

# Meijer LPGA Classic

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

Blythefield Country Club

## Natasha Andrea Oon

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are here in the press room at the Meijer LPGA Classic for Simply Give with sponsor's exemption Natasha Andrea Oon. You got in here because you won this kind of big deal award, the 2022 Juli Inkster Award. You were selected just recently as the award winner, and we have a special guest on Zoom with us today that I think would like to congratulate you.

JULI INKSTER: Hey, Natasha. This is your favorite LPGA player. No, I'm really excited for Natasha. You know, she's had a great career at San Jose State, my alma mater, and for someone to win the Inkster Award from my alma mater is special.

I do want thank Meijer for giving her the opportunity to come out and start her career. You know, workday also, who helps sponsor this tournament, and then Outlyr who is helping run the tournament.

Really without those three people we wouldn't be able to do this award. Very passionate about it. I love kids to honor their commitment to their school and teammates and coaches and Natasha came over here from Malaysia at 16 and went to school and graduated in three years and is doing her masters program.

But I've seen her grow from being a freshman to being a senior, and not only personally, not only mentally, but physically, too. Her game has really gone to top notch, her finishing third in the collegiates program. So I know she's excited to be here and I know she's really excited to start her professional career.

So hopefully I can -- I've got this thing in Boston, and hopefully I can get there Friday and Saturday and watch you play a little golf.

**Q. What does it mean to not only win this award, to be talking to somebody like Juli that's had such a storied career on the LPGA Tour?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: I think like Juli has always been like my idol, because whenever I went to -- well, even

before I went to San Jose State I talked to Juli in the U.S. Girls Junior in Missouri. Do you remember that?

JULI INKSTER: Yeah, I remember that. Yeah.

NATASHA ANDREA OON: I was like, I'm going to San Jose State and you're like, yeah, they need you. (Laughter.) It was so funny. So I always wanted to follow in her footsteps and just winning her award -- and I was on her scholarship at San Jose State, too, so obviously she's done a lot for San Jose State and women's golf in general.

So just talking to her and her mentoring me is just meaning the world to me. I'm always growing and learning every day, and just to get to learn from the best in women's golf is just amazing. I'm a very, very lucky woman for sure.

**Q. For those that don't know, the Juli Inkster Award not only do you get a \$50,000 check to help get your career started, you also get to spend two days with Juli and pick her brain. What are you planning to talk to her about and what have you already asked her?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: I have spent some time with Juli since we were both in San Jose. She's kind of in Los Altos, which is a course that San Jose State goes to a lot. So I've seen her in the facility, seen her on the putting green.

I remember I had a putting match with her one time and we were -- it was like a war obviously, so her husband, Brad Inkster was my coach for short game, so definitely been around her for a bit even before this award.

Now that I get to spend more time with her and picking her brain, I think I'm just out here right now learning so much, so I think I have a clear idea of what I want to know from her, which is like how to conserve your energy, like what is it like -- do you change your clubs every week, how do pros keep it in tip-top shape.

Because this is a really eye-opening experience for me, and also she lent me her caddie, Ralph, which is such a great thing, and Ralph is such an amazing caddie, too. I'm asking him course management stuff, which I thought I



would know being in college, but then there is just some things out there that, okay, cool, I didn't know I should do that.

Like there is just a hole, I forgot, but, it's like what if it's in the back? Let me try some chips from the back. He was like, no, let's not even go there. You're not even going to go there. It's like, let's keep it there.

Just a lot of things. So I think more course management, how to handle pro life, and just how to go into each week, because you're not going to hit it perfect all the time for sure.

**Q. With the award you were given an exemption in the Meijer LPGA Classic for Simply Give, as well as the Portland Classic in the fall. Let's talk about making your professional debut this week and just how excited are you to be here at Meijer, at Blythfield, a place the LPGA has been for eight years in first start as a pro?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: Yeah, this is like I think my third LPGA tournament, but I feel like as a pro it's just so different than an amateur.

Definitely I had Kelly Tan, a fellow Malaysian, and she's been out here for a while and really took me under her wing and just taught me a lot.

Just making my pro debut at an LPGA tournament is something not a lot of people get to say that. Very, very cool experience for sure. I think I'm just trying to get comfortable out here.

It's such a change for me, especially coming off Nationals and then I had (indiscernible), then I had to go to Ohio.

I'm just getting used to it. I'm just trying to also keep myself just grounded and just remember that this is just golf at the end of the day. It's just a different level.

**Q. You spent four years in college. That's not always a thing that young women do with professional aspirations. How much do you think spending all four years collegiately and taking all four years has helped you prepare for this moment?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: I think you just grow so much as a person in college for sure. I've definitely learned a lot under Coach Pat, Coach Dana, and Coach Kortnie, my three coaches. Coach Pat was my assistant coach freshman year, Coach Dana has been there all four years.

You definitely just get used to the grind life, like 36 holes

one day, carrying your own bag, no caddie. Like you can't even hit more than one ball on the green, or like if you don't get in the green you just can hit another one, but like you only get to hit one ball, and if you get it on the green that's it.

You just got to go with it. There is no time to stop. Just got to go, go, go. Sometimes you can and just remind yourself like this is all golf, like you love this. It's just something -- the schedule is just so much.

I feel like being with such a busy schedule and these girls being out here every week, it's just preparing me for the professional life.

