

Cognizant Founders Cup

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Clifton, New Jersey, USA

Upper Montclair Country Club

Caroline Masson

Azahara Munoz

Press Conference



and skillsets take advantage of?

CAROLINE MASSON: So to me, it's narrow and it looks narrow I think. I said yesterday like sometimes it's almost a little bit claustrophobic to my eye. I just have to be out there and just be free and swing freely and not try to be too perfect with narrow fairways.

Obviously you know you kind of want to hit the fairways to have a good chance to get the ball close. I think some greens are small, narrow; out of the rough it's a really big challenge.

I think hitting the fairways is key. I think both of us I think I feel like are pretty good drivers of the golf ball so that's a good thing. (Smiling.)

Yeah, I think from the fairway you can give yourself some chances and it doesn't look as hard, but from the rough it's a really difficult golf course.

AZAHARA MUNOZ: I couldn't agree more. I was actually going to exactly that. Definitely be in the fairway is key. Some course look narrow and they are not so narrow, but this one is actually really narrow. Hitting the fairways is definitely important.

And, yeah, because you don't want to be missing the greens, you want to be below the hole. The greens kind of gets pretty slippery if you're putting down the hill.

I feel they're a bit softer this year, which helps. Last year I remember the course playing super firm, so I think that helps a lot with the second shots.

At the same time, the rough is quite juicy and, yeah, you definitely want to be in the fairways.

Q. As I alluded to, two of our moms playing on the LPGA Tour. What's it been like, especially for you, Caro, being a new mom juggling player responsibilities and mom responsibilities? I know getting this press conference organized was fun, trying to schedule around Lukey's schedule. What's it been like juggling both of those very important responsibilities?

THE MODERATOR: All right, joined now here at the Cognizant Founders Cup by two of our moms on the LPGA Tour, Azahara Munoz and Caroline Masson. How are we feeling? How is the golf course? How does our games feel? Take us through what the last couple days of practice have been like.

AZAHARA MUNOZ: It's good. The golf course is looking amazing. I think it's a bit of -- hopefully the weather doesn't hit us too badly. It's really nice, in perfect condition, but I think it's going to be playing a bit different.

But practice been going good. Got here Sunday night so I played Monday the back nine, yesterday played the front, and playing the back again for the pro-am later this afternoon.

So far so good.

CAROLINE MASSON: Yeah, I have played the front nine so far. Haven't seen the back nine yet. It's been kind of interesting. We got here early on Sunday but obviously Jason has some commitments with Nelly too. So we're trying to juggle everything with Benton and his schedule and my schedule.

I played a practice round for the U.S. Open qualifier yesterday off site, so it's been a busy week so far. But, yeah, happy to be back. I played here obviously a couple years ago I think when the tournament was here for the first time.

I remember the golf course well. It's a good track. You better hit it online I think to have any chance. Yeah, I'm going to put a little bit of practice in today and try to get everything ready for tomorrow.

Q. That leads me right to my next point. Every player we've talked to says how much of a challenge this course is. What is it about this course that makes it so challenging, and what can you two do with your games



CAROLINE MASSON: It's been a challenge. I felt like in the first few weeks I thought it was maybe a little bit easier than I thought. I mean, we are super lucky. Benton is a great traveler and a great sleeper. That's obviously very helpful.

It's just, I don't know, like on the golf course I feel like I can do the same things that I've always done. Daycare is an immense help. Like it's been awesome. The ladies are great and he's happy there. I'm not worried about him at all when I'm out here, which is awesome.

It's just the time off the golf course that's more challenging. Usually I used to go home and, yeah, I got to do what I wanted. If I wanted to take a nap I took a nap. If I wanted to go work out I could go do that.

Now you have Benton and you obviously want to spend time with him, and he's getting more and more energetic and moves around a lot more, so it's just, yeah, a lot more off the golf course.

But it's been also so much fun. It's just you come home and I can totally switch off and forget about golf. It's a great balance I think added to our lives that's just amazing. I'm just really happy to be able to do this.

AZAHARA MUNOZ: For me, my little one is a little bit older than Benton. He's a great traveler; not a super great sleeper on the road. I think that's the biggest challenge for me. He sometimes wakes in the middle of the night. I don't know if he doesn't like the travel crib, but he cries and then I put him in bed with me and he is up super early. Like this morning he is up at 5:30, so days are pretty long.

At the same time, the ladies are great. When he's here I know the same thing as Caro said, I don't have to worry about him at all.

