

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

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Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Rose Zhang

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, pleased to be joined by Rose Zhang. Rose, I know you had a 7:30 tee time. You've seen this course. Here you are, second season as an LPGA Tour member technically at the Tournament of Champions. What's it like to kick off this event?

ROSE ZHANG: It's super exciting just to be here a little Lake Nona. Last time I was here was at the Curtis Cup practice session with Captain Sarah Ingram and all my other friends.

But to come back and see the course and have this be the kick start of my 2024 season, it's just really cool, so really excited. I don't really know what's going to happen, but I'm prepared for anything.

Q. We last saw you at the Grant Thornton Invitational, and we spoke with Lydia who said it's a little bit of a shortened off-season. What was it like preparing for this first event?

ROSE ZHANG: It's been very interesting, because with the short off-season it's not something I'm super used to. I'm used to kind of having two, three months off, especially with amateur golf.

So with that in mind, coming into this event it was a little bit of a hustle to kind of get things in order.

I have new clubs in the bag. I'm trying to figure out my putter situation. Health-wise been a lot happening too. So just a little bit of adjustments here and there, which kind of I guess throws off your off-season schedule.

I also moved, so I've been moving three different places. Moving from Irvine to Vegas, Vegas to Stanford.

And I also finished week one of school. So there has been a lot of moving parts. (Smiling.) It's been fun.

Q. You're not busy at all. Couple questions that have



come in. So how are you balancing that class and workload with your practice schedule? How do you plan on balancing that, especially through the beginning of the season?

ROSE ZHANG: Right, well, this is the only event that I'm playing in January, and then going to March I'm going to start my season back up again at Palos Verdes, so it gives me a little bit of time to do a bunch of prep work in between and a lot of school.

But I did finish week one and am missing some of week two, which some of my professors aren't too happy with. You know, once that's all settled we've just been doing a lot of work outside of practice, and I think it's time to really just get dialed in, grind on the golf course, too.

Q. We were just talking about it off camera. You do have a little bit of homework this week. What homework do you have and what classes are you taking this semester?

ROSE ZHANG: Right, so I'm taking a stats class, so I had to finish a PSET last night at around 12:30. This morning was a very early pro-am time, so didn't have too much time to rest.

I'm also taking journalism class and then a political science class, and finally a media psych class. So everything is really interesting, but it is a full course load, so I'm very well-prepared to have some late nights.

Q. What have you learned in the journalism class?

ROSE ZHANG: We're supposed to create some beat memos where we're trying to build a couple stories that we want to cover in these ten weeks that I'm taking the class.

I think I'm going to do something around Stanford athletics. Right now it's all brainstorming, but getting started in terms of how to interview people and how to write good articles that people want to read objectively, yeah.

Q. You said moved from Vegas back to Stanford. Is that for school and then you'll be back in Vegas once school is over?

ROSE ZHANG: Yes, 100%. The transition from moving



out of state and being in Vegas is not something that I really called for in this off-season. Figured it was a really good time to do so.

And then I just have a bunch of stuff there. But then I also realized, oh, I have to go to Stanford, so I had to move some of my stuff back up to the Bay Area.

Q. You mentioned new clubs. Was that something where you eventually would've had to transition into new clubs because you kept using the same ones you used in college, or is this just new year, new equipment?

ROSE ZHANG: Right, it's both. The Ai Smoke Paradym has been really, really good. I think woods-wise, it's always the little alterations. There is always new product coming out, so being able to adjust to those is not too bad.

But I have changed my irons. With the irons now, they're not the Apex Pros that I played my whole life. Ever since I was 13 I was playing Apex Pros, and now it's the Forged Star irons, which I'm really excited to play. But it's also something very new.

Going from there, trying to get dialed down with what the specs look like and what my gapping is for all the rest of my clubs.

Q. What do those irons allow you to do?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, so the reason why I wanted to change them was to have a little bit more accuracy in my distance control. Even though I was hitting really well with the Apex irons, there were some cases where my ball was too hot coming off the face. It's been generating a couple different noises that I would probably not appreciate as much on the golf course.

So with that in mind, these golf clubs are more precise with the distance control while being around the same number as what I had before.

Q. Did you say new putter as well? Work a new putter in?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, put the Ai putter in. It's been quite interesting. Quite interesting of a journey to find my putting back a little bit.

Right before British Open last year, that was when my putter disappeared, so now it's kind of transitioning to what feels good, how I can visualize putts going in.

There hasn't been a lot of practice going on, so trying to

understand my lie angles and everything and the setup. It's just been a little bit of a transition, but hopefully we're just going to have the confidence to keep rolling putts.

Q. Sounds like as you dive into all the new equipment you learn a lot about your specs, swing, what's that journey been like?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, it's been really interesting because I -- in my opinion it's really cool. I love just learning more about golf and the specs on how players play and what specs are catered more towards my game.

I will say that it's not something that you think about a lot in amateur golf simply because you have so much time to adjust your game without actually adjusting your equipment that you can just work with whatever you have.

