

AIG Women's Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 8 August 2023

Rose Zhang



ED HODGE: Delighted to be joined by Rose Zhang in the Media Centre. I think we'll go to questions straightaway.

Q. Congratulations, everything you've done, very exciting following your progress. Now, you've moved from university to the LPGA Tour. It's very different socially from university, isn't it, not lots of nice boys around. So do you miss that it's a different environment altogether?

ROSE ZHANG: I would say I don't miss it at all because I know in the winter I'll be going back to the beautiful campus and seeing my friends and being in that environment of going to class and hanging out with the team.

So that's not something that I think that I'm lacking, but it is different out here. I will say that I don't feel as lonely, though, as a lot of people have talked to me or mentioned to me about just because I have friends who I played with from junior golf and we have created a bond, so now that I see them on tour, it's kind of like a catch-up session, and I've been enjoying my time really well out here.

Q. So did you say you're going back to classes at the end of this?

ROSE ZHANG: Yes, I'll be going back to class in January. So I'll be back on campus and I'll be stacking up classes in the winter quarter. Potentially taking some classes in the spring quarter, and then continuing on to continue playing golf and playing on tour.

Q. Will you do as Michelle Wie did and end up with a degree just by going back from time to time?

ROSE ZHANG: Exactly. It's essentially what Michelle did. Both of us kind of talked about it before and that's how she gave me such great advice on what I want to do in my future. I'm definitely inspired by her, with her abilities to both finish her academics as well as play professional golf, and it was certainly something that I was a little bit iffy about.

But she told me it was totally doable which encouraged me

to continue down that path, too. And we both major in communications, so basically when I was talking to my counselors, they pulled up her transcript for me to see what classes she took which is really fun top kind of see how someone else did this, and was successful in doing so.

Q. And did she tell you how she got on the front of the local magazine in Stanford --

ROSE ZHANG: She did not tell me that.

Q. Briefly, I'll tell you why, she was saying how people could get fitter, and she said give everybody a smaller plate so that you don't put so much on your plate, and she wrote about 800 words on it I think and it went down very well.

ROSE ZHANG: Oh, wow.

Q. You played some practise rounds. What do you find most interesting compared to the previous other courses you have played, and any specific reminder of any particular field?

ROSE ZHANG: Certainly. Well, I knew that Walton Heath when I first came here, and when I first heard about it, it wasn't really a links-style golf course. When I was out here, it definitely was different from the previous British Opens that I've played, Muirfield and Carnoustie, those are very traditional links-style golf courses.

So when I came out here, I was well aware of the heather. The heather is beautiful but it's terrible to be in. Not somewhere you want to be this week. And I will say that I believe the course is beautiful. It's playing a little bit softer. Just because there's so much rain. I heard Friday, Saturday, it was a downpour in the UK.

So the whole golf course is a little bit wet, but I think if the golf course continues to be wet, there's bog to be really good players who are going to score low scores.

Q. You know that several previous AIG Women's Opens, you have played, compared to now, you are a pro; what's the difference you feel participating in a really good form right now?



ROSE ZHANG: It's pretty crazy just because last year I played here as an amateur, and I was kind of just understanding what it felt like to play in the British Open as a high, top-level amateur player.

But now that I'm a professional, I believe it still feels the same. It's just a different status that I have now. A lot has happened in the past year, and I've been very grateful for those experiences.

But when you're out there on the golf course and you're playing difficult courses like this, you're going to have to be able to put golf in front of you and be sure to make sure that you're technically trying to get the ball in the hole.

Q. You obviously have a lot of Chinese fans, and now China has opened up and it's been announced that Buick LPGA will be playing. Will you be looking at that and will you be going to China any time soon?

ROSE ZHANG: Yes, I'm very much looking forward to playing in the Asia Swing. I know that Shanghai is starting out, so I'll definitely be there, and that's certainly on my schedule.

I'm very grateful for all the fans that are in China, and back in southern California, a lot of my family and friends want to go over to China to watch and support. It's been a really nice welcoming for me.

I haven't been back in China since I was five, so 2008. So going back will bring back a lot of good memories, and I'll be able to learn more culturally.

Q. You had a Top-10 finish in every major you've played in so far this year. Can you just tell us some of the keys to maybe your major success?

ROSE ZHANG: I would just say that I think in the majors that I've played in so far this year, it's been pretty incredible to just be able to compete as a professional.

Last year and the last couple years, I've been able to have somewhat of an experience as an amateur in playing these major championships. And I knew how hard and how grueling every single week is, so taking that into consideration, making sure I'm preparing my body and making sure that I'm going out there and having a really good strategy has allowed me to commit to my game when I'm out there playing. No doubt, it's really hard to be out there, and you know that it's a big event, but keeping yourself in composure and in your stride is something that I've done well in the last three events.

