

Women's Olympic Golf Competition

Tuesday, 3 August 2021
Saitama City, Saitama, Japan
Kasumigaseki Country Club

Sophia Popov Caroline Masson Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started. Caroline, how important is it and how excited are you to be back playing in the Olympic games?

CAROLINE MASSON: Yeah, it's a huge honor to be back, obviously after playing in the Rio and experiencing the Olympic village and the Olympic spirit it was a huge goal of mine to come back in 2020 or now 2021. Yeah, it's definitely a huge motivation to keep going, play consistent golf over such a long time and represent Germany again, so I'm super excited to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Have you played much in Japan? Is this one of your first trips here?

CAROLINE MASSON: Yeah, I played a few times. We usually come once a year and it's always good tournaments on pretty tough courses. They usually play a little bit different than they do in the States, a little bit tighter, really fast greens I remember pretty much every time I played in Japan. So this is a really good golf course, I think it's probably the best one I played in Japan and, yeah, it's just nice to be back. People are extremely friendly, it's a shame, obviously, we can't have spectators and experience that because especially women's golf in Japan is just a huge hit. I'm sure it would have been a great show. But we're so happy to be here and at least show off what we can do, how good we are. I think the Japanese people know that and just make them happy that at least we can play.

THE MODERATOR: You come from a family with some Olympic aspirations, Olympic backgrounds that might make it a little extra special for you to be here as well.

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, I think that my mom back in 1980 would have loved to be part of the Olympic team and my brother had aspirations to go in 2012 and he barely missed out for the swim trials. That's why I feel like I'm



representing more than myself. I think I'm definitely representing my family and everyone is obviously super proud and they would have loved to be here and experience it with me, but I definitely, it's not only an honor for me to be representing Germany but also my family and hope to make them proud.

THE MODERATOR: Take some questions.

Q. Were you guys out here to watch any of the men's golf on the weekend?

CAROLINE MASSON: We got in a little bit later, we got in on Sunday. I think we watched the finish kind of at the airport and tried to see every shot. And obviously watched a little bit at home, but, yeah, it would have been really fun to watch that finish. I'm pretty sure it was really exciting.

Q. Were you able to talk to any of the German golfers like about the golf course? What are your first impressions of the golf course, how do you think it will play for you guys?

SOPHIA POPOV: We talked to the guys briefly, but -- and we obviously saw some on TV, so we could see some of the shots. But I think that going out there the last two days I think the course is going to play a lot different for us. It's fairly long as far as the setup is right now. Today was obviously really windy, so some of the longer holes like 18 was into the wind and it makes it really tough. I think we might be hitting from different spots hadn't we have different layup shots that we hit, but as far as where you want to miss the greens and where you want to be, we talked to them a little bit about that and always kind of making sure your misses are on the right sides.

Q. To go back you come from a family that has some Olympic lineage, given Xander and his father, it was a pretty well heard story. Could you sort of empathize with how special it would be, given how close you are?

SOPHIA POPOV: Absolutely. I think that my mom I guess was in a little bit of a similar situation where she had a chance to go in 1980 and then the U.S. boycotted. Although a week before trials she broke her arm, so in the

end it was probably all for the better. But she was one of the fastest sprinters in the United States at that time and that was pretty much her only chance because after college she stepped away from swimming and didn't want to try out again, she was basically done with swimming. So she got so close. And my brother, he got within a couple hundredths of a second of going too because he's a sprinter himself. So it can come down to nuances, especially in swimming, it's brutal, you can have a false start at trials, you can have just not feel your best that one single day. And so I thought for me as far as golf goes we have a little bit more time to qualify for the Olympics and you don't have to be on top of your game all the time, but last year quite frankly gave me a chance to make the team. If we had gone in 2020 I wouldn't have made the team. So I think especially because of that I always have this feeling that everything happens for a reason and I was given another chance essentially and by winning The Open last year I could make my dream come true.

Q. Caroline, I know you competed in 2014 at the Women's Open at Pinehurst and Rio as well. What benefit if any at all is there playing the week after the men at a high profile event for both?

CAROLINE MASSON: I think benefit for us, I don't think there's really a benefit. I mean, yes, you get to see a few shots, you maybe have an idea what the golf course looks like. But in the end you just got to play good golf. I think benefit in terms of media coverage and that kind of stuff, I think it's huge. I think the everybody after Pinehurst said, hey, we need to do this more often. Obviously you need to find the right golf course that can handle two weeks of competition like that. I think they do have a great golf course this week for that. So just it's not so much a comparison, because the golf course always plays different and Pinehurst they were really trying to have us hit the same clubs into the greens as the men. I don't think that's the case here. I'm pretty sure that as of right now the golf course plays a lot longer. So you can't really compare the women's game to the men's game. But I think for people watching it's just really exciting to say, hey, Xander hit it here and he made this putt and get an idea that, I mean, hopefully, the women's golf is not that far away from men's golf.

Q. Along those same lines, would it be exciting in your mind if this event was actually kind of a mixed team?

CAROLINE MASSON: 100 percent. Yeah. I mean, obviously I think it's okay to play four days of stroke play, that's what we always do, that's how we always determine the best player of the week in any golf tournament pretty much. So it's okay to have that four days of stroke play, I'm okay with that, but I think we could add a mixed -- I

mean, if it was up to me we would add some alternate shot, best ball, something like that as well. I think that would be a really fun to showcase that golf can be more than just four days of stroke play. So I mean in a perfect world we would have both for sure.

Q. The schedule is coined of crazy you're in the middle of kind of a gauntlet of events between Evian, this, Carnoustie, Solheim, is it dizzying in any way to just be flying all around the world all summer long? Does it take a lot out of you?

SOPHIA POPOV: Yeah, especially with us coming from Evian and Caroline and I being from Germany we got to go home for a few days and we kind of wanted to extend that stay a little bit because we want to see our families. And then you kind of come here and you only have about two days to prepare and you're pretty jet lagged. And then you go back and not just for any event but for the Scottish and the British. And I feel like -- I've been talking to a couple girls about this, but I feel like it's so dense in the middle of our schedule, like this summer we still have quite a few events to go, but to me it feels like we're at the end of the year already. But then I look ahead at what we still have to play and it kind of makes you think, you're like, oh, where can I take my breaks. And I definitely have to take one eventually, probably after the Solheim Cup, just to take a breather, because it's been crazy and it's just been the intensity of every event because every one of them is so important. So I think that can be a little bit dizzying, in your words.

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