I was talking to Olly, my caddie about it as well, that this is something really new to me. I'm not trying to tweak anything in my game, but rather in my clubs because there is some significant need to change. But that's about it. I think it's a pretty cool transition.

Q. Was going to ask you, in the short period you were out here last year, great instant success, what is the most significant thing you learned?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, I think the biggest thing about last year, my little rookie season, was just to not pile so much on my plate. It's been a lot that's happened, and I feel like I continuously will have a lot that's going to be happening.

It's almost like every single day, almost like I'm in a rush to complete a lot of things. Balancing everything and being able to handle all the attention as well.

I think it made me realize that there is times where I need to focus on certain things and take a step back. Try to make those things improve, including my golf game, school grind, et cetera.

Having that clear mindset of what I want to do on a daylight basis instead of rushing into things is something I've been kind of working on.

Q. Sounds like you still have a lot on your plate. How are you prioritizing?

ROSE ZHANG: Right, it's still a work in progress. I think I'm learning a lot more as there is more things coming my way. I would say that the prioritizing, it would just come little by little as I continue to navigate the waters of pro life and school life, how they intervene with each other.

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Also since I'm now kind of a grown adult, like I have to actually figure out everything else, just including moving houses, all the paperwork and stuff.

I think the people have really helped me in my life, from my team to my family, friends. They've been really supportive. They've really kind of eased my I guess answer tees about having to complete everything at the same time.

So the priorities I think will come, but as of now, it's golf, school. Pretty simple. Not too much happening. (Smiling.)

Q. I think you mentioned earlier on during the off-season, short off-season, having to deal with some health things unexpectedly. Can you share what you were dealing with?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, I think with the travel and all the unintended stress on my body, my like nutrition and the overall like feelings of eating has been quite different. My body has not been processing things as well, so I'm working with a nutritionist to help me see how I react to foods. I would eat vegetables and be bloated, which is not necessarily too normal.

But these are not in my opinion like crazy health concerns. It's more so how am I able to optimize my performance in-season and traveling everywhere with the time differences and time zones, what would make me perform well.

Also it's just like little tweaks in the neck here and there. (Smiling.) It's all a work in progress.

Q. Anything you had to cut out or eliminate that you're missing?

ATTORNEY2: I'm Asian, Chinese, and I can't eat soy so that's not great. You know, a little bit of like just cutting out gluten and dairy as well just to clear out my systems and make sure there is other things that are -- I'll obviously like reintroduce these things, but as of the moment we're trying to figure out what's happening.

Q. How are you feeling now?

ROSE ZHANG: Feeling okay. I mean, at least I can eat rice.

Q. Rose, is it difficult for you to say no, in terms of prioritizing?

ROSE ZHANG: 100%. That's also one of the biggest lessons I learned. I remember talking about it last year at

the end of the year, about saying no. You know, I always have been a people pleaser, but not just for others but for myself, too.

I think the adjustments of saying no are just such a crucial skill to learn, especially when you're going to have a lot more on the plate. It's necessary for you to be able to maximize what you can do, what you can't do.

So slowly still learning.

Q. And every day and every week is different. What may be the biggest thing you have tried to push off your plate and say no?

ROSE ZHANG: As of now, it hasn't been too crazy. I would say it would -- my nos are more so just pushing off like in terms of schedule.

Some people remember some like kind of tasks that I need to do, they're not immediate. They're not required to be immediate. Obviously there is an ideal date for every one.

When there is really busy days, try to push it a day or two off so I can focus on other things when it comes to practice, PT, et cetera. Like those are probably more so the priority. Then I revolve everything else around that.

Before it was like, oh, people have asked me to do this, therefore I have to make this the priority, rather than my own game, you know, responsibilities, et cetera.

So it's more so the rearrangement of responsibility.

Q. Also, you mentioned this time last year was Curtis Cup practice. You kept a very active amateur career, but what's been perhaps the most drastic difference in scheduling travel and being on tour compared to being part of the amateur scene?

ROSE ZHANG: You're playing a lot more golf, that's first of all. Full rounds of golf and they're competitive. At the same time, once you're done with Sunday, you're traveling straight to the next event.

Usually in amateur golf they're only probably three, four days long max. Those are really long events. You have probably at least a week or two to go back, settle in, you know, usually I go back to practice a little bit or take a day or two off.

But that's not really the case when you're out here on tour, especially in different time zones. Your body has to adjust to so many things and different stresses, environments.

So that really just changes the entire dynamic of how your supposed to play the game and where your mind space is.

Amateur golf is still very much competitive. I would argue that a lot of the amateurs, they all have the skillset to be playing here on tour, but it's just a matter of who can manage it the best.

Q. Sorry to hear about the health stuff. Did you have any idea what the timeline might be in order to figure out...

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, well, it should be probably in the next month or two. It's mostly just kind of reintroducing different food categories and seeing how any body process it. From there, I'm doing some labs to really get down to the nit and grit of what's happening.

But I think it's just to know -- it's just for me to know how my body is in different atmosphere, temperatures, environments, especially food centered areas.

So it's really just for my own wellbeing and performance. (Smiling.)

