

# Meijer LPGA Classic

Wednesday, June 14, 2023

Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA

Blythefield Country Club

## Paige Crawford

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome inside the online and in-person media center here at the Meijer LPGA Classic for Simply Give.

I will just kick things off. Welcome back to the LPGA Tour, Paige. Being able to have this exemption, I just want you to walk me through what the final day to the John Shippen Invitational was like for you.

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Yeah, so going in I was 3-down against Anita, and making the turn I was 4-down. She was playing so well. I was pretty consistent but she was on fire, so I was just like, you know, it's her day.

So I was just staying patient, enjoying the round, and she started bogeying here and there and it started kind of turning a bit. At the end I had no idea where we were, and so I asked my caddie, like, where are we? Are we tied? What's happening? She was like, I think you're tied. She was like, you have to make this putt to win. I was like, okay, I'll do it. I'll try and make it.

And sure enough, I made the putt to win.

THE MODERATOR: That's exciting. It's also quite exciting on the final hole having that putt in front of you. Did you think about your experience at Cognizant Founders Cup or even during the Cognizant Cup that John Shippen also sponsored as you were coming up that back nine?

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Yeah, honestly, no, I wasn't. I was just staying patient. I was just focusing on hitting the ball as close as I could. I was really hitting my approach shots close and making some putts.

I was just having fun playing with Anita. She was a really cool person, competitor. I really enjoyed our round together.

THE MODERATOR: We learned a lot about you at the Cognizant Founders Cup, a lot about your story and what you are trying to accomplish with your journey here. What did you take from your first LPGA Tour appearance in

Jersey?

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Yeah, there was a lot to take away. Just learning the ropes on the LPGA. It's so different from playing mini tour events by far.

Honestly, just keep playing, just keep learning. Working on the short game I think is very key definitely. They're really good at short game out here.

And just playing a really nice course is really nice. I just enjoyed the week so much. It was an amazing experience and I will never forget about it.

THE MODERATOR: Was there a certain highlight from your week at Founders Cup that sticks in your head? Did you meet or talk to someone that changed your perspective?

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Yeah, there was a lot of highlights. I would say first off, birdieing my first hole, which is really cool.

Then the nerves kind of came in.

Then birdieing my last hole. Same club, 48 degree; I stuck them both.

Then also Stacy Lewis, she saw my press conference and came up to me and talked to me for a little bit, which was really, really nice.

Lexi Thompson, met her a few times at the U.S. Open in 2011 in Colorado Springs, so she sort of remembered me and she was really nice.

There was a lot of highlights.

And also meeting Babe Zaharias' niece. She's really cool. She lives not too far from me in Colorado Springs; she lives in Pueblo, so...

THE MODERATOR: What a time for you, and now to be here at another LPGA Tour event. You not only get an exemption into this week, but then looking ahead to the



Dow event also in Michigan.

Just what does the John Shippen and these opportunities you've been able to earn mean to you?

PAIGE CRAWFORD: John Shippen, these opportunities are amazing. I'm so grateful for the John Shippen. They are my favorite tournaments. I appreciate them getting Black girls out here to play golf, exposing us to the top level, playing really nice courses, getting these sponsor exemptions. I'm glad that the Meijer gave a sponsor exemption to the John Shippen.

It's an amazing experience. It's life changing for us. We don't get these opportunities often, and so I'm just so grateful for them. This never would've happened without the John Shippen.

**Q. Starting there, as somebody who maybe has younger girls that will look up to you and see you playing this week, especially as a woman of color, what does it mean to be a role model for them a little bit? Not putting pressure on you, but just saying there is a space for women of color in golf.**

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Yeah, I definitely think there is a space and it's going to keep growing for us. We're going to see more and more women of color playing golf now I think. We're breaking barriers and getting more opportunities, so it's just really exciting.

I'm very grateful that we're actually playing golf now and continue to play after high school and college and professionally, too.

So I'm really happy about it.

**Q. Do you have any goals for yourself for this weekend? I'm sure you would like to make the cut.**

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Yes.

**Q. Is there a certain part of your game maybe that you've really have been working on or that you want to continue to work on throughout this weekend?**

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Yeah, I definitely want to make the cut. That's definitely a goal mine. Definitely short game. I'm a public golf course player, so I don't get to play really fast greens and deep rough often.

So definitely putting and short game, chipping around the greens, I definitely want to do better this week in that area.

THE MODERATOR: As I said earlier, we learned a lot

about you at Founders Cup. We learned about the RV, the road you've taken to get here. For people here at Meijer and the Grand Rapids community, walk us through the journey to get through this moment here.

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Yes. So I turned pro in 2015 and I was playing a few tournaments here and there. I was playing the Cactus Tour mainly, which is in Arizona. It's close to Colorado. Golf is expensive so it was very hard to get better and all of that.

So I started working a few years ago at a climbing gym and a golf course. Then COVID hit and I was kind of like not doing much, so I was Door Dashing, and then I started playing a lot more golf again and just saving as much as I could and finally was able to get a van.

I was car camping prior to that. And having the van has always been a dream. I had the little Barbie van from, I don't know, the 1990s, so I always told my parents I was going to live in a van and they didn't believe me, but it happened. I start traveling in the van playing tournaments.

This year played the John Shippen in New Jersey. First time in New Jersey. The year was kind of mediocre I would say for my game, but it started getting better. I got a trainer, Nate Jackson, in Canada. He definitely changed my game and my body.

My body definitely needed some help, so I think that was a huge factor. Things have been clicking and I've been just really enjoying it, because you never know. This could be my last round golf so I'm just really trying to be grateful for these experiences and enjoying the journey.

THE MODERATOR: I always like hearing about the journey, hence the reason I wanted you to repeat it again. I know you have a friend on the bag that you met working at a climbing gym. A lot of players out here sometimes have long-term caddies. For you to have a friend on the bag, how much more confidence do you feel playing in these events knowing you have a different outlook of the caddie experience?

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Yeah, it's so helpful. I'm a pretty shy person naturally, so having a friend that really knows me and knows that sometimes I start spiraling and freaking out, she knows how to calm me down and keep me focused, it's very helpful.

That's what I need to stay calm and focused instead of just having somebody randomly and can't really tell them how I'm feeling and they don't know how to make me calm. Yeah, so really grateful to have her.

THE MODERATOR: Do you think you'll have any -- I don't want to say family or friends -- but support from your circle here this week watching you in your second LPGA Tour event?

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Well, actually after I won the John Shippen we found a little Hipcamp place that's ten minutes away, so the guy who runs the Hipcamp, him and his friends might come. That will be really cool.

The Dow maybe my parents will come. Not sure yet. Maybe my caddie's dad will come. We'll see what happens.

THE MODERATOR: One last question before we wrap it up. Just in general, have you been able to, you know, since playing in the John Shippen, now that you're kind of back in this LPGA Tour experience, what have you taken from the last couple days getting back into the LPGA Tour-like mindset?

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Yeah, it's a lot. It can be overwhelming, especially I don't know what I'm doing half the time. It's just been really fun. I'm trying to enjoy it and stay calm. It's fun to see girls that I watch all the time on TV. I got play with the Jutanugarn sisters the other day and I was pretty nervous about that. They're really nice people, so nice. So I was very grateful to play with them, and I learned a lot from them.

So just kind of just trying to learn from these girls who get to play on the LPGA full time.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you, page, for coming in.

PAIGE CRAWFORD: Thank you.

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