

CME Group Tour Championship

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Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

Rose Zhang Hae Ran Ryu Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome everyone to the media center here at the CME Group Tour Championship.

I am happy to be joined by our 2023 Rookie of the year Hae Ran Ryu, and Rose Zhang also making her CME Group Tour Championship debut.

Welcome ladies.

Hae Ran, I'll kick it off with the first question. You were named Rookie of the Year just this week, earlier in the week, and I just want to know how happy you are to have achieved this honor in your first year.

HAE RAN RYU: I want to translate from David, but I just speak English. And, yeah, it's first time I play in the CME in the year this week.

But, yeah, it's so exciting now because first time I play here, and many players want to play this week, but, yeah, I can make it.

And then, yeah, it's so exciting now.

Q. At what point in the season did you think you could win Rookie of the Year, and how long has this been a goal for you this season?

HAE RAN RYU: So before the season it was my goal win Rookie of the Year. To be honest, I think after I won at Walmart I thought I had a pretty good chance.

In terms of the like goal-wise, it was even before the season started.

Q. Rose, kick it over to you next. Your first CME Group Tour Championship. I know it's been a wild year for you with the first win coming in this summer to earn you membership. How happy are you to be here and how would you say your season has been



overall?

ROSE ZHANG: I'm so grateful. Just starting off in June it was kind of my debut and everything followed quickly after, playing all the majors and then getting all those sponsor's exemptions and not needing those sponsor's exemptions and playing throughout Asia. It's been a very busy and fulfilling season.

I'm really glad to be here and just being here, being able to compete this week let alone, is already a great achievement for me.

Q. What are some of the biggest things you've learned this season that you are maybe going to take into your first full season on the LPGA Tour next year?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, a lot of life lessons thus far. I feel like all I wanted was to learn what it's like inside the ropes, learn how to take care of my team, handle my body, navigate kind of the dynamics of both media and golf.

So I've been trying to focus on the big picture of everything, and I think that's kind of the biggest thing. I just want to kind of have fun, build relationships, and ultimately that's kind of what I did.

Q. Rose, almost a year ago this week you were at the East Lake Cup, and now you're here at the Tour Championship. Could you in your wildest dreams have imagined how the last year would progress?

ROSE ZHANG: I honestly couldn't, because actually this was the same time last year where I talked to Coach Walker and decided that tour golf was out there for me, and following my sophomore year I wanted to try to pursue it. After NAAs everything came really quick.

In these short months, five, six months, never would've imagined myself even being in contention, and playing CME, and I feel like I guess everything has happened so quickly.

Last week I was able to go back to Stanford, say hi to my teammates, my coach, my friends, and it's definitely a very different world that I wouldn't have imagined myself being in right now.



Q. Reading your transcript in Japan, sounded like you were pretty tired. You've had a big year. I guess first, how are you energy-wise? What have you learned about spacing out your schedule next year?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, well, I got half a week of rest coming back from Japan. Had another sponsor outing.

I feel like energy-wise we're yearning for a little bit more of just that little break. I just hope to end the year off with the best efforts I can put out on the golf course.

But, you know, following next year, I'm definitely taking a little bit more of a break in the beginning of the year before starting off the rest of the season with plenty of golf tournaments to play.

I'm also going back in January to school, so it'll be a good time for me to be grinding somewhere else apart from the golf course.

Q. Can you remind us of how the system works, the quarter system, from January to what? How many classes will you be taking?

ROSE ZHANG: So Stanford is a quarter system; a quarter is ten weeks. You know, school starts in winter quarter, January to March, to close to the end of March, and that includes finals weeks and whatnot.

So I'll be kind of taking that time to go back and study in person. And we have the Asia swing, Florida swing, so it's to be determined on whether or not I'm playing those yet.

Q. How many classes will you take?

ROSE ZHANG: I'm taking five classes, 22 units potentially. If I'm slacking off a little bit, 20. (Laughter.)

Q. Wow.

ROSE ZHANG: I kind of have to. It's something that I have to grind on.

Q. How many units do you need to graduate?

ROSE ZHANG: I am 55% done with my graduation, so I have like 90 units, 85, which means I'm going to have to be working a little harder in the next couple years if I want to kind of simultaneously play golf and study.

Q. If you can go back to yourself ahead of Liberty National, what would you tell yourself now that you didn't know then?

ROSE ZHANG: I would tell myself that I think the biggest lesson is that it's okay to say no. Yes, you have your responsibilities and obligations for media, sponsor outings, but ultimately you have to learn how to take care of yourself and your own work, your own craft, and that's to be playing at your best on the golf course.

So for me, I've heard that from so many veterans, but I haven't really experienced it for myself, where sometimes it is a requirement for you to say no just so that you can make sure you're 100% every time you're out there.

Regardless of whether you're competing on the golf course or even doing media, you want to make sure your full energy, ready to go.

Q. Planning to play any events while you're in school in the first quarter?

ROSE ZHANG: Maybe one or two. If I'm going to be taking 22 units, it's a little hard.