But then when I go home I used to maybe not take a nap, but rest, go to physio, go work out. I've never been a napper, but now with him it's like, mom, let's go to the park and he's like nonstop.

It's a lot like try not to -- I mean, I guess I chose to be a mom so I feel like he deserves that. He needs to have his mom, too. So when you go back, I am a mom. So even if I'm tired, I do it, but then you don't have as much time to rest and things like that.

I wouldn't trade it for the world and I think it helps in the sense I'm never thinking of golf when I'm out here. Sometimes that's actually really good. Before if you leave the golf course and I used to be like, oh, this hole or, I don't

know, that hole or I'm not playing good. Now I literally do not think of golf, so that's actually pretty great.

To be able to do this with him is something I always wanted and I'm very, very, very happy I can do it.

Q. Just I know it's probably a little more fresh in your mind Caro; your first event back was at Palos Verdes, right?

CAROLINE MASSON: Uh-huh.

Q. How is your outlook on the game and everything about golf, because it's your job, how has that changed since you became a mom?

CAROLINE MASSON: Yeah, I mean, definitely changes the perspective a little bit. I mean, I was interested to see what it was going to be like, and my hopes were that obviously I'm still -- I've always been intense on the golf course and I don't think that really changes. I just don't get as upset and I think I don't let it touch me as much.

It's more like it was a bad shot, dang it. Well, Benton is at home, and when I come home it's -- he's going to be happy to see me and he really doesn't care what I shoot today.

I think it takes away that pressure a little bit, takes away the perfectionism I've been dealing with pretty much my whole career. So try to have fun and hit the ball and find it and hit it again. That kind of mindset has helped me a lot, and I'm sure every mom, like we talk a lot about not defining ourselves by our scores and by our golf.

I mean, I would think that most players fall into that trap at one point in their career where it's maybe not going well and it's hard to see the positives when you pour everything into golf.

To have that balance with a family and a child and him or her being out here on the road with you is just -- it frees you up a lot and makes you appreciate the game a little bit more. It seems more like a game again maybe. You're trying to play the game and not trying to be so perfect.

It's been a great outlook and very helpful for me. Again, I'm lucky to get in a way a second chance at my career as a mom, kind of in a different role a little bit for myself, and make the most of it.

AZAHARA MUNOZ: Yeah, same. I think when you're having a good day everything is great. When you have a bad day and you go back, and, you know, I go to daycare and pick Lukey up and he's so happy to see me, I could

care less of what I just shot.

Obviously we still want to do our best. You just have to manage your time a bit better. I still want to play good golf.

I don't want to think, well, I obviously practiced a bit less than before, I don't have as much time. I still want to perform well.

At the end of the day you put things in perspective a bit more. Yeah, I guess you are -- I don't want to put words in -- but we are at the end of our career. This is my 15th year. I'm definitely towards the end. I don't know how many more years I have.

Now having him is like things just change. You have a bad day and it's like, is it that bad? You still have him and thankfully he's healthy and that's really what matters.

Q. Aza, I know you were part of that crop a couple years ago, the big baby boom in '22, '21. To see Caro, the next generation of these new moms, how cool is it to see some of your friends some of your and Solheim Cup teammates and people you've played with forever becomes moms now?

AZAHARA MUNOZ: It's really cool, because the tour went for a few years there were literally no babies. Well, Paula and I had a baby and then so many babies came out. I've just been in daycare for an hour because I was early and waiting for the -- Kai was there, Mel Reid's little one.

It's so cool to have so many kids growing up together. I don't know how long Lukey will be around, but for a few years I hope. That's a relationship that's so special. The ladies are amazing, and all these little kids growing up together I think is something really, really special.

I've said it before, like our life is not normal. They don't go to a normal daycare, but to be lucky to have the chance of that, have kids around the same age and seeing them all grow up together is just really fun.

Q. Caro, we saw you and Benton watching daddy jump in the lake at The Chevron Championship. For you and him personally, what have been some of the best memories so far? I know you've been back out here a couple months. What's been your favorite moment so far?

CAROLINE MASSON: Yeah, I think for Jason to be able to win in front of Benton, that was one of his goals. It's kind of happened a lot so we don't want to normalize it, right? Obviously those moments are pretty special. He doesn't understand what's happening, but just for him to be there and take these pictures with Jason and Nelly and the

trophy at the end of the week is really cool, and I'm just really looking forward to in the future showing him those things and showing him he was there.

