

# Ford Championship presented by Wild Horse Pass

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Chandler, Arizona, USA

Whirlwind Golf Club

## Rose Zhang

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome to the media center at the Ford Championship presented by Wild Horse Pass. I'm joined by Rose Zhang, returning back to competition from your classes that she just wrapped up. I think that's the first thing everyone wants to hear about.

How were your classes this past quarter and what did you take?

ROSE ZHANG: It's been good. I would say that I had a pretty heavy load, but nonetheless, very fulfilling. I couldn't really say that it's a complete break. I took 22 units, so some of the classes were just sitting through three hours of lecture and listening to student presentations about deliberative democracy.

I had a couple fun classes though. I took a Hebrew-Jewish literature short stories class. The sleep and dreams class that I mentioned at Hilton where people can fall asleep and get extra credit. Took some politics of algorithms classes, and a science tech society class.

Yeah, it was a heavy load, a lot of writing.

#### **Q. Do you have a favorite project or anything you worked on?**

ROSE ZHANG: Favorite project? I worked on -- in my sleep and dreams class it's obviously going to be the most fun. But I did -- with my partner I did a perfect sleep routine for morning and evening.

Like we basically explained the whole neurology side of things which was pretty cool.

#### **Q. And you talked about this is your second year doing this with the quarters. Just talk about how you've been balancing and keeping up with your practice and all your other obligations on top the school?**

ROSE ZHANG: It's been a little bit difficult, but I had a little



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bit of a different approach to this quarter versus last quarter. Last quarter I felt how difficult it was going through the season and maintaining just my energy and my stability in the things that I was doing.

So I decided to use this winter quarter to just be a student. As I said before, it was more so the objective of trying to kind of bring balance back into my life; whereas last quarter I both took 20 units and then I played a lot of golf on top of that.

This year I hosted an AJGA event which was super cool. I was out there the entire time. Had a parents Q&A and a player Q&A as well. I had a lot of family friends who actually played in my event, so a lot of near and dear to home type relationships.

I would say for the most part, very satisfied with the way that I approached the entire season from the ten weeks. I feel like there is a lot of things I look back on and I think there is necessary steps to improve on to stay more stable and not completely burn out towards the end.

#### **Q. With all that you just said, how do you switch gears and get ready to be a professional golfer this week again out here?**

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah. I think there needs to be a little bit of a learning curve. I'd say I give myself a little bit of time to adjust. There is a lot of events this year, so it allows me to have an opportunity to have an open mind.

I think I need a lot of technique work, a lot of things that I need to work on in terms of my game from the long game to the short, so it's a lot more focused on that rather than just trying to go for a score, go for wins, all that stuff.

Because I think if you take care of your game in the process, then that will put you and set you up for opportunities.

#### **Q. It was challenging last year for you to do both. This year did you enjoy having the dichotomy of Rose the professional athlete and Rose the student and just get that ten-week break where you get to be**



## **quote-unquote normal?**

ROSE ZHANG: I enjoyed it for sure. I felt like that was the first quarter or that quarter was the first quarter where I felt somewhat normal, where I was going through all of the struggles of being a college student.

I was sitting through lectures, eight hours of lecture every Thursday and Tuesday. I had pop quizzes for some of my classes. That is honestly terrible. Like if I was a student-athlete I would be missing all these classes and I would probably have zeroes on all my pop quizzes.

It was a lot of being attentive at school but also I learned a lot about the outside world with AI, with politics, with like society interactions. There is a lot going on in universities right now, and I think it helps widen my horizons a little bit, like I anticipated.

## **Q. How do you put that aside, put the golf hat back on, and get yourself in a competitive mode to get out here and play against the best in the world?**

ROSE ZHANG: I think regardless, competition is innate in every athlete, especially with the LPGA Tour being one of the biggest competitive fields in this women's sports.

So I feel like it wouldn't take too much time to put the competitive hat back on. I will say that it will take a little bit of time to get acclimated with going back to the structure of Mondays through Sundays, what are we doing to prepare for golf.

But I do think that this year will be a little bit different in that I have a lot of different perspectives of how I'm approaching this game entirely.

## **Q. Just your thoughts on Whirlwind Golf Club. It's a new venue for the Tour this year, and desert golf in general. What do you like about it and what's your strategy?**

ROSE ZHANG: I love desert golf. Played a lot of desert golf from being a junior golfers. Played in the Thunderbird. I played in the NAAs. Played in Longbow, so there is -- Grayhawk.

I played all these courses, and they're pretty similar in that they roll out. Greens are firm. It's going to be hot. So we have to conserve energy, but we also have to be smart in how we're using yardages, how we're using clubs.

There needs to be a little bit more creativity, but I would say that there are certain holes out here where you can definitely attack, especially the par-5s, for a lot of the

people that are long hitters.

I wouldn't include myself in that circle, but I will say there are some attackable holes. I think for the most part, it requires both conservative approaches but also aggressive. And that's probably very cliché for every single golf course, but I will say that especially for desert golf that's very applicable.

