

Women's Olympic Golf Competition

Wednesday, 4 August 2021

Saitama City, Saitama, Japan

Kasumigaseki Country Club

Aditi Ashok

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started. Great first round. To start off, just thoughts on the round today and then overall being here at the Olympics.

ADITI ASHOK: Yeah, I think I played better than I expected today because I had a lot of hybrids into the greens, so I didn't really expect to be like 5-under through 17. But, yeah, I kind of holed some putts and holed important par putts as well which kept the momentum. So, yeah, it was a good day.

THE MODERATOR: Then just being here, I know you played, you're the youngest to play in the Olympics in Rio so the opportunity to come back again, maybe a little bit of what you learned then and maybe how you changed as a player since then.

ADITI ASHOK: Yeah last time I was a rookie basically and I just finished my high school exams and then I was at the Olympics in two months. But this time I think definitely a lot more experience, just playing on the LPGA the last five years has been kind of, makes you way better as a player than I was at Rio. And I think the Olympic experience was, I didn't finish as well as I wanted to last time, but just seeing the affect that it had on golf in India was inspiring and that's kind of what motivated me for this one as well.

THE MODERATOR: How did you get started in the game of golf, what brought you, attracted you to golf as a sport?

ADITI ASHOK: Actually me and my parents started at the same time. We used to have breakfast at this restaurant that overlooked a golf driving range and so we wanted to walk in and try it out. I, they gave me like a baby putter and that's kind of how I started playing golf. I enjoyed putting, I think I was there for like three hours just putting on the greens. So that's kind of what got me started. And then eventually learned the whole game. And I think as a kid playing junior tournaments with other kids my age was something I never really got to experience in regular life, so just playing competitive sport with kids my age was really



interesting for me and that's what kept me going back to the golf course.

Q. When you talk about coming out of high school exams and going to the Olympics, this year compared with last year, do you have different expectations and how does that change for you?

ADITI ASHOK: Yeah, for sure. Last time I think it was more just enjoying the experience and staying at the village, seeing all the other athletes, but this time I think definitely here to have a good finish, hopefully give my best, try and win a medal. I think having played the Olympics once definitely gets you more prepared, you're not as overawed by it. I mean it's still the Olympics, it's still really exciting, but, yeah, definitely more prepared for this one.

Q. Were you at all surprised by the attention you received after the 2016 games back home in India?

ADITI ASHOK: Yes, definitely because I had, I mean I had, nobody really focused on women's golf and I was just a rookie, I just turned pro, so nobody had many expectations of me either. But yeah, I, definitely it was surprising and I think in a good way because I never thought the Olympics could impact golf that much in India. So knowing that it could bring that many more eyeballs to the sport was a good thing.

Q. Is there any way to get used to the heat out there as a golfer? It beats down on you the entire round. Can you get used to it or is it something that just nags forever?

ADITI ASHOK: I think you get used to it. I played a lot of junior golf in different parts of the India that were about as hot as this. I guess I'm not as used to it the last few years, but in general I didn't find it too hot, it was kind of okay for me. But yeah, I guess you just get used to it.

Q. In Rio 2016 those first couple of rounds you were right up there. Can you describe what sort of impact was going on at the time in India?

ADITI ASHOK: Oh, yeah, I think it was quite big. I think my social media following just blew up, basically. I think a lot of people were trying to figure out what golf was, so that they could understand how I was playing and if I had a chance to win a medal. I wasn't in India at the time and I didn't go back for about another month but even then I think for the next six months to a year everybody remembered and recognized me from the Olympics, even though I had won like three European Tour events after that, people still remembered me as the girl who did well at the Olympics. So I think just knowing that in fact that it has kind of motivates me this week too.

Q. Do you remember the sort of numbers of social media-wise what it went from and to?

ADITI ASHOK: I think I had like 4, 500 followers on like Twitter and Facebook and stuff and it jumped to like 14 K, I think overnight. Which is quite a lot. I guess I was like, Okay now I got to think about what I'm tweeting before I send it out.

Q. And when you went back a month later, people, was it just in the streets people were coming up to you or at events?

ADITI ASHOK: Yeah, in general not as much but in the golf courses definitely. I think every member and every junior knew about me from my golf at the Olympics. So that was like the first thing and they all wanted to get a picture with me and ask me for advice on what they should do, how they should try and pick up golf. So that's what it was like.

Q. Could you put it into words what would a medal even a gold medal, what would that do for golf in India, women's golf in particular?

ADITI ASHOK: I mean it would be huge, because women's golf is not really on the radar of sports or people in India, so it would be great for the game of golf, women's golf. I think just as a woman athlete in India, we have never won a gold and we haven't won as many medals -- obviously this games we won, all the medals have been from girls and so I think that's a nice trend and women athletes doing well is definitely good for a country like India.

Q. Your results on the LPGA this year probably not as good as you would like, is it just a coincidence that you're playing well now or do you think the Olympics brings that out in you?

ADITI ASHOK: I think I've been doing well the last maybe three or four weeks, it's kind of been coming back. I had a

big break after May, I think May and June I was stuck in India and I was trying to get Visas and my passport was stuck in a consulate because of the lock downs and I didn't get to practice for a couple months in India. So that kind of set me back a little bit. I think overall I am playing good this year, it's just hasn't shown because I had two months off without golf and so that kind of led to some missed cuts. But I think I've been playing good and the Olympics is just, I guess it is coincidence, but it was also kind of falling in, falling in line because I played good at Michigan, so that was just a couple weeks ago.

Q. What's your relationship like with Anirban?

ADITI ASHOK: I mean we both are from Bangalore, but we have never really seen each other much. The last time I met him at the Olympics and now we met at the Olympics again. But, yeah, he's great and I think he's, obviously he's been flagged there for golf internationally from India for the last few years, so yeah, he's nice.

Q. For someone your age not only now but five years ago, are you comfortable with the attention, with basically being the face of women's golf in India?

ADITI ASHOK: I think I'm a little more comfortable now than I was five years ago. I think you realize it's, a lot of stuff comes with it that you maybe don't really like, but it's important for little girls back home to have that image of a golfer internationally on the LPGA or at the Olympics and not just participating but also kind of contending here and there. So, yeah.

Q. A bit of a silly one but what numbers do you think your social media would go to with a gold medal?

ADITI ASHOK: Oh, I think it would go to like hundreds of thousands for sure. Yeah, it would be really big.

Q. Nice to have your mom here, is that right?

ADITI ASHOK: Yes. Yeah, my mom, she's caddieing for me. Last time I had my dad on the bag, so the experience was just so incredible I was like I want to have my mom next time and I made good on that promise.

THE MODERATOR: Nice of you to bring your mom in the horrible heat. I hope you did well, mom.

ADITI ASHOK: Yeah, she did good. She had the stand bag, but, no, she did good.

Q. Do you remember the name of the driving range where you went and have you been back at all from that first time?

ADITI ASHOK: Yes, so it was the range at KGA, so that's where I started.

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