the general manager of Earl Grey Golf Club, Jana-Lyn and her son Ewan, her mini me for today I guess. Jana-Lyn to come in late, she was hired Feb 1 I want to say.

April 1. So to have such a short runway for taking over, it's been an exceptional championship, Jana-Lyn.

To have two incredible female leaders for this female championship is not lost on us, so thank you very much.

Sunday with a little bit of good weather that we received, some foot traffic that we are hoping to get, we are headed towards this being our greatest CPKC Women's Open in our 50 year history.



Ryan will talk through some of the attendance numbers, commercial numbers, maybe some of the other metrics that we use, but we have been received in this city so well. The golf course has been tremendous. The players have really enjoyed their time here, as always.

As you saw by this morning, the check presentation, a record-breaking donation by the community and CPKC to the Alberta Children's Hospital.

All in all, for us it's just been a capper, and we're hoping for an amazing Sunday and maybe even a charge by Brooke Henderson or one of our other Canadians.

Couple bigger things just in terms of what was going on this week that we're incredibly proud about. It was the fourth iteration of CPKC Women's Leadership Summit. It was a full house WinSport Calgary, which is a great facility, partner facility for us, and amazing to have a roster of I would say national and internationally renowned speakers join us with a very engaged community.

Part of the beauty of this event is the engagement we have with our female community, our golfers, our business leaders, and so that leadership summit was of real highlight.

You well know the numbers of Canadians we had in the field. We had 17 Canadians with five making the cut. Obviously for one the missions of our organization to develop to see more Canadians on the LPGA and PGA Tours, it is really wonderful to see some of our seasoned pros like Alena doing so well and of course Brooke.

But also people like Savannah Grewal and Ellie Szeryk and Maude-Aimee LeBlanc to continue to have the platform that national championship provides for them.

My last comment I want to share is this mission we have of seeing more girls, young women, ladies, continue to play golf. It is our single largest opportunity in the sport to get more women playing, and platforms like this give us this incredible opportunity.

From the qualifying events we hold across the country to



the world junior championships that we host later on in the fall, and obviously our pinnacle event being the CPKC Women's Open.

So there are a few more details about the results of the tournament, and I'll turn that over to Ryan Paul and we'll take some questions.

RYAN PAUL: Thanks, Laurence. Thanks for being here, everyone. What a special week this has been from even dating back to 2021 when we were looking at venues to come to in Calgary, and when we first set eyes on Earl Grey I think we knew we had the place that was going to be successful.

I didn't know it was going to be as successful as it's been. I think Laurence said we are doing very well in our gates, and our numbers pierced really over the 70,000 mark, around 72,000, with the potential to be our greatest attendance number for our 50 year history.

Hopefully today goes as expected.

But even leading up we knew we had something special. 1,300 volunteers signed up. We reached our registration capacity as early as March. We have never done that in this tournament's history, which shows the volunteerism and the excitement for this event in Calgary.

Hospitality sales and hospitality buyers up 30% from last year. I think a special night was July 2nd 3rd third last year. We had our first sales night where we were releasing all our hospitality products. We thought we had a good ladder, roster of products, and halfway through the night we were walking out to the golf course trying to find if we could build more units because they were just flying off the shelf, which is unbelievable.

For an event like ours that won Tournament of the Year the last two years on the LPGA Tour, it's going to be very, very hard for the LPGA to not make it a three-peat. It's been incredibly successful for us.

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Maybe two other things I'll mention: One is we have been kept well informed of what's been happening with our golfing friends and community in the Jasper area. Our friends at Levelwear and CPKC have committed to making a donation through the revenue and the net proceeds of our merchandise sales.

That's headed towards -- it may top six figures, so it's really exciting between Levelwear, CPKC, Golf Canada, so we are really appreciative of what Levelwear's initiative has done in that area, and thinking about our friends in Jasper.

And then last, you're well aware that in 2025 we will be in Mississauga Golf and Country Club. Earlier this month, some of the challenging weather that happened in the GTA, Mississauga and Credit Valley were two of the toughest hit golf courses and they've recovered really well.

I know they're going to be in great shape, a great test, and for us to be back in the GTA with the CPKC Women's Open will be super exciting.

Thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Just curious, you say back in 2021 you sort the laid eyes on Earl Grey and thought, okay, this is a place we can have success. What gave you that feeling then?

RYAN PAUL: Well, it's a few things: So first thing you want to look at is inside the ropes. Do you have a championship golf course available that will truly test the players. I think that's been certainly proven true this week with the scores that we've seen.

The players have said to me on multiple occasions these are the narrowest fairways they've dealt with on the LPGA this year, and certainly through the rest of the year.

And the rough and the length we're playing at, rivaling U.S. Open rough that they play on a year-to-year basis. I think that's very special to us and certainly Earl Grey Golf Club as well that we have conditions like that and can truly test these players. And when we're compared to a U.S. Open, that's really special.

And second and equally as important is the operational elements, and do we have the space around the golf course that we can move fans along to watch the course. Do we have the space for compounds, television, all the infrastructure. We set a new record for that this year with 95,000 square feet of infrastructure.

To have the space to do that as well as have a championship course is really the recipe for success for us. I think from CPKC's side they've felt that do. On top of that, the clubhouse is a truly top in class one here as well.

Q. Just want to clarify on the attendance record. You said you're trending towards setting an attendance record if things go well today.

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: So depending on what happens over the next three hours, if we get the walk-up we're looking for, we would get just ahead of 73,000 and

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beat the Ottawa Hunt record of 2022.

Q. Ryan, when you guys are looking at venues, how many clubs do you have, if you can ballpark, will reach out to you after this week and go, we want in? Is it a flood of requests or are you guys reaching out?

RYAN PAUL: This week we've certainly had that flood of requests where people are seeing it on TV or they've come here to watch and are seeing how special it is.

And even when you walk around and just see the smiles on the faces of volunteers and members here and how much it means to them and the community that's built, it's hard for a club not to want to host something like this.

So we certainly see that come in more. This one specifically for 2024 we had -- I don't want to say entered an RFP process, but we had reached out to all the Golf Canada member clubs in Calgary. Gave them an idea what it takes to host a national championship. If they were interested in learning more or being considered, that we would give them some consideration.

So we start with phone calls, talked about all the minimum requirements, and that led us to some site visits back in August 2021, and here we are today.

Q. Does that mean you set your targets on a city and then cast a wide net to see what clubs are interested and what ones might be fit to host?

RYAN PAUL: Absolutely. With CPKC we work hand in hand on markets we want to be in, one, to bring professional golf to that community, but also the charitable component in part for CPKC to partner with a Childrens Hospital in the area and make that impact.

They're right beside us driving the markets that we go to.

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Can I follow up on that? It is pretty exciting in terms of process that we do with CPKC. They are very motivated to be very broadly across the country, and we go through these market reviews and where can be and how can we get there, and then looking at the golf clubs.

I do have to give a shoutout. The score top 100 golf courses is one of the most important...

Q. I've heard of it. (Laughter.)

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: And I'm not just blowing smoke. It is one of the most important media outreaches we do with the golf clubs, that you do with the golf clubs,

and that they pay attention to.

So one of the things that's always a topic of conversation with either aspirational golf clubs or historic and well-established golf clubs is they talk about their ascendancy in that list. That's a very important thing.

We can be very candid. Earl Grey, this is their first national professional championship. They would not have been on many people's list outside of the city or province before. We hope with the platform that the LPGA Tour Broadcast gives around the world they're now on people's list. That's a very exciting thing for us to do.

Q. Just a follow up on venue and maybe a question for Ryan. A lot of the players this week have said sixth major, major championship like setup. Rose Zhang on Friday said 2-under par, she was tied for seventh. She said 2-under would usually be early exit. So moving forward from a venue and set up perspective, is treating it major championship adjacent something you're going to try to do more of moving forward?

RYAN PAUL: Yeah, I think so. And I think inside the ropes and outside the ropes. What we build here is one of the largest builds on the LPGA Tour and something we're very proud of.

Really that's the first impression players have when they get to the course, is how big the build is and the crowds are. Really they have that major championship feel to them when they're beginning their practice rounds and coming on site.

