

World Golf Hall Of Fame Induction Ceremony

Wednesday, October 10 2018

Retief Goosen

Billy Payne

Dennis Walters

Jan Stephenson

Jack Peter

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: I would like to introduce Jack Pieters president of the World Golf Hall of Fame who is with me here in Orlando, Florida

JACK PETER: Thank you, Brittany, and hello to everyone who has joined us today and thank you for being on the call.

Obviously we are beyond thrilled to be joined by four of the five members of our newly announced 2019 introduction class and before I introduce them formally, I want to take a minute to remind everyone that the 2019 induction ceremony will be held on Monday, June 10, 2019, and it will kick off the Men's U.S. Open at Pebble Beach.

The ceremony itself will take place at the Sunset Center in Carmel By the Sea, California, and as we get closer over the coming months, we'll provide updates on credential requests and any other information that is relevant.

But back to the class. We are obviously very excited. We had a nice announcement on the Golf Channel this morning and we feel this class is clearly one of our strongest classes to date.

I'm joined today by Retief Goosen from South Africa. As you know, 33 worldwide wins, two-time U.S. Open Champion. Retief sat within the official World Golf Championships top 100 for over 260 weeks from 2001 to 2007, played in six consecutive Presidents Cups with the International Team and has been a great ambassador to the game, so we want to welcome and congratulate Retief.

RETIEF GOOSEN: Thank you.



JACK PETER: Also on the call, we have Mr. Billy Payne, Chairman Emeritus from Augusta National Golf Club. Billy is from the United States, served as chairman of Augusta for 11 wonderful years.

The list of significant achievements is very long and I'm going to let him talk about that with all of you media, but introducing female members into the club, the Drive, Chip & Putt Championship, the Latin Amateur, the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship, just to name a few, not to mention bringing the tournament itself to a whole new level, so we're pleased to have Billy on the phone.

Also on the phone we have Jan Stephenson from Australia, the LPGA Rookie of the Year in 1974. Jan went on to win 20 professional victories including three different majors in three consecutive years, and she was recently honored with the Order of Australia Medal this year for contributions to the game, so we are really delighted that we have representation from Down Under.

With me in the room, is Dennis Walters, also from the U.S. At one time an elite golfer who taught a bunch of golf clinics and shared life lessons and over 3,000 appearances after becoming paralyzed from the waste down at age 24. He is truly an inspiration and he will be a great add to the World Golf Hall of Fame. He is one of 11 Honorary Lifetime Members of The PGA of America and in 2018 he received the USGA's Bob Jones award. So we are pleased to have Dennis with us today.

Also want to recognize the late Peggy Kirk Bell who will round out this great class. We don't have anybody from Peggy's family, but are in touch with Bonnie McGowan up in the Carolinas regarding her induction, so we will be able to get some more information about Peggy to you all later.

So this is our class for 2019. Again, we offer our sincere congratulations on behalf of the World Golf Hall of Fame. Without further ado, we'll get started.

Retief, we'd like to get your reaction and thoughts in general about being inducted.

RETIEF GOOSEN: It was very unexpected when Jack

rung me a week ago and said, oh, you've reached a final -- how can you say -- the final four of the class, and that the final four was going to be yesterday and so yeah for a week, it was playing on my mind quite a bit and you're thinking what you've done, what you've not done, you're thinking of the other guys, you're competing against Corey Pavin, Hal Sutton and they are all great figures in the game.

Yeah, funny enough, yesterday I was standing on the putting green hitting a few putts and then this number rings which I didn't recognize, but thought maybe I'd pick it up, and it was Gary Player on the phone. It's always great hearing Gary's voice, but he sounded extremely excited, and when he told me, yeah, I sounded very excited.

So it was a great moment, and I felt shaky after that. Missed a lot of putts, but it was very exciting. We can't wait for the actual day to come around, and getting to that great place, the Hall of Fame.

THE MODERATOR: Billy, same question. Your thoughts and feelings about being inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame.

BILLY PAYNE: Of course, overjoyed. I think in my particular case, this honor is a salute to the collective contribution of the members of Augusta National and our really terrific staff.

I guess I was the messenger and proud to do our best to attempt to grow the game, put on the world's best tournament, and we did so as best we could for those 11 years and I'm looking forward to more great things from chairman Fred Ridley in the future.

THE MODERATOR: Jan?