But yeah, I think next month or two should be good.

Q. What are your goals for 2024 out on tour?

ROSE ZHANG: I'm definitely not kind of -- I'm not a result-driven person. I'm not someone who wants a certain ranking by the end of the year or I want to win this event by the end of the year.

But it's more so I think I'm more process driven, so when it comes to just mini goals and what I want to do in school, what I want to do on the golf course, figure out my putting, figure out my chipping, hitting, all that stuff, the goal is to just be consistent in these areas and then figure out how to perform from there.

So I don't necessarily -- I generally don't have a number in mind on what I need do. It's more so I play by ear.

Q. How do you balance choosing to take such an extensive course load at Stanford versus giving up a couple events and maybe missing out on some opportunities to move up in the rankings for the Olympics and Solheim, and seasonal awards?

ROSE ZHANG: In my opinion, I think being at school is already a huge opportunity. I don't think a lot of people have that opportunity to be able to go back and pursue their education while they're playing a sport or doing their own thing.

So being able to be there, it kind of in my opinion and perspective, I think I did better and will do better through this period of time of just learning and learning from people who are just such intelligent in their own minds and fields.

But, yeah, obviously there is a lot of big time events coming up with the Olympics, Solheim, but in my own mind, if I play well in the events that I have, then naturally I'll have the opportunity to play those events.

Q. How is your time at Stanford help you feel more grounded coming into the year when you come back?

ROSE ZHANG: Right, well, it's definitely a time that's more simple. There is -- everyone is busy, no matter what you're doing, everyone has their own schedules. You're kind of just a fish in the sea where you can do whatever you want and you prioritize your own kind of needs and responsibilities.

So being able to do so, being able to find discipline in my own schedule and myself, it kind of I think will help me later on in the season to prep me for whatever is to come.

Tea at the same time everyone around me is doing such crazy things. Some friends are doing start-ups already. Some people are entering the internship business and have already gotten into very top, top companies.

So everyone in their own right is grinding, and it's a really good environment for me to also do the same.

Q. What do you think of the depth of the American women's game right now? It's a little bit of a change in the guard maybe in recent years, and you're one of the young players pushing toward the top here.

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, there is definitely so many more American women playing the sport. I think it's incredible just being able to have everyone kind of indulge in the sport, being competitive in it. And at the same time, there is a lot more national events that are playing against the other nationalities.

For us to be able to represent our own countries, represent something bigger than us, it's really kind of what we want to do as athletes. But, yeah, the honor of just being an American player and being able to play on U.S. soil, it's really cool. You can travel all 50 states and not one state is the same.

Q. Growing up in southern Cal, were you aware of Allisen Corpuz when she was at Southern Cal?

ROSE ZHANG: Yes. I actually took an unofficial visit to Southern California, USC, and I met her there while she was -- I don't know what she was doing. I think she was signing up for classes or something of that sort.

But saw her passing by. Then we played a couple amateur events together. We were partners at Curtis Cup. So what she's been doing so far and what she's done with her career has been really cool to see.

Q. What did you think of her performance at the U.S. Women's Open? She just kind of didn't let anyone really get in there to get her at the end. And the fact she's 25. Took a while for her. 25 is still young. Maybe not for women's golf. To get to that point and just her perseverance.

ROSE ZHANG: 100%. I think her performance was so inspiring. Didn't really surprise me that she wasn't fazed coming down the stretch because her personality is so calm, cool, collected. Even when she makes the putt or drains something, at the Curtis Cup and to win the match she was so unfazed.

It's in her DNA that she's like that. With that in mind, her being at Pebble and performing the way she did, it's really inspiring for a lot of young players, athletes, and everyone those on tour, including me.

Q. Just couple quick follows. This semester's course load, how close does that get to you a degree, and what's the degree going to be in?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, so my degree is going to be communications. Planning on finishing out my undergrad, but I think -- so I did finish two years of school already, so halfway to my graduation. Stanford has a requirement of 180 units, to 180 -- 1-8-0.

Exactly. So I finished around 90-ish units. I'm just going to keep doing the 20 units per winter quarter. Maybe take a couple online classes if I'm allowed to in other quarters.

And then potentially if I do all that, I'll graduate in '26, which is not bad at all, because my regular graduation year was '25. A lot of my friends are co-terming anyway, so all be there studying for their Masters.

Q. The LPGA this year will play for 120 plus million dollars. As a player who has spent years chasing trophies, now money is an element. Does that change anything about how you go about things or how you view just the game itself?

ROSE ZHANG: Not necessarily. I think for all players it's

a big bonus for us, you know, for the LPGA to have a lot more monetary value and everyone to have a career where they can earn a good amount. You know, it's great, but I think everyone genuinely loves the sport to keep pursuing this game.

Even when the LPGA didn't have a lot of money in events people were still playing because they just love the sport. I think that the overall transition of the LPGA growing and growing the monetary value just has risen up with it. So for us it's just we're still playing the same tournaments, still the same people. It's just nice to be a little more comfortable without having to worry a lot about the money.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Rose.

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, thank you.

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