

KPMG Women's PGA Championship

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Springfield, New Jersey, USA

Baltusrol Golf Club

Rose Zhang

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the KPMG Women's PGA Championship. Pleased to be joined by Rose Zhang. It's been a few weeks since your win at the Mizuho Americas Open. What have you been up to since then and how much are you looking forward to this event.

ROSE ZHANG: It's been pretty hectic. Once I went back on campus, I had to get ready for finals. I studied at night with my friends, and we were all in the struggle bus together.

But once we had that over with, I moved out on the 13th, and basically the 14th I drove back down with my parents to go back home to Irvine for a little bit. Spent three days with family, with a couple friends, and it was just a very wholesome time for me.

Yeah, it's been a whirlwind for sure with everything happening, but I've been enjoying every moment.

Q. What have the media requests been like since your win?

ROSE ZHANG: It's been quite a lot, to be fair. I definitely did not expect a lot of frenzy to occur over my last win. I expected people to know. I expected people to be just super happy about it, but I never thought that media would also be like all over it, as well.

It was definitely a lot more than I expected, but I've been doing quite a few press interviews, press conferences.

Q. When you got back on campus, were you treated any differently? Did more people recognize you? What was that like?

ROSE ZHANG: Somewhat but not really. I feel like I've said this before in interviews, but Stanford truly is an amazing place where I can just be myself and be my own person.



Once I got back on campus, all my friends were like, yo, congrats. After that we spent time just talking about random things and how they have been surviving campus life.

And it's spring quarter, so it's a lot more fun than any other quarters. The weather is great and people are outside fountain hopping, et cetera. They've been sharing a lot of stories with me, and I've just enjoyed listening to what they are living through and campus life.

Q. When we spoke before Mizuho you were saying you knew there was a transition but you weren't going to handle it any differently. Now coming into a major and coming off a win, is your mindset any different?

ROSE ZHANG: No, I don't think it's any different. I feel like if anything, I've played major championships before as an amateur, and with that amateur status, I kept in mind, hey, I'm just going to go out here, have a learning experience, and it's been turning out well for me.

I've played well in the major championships that I've competed in, but if anything, this week isn't necessarily anything different. I would compare this week to other weeks, whether it's in college golf or even last week at Mizuho. The golf course is much more difficult. The way that the course is laid out is a lot more of a tester for all the players out here this week.

With that in mind, it's just the venue is going to be a lot more hard for us to play. We're going to have to grind through every single shot. It takes a lot more precision, a lot more grind within us to be able to execute what we need to when we're out here performing and playing. That's all I'm thinking about.

Q. No additional excitement or pressure coming in as a pro, though, to your first major?

ROSE ZHANG: I mean, it's super exciting, no doubt. But I wouldn't say it's anything different. I wouldn't place it on another platform or pedestal for me to just admire and look up to.



It's another event. I'm still playing the same sport. I'm just in New Jersey again and trying to play well.

Q. You've handled the whirlwind beautifully; what has been the biggest adjustment for you?

ROSE ZHANG: Biggest adjustment, I will say that I haven't been able to work on my game as much as I was able to before as an amateur. There's a lot more obligations that you have to do as a professional. You have a lot more press interviews, conferences, and it does take a lot out of you and a lot out of your time and energy. Therefore I haven't been able to grind like I usually have been.

I feel like as an amateur, you take it for granted where you can just be out on the range, no one is talking to you. You can hit balls for like four hours. You can chip, putt, do whatever you need to.

But I can't really do that anymore. That will definitely take a bit of adjusting just because when your game isn't as solid and when you've been playing a lot of events, going on the golf course, your game adjusts to the different weather conditions, how you're playing golf courses, and yeah, I think that will be the biggest transition for me.

Q. How valuable is the affirmation that the win gives you, especially when you're coming straight into a major on such a difficult golf course?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, I think it's so valuable. I definitely did not expect myself to be in that position at all going into Mizuho and that entire week.

But the fact that -- it was more just validation for myself to say that, hey, I can compete at the highest level, and as long as I do what I need to, as long as I perform as well as I can, I'll be able to be in contention week in and week out.

Ideally the LPGA life is the dream life where you can come out here, play the sport as your profession, and just have a good time with friends out on Tour.

It's just really cool to see how I was able to just go right into it and start out my career.

Q. The challenge of dealing with all the noise that that has generated, obviously you've touched on that, but is it a challenge that you relish?

ROSE ZHANG: Definitely. I think it's a great challenge. No matter what, I've been taught to never give up and always face your challenges, regardless of what happens. As long as you try, as long as you do your best to complete

your responsibilities or do what you need to do, that's kind of just how you should live life. Even if you don't succeed, even if you don't play well, whatever, it's always going to be all right. There's always going to be up trends that you can have and you can work to improve for the better.

Even with the bunch of interview requests and all the commotion happening, I've just been taking it in my stride, and I'm taking it all in.

Q. What was the toughest final?

ROSE ZHANG: Oh, toughest final. Definitely my computer science final, my CS 106A. That entire class has been quite difficult.

But I'm super thankful I've had friends who are CS majors, and we've grown close over the last couple quarters. They've been really pivotal in helping me pass that class.

