

ShopRite LPGA Classic

Presented by Acer

Thursday, June 6, 2024

Galloway, New Jersey, USA

Seaview, A Dolce Hotel

Yuka Saso

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome everyone to the ShopRite LPGA Classic. Joined by our most recent winner and now two-time major champion, Yuka Saso.

Q. Coming off a fresh win, how do you come off that high and prepare for this week at the ShopRite?

YUKA SASO: We had three days to prepare for this event, since the tournament starts on Friday, so that helped a little bit that I can rest on Monday.

Yeah, nothing really change. Do the same thing and trying to recover from last week and have fun this week and enjoy playing golf.

Q. Then the fans out here are super excited to see the U.S. Women's Open champion in action. Does that add any extra pressure to you?

YUKA SASO: I'm very thankful that all the volunteers came up and greet me. It was a very good, you know, thing for them to do to come up on practice rounds and say something.

But, no, I don't think I'll have any pressure or anything. Just the main thing is to play golf and enjoy. No, I don't think I'll be --

Q. My last question for you: What are looking forward to this week her at the ShopRite?

YUKA SASO: To play the tournament because I miss it last year. I had to withdraw the last minute on Friday because I had flu.

Yeah, I'm glad that I was able to -- I mean, I'm hoping I won't do that again. I'm really looking forward to playing this week.

Q. Last week you did a great job on a long course; this is the shortest course on the LPGA Tour. Can you describe for me some of the things you play differently

here compared to what you had to face at Lancaster?

YUKA SASO: I played this tournament a few times and it's not as long as last week, but it has its own way of making the golf challenging, especially the greens. It's po and it's very bumpy. When the wind blows I think that's where all the complications starts.

I don't know how to compare the two golf courses because it's very different one. Here it's pretty flat and Lancaster has a lot of slopes on the greens and fairways.

So, yeah, I don't think I can compare the two golf courses. Both of them are really good and has a different type of challenges.

So, yeah, I don't think I'll think too much about last week and trying to put that in play this week. Like I said, it's a different golf course, so I just put the experiences that I had before playing in this event; hopefully I can put that into play this week.

Q. I watched you play some of the holes out there in the pro-am. What is the benefit? What did you get out of playing a pro-am? What are you trying to figure out on the course when you're playing with other players, amateur players?

YUKA SASO: Nothing really on the golf side, but more like enjoying the game with the amateurs. I think that's what the pro-am is here for. I'm just hoping that they enjoy playing.

I think that's what I told them as well when we were playing, that just have fun and let's enjoy the 18 holes, because I think like even for me I enjoy playing with amateurs, because on tour you only get to see the same people all the time over and over and over.

For me I really like playing the pro-am so I get to meet new people that is not like golfers, yeah.

Q. Several of the women said that it's intimidating for them to play with the U.S. Women's Open champion.



Did you try to ease their thoughts about that?

YUKA SASO: I don't know. I try not to be intimidate -- am I intimidating? I try not to. I just try to be a normal person as much as I can be.

Yeah, I don't know. I didn't mean to --

Q. I don't think it's anything that you did, except win the championship, right, so...

YUKA SASO: I mean, yeah, I guess so.

Q. Thanks.

YUKA SASO: Yeah.

Q. I just wondering, what has your life been like since you holed that final putt on Sunday?

YUKA SASO: Nothing have been change a lot. You know, we drove down here to Atlantic City and trying to prepare for the tournament. I haven't really done anything.

Yeah, I haven't really noticed anything yet.

Q. Any celebration or anything like that with your friends, players?

YUKA SASO: No, not really. It's tournament week this week and I think everyone wants to focus on tournaments.

I do the same, so probably when I get back to Dallas.

Q. Obviously there was a lot of pressure last week at Lancaster and you handled it very well. This week, do you feel like there is less pressure? Do you feel a little more -- you feel easier with this atmosphere coming this week?

YUKA SASO: I was nervous last week. I get nervous every tournament. I don't think I would feel more nervous just because it was a major or it's after a win.

I don't think I -- emotional-wise I don't think anything will change. I am just here to enjoy, especially I missed this tournament last year. Yeah, I don't think I'll feel any pressure.

Q. I'm just curious, because you said you did not expect to win at the end of the tournament; you started the day three strokes down, tied for fifth. We hear the champions say, I'm only three strokes down, I can get this. I'm in striking range. Curious to find out your mindset going in. (Tagalog.) Three strokes in and I'm

tied for fifth, or do you just tell yourself, I'll do my best every single hole? Mindset coming the a final when you're in striking distance of a win?

YUKA SASO: I have a question? Can I answer mixed in Tagalog and English, or you want me to answer in full English or full Tagalog.

