

U.S. Women's Open

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Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA

Lancaster Country Club

Rose Zhang

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the interview area. We are joined by two-time USGA champion Rose Zhang. I know you've played this course this week. Just your initial reactions.

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, it's such a beautiful place. I love it here. The course is definitely playing difficult. There's high demand in hitting fairways, hitting greens, and around the rough it's pretty penalizing.

The greens themselves are very undulating. There's going to be a lot of lag putting, a lot of side-hill reads.

I love it. It's challenging, and it's very deserving to be a U.S. Open course.

Q. How do you feel your game is right now? You had the win and you had to WD, but what shape is your game in coming into this major?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, I think in terms of my game, I know what I need to do, and I think I've been adjusting a little bit with just the overall game, fine tuning some things in my swing.

I'm slowly going to, I guess, just commit to whatever I can when I'm out there tomorrow and the day after, and it's pretty simple from there.

But I feel like the game is definitely trending in the right direction, and regardless of the results, I think there's a lot of improvement from where my game stood before the prior two weeks.

Q. Rose, in your last outing, you and Madelene not only lapped the field, you lapped them twice. What was it about that week that separated you guys from the rest of the field, and is it something you hoped can carry forward this week?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah. Upper Montclair was also not a very easy golf course. Actually before I came into that week, my dad was telling me how 23-under won one year,

and I was telling him that it was a different golf course, the Cognizant wasn't always played there, and I didn't even see 20-under.

But apparently if you hit a lot of fairways, a lot of greens, and you make some good putts, then you can get that number up there, and that's exactly what Madelene and I were able to do. We were very consistent throughout that entire week.

I think a lot of things clicked for me. I was very committed to my game, and I had the feels in me to be able to attack pins when I needed to and make putts when I needed to.

Q. Do you watch much golf on television?

ROSE ZHANG: I do, yes. I was actually watching my teammates play in the NAAs this past week. It's safe to say I was almost shaking for them the entire time.

It was just like a little pre-celebration birthday party, and I was glued to the screen the entire time. So yes, I've been watching a lot of golf.

Q. Obviously this week there's a lot more television presence here than maybe a typical week on the LPGA. How much do players notice that, and is there some sort of change in the perception of the tournament as a result of that?

ROSE ZHANG: I think players do see a lot more presence with the media, with a lot more cameras. But these are things I think we've slowly become more accustomed to, especially when we're out there and trying to prepare and do our work.

I guess for us it's almost, I guess, better, just because there's more attention to the women's game and everyone feels more encouraged and more obligated to come out here and play their best, do their best.

I think there's a good positive side to that.

Q. I think I have this right. So the last seven times Nelly Korda was started she's not won exactly once,

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and that was the time that you won. I think a lot of people are getting sick of answering Nelly Korda questions, but even in your young career you know how difficult winning is. From the media perspective what we don't get is from your angle, describe what she's doing. What does it look like as somebody who's been there, done that, and knows how tough it is to win at that clip?

ROSE ZHANG: 100 percent. I don't know how to explain it or how to phrase it right, but what Nelly is doing is not something that anyone can do, and history tells itself. It's so hard to win one tournament out here. People spend their whole lives out here on Tour, and it's so hard to grab just that one win, just because coming down the stretch you've played four long days, you've practiced leading up to that point.

You've spent your whole life playing, coming down to the stretch and trying your best to grab the title, come out on top, but everyone else is also doing the same thing.

Being able to really grind mentally, physically, having the game and having that trust in yourself and other people around you that supported you, getting to that point and winning is already so difficult, and for her to do it, oh, my gosh, six times, it's honestly almost unheard -- it's basically unheard it.

I'm witnessing some crazy history, and it's really, really inspiring to see her out here and play. She's almost looking unfazed, and I think because she's so solidified in her prep work, she's so solidified with the people around her, and she loves the game. She's really just going out here and playing for herself.

Q. Can you learn anything from that? Do you look at it and say, I'm going to incorporate this or that?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, 100 percent. I think just watching a lot of Tour players out here, I'm always constantly learning, and Nelly is just a prime example of being able to play at her best out here and having fun while doing so. I see her composure. I see her commitment. I see how she's able to really just get things done and then get the rest that she needs.

That's something that I already knew from a while back when I was an amateur when I saw her she was super good at, and that kind of reminded me how important it is to really make sure that Tour life is a lifestyle and you have to make sure you're balancing everything, from rest to work to just enjoying.

Q. I think Lydia said a couple weeks ago at an event

that Nelly was in, it's almost like everyone is playing for second place. When you go into a tournament, especially a major, do you think, I'm going to have to be better than Nelly, or is it more about the state of your game and how you want to attack the course?

ROSE ZHANG: It's the latter. I definitely do think a little bit more about how I should play this golf course because at the end of the day Nelly is also a human being, and everyone has to consider that, too.

Even though she's not acting like a human being right now or playing like it, I think she has a lot of pressure on her, and that's why I'm saying she's so incredible, because she's able to handle all that pressure.

For all these players out here, they're kind of dealing with their own pressures on trying to play well, and everyone wants to put up good scores, especially at difficult venues like this.