Yeah, like Kelly out there, she's just saying I'm going to go back home, and you don't really get to do that at all in college at all. No, no. So definitely just going at 100 all the time and just looking at how professionals conserve energy here, yeah, for sure, I think I'm just getting used to toning it down for sure.

**Q. You talked about playing with Kelly Tan. What were some of the things that you either asked her or the advice she was giving you as you get your feet wet and get started on this journey?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: So Kelly just -- out there in the practice round she was like mentoring me like 100%. She was just looking over me. I asked her, how is it out there? How do you keep yourself consistent and the mentality?

I was just looking at the two girls out there, which was also Casey Danielson. I was like, gosh they're so good, they're hitting everything so straight.

And then Kelly just was like, you have to believe you're that good, too. If you want to be out here, you have to believe you can be out here. It's just golf. You've done this all your life. We're no different.

I was like, oh, my gosh. Okay. And then I was like I took everyone seriously and it's like, okay, let's stop being a spectator and get the practice round down. Just taught me a lot in terms of course management, and she saw me hit some shots, she's like, that's fine, that's fine. You can hit that for sure.

Yeah, a lot of little things here and there made up a lot for me, uh-huh.

**Q. How much do you look up to her also being from Malaysia?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: It's hard being in an

(indiscernible - background interference) go out there. Like I saw how she -- her professional journey for sure. I think she had to go back to Q-School and now she's doing super well, so I look up to her like a ton, because she's made the impossible possible kind of thing.

**Q. Let's talk about the golf course. What did you see in the golf course today that you liked? Is it a place that you feel comfortable or did you have to kind of figure some things out?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: It's definitely like a Michigan-style golf course. I kind of went to some regionals two weeks ago in University of Michigan -- not two weeks ago. I think it's like May or April, somewhere in there.

I played in Ann Arbor at it has and it's definitely got that type of feel, so I'm more comfortable because of that for sure. I love the course. It's in tip-top condition.

As a golfer you get to play in all these kind of conditions, and seeing how the course is consistent in every hole and like the green speed is just consistent, you're like, wow, this is amazing.

So definitely looking forward to enjoying being out there on the golf course. And just the grass is thick, too, for the rough, for sure, for sure going to be a challenge out there, but I'm really excited.

**Q. Spend a lot of time in California. This is a style that you don't get to play that often. How much experience do you have with that kind of golf course? And from that previous experience, what have you learned that you will carry with you?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: I think it's not usual for sure in California. There is a lot of like trees for sure, more than California. I feel like California is just kind of wide open, a little hilly like that.

So I think Chevron, when I played in Mission Hills they have the rough really thick, so that just kind of taught me how to play in the rough. So that's just kind of what I'm basing it off on.

Yeah, just a lot of just getting use to it for these two days, and I think as a golfer you just kind of have to adapt to these conditions even if you're not used to it for sure. Yeah, uh-huh.

**Q. And you just mentioned you played in The Chevron Championship. Obviously played a few events as an amateur; what's hitting different for you coming out**

**here as a professional?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: Definitely I feel like more pressure for sure, but I feel like that's pressure from myself, especially I feel like everybody has got expectations for themselves out here, and I just want to be like, oh, let's do well, but I feel like that's not the focus.

I feel like the focus is just trusting the process and seeing how do you and just moving forward whatever happens.

What's hitting different this week is just -- I mean, for some reason I'm more familiar with a lot more people here. I just know a lot of these people from college golf. Some of them turned pro really quickly. I'm just saying hi to all these people.

It's just I feel like I just took it more seriously now. Before it was just like, oh, I'm trying my best. Now it's like, okay. Let's do the job. I've been out there getting fitted, getting more tips from my caddie.

Yeah, and then before also it was like my coach was my caddie, but now it's like a real tour caddie, so I'm kind of excited, yeah, for sure.

**Q. Is there anybody that you have seen this week that you may not know super well that you've been like, oh, my gosh?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: Everyone, everyone. (Smiling.) I'm like, mom, mom, look, look. Yeah, there is like Muni Hee, Nelly Korda, there is Sung Young park. Yeah, everyone. Oh, my God, I see them all the time, yeah.

**Q. For little Natasha I'm sure that's just been cool to be out here with golfers you watched for all those years.**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: Yeah, for sure, 100%. I wonder how they feel looking at themselves on TV all the time. I was like, oh, my gosh, they're literally there. So, yeah, for sure, like definitely star struck, yeah.

**Q. Where are some of your goals for this week? First event as a pro. What are some of your big goals?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: I think I just want to really enjoy it. I feel like people coming out, they just put so much on themselves, and I'm not saying that I don't, I probably do, but I just want to tone down all the pressure and just enjoy it, trust the process, and just learn really from this experience, especially from today.

I just realized there is still so much for me to learn, even though I think I'm at that level. So I just want to learn, like really reel it in and take a moment to look at everything, where my journey has brought me here and just realize that I worked a lot for this and just enjoy the week for sure. That's my goal.

**Q. What are you most looking forward to?**

NATASHA ANDREA OON: I don't know. Just teeing it off and just playing. Probably saying hi to spectators. I love the 18th hole. Like when you hit and they're just cheering and stuff, yeah, I love that. That's what I'm really looking forward to is spectators, yeah.

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