

Cognizant Founders Cup

Sunday, May 12, 2024

Clifton, New Jersey, USA

Upper Montclair Country Club

Rose Zhang

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, very pleased to be joined by the winner the Cognizant Founders Cup Rose Zhang. Rose, just take us through the day. Obviously very tight to start with Madelene and find yourself three shots down. To makeup the ground and win, what went into today?

ROSE ZHANG: Honestly today has been a roller coaster. I think from the start of the day just coming out, it was raining, it was cold. I knew it was going to be a grind.

I think coming out I had those expectations of today I really have to find it in me to even play well, let alone win. And Madelene has been playing rock solid golf. She's been blowing away the field so just been trying to keep up.

I think that was the mindset going in. I didn't have any expectations because I knew coming out here there was going to be a lot of golf to play. A lot of mistakes could have happened, can happen, and I just have to be able to take whatever I have out here.

So that was the whole day. Starting from 1, hit the pin and definitely did not expect that, but it was a nice little save. And going from there was able to hit some close. Gave me a little bit of momentum just in my own round.

Madelene was playing lights out as well. So I wasn't really thinking too much of it. Going to the back nine, yes, I was a couple down, but I don't think I ever really thought about it too much. I just enjoyed the round. Enjoyed my time with Oly and also Madelene and her caddie. We all had a good time.

Coming down the stretch it was honestly I just hit some crazy shots that I don't know if I could hit again in that moment of pressure and was able to get it done. That putt on the last hole, I was already shaking over the putt, but just thinking, okay, let's give it a chance, roll it. If it goes in, fine. If it doesn't, let's prepare ourselves for a playoff.

So I was full-on prepared for that.

Q. Pretty gutsy to go 4-under in your last five to win

your second professional event. When you hit I guess, 15, 14 what was going through your mind? Did you know you had to make something like that happen?

ROSE ZHANG: I honestly didn't just because I expected Madelene to get some birdies in as well. So for me personally, I was just trying to hit greens, get the right yardage, and see if I could roll in some putts.

Starting out the day it was a little bit hard to get my putter going. I didn't really think too much of it. It was a little frustrating to not be able to make some putts when I needed to put some pressure on her.

But it was -- coming down the stretch I was able to make some really clutch putts and ultimately that's what really saved me.

Q. Coming up on your year-a-versary as a professional. To pick up two wins in your first year as a pro golfer, if I told you that last May or even last April, what would you have thought and would you have believed you would be sitting here with arguably one of the biggest trophies in women's golf next to you?

ROSE ZHANG: It was definitely very heavy. I wouldn't believe you just because I was even considering not turning pro, from last May or two years back. I wanted to be prepared. I wanted to come out here and be able to compete against the best in the world. In order to have that, I had to work my way up.

So at the moment, a moment in time when I was a high schooler, I didn't think I had the game yet. So coming out here clearly everyone's such incredible players with incredible resumes, every person in the field basically has a win under their belt.

I think being able to even come out with a win, coming out with two, just very blessed.

Q. After I think 13 you were down 3 with five to go. Is there anything in your mind going, I got to pick it up? Or is it just play your game and hopefully it gets



better?

ROSE ZHANG: It was the latter for sure, just because when you're out here and playing this type of golf course, Upper Montclair is not an easy course to say the least.

You need to know how to hit the fairways, how to hit the greens and give yourself the best opportunities for birdie. That's all I could have done, because if I started looking ahead of myself and stressing out about the score, I could easily bogey and that would ultimately seal the fate of not being able to hoist the trophy.

I think I really did a good job settling myself and almost accepting anything that comes. If there is an opportunity I'll take it. If there isn't I'll just keep on playing my game. That's all there was to it.

Q. Considering on the first hole you almost fell on your... are you surprised you won? That shot could have sprayed any way the way you were -- hits the pin and...

ROSE ZHANG: 100%. Yeah, it was a very interesting way to start off the round, but I guess it kind of got a little bit of nerves off my back just because I had that easy tap-in par putt.

I just thought to myself, wow, I mean, today is probably going to be a lucky day. Maybe I can get something going. Would not have imagined myself being who are now, especially after 12.

Q. Just one final question: Obviously after the win you didn't win, and I'm just wondering is this like you win now, does this feel like - I don't want to say vindication - but just feels like it reinforces all the work, all the...

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, for sure. Coming out here on tour, there was a lot of the expectations on me to perform, especially after what I did at Mizuho last year.

