

Hanwha LIFEPLUS International Crown

Wednesday, May 3, 2023
San Francisco, California, USA
Harding Park

Nasa Hataoka

Ayaka Furue

Yuka Saso

Hinako Shibuno

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome inside the media center here at the Hanwha LIFEPLUS International Crown. Start with Nasa. You're the only person on your team to have played an International Crown before. I know the format is a little bit different this year. What are your thoughts on that?

NASA HATAOKA: Five years ago I was the youngest on the team, and I was a little nervous. This year, using the experience from the last time, I hope I can lead the team.

Q. Yuka, tell me a little bit about the dynamic of this team. You all seem to get along really well and have a lot of fun on the golf course. Do you think that's an advantage to have such good camaraderie and be such good friends?

YUKA SASO: I think we have a really good team, like I said last night at the party. Multiple LPGA winner here and major champions, and me and Nasa hit it pretty long, and obviously everyone knows Ayaka and Shibuno is a very consistent player.

We're all friends and we all get along. I think that's a good advantage to have on a team event.

I think we're really good, yeah.

Q. Hinako, what's your experience with team match play? I know that's not a format Japan gets to enjoy a lot.

HINAKO SHIBUNO: First time playing match play for me.

Q. Are you nervous about the format? Have you



asked a lot of questions on strategy and how to handle the format?

HINAKO SHIBUNO: I'm so much nervous that even think of the strategy because I'm so nervous.

Q. How much with that inexperience will you be relying on your other teammates, especially Nasa, who has some experience?

HINAKO SHIBUNO: I'm just so honored to be here and playing alongside with these girls, and I hope to play my best.

Q. Ayaka, if I remember correctly, you like match play. Played in the Bank of Hope event last year and it seemed to suit your game. What is it about match play that suits your game and why does it work as a format that you really enjoy?

AYAKA FURUE: Last year my shot was really good, and also putting was really good. But I think match play is very -- you have to think of the strategy, how you have to be aggressive at this hole or kind of conservative this hole. You have to really strategize.

Hopefully I can make that same strategy this week using the experience from last year.

Q. Nasa, what went into deciding who was going to play with who in the first few matches tomorrow?

NASA HATAOKA: Yesterday we practiced together on the practice round, and then when we turned the back nine, we kind of started talking, okay, who is going to be a good match.

I think someone hits really aggressive and then someone has to be very conservative. So I think that's a good match for us.

Q. Yuka and Nasa, you had a small match of your own at Olympic Club two years ago in a playoff for the U.S. Women's Open. What memories do you two have of that now?

NASA HATAOKA: Yeah, it brings up the memory from two years ago playing in San Francisco, just really across from

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here. Yuka played really well that week and I'm so proud of her. And Hinako is the major champion and Ayaka is win here, too, so playing alongside these girls, I'm very honored and excited for this week.

YUKA SASO: For me, I think obviously Nasa is a very good player. She's won on the LPGA many times. To have her on the team, I think you feel really relaxed. I mean, I don't want to be relaxed-relaxed, but it's good to have a player who has experience like Nasa, and obviously Ayaka and Shibuno, as well.

It's good to be back here in San Francisco. Good memories here. But yeah, it's a different golf course, even though it's just five minutes away. I think it's going to be a little bit different.

Yeah, hope to have fun, and hopefully I can help a little bit the team.

Q. Any memories in particular for you?

YUKA SASO: Here in San Francisco? Yeah, the Olympic Golf Club obviously was very special. I think they're having a little change for the course. I just saw them Monday when my caddie told me that there was some -- we can't really see the grass. I'm not sure what they're doing or anything. I can't really say.

Yeah, it's good to see even just a little bit from afar. It brings back all the good memories. It just feels good.

Q. Nasa, this is the first time Crown has returned in five years. What do you think needs to happen this week for it to be a successful event in your eyes?

NASA HATAOKA: Eight strong countries here this week, so we're all wanting to play well, but obviously America, U.S., and Korea is very strong. We all need to play well, but we all also make mistakes here and there, so hopefully we can cover the mistakes and then kind of move on and try our best.

Q. I'm talking more, Nasa, about the tournament itself. It's a team event; it's in theory on par with the Solheim Cup. To get it towards that stature of a tournament, what do you think needs to happen this week in your eyes?

NASA HATAOKA: Yeah, so a difficult question, but I think to become like a little bit upscale like a Solheim Cup -- well, I experienced going to the party last night -- not last night but at Tiffany -- and we see the crown and we really wanted to get one, so I get more excitement to win those kind of stuff.

Also like other country, like Brooke and Lydia. They cannot play in this event because they don't have the other players. So if they come to this tournament they have more people, like different kind of countries, I think it's going to get more -- I think it's going to get more evolved the tournament, and hopefully everyone can come and get together.

Q. I ran into Greg, your caddie, Nasa. He's won a lot of big tournaments over the years, and you guys have been together for a while now. Can you talk about how you work with him because of all his experience? What's that like?

NASA HATAOKA: So we've been together five years, but he's been caddying before I was born, like 35 years already, like caddying for Juli Inkster, Cristie Kerr. He has so much experience, so when I'm playing he gives me so much advice for management, like where to hit and stuff, but also other side, too. For the lifestyle he give me some advice, too.

I really like his personality. He's really nice and charm, so I really like his personality, so I wanted to win with him more tournaments moving on.

Q. I'm wondering what it is that specifically is making you so nervous?

HINAKO SHIBUNO: This is the second time playing a team event as a pro. But representing country is the first time, and with these girls it's the first time, and everything is first time. That's why I'm kind of nervous.

Q. And the match play part, yes? First time playing match play?

HINAKO SHIBUNO: First time playing match play, but I played once in Japan -- oh, sorry, no match play. First time for sure.

Q. Cool thing this week, we have numbers on the backs of our shirts, which is not something we usually do. If you could explain the significance of why you chose the number you chose for the week.

YUKA SASO: For me I think it's pretty cool because basketball players or baseball players or NFL players, they all have numbers, and golfers doesn't really have. It's good to have that feeling, and also it's a team event.

But my number doesn't really have a meaning. It's just my favorite number.

AYAKA FURUE: My birthday is 27, and also 36 is usually par, 36, and then if you make a birdie every hole, it's 27, so that's why I have 27.

Also my ball is using 27, so that's why I choose 27.

Q. Do you use 27 every week on your golf ball?

AYAKA FURUE: Yes.

NASA HATAOKA: I born in January, that's one number, and also we wanted to win, so number one. Also I choose the song, like the song name. The title is Number One, also, so that's why I choose 1.

HINAKO SHIBUNO: Just my lucky number is 8.

Q. Is there any reason it's your lucky number?

HINAKO SHIBUNO: My birthday, everything added, it's 8. If I add all my birthday, it's 8.

THE MODERATOR: Good luck, play well, and go, Japan.

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