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Quite a Team



Carl Pettersson (left) gladly put on the caddie bib as his wife, DeAnna, competed in the PGA TOUR Wives Golf Classic.

Stephen Dey

April 20, 2011

By Laury Livsey, PGA TOUR Staff

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HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C.—Athena Perez was laughing and smiling while standing on the first tee. If there is a hail-fellow-well-met among PGA TOUR wives and girlfriends, it's Perez. Ready to play golf instead of watching, Perez greeted with enthusiasm her playing partners for the day—Shanna Klauk, DeAnna Pettersson, like Perez both TOUR players' wives, and Brittany Shane, a reporter for the local NBC affiliate.

Perez, like many of the women who were playing Wednesday, was paying homage to the tartan theme of The Heritage, set for this week at nearby Harbour Town Golf Links. Perez was decked out in black knickers, red-and-white argyle socks and two-tone golf shoes.

As a fashionista, she looked great. So what if her swing needed a little work?

As she nervously walked onto the tee of Sea Pines Resort's Ocean Course and began taking practice swings, she said, "Who here plays golf?" Her husband, PGA TOUR player, Pat, looked on.

"I've never played a round of golf, ever," answered Pettersson, the wife of Carl.

"I've hit balls at a range once or twice. But that's it for me," Athena admitted.

As the two established a suitable comfort level with their play, or lack thereof, Klauk, who was not really paying attention to the conversation, emerged from behind her cart and said, "Do we get to play with rangefinders?"

Pat Perez smiled, DeAnna and Athena began laughing and it was obvious Klauk's was a question nobody else in the group had considered. All Jeff Klauk could do was smile. "Yeah, she's played before," the TOUR veteran said of his wife.

The former Shanna Nagy did more than just play. She was a member of Florida Southern's first women's golf team, and she won the NCAA Division II/III individual championships as both a freshman and again as a junior. She was also an oh-by-the-way two-time national player of the year and is one of Florida Southern's most-decorated student-athletes.

Not that the group knew any of that. Shanna didn't say anything. But the rangefinder comment let everybody know she had a bit more experience than the rest of the foursome.

With DeAnna the first of her group to hit at the biennial PGA TOUR Wives Golf Classic, if hard swallows made noises, her "gulp" would have been deafening.

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"I was completely wrecked on the first tee. So nervous," she said. "Making contact with the ball was 100 percent my goal. So every time I did, that was fabulous."

DeAnna pulled out her driver on the opening hole of the nine-hole tournament where husbands and boyfriends caddie for their significant others, with all proceeds going to charity. Without the benefit of a practice swing, she took a swipe at the ball and hit it flush. The club made it through a little too early, though, and her ball, a low missile, landed at the base of a palm tree, a little out of bounds. DeAnna shrugged, still happy that, in her words, "didn't swing and miss it."

And that was the juxtaposition: Shanna Klauk was twice considered the best player in her college division during her collegiate years, and DeAnna Pettersson last picked up a golf club in 2008. Before that? "Ten years ago," she said.

With those resumes, Shanna and DeAnna led the team of Klauk, Pettersson, Perez and Shane and did quite well in the scramble format, thank you very much.

There was the duo's play on the par-4 12th. After Shanna hit a drive that was 100 yards short of the green, she then chipped to six feet and DeAnna sunk the putt. High-fives all around.

On the next hole, the team used DeAnna's drive, as she hit a low hook that was similar to her opening drive but this time stayed in bounds. And on the team's seventh hole of the day, with the team finding its ball in the bunker in two on the par-5 14th, DeAnna set up over the ball, swung, skulled her shot and watched as the ball hit the bunker's lip, popped up, landed and rolled to a stop seven feet from the hole. Shanna coolly made the birdie putt.

DeAnna and Shanna. Yes they . . . can-a.

"That shot was complete luck," DeAnna said. "But, hey, luck happens."

"I loved that we were having fun out there," Shanna added. "We all had a great time even though DeAnna is very much a beginner golfer. But she hit some great shots that counted for our team. She hit some closer than me."

For the round, the foursome finished at 7-under, two strokes behind the winning team of Joanna Saleeby (Kyle Stanley's girlfriend), Briony Harper (Jarrod Lyle's girlfriend), Rachel Thompson (Michael) and Lorie Haas (Bill).

"I did hit some good shots, and I definitely contributed to the team," said Shanna, an infrequent golfer now and busy mother of a soon-to-be 6-year-old son and a 3-year-old daughter. "But there were some other shots I hit with my 4-iron—and I normally love my 4-iron—and, well, I hit some horrible 4-irons. I was a little frustrated and had to show some self-control out there."

In the end, none of that mattered. As DeAnna said, "It's all for the cause." The PGA TOUR Wives donated half of the tournament's proceeds to Hilton Head Heroes, an organization that allows families with a child who has a life-threatening illness the opportunity to travel to the island for a resort vacation. The remainder of the funds will be distributed by the PGA TOUR Wives Association and its various initiatives.

With Team Pettersson in the Ocean Course parking lot, following the round, Carl dutifully took his wife's bag, cleaned the clubs and put them in the trunk of their courtesy car, leaving DeAnna to sum up the day.

"First, we really were out there for fun and to raise money for a great cause. I think everybody was pretty relaxed by the time we made it to the final hole," she said. "And secondly, I'm very thankful that I don't have to do this for a job."

Her husband, removing his caddie bib as she spoke, felt the same way.

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