JAN STEPHENSON: I'm so emotional. I was crying when Nancy Lopez called me yesterday because I knew she was going to tell me I didn't make it again, and I didn't hear her when she said I made it because when she started the conversation the same way, you know, two years ago, she said, "I know you've worked so hard for the LPGA but you didn't make it."

So she started exactly the same way yesterday, "I know you've worked really hard" and so I started crying. And then she said, "But this time you've been recognized and you've made it."

"What did you say?"

I've been crying, goosebump, couldn't sleep. It was like winning the U.S. Open all over again.

THE MODERATOR: And finally, Dennis? How does it

feel?

DENNIS WALTERS: Feels great. I'm still a little numb. It hasn't really sunk in, but I also got a phone call yesterday and it was from -- popped up on my cell and I knew it was Jack Peter. He goes, "Hi, Dennis, this is Jack Peter."

Immediately, "Hi, Dennis, this is Jack Nicklaus."

Immediately after that, "Hi, Dennis, this is Gary Player." And I knew it was going to be good news (laughter) I said, they are not going to call me and say, sorry.

So they all chimed in in a chorus, "Congratulations, Dennis, you've just been elected to the World Golf Hall of Fame," and I started crying. And I'm not a big cryer, but this made me cry. I've had a lot of tears of sorrow in my life but these were tears of joy, and so when I composed myself, I said to Jack and Gary, I said, "Man, you two guys must have done some sales job because laugh these people probably never even heard of me."

Jack said, "No, no, no, they have all heard of you, but they know a lot more about you after we got done with them."

You know, I can't walk, but when I got that call, I felt like I could fly. Just amazing. Honestly, I can't believe it. I want to congratulate all my fellow inductees and Retief and the family of Peggy Kirk Bell.

Everybody has a story of how they got here, but I think my story is probably the most unlikely journey to get to any type of Hall of Fame that anyone's ever done. I was laying in a hospital bed 44 years ago and I never thought I was actually getting out of that bed. I've done so many things I've never thought were possible, but it also gives me the opportunity to show others what's possible.

I'm hoping that this platform will help me reach other people and encourage them to reach for their dreams, strive for excellence and do something in their lives that they didn't think they could.

Q. Mr. Payne, I'd like to ask you something specifically, and congratulations to you and everybody else on the call. It used to be, I guess the Chairman of Augusta National was entrusted with running a golf club and, as you said, the world's best tournament which I don't think anybody disputes, but you've kind of evolved that position. What do you think the responsibility was for you and for future chairmen of Augusta National to the game itself on a global basis?

BILLY PAYNE: Thank you, that's a great question. I

think the efforts that I was a part of during my 11 years at Augusta was a distinct effort to reflect back on the contributions that Bobby Jones and Cliff Roberts had made to golf, their love of golf, and their desire that golf would become a game, not only for the privileged, but for others, because of what they believed golf could do in the area of friendships and relationships.

So I didn't invent any of that. I simply thought it was my obligation as chairman to return us a bit to an all-out effort to be an asset to the game of golf and not just an asset to the community of Augusta and, you know, the membership and the four principle tournaments that take place every year.

Q. What are some of the different ways being the chairman of Augusta national is tougher than being chairman of the Olympic Committee?

BILLY PAYNE: I'd love to answer that question. Thank you for asking it. Being chairman of Augusta National is a hundred times easier than creating the idea of bringing the Olympics to your hometown and then being the CEO of the Games themselves over a ten-year period. The main distinction being; the community at Augusta that makes things happen, they are all your best friends, and friends want to help friends be successful, and that's the way Augusta works, both with the membership and the staff.

Running an Olympics, on the other hand, you discover fairly quickly that everybody wants a piece of the action. Everybody wants to build something or to be employed or to do this or to do that. Believe me, being chairman of Augusta National is light years easier than running an Olympic Games.

Q. Jan, wondering what it was like in the mid 70s, juggling your fame and trying to focus on your career that eventually ended up in a Hall of Fame nomination?

JAN STEPHENSON: I thought it was probably going to hurt my Hall of Fame because there was such a focus on the pr part; that the commissioner kept saying, every time I would do something, do a favor for the LPGA, don't worry, they will recognize that and in the end, all those people are golf.

It really did come down to just my golf but that still was the most fun, was playing and winning. I did try to really focus on my career. I tried to make that the most important part, was playing golf.

Q. Your fame and celebrity in the 1970s attracted interest from a lot of people and documented one of those is Donald Trump. Do you ever wonder if you could have been the first lady or not?

