

World Golf Hall Of Fame Induction Ceremony

Monday, June 10 2019

Jan Stephenson

Induction Speech

JANE SEYMOUR: I met Jan Stephenson many years ago when I enlisted her help in raising money for my charity, the Open Hearts Foundation. We instantly connected. She gave me a golf lesson, and I was hooked as a fan to life.

She has a storied Hall of Fame golf career. Jan began her sporting career in Australia. From athletic parents, she learned about work ethic and sacrifice. Winning state and national championships as early as 13, she demonstrated that she was destined to be a champion.

Jan joined the Australian Ladies Professional Golf Tour in August 1973. With only ten events left in the schedule, she won five, including the last two, which were majors in that Tour. Some of the U.S. LPGA players had been invited to compete, and they encouraged Jan to try the U.S. LPGA Tour.

So in 1974 Jan came to the U.S., earned her Tour card, and captured Rookie of the Year honors. Jan's life in America took a dramatic turn in 1975 when Ray Volpe was named the new commissioner of LPGA. He singled out Jan to be the face and body of the revamped LPGA.

Her profile rapidly grew through both her success on the course and her increasing popularity off. But it was in between the ropes that Jan truly set herself apart. She became a dominant figure on the LPGA in the 1980s, capturing three major championships, including the 1981 Peter Jackson Canadian Women's Open, the 1982 LPGA Championship, and the 1983 Women's U.S. Open championship.

A true International star, Jan counts wins on five different continents among her more than 25 career victories.

What I've always admired most about Jan is her incredible work ethic. She now has transformed the dedication she had for golf to her wine and spirits business. But it's her work with charity, however, that is truly inspiring.

With her business partners, Diane and Michael Vandiver, they started the Jan Stephenson's Crossroads Foundation, providing assistance to



veterans and first responders at their Purple Heart golf course in Florida.

Jan, I am so sorry I am not able to be there with you today to celebrate this great achievement, but I know that I am honored to call you my friend and I look forward to celebrating with you and this well-deserved honor of being a member of the World Golf Hall of Fame.

HOLLIS STACY: Thank you. Tonight it is my pleasure to present for induction into the World Golf Hall of Fame a great competitor and a great friend. Ladies and gentlemen, Jan Stephenson.

JAN STEPHENSON: That's typical Hollis. Thank you, Hollis, you've been a really great friend for a long time. Right before we came out, she gave me two tissues and said, Put it in your pocket just in case. And then she said, Don't hit it left.

(Laughter.)

So typical Hollis. I'd like to thank Jane Seymour. Even though she's extremely busy, she graciously accepted my request to write my induction video. What a wonderful role model for women, and a dear friend she is. I'm sorry she has to be in Europe at this time, but she's got a really good movie she's doing. So I'm happy for her.

Looking around the room, I see so many people who have helped me and supported me over the years. It is amazing to see friends from all walks of life and from all kinds of places be here because of the incredible game of golf. So to all my friends and family, thank you for your support, and please know that you're truly appreciated.

First I want to thank my brother, Gregory, and my sister Norcheri (phonetic) from traveling from Australia to share this moment. Family is an important part of any success, and certainly mine is no exception. Every weekend growing up, my parents would take us to a weekenders about 60 K north of Sydney. We were supposed to be going to the movies on Saturday afternoons while our parents played this new, fantastic sport called golf. Instead, we would sneak up to Tiger Lakes Golf Club (phonetic), and I would emulate golf

swings and collect golf balls, and my brother would catch poisonous snakes, and we'd sell the venom to the local reptile park.

(Laughter.)

Once we were found out, we were allowed to start playing golf. I fell in love with the sport right away, while Greg -- and I played all the time, while Greg would split his time between surfing and golf.

My parents were dedicated to seeing me succeed. Dad worked night shifts just so he could take me to golf before school and after school, and mom worked two jobs: One as a bookkeeper and then in a dress factory just so she could make my golf outfits at night.

I found success in my native land winning many amateur events, and then, when I turned pro in up 1973, I won the Australian Ladies Open and the ALPG Championship before coming to the U.S. I was Rookie of the Year honors in 1974, and then the new commissioner, Ray Volpe, in 1975 changed my life and that of the LPGA also.

He asked me to be the face of the LPGA and lined up meetings with potential sponsors. Consequently we signed many multi-year contracts to sponsor LPGA tournaments. He also introduced a fashion magazine that would be inserted into tournament programs and started marketing the LPGA with sex appeal.

I was front and center, resulting in a lot of controversy. These were tumultuous and exciting times. And it certainly launched my career in a slightly different direction than I perhaps had imagined.

