

**State Farm Classic
The Rail Golf Course
Springfield, IL
September 2, 2006**

Third-round Interview

AN INTERVIEW OF MARIA HJORTH

THE MODERATOR: Maria, thanks for coming in and joining us today. You are still holding on to the lead after the third day by one shot, let's talk about today.

MARIA HJORTH: Well, I have been waiting to kind of hit a lot of good drives. And I hit a lot of good drives today, but unfortunate I didn't hit my approach shot as close as I would have liked. That was kind of the difference. But I still played solid, and, you know, I'm happy with the round today.

THE MODERATOR: What are your thoughts going into tomorrow with the lead? What do you think you have to do to hold on to win?

MARIA HJORTH: Well, I still think the course is still playing, and are you able to make a lot of birdies. The wind picked up a little bit today, so I think that is why the scores weren't as low. I know Nancy Scranton had a really good round, other than that there are not that many shooting low scores. You have to go out there and shoot maybe a 4 or 5-under tomorrow to make sure that you can win the tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Do you want to go over your scorecard?

MARIA HJORTH: Yes. On the 2nd I had a good drive, and then I hit a 52° wedge to, oh, about 12 feet.

And then on the 4th I had a good drive, and I hit a 4-iron for my second to the back edge, and 2-putted from about 30 feet.

And on 7, I hit a pretty good tee shot a little right with my 7-iron, and left the first putt about 8 feet short, and I missed that one.

THE MODERATOR: What was the length of the first putt?

MARIA HJORTH: The first putt was probably 35 feet, I would say. And then on 8, I hit a rescue from the tee shot, and laid up with a 9-iron, and hit a wedge to about 20 feet. And then on 12, I hit a really good drive, and I hit a pretty good second shot, and it just didn't turn as I would have liked. It came up in the bunker right. And then where the pin was today was difficult to get it close. I kind of just got it to the bottom here and then 3-putted that one. The first one was probably about 25 feet and then putted it, like, 4 feet passed, and missed it coming back. And then on 14, pretty good drive. And then a lob wedge to about 4 feet and made the putt.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Maria?

Q No. 7, par 3, it was a tough hole partially the wind and partially the pin it was pretty far left, was it?

MARIA HJORTH: Yeah. That hole is always a tough hole. I mean, it's fairly long. Today it was playing downwind and a little bit off the right, so, you know, I knew that I didn't really want to, you know, go left because, you know, the wind is going to take it. And it's a difficult chip shot from missing it left. So I kind of held onto it a little bit, and went a little bit right instead. But, yeah, it was a tough pin today. I don't think I have seen it this far left. It was very close to running off, running off the green. It's a good hole and a tough hole too.

Q I know you won twice on this tour in 1999, when was the last time you have been either in the lead or at least sharing the lead through the first three days?

MARIA HJORTH: Yeah. No, it's definitely been a while. I had a win in Europe last year and the year before that as well. And that was leading coming into the last round. On the LPGA I haven't had it for a while. So we're looking forward to tomorrow.

Q Just overall the scores today, other than Nancy Scranton really had a tremendous round, if there was one particular factor was it the wind today?

MARIA HJORTH: Yeah, I think so. It must have been. I don't know why it really played that much harder. Because the greens are still soft. You can still, you know, play the ball out to the pin. And, I think it must have been the wind to try to figure out how much the wind is blowing. And sometimes it's not really affecting it as much as you think, and sometimes it's affecting it more. A lot of the greens are kind of a little bit raised up as well, so it makes it, it usually plays a little further that way. I guess it must have been the wind, and maybe a few tougher pin placements.

Q I read that when you won in '99 it was a due to a classic that played with a mismatched set of clubs. What happened there? Can you kind of explain what your situation was?

MARIA HJORTH: Well, it was just that I was flying over to Japan and they lost my golf clubs. So I didn't get them, well when I got there on the Tuesday, I didn't get them. And they said it was going to be there on Wednesday, and it wasn't. And then on the Wednesday I had to get a set together and to try to play. And then I played with a set on the Thursday in the Pro Am. It was a titleist set and it was similar to what I was using. And I borrowed Laura Davies driver and putter, and I borrowed someone else's 7-wood, and I got some clubs together. And on Friday I played really well. I got my clubs on Friday evening, and I decided to keep the clubs I was using because I was used to them, and I knew how far they were going, and I played well with them. And I decided to put my wedges, and my favorite wedge, back in the bag. Other than that I had just kept what I had borrowed.

Q How well do you think you will sleep tonight having the lead?

MARIA HJORTH: Well I think I will sleep really well. You know, I have been working hard to get to this situation and hopefully I will, you know, go out there and all I can do is put myself in a position to have a lead, and a chance to win the tournament. And we'll see what happens. I definitely will sleep really well.

Q (Inaudible) you have been off for a while. What kind of a day (inaudible)?

MARIA HJORTH: Well I think also a little bit more than a year ago I changed to a long putter, and that has really, really helped my putting a lot. And, you know, you just feel confident especially with 3 or 4 or 5-footers. You can be a little more aggressive with your birdie chances. You know, if you have a little longer return you know you will make it.

So that has been a huge boost for me too to go to the long putter. And also being more confident on the course with my swing. To take it from the practice range to take it out on the course, it's really been a big thing.

It's starting to come together this year. And I had a lot of good rounds, but really, you know, put a lot of good rounds together in the same tournament. So, it feels now like I can go out there tomorrow and really, you know, trust what I am doing. I have nothing to lose. I'm out there having fun and enjoying the situation.

Q When did you start feeling that (inaudible)?

MARIA HJORTH: Pretty much kind of this year. I started off in Australia playing pretty well. And I started off the first event as well in Hawaii playing solid. So it's been kind of coming and going. As soon as you go out there and trust yourself and trust what you are doing, that is when the results are going to come. And hopefully we'll be showing off even more tomorrow and this week.

Q You said at the outset you were talking the first couple of days you weren't hitting a lot of fairways. Do you know how many fairways you hit today, an improvement?

MARIA HJORTH: Yeah, well I hit -- what is it? I hit I think 10, yeah, I think 10 or 11 fairways today. Which was, you know, I had a few kind of bad breaks as well towards the end. Because I was hitting on 15, I hit a really good drive and it kind of just went out on the rough in 3-inches, and it was in really thick rough. And the same on 17, I had a good drive, it just kind of went through. So there were a few, but at least I was striking them better. And I was hitting them more freely rather than trying to guide the ball out there, which I have done the first two days. In that regard it was a lot better.

Q You mentioned that you had played well the last two months when we spoke earlier. Was it a specific tournament that you were at two months ago when you really felt that you were starting to play well? And if so, what tournament?

MARIA HJORTH: Well to me Toledo was the event that I started to play well. And then I was over in Europe and played for four tournaments. And I had four really good finishes. And so that was the tournament that I felt I can really go out there and trust the game I have, and know that it's going to show off, and show some good results. So that is kind of where it probably turned around. Thank you.