Once you get inside the ropes you have that major championship test of golf. Like I said earlier, that's something we're very proud of, and the host clubs that we're with -- Earl Grey this year and Shaughnessy last year as well -- was very proud of that test of golf that it brings.

Q. Laurence, just wondering if you could provide a status update on the new tournament director for the RBC Canadian Open?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Well, since you turned us down, Adam, we're going to continue on that search. Yeah, there is -- we're kind of in the thick of things. We've gone through a couple really interesting changes in our organization, very positive new news. Some people from our team have gone on to pretty important and pointy jobs at the moment right now.

So, yeah, no material update at the moment, but going to have some news within the next 30 days and we're excited to share that with you.

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Q. Laurence, just wanted to ask you, you mention the Canadians. A lot of the international players say how much they enjoy this tournament, coming to Canada. It's the only time they get to Canada. How nice is that to hear not just the Canadians but the international players love coming here?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: First of all, thank you for the question, and a shoutout to John Chidley-Hill. I think this is first one he missed in a while, so it's great to have you here.

Probably got to give all the kudos to Ryan Paul. Ryan has a constant communication with the LPGA Tour players and that organization. We make it a priority to go to golf courses that they will love, go to hospitality and hosting spaces that they will feel welcomed.

It is a truly global event with that player field, and Ryan has done just a masterful job making sure that they feel they are the most important thing going on for this tournament and the most important thing in professional golf.

So we're very lucky and going to continue on making it very special for them to attend.

Q. Ryan, he mentioned you. You have a lot of interactions throughout the year with players to try to get them to come here?

RYAN PAUL: Yeah, I try to make it down to a couple events a year just before the CPKC Women's Open just to continue the relationships with the players, tell them where we're going, what to expect, make sure they're coming.

It's great, and I think they all say that they love coming to Canada. It's how they're treated from the moment they arrive to when they play, the fans, the volunteers make them feel welcome.

The clubhouse food is always world class. What Levelwear for the caddies, the Levelwear caddie lounge is something that the caddies don't see on a week-to-week basis.

And doing more and more things like that for the players to enhance their experience. This year as well with the Audi Precision Award and giving 20k to the player with the best reasons in regulation this week. Initiatives like that show that we care about the players and it's more than just a golf tournament, it's a celebration of golf in this country.

I think to your question earlier, you hear it, you also see it. Friday especially this year was special for me with red and

white day. That's supposed to be a fan initiative. How many players are packing a red and white uniform in their suitcases before coming to Canada and that's what they're going wear on Friday is pretty special.

Q. The success of this tournament, would you consider adding another tournament in Canada?

RYAN PAUL: I'm at capacity with running one tournament, but I think what we have right now is very special that we wouldn't want to deplete it with having multiple events on tour.

We have a national open, and that's something we're proud of and put our heart and soul into making a top event on tour.

Q. Laurence, talking about potential attendance record today. Hear from the PGA Tour Champions players every year at the Rogers Charity Classic about the support in Calgary. What's your sort of sense of what makes Calgary such a strong golf market?

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Yeah, so maybe nationally speaking there is a pretty linear correlation with the populations in general. There are four big markets of Ontario, Quebec, BC, and Alberta. But where Alberta extends itself amongst the other regions is the amount of play that is going on here. So the per capita play.

Alberta Golf in particular, the provincial organization is probably one of the strongest provincial golf associations in North America. Their programs, their initiatives, their level of play. I'll follow up with you on the direct handicap correlation and how many people, but it just has an outstanding level of activity at all levels of play.

The other thing I probably didn't realize enough, I had been at a few Shaw Charity Classics, now Rogers Charity Classic. I did not realize the spirit of volunteerism in this province. Maybe come from generations of stampedes and other events and sort of western culture maybe, but the receptivity, engagement, I mean, maybe that's one thing that gets missed.

We're very lucky in golf that there is this volunteer connection, but when you think about -- what was our number, Ryan, 1,300?

RYAN PAUL: 1,300 volunteers.

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: 1,300 people giving up days, getting dressed in the morning, going out to the golf course, spending the day, some of them aren't glamorous jobs, it's pretty special. That spirit was felt by us and that's



why we'll be back as soon as we can.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen.

LAURENCE APPLEBAUM: Thank you so much everybody. Appreciate you guys.

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