But I think it's not necessarily like one special moment. It's just these everyday moments. He stands up in his crib now and he just smiles at us. When you pick him up from daycare and he hears your voice and turns around and just goes nuts, it's just these little moment that make it so special and maybe make it feel just a little bit more normal out here.

Like Aza said, it's not normal. It's not a normal life, not for us and not for a child to grow up. But those things, going to dinner with him and seeing him eat and loving it out there, it's just really fun and normalize being on the road.

I think like these are the moments where Jay and I sometimes look at each other and say, oh, my God, this is so cool, and we just really love it, yeah.

Q. Aza, it's an Olympic year and everyone is talking about the Olympics. Played in two Olympics as not a mom; trying to become another mother in the field.

AZAHARA MUNOZ: He was in my tummy, though. Nobody knew, but I was 11 weeks pregnant when I played.

Q. To be able to represent your country, yes as a player is always a special opportunity, but to represent it as a female athlete that's a mother, what would that mean -- caro, if you want to answer this as well -- for both of you to be able to have that moment maybe in Paris here in a few months?

AZAHARA MUNOZ: Yeah, it's really, really special. I think actually Tim is going to be caddieing for me and Jay is gonna be caddieing for Nelly, so the four of us are going to be there.

We're still trying to think of how it's going to work. I don't think we're going to be able to take him because there is no daycare. That's the only thing about the Olympics that maybe could be done a bit better. But I don't know how it could be.

The fact that there are so many women athletes and a lot of them are moms, so it would be actually great to be able to take our kids there and let them experience the whole thing as well.

So in that sense it's a bit sad. Like I would've loved to be there with Tim and the baby. That would've been amazing. Yeah, to be able to do this for the third time and obviously now with the child is pretty special.

CAROLINE MASSON: Yeah, to be really honest, I started hitting balls in January and I was like, I mean, I just hope my comeback goes all right and see where we end up.

Obviously it's a big goal of mine this year to have a chance to play the Olympics and play Solheim, but at the sometime, there is no disappointment if I don't.

As of right now my world ranking dropped so much it's going to take some good results to get on the German team, and obviously same for Solheim. So it's a little bit like a bonus I think if it happens. I feel lucky to have played two Olympics. Both were very different, amazing experiences. It would be awesome to do it again as a mom.

It's something you want to prove to yourself you can do it as a mom. I don't know if I have enough time to get enough points to make it. Obviously that's the goal, and if it happens that would be amazing. Jason is most likely going to be there, so to share it again with him would be cool.

And obviously being in Paris I feel like it's a little closer to home for both of us. Brazil was cool and Japan were cool, but being very close to home where maybe some friends and family could actually come and watch and experience it and see you play in it live, I think that would make it extra special.

So big goal, but I'm just focusing on every week at time and see where that gets me.

Q. Start off by saying it's just extraordinary what you do, before I ask my question. Aza, you came close to winning obviously at the end of last year. Can you put into perspective now that you've been a mom for a while -- and Caro, you can weigh in, too -- how hard it is to win as a mom? And have you talked to any of the maybe retired players or -- Stacy is obviously the only current one on tour right now that has won as a mom -- of just how difficult that is?

AZAHARA MUNOZ: It's very difficult. I came close last year. Obviously an amazing week. It's really hard to win anyway, let alone being on the older side and being a mom. The thing with being a mom is every week is different. Like this week Lukey at the beginning of the week, he was quite sick one night so then he doesn't sleep very well. This morning he falls over and almost cuts his eye.

So there are so many things that happen as a mom, and like you just have to go with it. But as I said before, I never

want to use it as an excuse, but it is hard. You are more tired. All these girls are 20, 21, 22, obviously dedicating their 100% to the game and we are dedicating the time we have, and the time you have you might not be feeling super fantastic either because you maybe didn't have a super good night of sleep or whatever. You have an afternoon tee time and I've been in the park with Lukey for two hours so I'm already tired.

At the end of the day you wouldn't trade it for the world either. So it is what it is. I never wanted to use it as an excuse, but it is definitely tough. Obviously it's something else, but it's my new normal.

I also don't think, oh, my God I have to do all these things and they don't have to do them. I never look at it like that. It is what I have to do. I don't know what they're doing. I don't know what other people are dealing with. They might have something else.

So it is what it is. But, yeah, it's obviously pretty tough. But it's tough without kids so it's just tough winning out here.

