

August 15, 2007



An Interview With:

**CRISTIE KERR
WAYNE GRETZKY**

MARK WALLACE: Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Mark Wallace, I'm from CN, and I'd just like to start off by thanking Wayne and Cristie on for agreeing to participate in today's Pro-Am for the benefit of Stollery Children's Hospital here in Edmonton. We raised a lot of money, this Pro-Am team, raised \$30,000, a little over \$30,000, and with CN's match through our Miracle Match program, we were able to give back to the Stollery Children's Hospital over \$70,000.

Once again, thank you both. Enjoy your day. I know your Pro-Am participants are looking forward to playing with you and they're a little nervous, so go easy on them. But on behalf of CN, thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: I also want to mention as we get started, obviously you have your chance to ask Wayne and Cristie a lot of questions about the wonderful, them playing for the CN Miracle Match, but this is also the defending champion's press conference, so feel free to ask her about coming back and defending her title at the CN Canadian Women's Open.

Q. Wayne, and Cristie, too, for both of you, yesterday, Wayne, you announced at auction for Joey's House a golf getaway weekend for both of you, and I'd like to get both your thoughts on already the bidding of \$30,000 this morning. Just your thoughts on that, surprise, reaction, whatever you've got.

WAYNE GRETZKY: First of all, it's a great sports city. This city does so many things for charity. Always rallies around the community. Yesterday when we were at the hospital, it was pretty overwhelming to see the kids and see parents and the suffering that they have to go through. So for us just to really come up and enjoy ourselves and have a fun day, you know, it's

really -- I know it's her job, but it's not work for me, I'm just here having fun. Anything we can do to help promote charities. I know the PGA and the LPGA really do a tremendous job of giving back.

So this whole event with CN backing it and sponsoring it and really trying to rally a community is wonderful, so it's been great for both of us.

It's all fun and games until they see me hit the ball, then they realize they got into something really bad (laughter).

CRISTIE KERR: Well, I think that CN a terrific job at raising money for charity and for the children's hospital here. You know, I've been able to go to a few children's hospitals and neonatal units, and you don't realize how lucky you are until you actually go and you see like how many stories there are and really just how lucky you are to be healthy.

So my hats off to CN for raising money for the children's hospital and Joey's House. I'm very honored that Wayne would ask me to be a part of it. I told him anything I can ever do, I'd be honored to do it, and I'm just glad that we're raising a lot of money for it.

WAYNE GRETZKY: I asked her if she could skate.

CRISTIE KERR: I told him I'd try.

Q. Cristie, a two-part question for you. One, I wanted to ask you about defending your title, how you feel about that? And part two, you have an Edmonton caddie, and I wonder how you hooked up and what's it been like to come back here.

CRISTIE KERR: I think the two-part question is kind of one and the same because we've been looking forward to this since last year when we won the tournament at the London Hunt Club. It was just an amazing victory. We came back from seven or eight shots to win, and just a dream come true. To win the Canadian Open, having a caddie from Canada, and then to go on and win the U.S. Open together this year, pretty special stuff. For him to be in his hometown and playing here in front of his friends and his family and everybody that's going to come out to watch us, just really special for us, and we're going to

make a run at defending.

Q. I have a hockey question and a golf question. The hockey question is, Cristie, I understand or heard that you're a Phoenix Coyotes fan. And what's the status that Wayne Gretzky can defend a golf tournament in the past?

WAYNE GRETZKY: We haven't done this in the last two years, partly because of Mike's schedule. Mike has been so busy. It's called Wayne Gretzky and Friends. It's not really a great golf tournament unless Mike Weir is involved in it.

But we had a nice run of four years. What I do now is have my own golf tournament in Toronto that we do, and right now we're in the process of trying to put together a Nationwide Tour event that will be in Niagara Falls next year at this time, so hopefully that all comes into play.

Cristie is our biggest fan. She comes to the lot of the Coyote games and she's a big NHL fan. She enjoys coming, and it's fun that she supports not only the Phoenix Coyotes but also the National Hockey League, so it's nice that she's around.

