



**Olympic Golf Update Presentation
62nd PGA Merchandise Show
PGA Forum Stage
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10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.**

DAMON HACK: Good morning, welcome to this Olympic Golf Update Presentation of the 62nd PGA Merchandise Show. I'm Damon Hack from Golf Channel's Morning Drive.

We are properly 19 months away from the start of the Olympic Games and more importantly for our purposes, golf's return to the Olympic Games, 561 days, give or take. Because of that, we gathered this esteemed panel to discuss where we stand and what the coming months will look like.

To my immediate left, you have the president of the International Golf Federation, Peter Dawson; the vice president of the International Golf Federation, Ty Votaw; two-time major champion and member of seven Solheim Cup Teams, Suzann Pettersen; U.S. Open Champion and member of four Ryder Cups, Graeme McDowell; 2016 Rio Olympic golf course architect and World Golf Hall of Fame member, Amy Alcott; and 2016 Olympic golf course architect, Gil Hanse.

Peter, I'm going to start with you. I understand you're just back from Rio. From the IGF perspective, what is the potential impact globally of golf's return to the Olympics and what have you seen so far already?

PETER DAWSON: Well, as you say, 19 months to go and the excitement is really mounting.

We began this project of bidding for golf to return to the program of Olympic sports because so many small countries, small in golfing terms, who really needed some help to grow the game. They said to us, look, if we could get golf into the Olympics it would give us extra exposure, extra government support, extra popularity for golf, and that's already beginning to show through in so many countries that I visit around the world.

The growth of the game is worldwide and the inclusion of golf in the Olympic Programme is the biggest grow the game opportunity we had and that continues to be the case.

DAMON HACK: How about from an American perspective? With your background with the PGA TOUR and LPGA Tour, can we have an Andy Murray moment with a kid from Sheboygan or Des Moines or Jupiter, Florida?

TY VOTAW: I don't think there's any question. Obviously with what's going on display here, it's obvious that the United States is the largest golf economy in the world, half of the world's golfers are from the United States, half of the golf courses, roughly, are in the United States.

When we embarked upon this process as Peter alluded to, we knew it would grow the game around the world; and we also know that anything that could bring golf to more eyeballs and to more kids in this country would certainly have an incremental effect here. Every four years, when NBC televises the Olympics, it's always the highest-rated sports program of the year, and golf had gone lacking in that.

Now that it will be part of that exposure, we think it's going to do nothing but help grow the game here in the United States.

DAMON HACK: Suzann, you were in this process beginning in 2009 in Copenhagen and you also hail from a country that seven times has led the medal count in the Winter Games, most recently in 2002 in Salt Lake City.

From a player's perspective, what is the significance of adding the potential of a Gold Medal to major championships and Solheim Cup victories?

SUZANN PETTERSEN: Growing up playing golf, you never had a dream of playing in the Olympics yourself. Coming from Norway where the Winter Olympics is pretty much the only pride and honor, and it kind of represents the country in such a great way, and growing up seeing all my role models, heroes, competing on TV, competing for the Gold, Silver and Bronze Medal, was a huge boost and now being able to kind of grow that dream myself is quite inspiring for me. And being a part of this process, you can see how much work it took to get golf back in and I think golf, as one of the biggest sports in the world, should be on the Olympic Programme.

DAMON HACK: Graeme, how about for you? I know you are a big sports fan, and a lot of people may assume that golfers just watch golf and care about golf. Did you watch the Olympics as a young man and did it fuel your sporting passion to an extent?

GRAEME MCDOWELL: Yes, very much so. Growing in Northern Ireland, one of our most famous Olympians was Dame Mary Peters, Gold Medalist in the '72 Munich Olympics, and I think my earliest memories probably from watching the Olympics on TV, being a purest, are the 100 meter sprinters, and Linford Christie being a phenomenal British athlete, winning Gold in '92. I think the Olympic Games is the pinnacle of sport. It's the ultimate achievement for a sportsman and athlete.

For the game of golf, I think everyone in this very large room understands how important it is to attract golfers to this game. You know, golf has a lot of problems it has to shake off, a lot of issues, one being the elitism of the game. Nothing will internationalize the game more than golf being part of the Olympics and bringing the game to underdeveloped parts of the world, bringing golfers to this great sport that we all love. I don't think the timing could be more perfect. We're all very, very excited and very passionate to be part of it.

DAMON HACK: Gil and Amy, you both literally have had your fingers in the soil and boots in the dirt. Gil, you moved your family to Brazil to take on this project. There have been hurdles, there have been challenges, where do things stand right now?

GIL HANSE: Well you're right. I'm sure everyone is aware there have been a few bumps in the road along the way, but I have a few images to show that the widely reported demise of the Olympic golf course is greatly exaggerated. From our perspective, there are really three key aspects to the project, which were the competition and having a golf course that would be challenging for the best players in the world to compete on, both men and women, and then also to create a course that would be available for a public legacy for Rio and the country of Brazil.

