

Meijer LPGA Classic

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Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

Blythefield Country Club

Juli Inkster

Carolina Lopez Chacarra

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, hello and welcome to the media center at the Meijer LPGA Classic for Simply Give. I'm joined by Juli Inkster and Carolina Lopez Chacarra, the 2025 recipient of the Inkster Award presented by Workday. Just so happy to have you guys in here.

Carolina, kick things to you first. How excited are you to be here this week and participating in this event.

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: I'm super excited and grateful for Juli and Workday for giving me the opportunity to be here this week and everything they do to grow women's golf. It's going to be my first like regular LPGA event, so I'm super excited for that, just to learn new things, get experience, and keep it rolling.

Q. With you receiving the Inkster Award, Carolina, talk us through that first phone call from Juli and just your emotions that you won the award.

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: Yeah, I was super excited and a little shocked. It was just amazing, everything she's giving me and everything she gives women's golf. I got a call from my head coach, Kim Lewellen, from Wake Forest. I was so happy. I was moving out from my college apartment so it was definitely a rollercoaster of emotions.

But super excited. I called my parents afterwards and they couldn't believe it. It was just super sweet, yeah.

Q. Juli, with this award, this is something very important to you and a passion project. Just share about how this award started with you and also when you called Carolina and how excited you were to give her a phone call about her winning the award?

JULI INKSTER: Yeah, that award started about seven years ago. Anne Walker from Stanford, we were talking about how kids were leaving school early to come to the LPGA. How you could have a really great shot at the

national championship and your top players leave to pursue their goal on the LPGA.

I'm a big team player, and so we just developed this award with Workday that goes to the highest rated senior that stays four years at their school, represents their teammates, represents their coach, represents their school.

Because you could be the fourth or fifth player on a really good team and you might not ever have a chance at a national championship. This might be your last run and your top players leave to go to the LPGA. They can't replace the scholarship.

So I think it's great. I enjoy it because it's more of the one-on-one. Going from college golf where everything is done for you, when to practice, how to travel, what to wear, to going to the LPGA and now you're all by yourself.

I just wanted to be there for them. I've been on the low side, the high side, I've had kids. You know, I feel like I've done it all. So there is really not a question that I can't answer.

I want them to feel comfortable that they can call me any time, ask me any questions just about traveling and how to practice and when to take a day off, take a week off.

So I really enjoy the one-on-one I get with my recipients.

Q. You also have Ingrid Lindblad Jenny Bae also here in the field. In addition to Carolina, it's like your three kids.

JULI INKSTER: Uh-huh. I'm building a little family. It's so fun. Natasha Oon has been on the injured reserve, but she's looking to come back this fall. Then Jaravee Boonchant. She's playing on the LPGA now.

First one, Natalie Srinivasan, she's getting her medical degree. She's going to be a doctor.

I just think it's cool how all these girls got here on a different path. They're all following their dream, and I just



want to help them on their journey.

Q. About that, through Workday and your foundation, Carolina's receiving \$50,000 to help with her travel expenses. How important, for both of you, is that -- Carolina, when you turn pro and start your journey, how important is that piece to kick start the journey on the LPGA Tour?

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: I think for me primarily now it's a big help for Q-School. Q school is expensive, and starting without having status on Tour, it's really hard to find sponsors or anyone that really wants to help money-wise. So that's a real relief for me personally.

I think just starting, not having to worry as much and put pressure about making cuts or worrying that much about the money part.

JULI INKSTER: Yeah, I think it's big. Everybody comes from different financial backgrounds. Being an LPGA pro you want to be independent, rely on yourself. Having that money takes a lot of pressure off them, and Workday has really stepped up and really helped me with this.

They do a great job at Memorial announcing my winner. I couldn't do it without them. I look forward to many years ahead and watching Carolina raise a trophy. I'll be a proud mama.

Q. Juli, you've had long relationship with this tournament and Cathy Cooper, so how important and great that each year this is an annual exemption to this tournament. So right after the NCAAAs, a couple weeks later, the winner will be able to play here?

JULI INKSTER: Cathy Cooper and Meijer have been a great partner. Got to know Cathy the last three years. She goes, hey, we want to do this. We want your Inkster Award, and it really rolls in great with the NCAA 2As finishing.

Carolina played in the Arnold Palmer Cup last week and now she can come in and play here, so I think she feels her game is in good shape.

It's great kick start for their career. Meijer has been -- really with Meijer and Workday, it's a nice bond. And then also Portland. They give my exemption also into the Portland tournament, too.

So I look at my career, and it's really relationships you build. I've always been a big supporter of Meijer and always come back and played this tournament. You know, those relationships can build into something that you have

a passion about. For them to make that work for me is truly a gift.

Q. Juli, you mentioned that Carolina kind of checked off all the boxes for this award. What was it about her and her leadership on the team that made you want to give her this award?

JULI INKSTER: The greatest thing about it is it goes strictly by the highest ranking on the scoreboard clip. Carolina, there was a couple neck in neck. She pulled away the last six weeks.

So it takes all the pressure off me to like -- you don't have time to do -- play golf, go school and do community service. It's two full-time jobs. I just think it's great for me that I just go to the highest ranking and I get to know them, call their coach. Kim was great.

Then we called Carolina, and that's how the relationship grows.

Q. What kind of things did Kim say about Carolina?

JULI INKSTER: She's a leader, she loves her team, playing on a team, loves team competitions. Just last week she said she had the best time playing the Arnold Palmer Cup. I'm the same way. I love Curtis Cup, Solheim Cup, even though we're on opposite sides. That's okay.