CRISTIE KERR: Well, I guess I've been a fan of hockey, and since I grew up in south Florida I know that's not the most ideal place to get into hockey, but when the Panthers made their Stanley Cup run, I really got into it, and I got to know a lot of the players. I'm friends with Ray Whitney, he's here this week and housing Juli Inkster. It's just pretty cool to be around the athletes, and hockey players love golf and I think golfers love hockey. So it just goes hand in hand. I've played golf with a lot of the NHL guys and have supported the Rangers organization for many years and now the Coyotes, so it's just pretty cool to be around other athletes and see how they live their lives.

WAYNE GRETZKY: She's got pretty good hockey sense, too. She thinks Crosby is pretty good.

Q. Talking about kids for a moment, you went through your struggles early in your career with a weight problem. Can you talk about how you overcame them, what prompted you to do it and what's it like for girls with similar problems? I guess you're some sort of a role model.

CRISTIE KERR: It's always nice to think of yourself as a role model, but for me I think it stems from much earlier than my battles with

weight loss. You know, when I was a kid growing up I was very sick. I had pneumonia probably three times before the age of two, and I almost got diagnosed with having cystic fibrosis, so I really identify with the money that CN is raising and everybody that raises money for the children's hospital and Joey's House. It's pretty unbelievable to think that there are people that will care that much to be able to take care of the sick. I actually forgot the question.

Going into weight loss, you know, I was always heavy. I always struggled with that. You know, I was getting hurt, I wasn't playing golf as well as I wanted to, and just didn't really have a good general opinion about myself. My self-image was very low. I didn't feel like that was me. So I decided to go to a nutritionist and a trainer and I saw them a couple times each, and over two and a half years I lost like 65 pounds.

I would like to be a role model. I hope people think of me as that. Generally I just want to try and help people realize they can take control of their lives, especially with weight loss now with the U.S. with it being such a problem with adolescents.

Q. This is Canada.

CRISTIE KERR: I know.

Q. A question for each of you, as well. If I can get you to talk a little bit about the course, the challenges that you're seeing on the weekend. And Wayne, if you could talk about as you're aware Kevin Lowe has been either applauded or vilified for going to the restrictive free agent market, what your thoughts are on that.

WAYNE GRETZKY: We had dinner with him last night; it was fun. Kevin is competitive, and he's trying to do what he can do to win. He's always been that way as a player. He's that way as a general manager, and his concern and worries about Edmonton Oilers and the city of Edmonton, I applaud him. He believes in what he's doing. He's not doing anything against the system or behind the backs of anyone, and good for him. He's a stand-up guy and he wants to win, so all the more power to him.

CRISTIE KERR: My part of the question, the golf course, you know, I played 18 holes yesterday, and I really like the golf course. I think it's a classic old-style course, tree-lined on a lot of the holes, and they've definitely grown the rough.

You have to get lucky to get a good lie. And the greens are coming up to speed now and firming up. I know they had a lot of rain last week. So I think it's going to be a really, really good test for the women this week.

Q. Cristie, given the parity of the LPGA, how difficult is it to defend a championship now on the LPGA?

CRISTIE KERR: I think it's very difficult. I've won ten tournaments now and I've not succeeded in defending, and that's been one of my biggest goals since I won my first tournament four years ago, five years ago. I definitely would love to give it a good run this week. With all the talent on the LPGA Tour, it's becoming not only more and more difficult to win but to defend.

Q. Wayne, seems like every time you come back to town, the reaction to you grows. And the other part is going through that whole process with NHL free agency this year, there was a lot of talk about players not wanting to play here. Can you address that from your perspective and background?

WAYNE GRETZKY: Well, the only thing I can say is from my experience and my ten years I lived here, I was telling Cristie and her husband on the way up here just how great a city it is and how much she's going to enjoy playing here and what a sports city this is. It's a pretty special place.

For those people who don't have an opportunity to come and live here, they don't realize and understand just how tremendous it is. It's a wonderful place to be an athlete at, the facilities are outstanding, the support you get not only from the fans but from corporate sponsorship here is as good as anywhere in the National Hockey League, and it's a bitter loss for those guys that don't want to come here. It's an experience for something very special.

Until they come here and see how great it is, they don't get that opportunity. To me it's their loss.