## **Q. First of all, I wish I had a sleep and dreams class in college. That sounds fun. Related to that class, was there anything you learned that might be able to help you with your tournament schedule and student schedule?**

ROSE ZHANG: For sure. Well, part of the learning process in the class itself was understanding sleep optimization. Talking about the emphasis of sleep. They had this class mantra called drowsiness is red alert. Basically that pertains to driving in particular, but it applies to like every aspect of your life.

Especially at Stanford, a lot of people are pulling off all nighters to finish P sets, practice sets, and they're finishing schoolwork, studying, and cramming for exams.

At the end of the day, like they are showing levels of how much sleep you should get and if you lack that amount of sleep by the day, then your awareness for things and your ability to obtain information will decrease significantly.

And also the time change thing. I had a big problem with time zone changes, and the LPGA Tour is a global sport. It's a global tour. We travel from Asia to Europe to the U.S. to like anywhere. So the time change affected me a lot off the golf course, and I had a lot of racing mind during that time.

So creating a routine that helps you wind down a little bit and then redoing that until you actually fall asleep has been like a little bit of an eye opener.

And they had us track our sleep as well, so I was looking at how much sleep I was getting. I was averaging six hours, so that's not great.

## **Q. What's your ideal amount of sleep?**

ROSE ZHANG: Oh, ideal, well the ideal to even be somewhat functional is seven hours, for an athlete it's eight.

## **Q. I know you're one of five new Girls Golf brand ambassadors. I wanted your perspective as our youngest ambassador, I feel like players who are new**



**to the Tour adjust to the Tour life, focusing on golf, all the commitments. For you, why was it so important to be an ambassador giving back your time and growing the game?**

ROSE ZHANG: I think regardless of age, it's necessary to at least understand why you're doing things and why you're competing, why you're playing this game called golf.

For me specifically I took a lot of time, especially in this offseason, to ponder of like why am I doing this. I think that one of the things that a lot of the tour players out here say is we want to grow the game and we want to influence and inspire younger generations.

I think that approach just sits super well with my values, and it has encouraged me to use whatever platform I have. Could be very small, could be very big, to help even the one girl, two girls that are out there.

You never know. Like for a lot of the kids out there, they have endless opportunities to go to college, to play professionally, to get into whatever profession they like, but we have to have people who actually are there to inspire them with certain experiences and inspire them with information that can help them really think for themselves what they want to do.

And that's kind of something that I have really -- I really hold near and dear to in terms of me wanting to impact in that way.

**Q. I know you're not far removed from being a junior golfer yourself. Hosting your AJGA tournament, being a Girls Golf ambassador, what does it mean to you to be a role model for the next generation?**

ROSE ZHANG: It's honestly a little bit weird because especially in the AJGA event that I hosted, I actually played with some of the competitors there as a junior golfer. It's, one, super cool to see that junior golf, amateur golf, and professional golf isn't too far away.

A lot of the little girls out there who I see, they quote-unquote have big dreams. Girls Golf really holds up that sort of slogan.

I think little girls do have big dreams, and they can actually approach it that way. I almost didn't dare to think that I was going to be a professional golfer, but I did have the dream and I thought it was big.

And now I'm able to be a part of it, which is super cool. So for me giving back in that experience to those who also want to either be here on the Tour or also go to college,

yeah, it's a fun experience for everyone, not just myself.

**Q. In the sleep and dreams class, what was the coolest thing you learned about your dreams?**

ROSE ZHANG: My dreams?

**Q. Yeah.**

ROSE ZHANG: Well, I learned that I didn't have dreams for quite a while, so I basically -- so I feel like a lot -- we basically had the sleep journal where we had to write what sort of dreams we encountered or how many dreams we had, whether it's lucid, whether it's like anything of that sort, or nightmares.

I a single dream for the first six weeks of the quarter, and then I started getting really stressful dreams. I was like, I would rather not have dreams at this point.

But I would say like it makes you a little bit more aware. Like your body and your mind is so complex to where like even when you're asleep, resting, you can have all these thoughts of like experiences or emotions, and you can feel it and sense it.

**Q. You talk about all that you learned from your sleep schedule. What kinds of changes will you make, for example for this week, and what do you hope to kind of use, let's say, when you go to Europe for the majors in July? You know, what happened for you last year with the time change, and then things you can do that will help this year.**

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, so one of the biggest problems that I have is post-tournament, especially after a Sunday, especially with all the adrenaline that's going through your body. I find it very difficult to even fall asleep.

So on Sunday nights I would usually have two, three, four hours of sleep. It doesn't help if you have consecutive tournaments where you have to play or you have to travel that Sunday or the following Monday and then go to the next site and have to do this all over again.

So the biggest thing, priority for me also isn't exactly getting acclimated to the time difference, but it's also post-tournament where I have a problem with like regaining my own like regular pace of mind.

So it's a lot of breathing and a lot of -- or less screen time. That kind of helps your heart rate slow down a little bit. Helps with too much information getting into your head, whatnot.

**Q. Where are you in terms of your Stanford, like your courses and classes? How many credits do you have left to take, et cetera?**

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, so I completed -- let's see, I completed 140 units and I have 40 units left, so basically two full quarters. I actually talked about this with my team recently, but because of me wanting to get things done a little bit quicker, I'll be going back to school in the fall and taking 20 units and then another winter quarter 20 units, and then I'll graduate in '26.

So only take me five years in reality to finish everything.

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