JAN STEPHENSON: Actually somebody asked him

that when were playing golf and he said, "We would have already been divorced by now." He answered that I guess. I guess everybody asks now that it's become public -- life would have been so different.

And I try to imagine what it would have been like, because I had said to him -- I wouldn't have been able to play golf. He said, "Well, you could have been the club championship at Winged Foot." And I don't think I would have got in the Hall of Fame. I can say that to him now.

He was actually such a good golfer and he was very supportive of my career.

Q. How much do you feel that you might have advanced the game, particularly women's golf, in Australia?

JAN STEPHENSON: Well, I hope I did a lot. I mean, Karrie Webb at one time said she thought I just did calendars and didn't win golf tournaments. Of course, she's taken that back since. But Jane Crofton and some of the other players, like Sarah Jane Smith and Sarah Camp that now play on the LPGA Tour, I brought them over when they were 16 to the U.S. and now Karrie has followed on with that charity, and they see what it's like on Tour and they get to see the vans and how exciting it is.

It definitely motivates them. They said that was something that was the turning point for them though want to come to America, so hopefully that helped.

Q. For each of the inductees, I was wondering, it's relatively new announcement, but each inductee has someone present them at the ceremony and I wonder if you had given any thought to who is going to present you.

THE MODERATOR: Retief, start with you.

JACK PETER: Someone is going to introduce you, Retief. We haven't even talked about that.

RETIEF GOOSEN: That's a tricky question. I haven't really thought about that, that one. It's a lot to think about. I'll speak to the family and so on. I don't know if my dad is going to maybe come over from South Africa. I mean, he's 86 now. So I don't know if he's going to make it or not.

I haven't really thought about that. It's something I have to -- I have time to think about it.

DENNIS WALTERS: This summer I was at the U.S. Open and I got the Bob Jones Award, and I had Jack and Barbara Nicklaus as my presenters. That was pretty cool. I would say I'd like to go with Jack again

and Gary Player, if I could do two. It's such a wonderful experience at the Bob Jones Award, and I'm really looking forward to Pebble Beach. It's one of my favorite places.

THE MODERATOR: Jan, how about you?

JAN STEPHENSON: Actually, Hollis Stacy because she's been a big help. She's like, I'm going to get people to write on your behalf and she's been trying to get some of the Hall of Famers. She's like, you don't campaign enough. I'm like, well I didn't know you were supposed to or could.

When she called me yesterday to congratulate, she said, the two questions, how did you find out -- and I told her about Nancy and she said, who are you going to have do your introduction. I said, I'll have to think about that because I don't know. I want it to be a woman. I mean, my mother just died so obviously she can't. But I want it to be a woman just because I think in this day and age, it would be something really cool to have someone. I've thought about a couple that are close to me that know what I've been struggling with, but I haven't decided yet.

THE MODERATOR: Billy, what about you?

BILLY PAYNE: I don't think I should even venture a guess, because you can't take it back.

Q. As a trailblazer in women's golf, not only as a player, but as the first woman golf course architect, as a golf entrepreneur, you've blazed so many trails. What might this latest honor -- what trail might you be able to blaze because of that?

JAN STEPHENSON: Wow, great question. It's something that I've always wanted. I mean, you know how much it's meant to me, and I actually didn't think I would ever get it. So that's probably why I'm so emotional and so happy is I didn't know that I would get recognized for the other things that I've done, and I -- I do want to feel like that there are businesses out there that you don't have to do it just by playing. I mean, I've used that to my advantage in my businesses, and it's nice to do that.

I would hope that other players, just like now with the lifetime awards, that I think they are so important because there's definitely different ways to be a champion rather than just playing. So I'm hoping that that could be something that could be a legacy.

Q. Mr. Payne, I was wondering who came up with the idea for Drive, Chip & Putt Championship, which I think is a fabulous for-the-game initiative. It had to be discussed.

BILLY PAYNE: Very proud of the initiative. I have to say it is an incredible partnership with The PGA of America. They do such a disproportionate share of the work and they are great contributors, and we are proud, of course, to host the final at Augusta National.

The idea, honestly, was my wife's. She commented to me one day how great she thought it would be if we could use the aspiration of playing golf at Augusta to inspire kids to take up the game, and to give it a try, and so we reached out to the ones that do most of the work, The PGA of America, and asked them to be our partner, and they do just a monumental amount of work to make it successful and were pleased to host the finals.

As it normally the case, it was my wife's idea.

Q. The only other thing I wonder on that is when are we going to get Drive, Chip & Putt for adults, if anybody would like to have a chance at that one.