As exciting as things were off the golf course for me where I was doing national television and being seen with famous celebrities, it was just as exciting on the golf course. My parents were a permanent fixture with me on the Tour through the summers of the '70s and '80s, and I found success winning tournaments around the world, including two of my three LPGA majors with my dad on the bag.

In 1987 I was living the dream life when I was involved in a car accident. I was feeling really confident after winning the previous week, and I had a lead by five with one round to go. However, my ribs were broken and the head injuries were such that I had to stay in the hospital and miss the last round.

I was desperate to getting back to playing, and instead of allowing my ribs time to heal, I had myself taped up every day and went back out on Tour. Seeing I hadn't had much success playing that way, I took Jack Nicklaus' advice and stopped playing until I was pain

free. I returned to win the last two tournaments of the year, so thanks, Jack. Fellow Hall of Famer. That sounds so exciting.

I thought 1988 was going to be the year I really got back, but fate had another different plan for me. My father was diagnosed with cancer and passed away that December. Losing him was very difficult for me. And the pain was compounded the following year when my longtime caddie, Rick White, passed away with cancer.

After spending a year in limbo of mourning, I was ready to get back to it. I started off the year with a top 5 in Jamaica, but the following week I was mugged and the assailant shattered my left hand. My hand was permanently damaged, and I'd never be able to hold the golf club again with my left hand with the last three fingers. I was forced to reinvent my swing to be more right-sided dominant with my new coach, Gary Edwin.

As I look back on my career, though, more than the wins and the fame, what stands out most to me are the remarkable women I had the opportunity to compete with and get to know and call my friends. I consider myself lucky to have played in some of the most amazing times, even playing with some of our founders, Marilynn Smith, Patty Berg, Louise Suggs, Alice Bauer, and Marlene Hagge. Marlene became a mentor to me and Mary Bea Porter in the '70s, and Mary Bea was my roommate in the '70s.

Thank you, Marry Bea, for being here tonight. I know it was really hard for you to get here. Your flight was canceled. But I really wanted to say thank you for teaching me about America and also understanding my sarcastic Aussie humor.

(Applause.)

In my opinion, I was part of the most colorful and competitive eras in LPGA history during the '80s and '90s. More than a dozen of these women are Hall of Famers, and many of them are here this evening.

I even got to witness the birth of Korean women's golf with the success of Se-Ri Pak and played with fellow Aussie and friend Karrie Webb in her very first professional event in Australia.

To now be counted amongst those stars as a World Golf Hall of Famer is not only an honor but it's so humbling. They have all represented their craft so admirably.

With my competitive career changing, I shifted my focus to some of my other passions. Having worked with Pete and Alice Dye, I started a golf course design

business and designed and built several golf courses.

Wanting to satisfy our competitive spirits, we started the Women's Senior Golf Tour, which is now our Legends Tour. Congrats to fellow Hall of Famer Juli Inkster for winning last week on the Legends Tour.

And speaking of spirits, one of my biggest passions these days is working on the wine and spirits business. I would like to thank my talented Aussie winemaker and his wife, Chris and Ursula Cameron, for teaching me so much and for being here today.

To my distiller and business partner, Marc Christensen and Dented Brick Distillery, I'd like to extend a huge debt of gratitude. This is definitely a male-dominated field. However, Mark has allowed me to have a big influence in our company's direction. And even though it is very competitive, I will persevere, just as I did with my golf career. I am determined to succeed.

Perhaps most special to me, though, is the Jan Stephenson's Crossroads Foundation that I started with Diane and Michael Vandiver. Thank you for everything. We work with disabled veterans where we conduct regular clinics for our veterans and first responders. We are one of only five Purple Heart facilities in the country. The special operations command of (indiscernible) Air Force Base have become like family to me. I would like to recognize at this time General Tony Thomas; Colonel Kerry Harbaugh; his wife, Lieutenant Colonel Dani Harbaugh (phonetics), who have traveled out to share my day.

(Applause.)

They did manage to get in a little bit of golf, as well, at Fort Ord.

Also there is a young lady here today that makes you feel really good about the future of our country. She is on the golf team and a cadet at the Citadel and future officer, Jessie Harbaugh. It's her dad's mission to be able to keep up with her long drives, but sorry, Colonel, you're fighting a losing battle on this one.

Golf has allowed me to travel around the world and make relationships that have lasted a lifetime, and now it has taken me to the World Golf Hall of Fame. It is a dream come true. I'm so honored to be amongst such wonderful champions of golf. Thank you.

(Applause.)