

Cognizant Founders Cup

Thursday, May 9, 2024

Clifton, New Jersey, USA

Upper Montclair Country Club

Rose Zhang

Quick Quotes

Q. All right, here with Rose Zhang after her first round at the Cognizant Founders Cup. Leader in the clubhouse. Bogey-free. Stellar front nine. Take us through the day. What was working for you?

ROSE ZHANG: Definitely. It was almost just auto-command kind of golf. I feel like in the last couple weeks it's been a little bit difficult. I've been struggling a little bit with the golf swing and gaining confidence in my preparation.

But going into this week I kind of let it all go; let the expectations go a little bit more. I was able to free myself up a little bit, which was really nice to see some shots go in, especially on the greens. I was able to get some putting momentum in, so it was really nice.

Q. I'm sure no more finals also helps that too?

ROSE ZHANG: Oh, it's incredible. I feel like especially, even though I'm a leave of absence right now, the last couple weeks it's still been a little bit of the aftermath of not sleeping and grinding in school.

So right now I'm just trying to settle down a little bit more and figure out, navigate my way around how to really play this game and get dialed in.

Q. What can a round like this do for your confidence? Lowest round on the LPGA Tour. We're almost on a year now. What can a round like this do for your confidence?

ROSE ZHANG: It's pretty big actually, just because I know that the number's out there for me, and if I'm able to get dialed in and do what I need to prior to playing an event, and also even just during the event, at least the number's out there and I can kind of let free a little bit more to play my own game.

I think as long as I have that little bit of confidence, no matter what happens the next couple days, I know that I'm going to be able to grind it out and figure something out



along the way.

Q. I know this number is not a stranger to you at all, especially in your collegiate days. To finally do it out here, much fun is that? You rattled off, what, four straight birdies -- six birdies in an eight-hole stretch. How much fun is it just to like to play it good?

ROSE ZHANG: It's been a hot minute since I've been able to do that. Honestly, like you said, it's really fun. Reignites the passion to be able to grind more and try to play better.

But, yeah, I mean, especially in my collegiate days, the golf courses, even though they did play difficult and there is a lot of amazing players out there, the LPGA is definitely on another level where courses are longer, they're tighter, and you're going to have to be able to navigate your way around everything.

So it definitely builds up my confidence and love for the game. Even though you don't really think about the scores, it's really nice to shoot a low number here and there.

Q. And for you, New Jersey is obviously a special place for you for a lot of different reasons. To add this to the memory bank and build on it over the next three days, what are you really looking for from yourself after a round like today as you move ahead and even into next week?

ROSE ZHANG: For sure. I mean, it's almost the one year anniversary I guess for me being on tour. I still feel like I'm learning every single week about myself, about how I should approach the golf game, and the lifestyle out here on tour.

Really I think the next couple days it's just me trying to play the best that I can, and I think you never really know what's going to happen. You never really know what's going to happen, especially with golf being such an up and down sport.

But I'm really -- I really learned to love it, and I'm going to keep grinding.



Q. Rose, you won at first -- on your first try. I think everybody was waiting, six in a row or whatever. What's been your opinion of how you've played and why haven't the wins come?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, for sure. It's been a really interesting journey for me. I think the first couple months that I was out here it was very adrenaline based where I was just living the life and kind of going out, having a lot of fun, no expectations, just learning and taking everything in.

I think once you feel a little bit of fatigue it's a little bit difficult to get yourself back on track. I just want to reiterate, it's so hard winning out here on tour. What Nelly is he is doing is something quite unheard of, and only two other players have done it before.

It's the best players in the world, and sometimes I have to remind myself of that. Just because I was winning a lot in college and in this game, you lose more than you win. So I do appreciate everyone's support and expectations on me. I think it takes a lot to be able to do well out here.

So a little bit more patience and hopefully I'm going to be grinding more, and I guess playing a little bit better.

Q. You did not play here last year. How much of the course have you played -- I mean how many times?

ROSE ZHANG: This golf course? I only played the front nine on Tuesday and the back nine on Wednesday for the pro-am, so I can't say I know this course so, so well, but it's a beautiful golf course.

It's tight. It's a difficult golf course to play. But if you're playing well, apparently numbers like this can come out.

Q. I have one other question. Madelene says this course fits her eye. Do you have any experience like that or does it -- or is just a nice course that you played well?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, I don't really think about that too much. I think that for me, there is definitely golf courses where you tell yourself, wow, like I'm playing well. I can see the shots.

But it's not something that I necessarily think about, wow, this golf hole suits me very well. So I think I just let go of that expectation.

But I do think this golf course is very suiting for the eye, and if you're able to hit good shots and be in the right places, you'll be able to play well out here.

Q. Been asking all the players this: Here at the Founders Cup. We are celebrating some of our Pioneers, Pat Bradley and Beth Daniel. What have they kind of meant to you growing up watching the game, playing the game, and what have they done for LPGA and women's sports? And not even them, but the Founders in general. What have they all done for you as inspiration to play and love the game?

ROSE ZHANG: 100%. People like -- I guess in general it's so nice to have this event that's designated to celebrate them, especially Pat Bradley and Beth Daniel. They've done so much for the game and I've seen them growing up, giving back to the game in ways that not a lot of people would be able to.

Not only were they incredible players back in their days, but they continue to bring influence to the players out here currently.

I saw them in junior golf tournaments and they were always just trying to spread love and passion for the game; really just encouraging all the little girls out there, and that's myself included.

But not a lot of people talk about the Founders it's so nice to really just give them all the credit for what they've done for this tour.

So I'm inspired by them and I'm glad they get a lot more recognition now.

Q. Just as part of the younger generation of the LPGA, a rookie last year, just how important is it to carry on and educate your -- the other players in your class, like what the Founders have done and how to carry on their legacy?

ROSE ZHANG: It's so important. On 18 I see the sign, Act Like a Founder. I think that holds true for every single player in this field. No matter how great at golf you are or no matter how inexperienced you are out here, everyone has a role to play in trying to inspire other people.

It comes through their fruits and the way that they act. So being able to really just keep that in mind, it holds up and allows other people to really be inspired by this game.

The Founders have done incredibly. They don't have -- with their humble abilities they've been able to impact so many players, so being able to do that will -- it's kind of respect giving back to them.

Q. Last one. I saw you reposted on your story Rachel Heck, congratulations to her. I'm just going to give

you this moment to give some love to her and some of your Stanford teammates.

ROSE ZHANG: 100%. You have no idea how excited I was yesterday just looking at their scores. First time in Stanford program history. The Top 4 has all four Stanford players. Like that's incredible. It's a testament to how hard they worked even in the winter quarter that I was there. And I wasn't on the team.

They've been working so hard, workouts every morning, practice, and then going to play these tournaments. It's just -- I'm so happy for them.

I'm cheering them on for when they go to NATTYs, especially Rachel. I was almost crying. Oh, my gosh. With her being able to come back after all she's been through and to win, so much love for you Rachel.

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