It's important not to get ahead of yourself and just think, oh, I have to beat Nelly. You've got a lot more people out here who are really just as driven, as competitive and as great of players. Because to get to the U.S. Open, it doesn't just take a lucky chance. It requires a lot of years of playing and being able to practice for this moment.

I mean, Lancaster is a difficult place. It's a difficult track. I'm going to have to -- including all the other players, but prepare for that.

Q. You made a coaching change earlier in the year. Could you just speak to your relationship with Todd Anderson and how it feels to get him up from Sawgrass and have him on property this week?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, Todd is incredible. I feel really blessed to work with him now and have him as part of my team. I've always had one main coach, and it was George Pinnell back at home when I was a junior golfer to being an amateur golfer.

But now making the transition, just knowing Todd through mutual friends and then just going down to Florida on a whim, getting to work with him just that one lesson, it really gave me a lot more momentum and inspiration to work on my game and better it further.

The last couple days I've been working with him, and he's been showing me different parts of my game. I was re-learning how to chip the last two days, last three days. Right now I feel a lot more encouraged on what's ahead of me, and Todd has definitely played a huge factor in that.

Q. You were talking about seeing history, and I'm sure obviously you got to witness a lot of history with Lexi growing up, watching her on Tour. We might be seeing her last U.S. Women's Open this year. How does that feel, just seeing her as you're kind of starting your career and hers kind of going in the opposite direction?

ROSE ZHANG: Honestly, it's so amazing to really see her, and being able to watch her a little bit while playing with her -- I played with her at The Match; we were teammates at Solheim Cup.

Lexi is so big, so strong, and she's so dedicated to her game, and she came out from a young age. For her to really come around and, I guess, say that this is her final year, yes, it's bittersweet for all the players out here, all the fans, but I'm super excited for her. I think she has so much to offer.

She's already dedicated so much of her time as a professional golfer, but now she can do whatever she wants, and honestly probably succeed in that, too.

I couldn't be happier for her. She seems a lot more free. She'll just, I guess, live life a little bit more, which I'm excited to see her do.

I came out as a junior golfer, and I watched her at the ANA Inspiration. I was even volunteering that week, and just watching her and seeing her putt on the putting green and hit balls, there's not a lot of people who are athletes like her. It's incredible what she's done.

Q. As a professional golfer you play a lot of really, really hard golf courses. What makes Lancaster challenging? And then if you have a most interesting hole that you've seen out here this week, what is it?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, I'd say all difficult golf courses have their own little knacks and characteristics. I think Lancaster specifically, it's tight in the fairways, rough gets thick. I don't know if the USGA is going to cut the rough any more, so it's probably going to get thicker.

At the same time, a lot of hills, a lot of undulation. Then you've got the actual greens, which are quite firm, rolling very true but also very quick. Those downhill putts can get away from you very quickly.

You're going to have to really just put on, I guess, the best performance in your course management as well as your physical game, from the short game to the long game.

I guess some holes in particular, 12 is actually very difficult,

especially if the wind picks up in the afternoon. Just making sure you're landing it on the green. You don't really know how much it's going to release. That hole definitely plays a little bit more difficult.

I've had some interesting things happen on 18, so for me I think even though it's a very straightforward straight shot from tee to green, it's still a very difficult hole with the distance. And you're going to have some woods in, hybrids in; for longer hitters, irons.

But I think those two holes in particular have definitely reached my mind.

Q. We talk about obviously the U.S. Open is probably the most complete test, but who's going to win this tournament, the person who putts the best, the person who drives it the best, hits it the best or hits the best approach shots? What's it going to be do you think?

ROSE ZHANG: Hmm. I'd say for this golf course in particular, whoever has the best long game and gets it to the hole or gets it to the right side on approach shots and then is able to have good lag putting.

I mean, yes, it's very, I guess, broad for a lot of difficult golf courses, but especially at U.S. Open venues like this, if you're able to play the ball tee to green really well and better than a lot of other players in the field, you are setting yourself up for a lot more easier putts, a lot more opportunities for birdie, et cetera.

Q. You're a pro golfer. Every time you tee it up you want to win, but how badly do you want to win this one?

ROSE ZHANG: Definitely I want to win this one pretty badly. I love just coming to the U.S. Open, and I've played in a couple as an amateur. I was able to play my first U.S. Open last year as a pro, and now it's kind of -- I guess for me, just being able to be at the U.S. Open and seeing all these players out here. It's one of the most prestigious fields, most prestigious golf tournaments that the women's game can play. I guess it's definitely up there.

No one wants to lose, but I think overall, I just really want to perform well.

Q. You said you were re-learning how to chip. What do you mean by that?

ROSE ZHANG: I mean that I've been having some interesting pitching, chipping issues, I guess. Upper Montclair didn't really show it too much just because I was able to hit a lot of greens.

But I guess I've always -- I think I've lacked a little bit of confidence in the beginning of the year from my wedge game. But being able to work a little bit and fine tune the impact, the way I should hit the golf ball, I've kind of started from baseline fundamental day one kind of and worked my way up.

It was just a little bit of a re-learning process for me on how to feel again with my short wedges.

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