Q. Do you find at majors you're maybe a little more --

there's a little more pressure on major weeks, but with your past finishes, do you maybe have more confidence and less pressure going into the last major of the year?

ROSE ZHANG: In my opinion, I know that major championships are weighed very heavily, and very much, so these are weeks that all players want to play well in. But treating it as a regular event and treating yourself as just a player going out on a difficult golf course and learning how to navigate the conditions and how the course is playing, is very important for any player to be successful during that week.

So there's a lot of pressure. There's a lot of mental toughness that you have to go through, and just learning how to be aware of that allows you to play well.

Q. With three consecutive top 10s in majors, how much do they impact your ambitions and targets for this week?

ROSE ZHANG: I would say they haven't really -- they haven't really made huge impact in what I want to accomplish this week. Ideally making the cut is the first thing that I want to do. And I'm just really lucky to in the last couple of events, I was able to have those opportunities to play and be somewhat in the mix.

But I know that my game is there. I know that I have the mental grit to be able to compete well on these difficult golf courses, so going into this major week, it's all the same, and it's the same kind of drive that I had in the previous.

Q. I'm not sure if you've seen your group yet for rounds one and two, but you're with Brooke Henderson and Ashleigh Buhai. How fun is it for you to be paired with the defending champion?

ROSE ZHANG: It's so cool. I actually remember playing with Ashley in my first ever U.S. Open, and that's back in 2018, I believe. So I just remember her being the nicest person ever, and she would always say "hi."

I watched her last year at Muirfield in the playoff holes she played against Ingee, and it was incredible to see how amazing their short game, their approach shots were, especially on that difficult 18th hole. So I'm really excited to be able to tee it up with her.

And Brooke, as always, she's just such an inspiration to those around her and one of the nicest players, as well. I'm really excited to tee it up with them.

Q. On the practise ground in college days, was there a



lot of chatter, and does that change out here? They all look like they work incredibly hard.

ROSE ZHANG: Can you repeat that?

Q. Chatter. Talking to each other at college on the practise ground.

ROSE ZHANG: Oh, chatter.

Q. Was it quite a chatty place and less so here where they all seem to be very, very serious?

ROSE ZHANG: Actually, no. I think that there's certain times and places where you can chatter a lot, and you can have fun with the team. But when we are all kind of practising and getting ready for events, we all stay very driven.

It's still a pretty competitive environment but we all have a good time with each other and talk here and there. I see the same thing when I'm out here.

Obviously not everyone's super close just because there's certain groups, certain people that are more so friends than others, which is very normal out here. But I don't see -- I mean, it is a professional sport now once you're out here on tour, so if there's less chatter, there's less chatter. But I actually see a lot of friendly environments on the range and in the players' lounge, etc.

Q. Obviously you did win the Smyth Salver last year. I think there's ten amateurs in the field. What advice would you give to them?

ROSE ZHANG: Well, it hasn't been too long since I was an amateur, but like myself, or giving that advice to myself included and to those amateurs out there, just learning to enjoy every single moment when you're out here putts a lot of things into perspective, and regardless of how you play, knowing that you put your all in, knowing that you committed to every single shot, that's the biggest thing when you're playing out here on a major championship, especially in the British Open.

So not thinking a lot about your score but more thinking about the process is something that I encourage everyone to do.

Q. Do you have any experience in other Sandbelt courses, Pinehurst, Melbourne, Australia, places like that, and this is the first time you've played in England?

ROSE ZHANG: This is not the first time I've played in

England. I believe -- actually it might be. Yeah, I think this is my first time playing in England a lot on the previous events. Gleneagles, Carnoustie; I guess this is my first time and my first time seeing heather. It's definitely a new little obstacle for me looking at the golf course.

Q. How are you judging the lie? Are you practising quite a lot or are you just trying to avoid it?

ROSE ZHANG: Ideally, I've been trying to avoid it. But I've hit a couple shots out of there. The most you can do is pretty much punch out. It will have to be an insanely good lie in order for you to see slightly go for the green.

So it's more so just taking a wedge and whacking it out of there.

ED HODGE: Can I just ask how different it feels coming back this year compared to last year, amateur to pro?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, it feels a lot more different just because even though I'm the same, somewhat, player, there's been a lot of experiences in the last few months that have changed a lot for my life. But I would say that last year as an amateur, there weren't -- I guess I was just kind of having fun and figuring out how I could compete with these professionals.

But now that I've been playing a couple of events with everyone out here and playing against the best in the world, I have realised that I've been able to compete. It's just a matter of how execute every single shot and how I am able to perform.

But yeah, I would say I've enjoyed both, just different stages in life, and I'm in another one this year.

ED HODGE: Thanks for your time and have a great week.

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