CAROLINE MASSON: Yeah, I mean, I agree 100%. The level of play is so good. At any point in your career you almost need, I mean, a nearly perfect week. Things have to go your way in order to win.

In a way I think that can still happen as a mom. When you're out there the golf ball doesn't now how you slept last night and what happened, Benton is a little sick or not.

In a way I feel like, I don't know, not to put too much expectation on winning, but I do believe that like we can still hit the ball the same, pretty much the same way that we did before having a baby.

AZAHARA MUNOZ: Uh-huh.

CAROLINE MASSON: If it's your week, it's your week. If everything comes together, I think there is a chance. You know what, maybe down the stretch having this balance in your life, like having the thoughts of, wow, what an opportunity, like I have everything I've ever wanted. I have a healthy kid, great family, let's go win this tournament.

It takes away the pressure of having to do this, but just puts more maybe -- it puts the whole pressure situation in a positive way and you can just enjoy it a little bit more. So who knows. Maybe it's a little bit of an advantage in certain situations, too. I think that's the way I'm trying to look at it.

It's the big goal for all of us that play out here. And like Aza said, I think everybody is dealing with different things, if it's

injuries or family issues. It could be all these things.

You know, we have to just make the most of what we have, and I think, yeah, again, maybe gives us a little bit of an advantage at times, too.

Q. I'm going to be talking to Rachel Rohanna here in a little bit and she has two kids now and just qualified for the U.S. Women's Open in her home state. Obviously she's playing on the Epson Tour this week. I think she might be en route to Phoenix. Can you imagine how hard it is with two I guess?

AZAHARA MUNOZ: No. I mean, let's put it this way: If I was to have another one there is no way I'll be playing. One thing is to travel with one and all the things you have to carry. I can't imagine traveling with two. I mean, I guess you could if you have help.

Like I know Brittany Lincicome does it every now and then with two; most of time just with one. But mom and dad come out. Some people are lucky. Our parents are back in Europe, so we don't have that luxury I guess. Yeah, for me traveling with two is definitely out of the question. If one sleep good the other one for sure sleeps bad. You'll never get a break.

Yeah, that will be -- kudos to her for qualifying. That's pretty amazing, so congratulations. Obviously she still wants to do it. She played pretty pregnant last time I saw her. I can't even remember what tournament it was. I think Hawai'i or something. She was already pretty pregnant. Yeah, that's pretty amazing what she's doing.

Q. Obviously we're here at Founders Cup, celebrating Pat Bradley, Beth Daniel. What have the Pioneers and Founders meant to you and how do you hope to carry on the baton to the next generation of female golfers?

AZAHARA MUNOZ: Yeah, I mean, this is kind of sad, I guess. Growing up in Spain I didn't know much about the women's game. Didn't know much about the men's game either. I qualified for the Junior Solheim Cup when I was 14 in Minnesota. I remember starting to hear about all these ladies.

I mean, it's amazing what they've done. Even the few years I've been on tour, 15 years, the tour has grown so much. To be able to do what we love for a living and make a good living is pretty amazing, and it's only getting better and better.

We owe everything to them because they didn't have it as good. Everything was pretty tough. They had to do everything themselves. Like sometimes we might

complain that we have to go to a pro-am party or I don't want to do that. They had to do everything every week. So to be able to do this thanks to them, we literally owe everything to them.

I think we're all super grateful.

CAROLINE MASSON: Yeah, very similar. It's interesting how you grow up in Europe without much access to the women's game and the LPGA. I remember playing the first Founders Cup in Phoenix. We had all these pictures out there of all the Founders and it was fun to be educated on the history of the LPGA and kind of understanding.

I think a lot of the young players come out and love golf and want to do this for a living and they have no idea who started all this. It's nice to learn about the history and appreciate what these ladies have done. They took things into their own hands and made it happen. It's so easy with obviously bigger tournaments we play and more money we play for to forget what it's like it really fight for all this.

I think Mike Whan and Mollie as well, they've always been reminding us on, okay, where did we start and you guys have to keep things going, kind of continue that legacy of the Founders. I think most players really understand that. I remember think that's why it's such a cool experience for people, pro-am players to come out here and interact with the players.

I think most players really get it and appreciate what has been done for us in the past and want to continue that in the future. I think it's a cool thing. It makes you kind of closer to the LPGA in a way, like really proud member of the LPGA. It's fun to see it grow.

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