Q. I hope I ask this question appropriately. I just listened to an interview with Danielle Kang relating her first year on tour to where she is now and how unself-aware she was and learning about the history of the game. I think because of your success you've obviously taken a totally different path. She felt like she was on autopilot for the first year out here. How much are you learning about your self-awareness, and would you say there is a little bit of autopilot that happens when things are coming at you so fast like they have been?

ROSE ZHANG: 100%. I think especially when things come your way really quickly, it's very natural to resort to autopilot, especially when you're fatigued and tired.

I will say that sometimes it's necessary to be on that kind of autopilot dynamic and level. You don't really want that to happen a lot.

Q. Is that something that you have recognized or that somebody has pointed out to you, or just the nature of the beast because of how things have unfolded?

ROSE ZHANG: I think to some level every player out here, because it's such a long year and everyone is grinding, they're on autopilot at some point in their season or career.

I developed a self-awareness that I realized I've been autopilot trying to handle everything but not really thinking through things, so definitely have been feeling it.

I have been on autopilot a little bit in Asia, but apart from

that, I think it's good to self-reflect a little bit.

Q. And to a Rookie of the Year, digesting everything, what has been for you the highlight or moment that has been like, pinch me, this is happening?

HAE RAN RYU: It's a (indiscernible) because, yeah, I'm first time winning in the tour, and, yeah, so grateful for the moments.

Q. Rose, I was talking to a Alexa Pano, and she talked about her friendship with you, being in the same point in your career.

ROSE ZHANG: Yep.

Q. Was important to have someone else in the same position. How much did that help you, the friendship with her? And she said once she won it was surreal thinking you guys are close friends and both have won on the LPGA Tour.

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, 100%. I actually grew up with her in junior golf and we even played our first invitationals together at The ANNIKA, which was here in Florida.

So we go a long way back. We've played junior Solheim Cups together, Junior Ryder Cup, played a lot of championships and developed that relationship.

Alexa and I are really good friends, and when she was out here -- she turned pro earlier than me. She's been out here grinding and I've seen how dedicated and driven she was.

It really inspired everyone around me, including myself, to push ourselves harder to that tour level.

Now that she's got a professional win, I've got a professional win, it's kind of weird to think that we were kids and then now we're on tour, pretty similar in just same age and being able to have success out here. It's really, really just cool to see this dynamic.

Q. Since we're talking so much about school, seems appropriate to ask you, what grade would you each give yourselves in how you handled your first season out here on the LPGA Tour?

ROSE ZHANG: Grade?

HAE RAN RYU: You first.

ROSE ZHANG: Okay. I'm thinking B a solid B.

HAE RAN RYU: B?

ROSE ZHANG: Why? What?

HAE RAN RYU: B? Just a B?

ROSE ZHANG: Because like, you know, it's -- I don't know. I just feel like I could have done a lot better in ways of kind of handling myself on tour and I feel like there is always room for improvements.

When it's A I feel like everything is just very solid, you know what you're doing. As of now I feel like there is still a lot more room to improve on and I think I can do better. (Smiling.)

I think yours is A, Rookie of the Year.

HAE RAN RYU: B plus.

Q. Why B plus? Why not an A?

HAE RAN RYU: Because I can't -- yeah, I think it's same as Rose. All of the solid play I can make some A, but, yeah, B plus is I think the best.

Q. Put you on the spot one more time. If you had to describe your rookie season in a single word, what would you use?

ROSE ZHANG: One word: Fulfilling.

HAE RAN RYU: One word...

ROSE ZHANG: What did I say? Fulfilling.

HAE RAN RYU: It's new. (Laughter.)

ROSE ZHANG: That's solid.

Q. I love that.

RUONING YIN: Who's your favorite player on the tour?

ROSE ZHANG: Favorite player on tour? I think it's Ron Dog.

RUONING YIN: I think it's R Dog.

Q. This might be a little fun, too, Rose. We had Rachel on Sirius XM a little while ago, and she mentioned something about a rib you brought her. What's that story? Can we tell it?

ROSE ZHANG: No, it's a really funny story actually and



not a lot of people know about it. It was this year at Nationals where we were fortunate -- it was so funny because last year at NCAAs we roomed together. This year she was having that surgery and her first rib got removed.

So she has this little bone that's in a little container in a plastic bag. She actually brought it to Nationals and we were rooming together again. So then we decided to make it a joke and have her put her rib in my golf bag during the practice round of the NCAAs.

Safe to say that I didn't carry it with me throughout the tournament, but I can tell you that that rib was in my golf bag for a solid 24 hours. And, yeah we came back and it was like that's the most low-key disturbing thing that we could have done with her rib.

You know, Rachel and I are a little bit of a weird, too, so it was really funny for the whole team and us.

Q. Attached at the rib instead of the hip.

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah.

Q. Do you still have possession of it?

ROSE ZHANG: I do not. I gave it back to the rightful owner. I can tell that you she was literally a part of my journey at the NCAAs, so there was that.

Q. Glad I got clarification on that.

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, I don't have her bone. I think it's with her now.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much, ladies. We appreciate your time.

ROSE ZHANG: Thank you.

HAE RAN RYU: Thank you.

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