Q. (No microphone.)

WAYNE GRETZKY: They've always been great to me. I said this today talking to someone and I've said this before, when you sit down on the bench and you look around and you see 15,000 people, you see 15,000 fans. In Edmonton they seem to be friends because it's always seemed to be the same people. If they weren't in those seats,

you'd wonder if they were away on holiday or one of their kids was sick.

You become a friendship with the fans because they become friends. So they've always been great to me. Anytime I can help promote the city and do things for charity here, I'm always willing to come back.

When Cristie asked me last year if I would come and play with her in the Pro-Am and she said it was in Edmonton and it was for the children's hospital, I said I'd love to come. As I said the other day on the airplane, right now she owns North America, she won the U.S. Open and the Canadian Open, so nice person to come and play with.

CRISTIE KERR: He said it wouldn't be the same person if I didn't defend here, though, so I have a task ahead of me.

Q. Wayne, I'd like to know how much you've been practicing. Even yesterday you kind of warned the spectators to bring helmets.

WAYNE GRETZKY: I'm not very good.

CRISTIE KERR: He signs a lot of autographs.

WAYNE GRETZKY: You know what, the thing about playing golf is that we all think we're professional athletes because we can all play golf. We all get a chance and an opportunity to go out. I spent the last two days playing at the Edmonton Country Club with some friends and had a great time. I played with Cristie's husband the last two days. I'm not very good. I'm about a 16, 17 handicap. So I go out there and I enjoy it and it's a great family sport, my kids play, my wife plays and it's something we enjoy.

I think that with the success of what guys like Tiger and Mike Weir have done for golf, and with the girls doing so well and being so charismatic, now the game is just growing leaps and bounds and everyone wants to be a part of it. I'm going to play today, I'm going to have some fun, and I told her everything inside the leather is good.

Q. This is more of a of a feature question for you. The game is growing in leaps and bounds and so is the LPGA. What's your opinion on women trying to play in the PGA instead of in the LPGA? Do you think it's a good idea or do you think women should develop their game in the LPGA?

CRISTIE KERR: You know, that's an interesting question because we've had a couple players do it now. I think as long as they're doing it for the right reasons, to raise money for charity, I think that that's only going to help the women's game to grow and get stronger. Annika did it at Colonial. She missed the cut obviously, but any money she was going to win was going to go to charity. And Michelle Wie has done nothing but help the game to grow.

But I think that on the whole, you know, we should be all trying to help the women's game grow on the LPGA Tour. I think it's great to do it every now and then, but I think that -- this is our home, this is where we play, and we've done so much to grow the game in the last six or seven years, I think it's what we can do now and I think that's where we should stay.

Q. Wayne, I just want to follow up on Terry's question. Is there anywhere, either North America or outside, that you can go where you're not recognized?

WAYNE GRETZKY: The thing is I can't recognize anybody. I'm the worst. I wouldn't know -- I'm just not good at recognizing people. So when I'm in places like Hawaii or Florida and people recognize me and talk to me, like I said, I'm shocked because I can't recognize anyone.

Q. Can you actually walk down the street in Honolulu or New Orleans? Can you actually do that or do you get mobbed?

WAYNE GRETZKY: That's part of my life. Hockey is everywhere and people love the game and want to watch it. People enjoy it, so it's just part of who I am. Obviously when I sign autographs -- Gordie Howe told me when I was 17 years old that signing autographs beats working for a living. So it's part of my life and doesn't phase me.

CRISTIE KERR: I've been around Wayne for the last three days, and honestly I've learned a lot from him because we can all get better at it, but honestly there's nobody better at it than Wayne. I said this on the Jim Rome radio show this morning, it's really hard to make people feel like they're special and feel like you get to touch everybody that you meet, and there's nobody better at it than him.

Q. Correct this if it's incorrect. Early on they said that you had what they called a

brassy attitude on Tour. Is that true, and if so, how did you change it?

CRISTIE KERR: It's something I still have to work on and get better at. When I came out I was 17 years old, and I traveled with my father. You know, you sort of just go and do what he does and kind of -- you kind of take on the qualities of the people that you travel with, I think, and my dad taught me a lot. But I think that's a part of being young and not knowing any different.

I've been on Tour 11 years now, and I think I've tried to learn every year that I've been out here, especially the years that I've been on my own, and you just try and do the right thing. That's all you can do.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you all for coming in. Thank you for your time, and good luck.

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