Those are the things that -- I love golf, individual golf, but team sports to me was always the most fun.

Q. Carolina, during your monster season was this award in the back of your mind, that if you finished at the top of the NCAA you could have this?

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: I knew about it. I knew it was out there and it was one my goals at the start of the season. I didn't know it was this big, two exemptions and like that amount of money. Yeah, it was definitely one of the goals I had set myself.

And, yeah, just super happy to be here today.

Q. Hello, hello, congratulations.

JULI INKSTER: You're better on mute.

Q. Here we go. We're off to a good start. Juli, I know you typically have little retreats with your winners. Is that in the books or on the books I should say? Where? When? What will you do?

JULI INKSTER: It's really up to her schedule. I usually do



it in the fall in the desert. Fly her and a friend out or her mom, we play two days, have some good dinners, talk about Tour life and anything else.

So hopefully she'll be able to do that. I kind of like to do it right before they start the LPGA or the Epson. So we go out and do some good practice and play some good golf courses out in the desert.

Q. I guess Carolina, I don't know if you have other mentors already or Tour, but curious what you're most looking forward to learning from Juli? How do you think she could help you the most?

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: I honestly think she's just going to help me with everything. I'm lucky enough to have her here. Going to treat her at my second mom basically. I don't know if she's ready for that.

Yeah, just as a guidance to get through all the new LPGA stuff and all about Tour life that I don't know yet. College golf is so nice to us and everything is given. We are super fortunate, so now I am really fortunate to have her and help me out.

JULI INKSTER: Also, Bethann, she has Kim, her coach, she can fall back on. She's got a good relationship with her. I'm just here for the golf part and the mental side of it and you're going to have highs and lows in golf. As you know, I've had them all.

So she's got a great team around her, and I'm just going to -- whatever she needs from me, that's what I'll help her with.

Q. Off topic, Scottie Scheffler said this week that Oakmont might be the toughest test I'll ever face. What kind of test did you feel it provided in '92 that you remember most?

JULI INKSTER: Bad emotions.

Q. I know. We don't have to talk about the playoff.

JULI INKSTER: You know what? It's a very tough golf course. I always thought it was a fair golf course. You know, you had to hit the ball in the right spots. It's kind of a golf course where usually you play to the front of the greens because then you have uphill chips.

At Oakmont you want to play from the pin beyond, because the back -- you're chipping back uphill. So I always thought it was kind of reverse of what we always played. I hope the USGA sets it up where they reward good shots. You want the best player to win.

Just listening to the comments, I think half the field have already said they can't play it. You already beat half the field. The USGA wants to test you mentally and physically, and I think Oakmont, as Scottie says, is one of the toughest golf courses I'll ever play.

Q. Carolina, you said you are aware of this award. Curious what you were aware of about Juli Inkster and her career before receiving this honor?

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: I think Juli has been one of our role models growing up, at least for me. So I knew who she was. I saw especially through Ingrid and Jenny Bae because they kind of closer to my age gap when I was in college and that they were also recipients of this award.

So I was aware of that just because of the girls I grew up playing college golf with. Juli, I knew how good of a golfer and person she is.

Q. You just played in --

JULI INKSTER: Keep going. (Laughter.)

Q. You just played in the U.S. Open. What did you take from that experience that can help you here this week?

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: I think the U.S. Open was eye opening for me. It gave me a lot confidence to know that I'm good enough to be on the LPGA. That was I think good for me to see.

And also it just out to me a lot of lessons and things to work on. It's different golf on Tour than college golf, so just really excited for this week as well to keep learning and growing.

Q. Any players that you're hoping to connect with or get to know out there this week?

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: Yeah, all of them honestly. I'm close to a few because I played college golf and they just recently turned pro in the last couple years. Playing with Pauline tomorrow so I'm really excited for that. Yeah, learn as much as I can from them and, yeah, very exciting.

Q. On top of having Juli as a mentor, how nice is it to have that connection with Ingrid who just won, and Jenny had an amazing performance in Mexico? What's it like to have those connections as you look to come out here hopefully?

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: Yeah, it's awesome not only because we get mentorship and help from her, but I can also reach out to two of them and ask questions because they recently came through the same path. Yeah, it's just awesome to get to know them in a deeper more personal level than just playing collegiate golf with them. Really thankful for Juli and Workday.

Q. Turning to this week, Juli been here for several years. You know about the crowds here and how the city almost shuts down for this event. Are there any, as Carolina tees it up in big crowds like that is different from team competition, NCAA competition, so any tips or advice? And Carolina, what are your expectations for this week?

JULI INKSTER: My advice is soak it all in. The more people out there, the more I wanted to play well for them. So you got to stay in your little bubble, but soak it in and enjoy the process.

As Carolina was saying, you got to know you belong out here. I think going from college golf to professional golf, you always have that kind of, okay, I was a great college player. Am I going to be a great professional player?

Her seeing herself play well last week in the Open asking right now that I know I belong out here, that's huge. We always tell everybody when you go out there, you walk with your head up. You deserve to be out here. You can play out here.

So I think with the crowds out here, which I love about it. Family affair. Kids are out here, great things for the kids to do. Great food, great drinks. I say soak it up because there is nothing better than playing in front of big crowds.

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: Yeah and my expectation, just as Juli said, is, one, to enjoy it, just to play my golf, trust myself, and learn just as much as I can to prepare for Q-School and for my future.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much. Appreciate it. Have a great week.

CAROLINA LOPEZ CHACARRA: Thank you.

JULI INKSTER: Yeah, thanks so much.