Q. Was it hard to care about a CS final after you've won an LPGA event?

ROSE ZHANG: 100 percent. Once I came back, I just felt all the -- I don't know, I was stressed about it, but at the same time, I wasn't stressed because I honestly couldn't care at that point about what my grades were.

As long as I passed the class, as long as I completed what I needed to, I was pretty much done with sophomore year.

Q. If you can reflect how much your life has changed. I know golf is the same, I know interviews are more happening, but how has your life really changed in the last three weeks?

ROSE ZHANG: My life. Hmm. I feel like it's crazy to say that other than all the additional press interviews and all the extra attention, my life hasn't really changed as drastically as everyone may think. It's just super busy, obviously, and there's a lot more happening.

With the people around me, they haven't really changed, and I appreciate that because they are a sense of like normalcy when I'm around them, especially back home. My family, my mom, my brother and my sister-in-law, I was playing with my niece in the last three days that I was at home. Obviously my niece is two and a half.

She's not going to know that I won a tournament or she doesn't even know that I play golf. It's more I go back home and everything is just very relaxed, and I have a good time.

Q. If you could chat a little bit about the media Tour

and then kind of a two-parter question, what was it like to be on that media tour, meeting people like Al Roker? Has there been anyone that's reached out to you that you were a little fan girl or a little shocked by?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, there's been plenty of people that I've been shocked by and super happy that they reached out. One of my, I guess, sports role models and role models in general, Steph Curry, he even kind of put me on his story and just congratulating me.

There were so many people out there who really reached out and gave their support to me, which I appreciated so much. And yeah, it really inspired me to -- later on if I'm doing well, regardless of what happens, I want to be out there and spreading positivity and encouragement to anyone who's doing well, regardless of how old they are or what they might do.

Q. What was the reaction to the Steph story? Did you just scream at your phone or --

ROSE ZHANG: I'm not a screamer, I would say. I was just like -- I couldn't really talk. I was just like, oh, wow. Like I had to look at it, I had to look at the story for a couple seconds before I actually gathered my thoughts, and then usually it would also be my other friends texting me that someone notable sent like a story with me, so I was just reading the texts before I actually saw the stories.

It was just like a, oh, wow. You just keep looking at your DMs and you're just amazed by how encouraging they are.

Q. Could you kind of take us through when you arrived, how many holes you've played each day, what you find to be the biggest challenge of this golf course?

ROSE ZHANG: Mm-hmm. Well, I came in Sunday, Sunday night. I stayed at a family friend's place. They live around two miles away. Basically Monday I started my actual practice. I played nine, played the front nine. Then went back, rested.

Then the next day I had the pro-am, so I had a very early pro-am starting time. Started at 7:40, played 18, got some practice in, went to the range, went to go putt.

Then I rested from there. Went to go see some friends for dinner.

Then today I came a little later, right around 9:00, and then played with my friend Lucy. We played nine together, the back nine.

That's about it. Now I'm here.

I would say this golf course is very difficult. It's definitely a major championship type of golf course. I expected nothing less from it. The rough is high. Greens are firm and very quick. There's a lot of undulation, so you're going to have to be able to play the ball where you need to when you're hitting into approach shots.

Even if you hit a really good shot and you're on the wrong side of the hole, it's going to trickle down into a rough patch or it will trickle down to the lowest part of the green. So you're going to have to be able to get your lag putts in, understand how to, I guess, how to use slopes to your advantage.

I feel like green reading here is also especially difficult. There's a lot of just hidden breaks. Sometimes I would putt like a 30-footer and I'll probably about six feet off on the other side of the hole, and I would be super confused.

That's what I've been doing in practice rounds is just trying to get a feel for what the greens are doing. Rough is super thick, like I said. The chips are -- the chipping techniques that I've been using this week are definitely different from any other chipping techniques that I've been using.

Once you're in the rough, that's kind of a lay up and try to minimize your big numbers. Fairways, greens, all typical, and the course is long this week.

I know rain is coming in and whatnot. That will definitely play another challenge.

I think it's a great golf course, traditional, and yeah.

Q. You said you got a little out of your game because of the commitments and you couldn't bang balls for four hours. Was that because of commercial things, or was that just because of the hoopla surrounding your first win? And do you intend to get back to what you used to do?

ROSE ZHANG: For sure. There's a lot there. I would say commitments are definitely much more prominent in my life. As a professional, you have to do a lot more things, and you're essentially your own business boss, so you have to really navigate towards what your career looks like, what your team looks like.

I've been taking a lot more, I guess, quote-unquote, business phone calls than I was when I was a college athlete, college amateur.

Also, at the same time, I've been playing a lot. Ever since

this year's Pac-12s back at school, we played Pac-12s, came back for a little bit, and then immediately went to regionals, nationals, and then I played Mizuho.

It's been a long stretch of golf, so my body has been tired. It's been a little burned out. I've been trying to navigate that, as well.

Just understanding what rest I need and how to take care of whatever I need to, all of that kind of funnels to how I should use my time, and practice isn't necessarily top priority at that point.

But in the coming weeks, I'll definitely plan on trying to get back in the game. But I think all it needs is some fine tuning, and we should be okay. But we'll see.

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