BILLY PAYNE: Maybe we go to seniors next, so I could be -- I don't know what the extension is, but I'm sure if there's a good idea there, we would be delighted to attempt to carry it forward.

Q. A lot of inductees into the World Golf Hall of Fame, a lot of them don't actually have an award named after them. The Dennis Walters Courage Award has been given for years by the International Network of Golf. To someone who followed in your footsteps and overcame great odds to continue to participate in the game of golf and at the same time gave back to the game of golf, so many worthy recipients over the years. Does this sort of jet fuel that award a little bit for you, and maybe open it up to some other people and what other message would you have to send back to those past recipients and followed in your footsteps?

DENNIS WALTERS: Thanks for the question. It's always been something that was very close to my heart to be honored by the International Network of Golf, and see all the worthy people who have been chosen. So that's given me a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure, and I would just say that I think the game of golf has to be considered the greatest game; if a guy in a wheelchair can get in the Hall of Fame, I think that that's incredible that I was able to do this, not by talking about it or doing anything but actually doing it.

And so I'm hoping that that would give hope and encouragement to other people to not only take up the game of golf, but to pursue whatever it is that they have a passion for, and not to focus on what they can't do, but to focus on what they can do.

And also, to have the mental strength and the mental

discipline to follow through. It's great to have an idea, but you have to have a lot of will to make sure that this dream happens.

What I always like to say is if you have a dream and it doesn't work out, that's okay, because the solution is simple: Get a new dream. That's really what I've tried to show through my own career, and I just hope that others will see the merits of this, and will be so inclined to do whatever it is they want to do.

Q. We haven't had a chance to talk much about Peggy Kirk Bell. I wonder if you could speak to any influence she might have had on your career.

JAN STEPHENSON: That's a good one. Obviously the founders, the LPGA and Mike Whan has been really good at getting the younger players to understand that the founders are the first ones and I got to meet and spend quite a bit of time with Peggy up in Pinehurst. She owns Pine Needles and was a great teacher. What she did there, to open that golf course up for the U.S. Women's Open, and again, we have our Women's Senior Open there in May, so it's going to be a great monument to her there and I'm hoping that it will be really fun to go over all the memories.

But when they had the women's Senior Open, the men and the Women's Open at Pinehurst, she opened up the golf course to all of the players and we went over there and played. We sat around and told stories. She wasn't doing well then, but she was -- she came in a wheelchair with her daughter and we sat around and told stories of when they first started the Tour, and that was fun, and then passing it on -- even when I came in 1974, they were setting their own pins and doing their own official rulings. It was amazing. Even back then, we actually travelled in a caravan with the CBs because we didn't obviously have cell phones or anything, so one of us wouldn't be left on their own if something happened.

She told stories before that, and it was really fun to realize what they did and the true trailblazing they did so they could truly make it, so she definitely deserves to be in.

Q. Was there a moment in your career when the Hall of Fame became a concrete goal or something you realized, I'm on a path here, where I could achieve that, too, and when was that moment?

RETIEF GOOSEN: For me, it was really once Ernie got inducted. I thought if I could pull off a few more wins and do some good for the game, I could have a chance. Obviously there's been so many great South Africans that has been inducted.

It was always a goal. You just try and play your best

out there and do good for the game, and the rest will come all by itself. I would say, yeah, once Ernie got in there, I thought, you know, this is something I would like to strive for.

JAN STEPHENSON: Well, I mean, for me, it was always a goal from way back when, but then I really felt like some of the things that I had done recently in the last 10 or 20 years is probably going to stop me from getting in, and that broke my heart, because you know, golf has always been my No. 1 goal and everything I've always done has helped the game.

I really felt like my chances were dashed, and so when I actually lost in a playoff when I was 52, and I thought, that was my last chance to make it on the LPGA Tour and my last chance to make it into the Hall of Fame. I was pretty upset about that. And then when they changed the rules with the LPGA Hall of Fame and said, from now on, we're going to change the rules from 1985 on, and I had only won like three since then. I thought, I guess I'm not going to get in.

Nancy Lopez kept saying to me, "One day you'll get in because I know how much you've done." We always used to joke about who has the most requests from media and things to do, because our locker rooms -- both her and my locker had post-it notes of people to call and things to do. I felt like I really tried to help the Tour back then, but I didn't believe that was going to be recognized in the end.

I actually thought I wasn't going to get in.

THE MODERATOR: That wraps up our inductee teleconference call.