Q. For us, I prefer full Tagalog, yes.

YUKA SASO: I'll just mix it. I think at the start was 3-down. (Tagalog)...score I can do this or anything. I just try to focus more it's a game, more focus on every shot.

And my caddie talked to me at the start of the day. Whatever happens he'll be very proud of me. I think I kept that in my mind the whole round.

Q. We saw in the live feed after signing scorecard after making official -- (Tagalog.) (Regarding FaceTime.)

YUKA SASO: I just called them to see them, like and say hi, which I do pretty much every week or every tournament after my round. I call them to say hi, how they doing.

Yeah, nothing really special. And we talk after, but at the tent where I called them -- (Tagalog.)

Q. First of all, congratulations for this historic win.

YUKA SASO: Thank you.

Q. Can you tell us, share us what were some changes when you switched nationality from Philippines to Japan and how did it help to you capture your second crown for the U.S. Open?

YUKA SASO: Well, changing nationality doesn't help my game at all. The win came from the practice and the help from my team.

Q. Quick question then. How hopeful are you the Olympic chances for the Paris games? How hopeful are you'll still catch the last bus business for it?

YUKA SASO: I haven't checked the rankings. I don't know my standings right now. There is two more events and I'm hoping that I can give myself a chance to get to Paris.

Q. Your upcoming tournaments?

YUKA SASO: So this week, ShopRite, and few weeks KPMG Championship.



Q. All right. Best of luck. Thank you.

YUKA SASO: Thank you.

Q. How big of a morale booster is this for you, especially as you mentioned earlier that you're trying to get a spot in Paris? After winning U.S. Women's Open again for the second time, how optimistic, boost -- (Tagalog.)

YUKA SASO: Well, winning a tournament is a really difficult thing here in LPGA, and to be able to do that I think after three years, it felt really good.

But, yeah, I think the confidence or those confidence I think comes from the practice. Obviously winning a big tournament helps a little bit, but most of it comes from the practice.

So I think I'll just focus on the process I've been doing and, yeah, hopefully I can give myself a little bit more confidence coming into the tournaments, upcoming tournaments.

Q. Follow-up, Yuka. (Regarding improvements from 2021.)

YUKA SASO: It's hard to explain. I think improvements can be seen from a numbers and other people. I think it's hard to see from yourself or tell yourself that, oh, I'm so much better compared to last year.

I feel a bit -- I don't think I'll say that to myself. But I think what matters is not stopping the grind like throughout my career. Yeah, so I don't really know what change. For me, I don't think I've changed since 2021. Only thing that changed is I got older.

I have more experience now on the LPGA. That's pretty much it. Other than that, I don't know if I change a lot as a person.

Q. What clicked in your game leading up to your victory? Did you make any adjustments going into it?

YUKA SASO: No, adjustments. I think I just did what I've been doing starting the year, and, yeah, I didn't have any big changes coming to Lancaster or anything.

You know, just trying to be patient and that's pretty much about it.

Q. Two wins, two majors. Last year you had two Top 3s in majors. Is there any way you prepared differently headed into a major week compared to a non-major

tournament?

YUKA SASO: Nothing really changes. I think only changes when the golf course like changes. Like U.S. Women's Open, the British, and the KPMG, they change the golf course every year, so it takes time to get ready.

I think that's pretty much it.

Other than that, it's the same.

Q. Is there something about maybe the challenge of a major and embracing the challenge of the course and maybe any course you come to that you kind of enjoy?

YUKA SASO: Yeah, I think every courses have that, but obviously when it's major, the golf course is difficult, but also the -- how do you say it?

Q. The environment or atmosphere?

YUKA SASO: Yeah, the -- I feel like you just get nervous when you hear the tournament, like it's a major week.

I think it's just not me. I think everyone. When you hear, oh, it's a major week, you kind of get that -- a little nervous in yourself. I think that's the only big difference of like regular events and major championship.

Yeah, I think all the challenges or anything like that, I like it. I think I should like it because it's my job. I'm thankful that I'm in that spot to be able to feel that. It has always been my dream to be out here, so just trying to embrace everything and enjoy the journey that I will have, I don't know, for few more years.

Q. Congratulations on your win.

YUKA SASO: Thank you.

Q. You're now representing Japan. How does it feel that your victories are still being celebrated here in the Philippines? Do you feel like you're still carrying the Philippines colors?

YUKA SASO: Well, I've always been half Japanese, half Filipino. I'm thankful for my family back in Philippines and all my sponsors who have been supporting me through up and downs and all the trust they've given me.

Yeah, I think I said this in other interviews as well, but if I could put two flags beside my name I would, but I cannot. I think the whole world already knows I'm half Filipino and half Japanese.

Even when I was representing Philippines, I always thought I'm always half Japanese as well. Even now I'm representing Japan, I always think I'm half Filipino. That will never change.