The aerial photo you just saw before shows the overall scale and feel of this. We were blessed with a very sandy site. The opportunity to create a golf course that looks and feels a little bit like the Sandbelt in Melbourne, Australia. I think these images will hopefully resonate and show people that there is grass, it's growing, there is a real golf course in the ground down there.

DAMON HACK: I remember covering a couple of Phil Mickelson's victories at Riviera, and he said, "Amy Alcott has great eyes," and what he meant was your ability to read greens and understand contours and slope and the way a golf course is built.

I'm curious from your perspective, what kind of golf course will be presented to the world in 19 month's time?

AMY ALCOTT: Well, Gil and I have created a real links-style course with a lot of diversity and the mandate for this golf course really was playability for all levels of golfers. Obviously I wanted to see it to be a real challenge for the top and elite women players of the world.

Although we are leaving a golf course behind after the Olympics are over in perpetuity for the people of Rio to enjoy and a wonderful, groups of young people hopefully who are soccer crazy in Brazil, but they will be exposed to a sport like golf that they have never been before, and the world, golfing, maybe countries that have never really seen the sport.

So, it's been a wonderful opportunity and I think the way we have set the course up with the tees, it's very versatile. As I said earlier, it will be quite a challenge for all levels of players.

And I especially like the challenge of the final holes coming in. I remember watching the men's U.S. Open a couple years back from Merion, thinking, here you have the greatest male players in the world; the last four holes really didn't have a real legitimate birdie hole. And so I think people will love the 16th hole. It's a real risk and reward hole.

Growing up at a course like Riviera the way I did, I love No. 10 there, and so we have -- Gil has really worked hard with me and we've created something very special coming down the stretch. So it's a big honor.

DAMON HACK: When you hear Amy and Gil talk about the golf course, the challenge, a little linksy, what comes to mind? What will you prepare for?

SUZANN PETTERSEN: It's kind of hard to say because you've never been there and you haven't seen it in person. From what I've heard it's going to be a fantastic course. It's going to be a links style which is probably not what I kind of had on my mind thinking about a course in Rio, having played some other courses down there.

But I really look forward to it. I think it's going to be a very special moment when you look back at your career, having been able to compete in the Olympics, not only the golf part but also like everything that comes with being an athlete in the Olympics. You have the Olympic Village, being around other athletes in other sports; you share moments together and I can't wait.

DAMON HACK: How about for you, Graeme, is this already front and center in your mind, 19 months away?

GRAEME McDOWELL: Yeah, I think seeing these images from what the guys are creating down there and kind of certainly heightens the excitement level to be part of it. We have all got a bit of work to do to make sure we are going down there to compete and being part of the Olympic Village, and just being an Olympic athlete.

I think looking at the golf course and growing up in the north coast of Ireland and being pretty passionate about links golf, in a year where the major championships, where we are excited to have a lot of links golf ahead of us with Chambers Bay at the U.S. Open and obviously back to St. Andrews, which doesn't get any better than that, and Whistling Straits up in Wisconsin. Links golf is something I'm very passionate about and seeing golf course done in Rio, it's definitely amazing and hoping to be there and hoping to make some birdies on 16 and be part of it.

DAMON HACK: Maybe a lot of interesting spectators here this morning. Before we open up it up to a Q&A, we have a video to give us a taste of what we are all getting into.

Q. Question for Ty. For the discussion of the golf course as accessible to the public, do you have plans for post-Olympic management access, membership fees, or who is actually going to run the golf course?

TY VOTAW: That's all part of the legacy plan that is going to be in the hands of the Brazilian Golf Confederation after the Olympic Games are over.

Obviously everything that Rio 2016 does in every sport is to try to make sure the legacy in Brazil, in Rio, continues and that's going to be something with golf -- it's the first public golf course in Brazil, and the fact that that public access is going to be there and the fact that it's going to be operated or over seen by the Brazilian Golf Confederation is something that we are looking forward to growing the game.

As Amy alluded to, it's a soccer-mad country. There's two golf courses in Rio currently and this will be the first public one in Rio and we are looking forward to having that legacy be developed.

As far as management going forward, that's something that is still far down the road and we are focused by the growing, maintenance and operations leading up to the Games themselves.

Q. For the quality of players on the Tour, how many are they going to take from each country to play?

PETER DAWSON: The answer to that is the qualification system is based on World Rankings. There will be 60, from both men and women, in the field, separate event, and at a date in July 2016, if a player is in the top 15 in the respective men's and women's World Rankings, a country can have up to four players play in the Games.

We then reach down through the World Rankings and there will be a limit, unless they get more from the top 15 of two per country. And there's an override on that, that Brazil will be entitled as the host nation to one player in each of the men's and women's events, and also, of the five Olympic continents, we have to have one player from each of those, as well.