I love growing up in Philippines and I always go back there. So, yeah, nothing have really changed. It's just that the outside -- how do you say it -- like paperworks or whatever it, it's just on those sides.

Q. How tough was it to go without a win for a long time? How sweet was it breaking that drought in the U.S. Women's Open?

YUKA SASO: It was tough, but also it's very hard to win here in LPGA Tour. It's the, you know, biggest and one of the hardest tour in the whole world.

So it was tough, but I enjoyed the journey, you know, with how much LPGA and other associations here in America makes me feel very welcomed, and everyone here our on tour is very nice to me.

You know, not winning is tough, but a lot of stuff covers it. Winning is not everything. You know, this is my life and my job, so whatever happens I have to enjoy it.

But winning last week felt really good. Obviously it's one of the biggest tournament of the year. It was my dream tournament to win since I was young, and to do it twice, it felt sweeter.

Q. One more question, Yuka. I ask you this in 2021. I'm always amazed your bounceback mindset within the round. You remember 2021, the last day, front nine, I think had back-to-back bogeys, or it was three bogeys in a row? Then that really set you back. Then back then you just told me your caddie said -- (Tagalog) -- you have many, many holes to go. How was it this time around? The double bogey on the sixth obviously must have really stung. What was the discussion with you and the caddie? Do you look at the scoreboard in that moment? Did you look at how many strokes you had to catch up? Did any of that help you get the four birdies on the back nine?

YUKA SASO: It's a major championship and I cannot expect to play perfectly all four days. Those misses always comes, and I wasn't really -- I didn't think it too deeply or anything like that.

I just tried to play the rest of the holes as good as I can. And, yeah, my caddie just kept telling me, you know, just refocus and focus on every shot. That was pretty much it. I don't know.

I don't know how I got that birdies. I just played really good. I was able to give myself good chances and I was able to grab it.

Here I am. I was able to lift the trophy.

Q. Lastly, just want to pick up on what you mentioned you're thankful for your sponsors in the Philippines. We have a lot of talent in the Philippines, men's and women's game. (Tagalog.) We understand how hard it is to get out of the country, to travel and play tournaments to get better. For, what's your message to the Filipino golfing community, Filipino golfing sponsors? How important is it for players like you and Bianca, Dottie, and others to be able to get sponsors to be able to improve? As you said, hard work and talent may not be enough. It's a team efforts with the sponsors out there and the media as we help prop you guys up as well. How big of a deal that is to get our golfers like you it the next level.

YUKA SASO: Talent is a very important thing, but like you mentioned, as a player you have to work hard as well. Those hard work, the sponsors can't give it to you. You have to do it yourself.

But, yeah, I mean, ICTSI has been supporting me since I start playing on tour in Japan and stayed with me for as long as I can remember. You know, the support of ICTSI gives to Philippines golf, not just to me, but Mr. Razon has been doing a lot of good job in building a Filipino professional golf tour.

It's very difficult to get sponsors. I understand that. Back in Philippines. You know, because in Philippines golf is not a big sport. I think everybody knows that. So I know it's hard to get sponsors, but I don't know -- like it is very important, but I think you just to have work hard and give yourself chances and grab it.

I think that's where the sponsors look at you and convince them to support you. Yeah, but I think with the situation where the Philippines are right now, I think it's growing so much since 2018, 2017, after we won the Asian Games.

I think it's a lot of people are more into golf right now and supporting the game. I think we just need a little bit more of time to have more sponsors and get them to support the Filipino golf tour and maybe people who wants to come out and play on LPGA Tour or somewhere else.

I think we just need a little bit more time.

Q. Did you have plans to go back to the Philippines at

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any point?

YUKA SASO: Not soon. I have tournaments. Yeah, so probably not in two weeks or three weeks. Olympics coming up, and before that we have KPMG and Evian and we have British.

So summer is pretty busy for all of us. Probably not soon. But I will.

Q. Bob had submitted whether if you would like to join a men's tournament in the Philippines, if you had heard about that?

YUKA SASO: Men's tournament?

Q. That's what his question said, yes.

YUKA SASO: I'm not a man.

Q. I guess had you thought about it maybe what he was going for?

YUKA SASO: No, I've never thought about playing in the men's tournament. How can I win that event?

Q. You said you hadn't got a chance to really celebrate sounds like your victory. What did you think you might do at some point when you ge the chance? You had a Whoopie Pie after the win.

YUKA SASO: Julia gave it to me. I thought it was for her, she was saving for herself.

But I don't know what to do. Have dinner with friends and probably friends or tour and some -- I don't know. Maybe we can have dinner or something.

I don't know how to celebrate. Probably sleep as well. Lack of sleep right now.

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