As the rankings currently stand, that continental qualification is already covered by the rankings, but we will have one each player from Brazil in the men's and women's events.

MALE SPEAKER FROM THE AUDIENCE: I'm from Brazil and I work down there in the golf industry, and I can tell you that we are so excited to be there waiting for you, and we are following all the steps to build the golf course, and we know that if we have some problems, but he did a great job and we can promise that we are going to make a huge party for all the world.

Q. With the back-to-back men's and women's competitions, was anything learned from the experience at the U.S. Open in Pinehurst, and just as a follow up, what will be the first competition on the golf course? Is there something planned as a warm-up event?

SUZANN PETERSEN: The experience the LPGA had following the guys at Pinehurst last year was a fantastic experience. The course held up; we played one of the best golf courses we've ever played in the U.S. Open. Great to play the same site as the guys. You can kind of compare your games, compare the strategies.

So from the LPGA standpoint, it was very successful. I mean, I was probably one of the critical ones going into it because with everything that could possibly go wrong, and us being the last ones out, I was proven wrong. So it was a very, very good experience.

GRAEME McDOWELL: From the men's side of things, having spoken with Mike Davis after the two U.S. Opens at Pinehurst last year, probably comparable, comparable playing surfaces to what we are going to see in Rio. I think the USGA obviously gathered a huge

amount of statistical data as to how the men were playing golf courses, as opposed to the way the women played golf courses.

So I think a huge amount of intelligence was gained last year as to how the two golf courses should be set up for the men's and women's events. Very unique for both men and women to be playing on the same playing surfaces around the same time. I think golf course setup is one of the big things that we will have learned from the Pinehurst experience last year.

DAMON HACK: What can you tell us about the sturdiness of the soil, for example?

GIL HANSE: Pinehurst was a restoration and kind of a retrofit for the two competitions. We had the luxury of designing from day one, anticipating that we needed to make sure -- it's not as simple as just putting the tees forward for the ladies.

It's making sure their landing areas correspond with a similar type of shot into the green that the men are going to play; how do we bunker that; how do the bunkers impact the men, etc., etc., how does the topography fit and flow. We are very cognizant of that as we went through the design. The other aspect was on the putting greens themselves.

We created I think large greens that are capable of having multiple hole locations and we can work the strategy into the hole locations for the eight competitive rounds I think without any problems.

Q. I have a question about the future possibility of having amateurs qualify if there's going to be a future in the Olympics after Rio. I know Adam Scott commented a couple months ago, that he was interested in having amateurs involved, and wondering what your all's position was for them in the future?

PETER DAWSON: This is a question which has come up several times.

When we were bidding for golf's return to the Olympic Programme, the IOC, the International Olympic Committee, made it very, very clear to us that they wanted the world's best athletes in our sport. The Olympic Games has that in every other sport; I think boxing may be the only sport where they do have an amateur code.

And it was made very clear to us, as I say, that this had to be for the top players and we all know the top players are the professionals. We occasionally get very, very good amateurs coming through quickly, but I see this as a professional event or with professional players playing into the future; the top, top players for the world's top sporting event.

Q. If you see tennis or soccer in Europe, a lot of tennis players prefer Wimbledon or other grand slams instead of the Olympic Games. In golf, we already have four majors. Do you as a player, Suzann and Graeme, how do you look at the Olympics? Is it a fifth major, or is it higher than The Ryder Cup? Player opinion; what do you think about it?

GRAEME McDOWELL: It's a very difficult question to answer. I believe that the Olympic Games will grow into the game of golf as players get a chance to go down there and experience it.

There's no doubt the four major championships are the pinnacle of the game right now. You know, golf has not been part of the Olympics since 1904. We have got a lot of learning to do. We have got a lot of understanding to do. I think as players, we are excited to be part of it.

We are excited about what it does for the game of golf, and I believe that the legacy and its position in the game of golf will grow as players experience that; as we witnessed the first golfer standing on the podium with a Gold Medal around their necks, and listening to their National Anthem.

I think until that point, I don't think we'll understand the impact that it's going to have on the world of golf, and from there, I think extrapolate that into the future, I think will become very, very important to the game.

Q. Just wondering if there has been anything done yet in terms of branding this golf course; does it have a logo yet, does it have an official name yet, is there anything like that that can be talked about?

GIL HANSE: We're just happy to have a golf course right now (laughter).

TY VOTAW: Yes, that will be part of the legacy, as well. I think it's either Golf Olímpico or Olímpico Golf right now in terms of what is on the outskirts of the golf course to identify it as an Olympic facility. But that will be a decision that will be made after the Games themselves.

DAMON HACK: Thank you very much for doing this and thank you for spending time with the Olympic golf update. Enjoy the rest of the PGA Merchandise Show. Thank you.

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