And sometimes the noise did get to me a little bit, but I had such a good support group around me. I had people who really stuck in and told me to take it one at a time. Especially I was able to grow so much throughout the journey in this past year.

I don't know, it's crazy to come out here. Didn't have any expectation of having to win because I realize that it's all just noise and I really just have to be able to work at it myself and try my best to put myself in positions like this.

But no matter what happened this week, I would've been

very satisfied and it reignited my passion for the game once again.

Q. Congratulations, Rose. What was the conversation with your dad as you exited the green?

ROSE ZHANG: There actually wasn't much conversations. He's an Asian dad. Of course he was just saying, good job, happy for you.

Q. He was losing it on the side.

ROSE ZHANG: I know. He definitely was. I don't think I've ever seen him this happy. Both him and I grew a lot in this past year together, traveling together, being inside the ropes, outside the ropes.

He's my number one supporter, and I don't know, it's crazy to really see him this excited, because back in the day and most of the time he was just, okay, why did you hit this shot and used the wrong club, why did you go here, why did you miss it low. It was all those conversations.

To really see him happy, I'm so happy that I can celebrate with him and be with him.

Q. All business to all celebration.

ROSE ZHANG:

Q. You're still in the transition of finishing school and establishing yourself as a professional even with two wins. Where does the first trophy live and where will this join it?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, so the first trophy is back at home in Irvine but it's going to transition to my Vegas home now since I do live there. Even though I'm not going back most of the time, I'll still be living there I guess in the off-season.

This will probably be -- I don't know. Might be in Vegas; might be in California. Might be in California for a little bit before so my mom and brother and sister-in-law can admire it.

Q. And finally, you were talking with Karen Stupples about how your faith has really allowed you to play great golf. Can you detail what that looks like? Is that daily devotional? What grounds you specifically with faith?

ROSE ZHANG: 100% I deepened my faith in college. I was able to really deepen my relationship with God and grow with people in the community and go to church. From there, I really realized that golf was very -- a very big part

of my life that sometimes it overwhelms me, and with my faith I was able to really re-grasp myself as a person, as just a child of God who needs support all the time.

And I guess especially in the past year there has been a lot happening, and every time I haven't been playing great or even in times I have been playing great, I've been doing daily devotionals with friends and it's been really just calming.

So just very thankful that I had His strength in me to be able to come out with all this. And there was definitely a lot of energy, a lot of I guess shivers when I was playing out there, but I had something in me that really told me to keep myself grounded and patient, which I'm very thankful for.

And also Scottie in the Masters interview, he's been a huge inspiration for me and other people. I mean, he's an incredible player to say the least, but even if he didn't win, even if he doesn't play the greatest golf, I think himself, how he carries himself as a follower of Jesus' is incredible, and I was very inspired by that.

Q. With this win you're likely going to move into Olympic position. Was that a goal of yours from the start of the year to get into the field? What would that mean to you if you get there?

ROSE ZHANG: Oh, yeah, I mean, I haven't really thought about it too much, but I definitely knew that this year I was on the cusp of entering Olympic territory.

I think in the first couple events coming out I put a lot of pressure on myself to be able to play well, and partially the reason is because I didn't want to miss out on the Olympics.

I've been watching it since I was five years old, so to be able to kind of near an inch towards that, definitely was a goal in previous events. This event I kind of took to slow and didn't really think about it much.

It is a cool thing that I would love to be a part of.

Q. You mentioned since the Mizuho win last year that sometimes the outside noise got to you. How did you see that noise impact you over the last year?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, I would say that it just -- trying to block out everything did tire me out a little bit more. I was a little bit more fatigued with being able to practice and putting in the work when there were a lot of thoughts circulating with how my results are.

I think more so I put the most pressure on myself to be

able to perform well, and becoming more result-driven definitely doesn't help anyone. That becomes a really bad cycle or circle to be in.

And I think ultimately I kind of got out of that and became a little bit more process-driven, just like I was a little bit before in college and amateur golf. And it's helped a lot more.

Q. Hi, Rose. Congratulations.

ROSE ZHANG: Thank you.

Q. I wanted to piggyback a little bit on Chantel's (ph) question. I think when we think about your time at Stanford we think about the golf team and class. How much is that community that you were just talking about, your faith community at school, how much is that preparing you for what you have to handle in the spotlight of tour life? How much does that play a part in why you want to go back physically to Stanford?

ROSE ZHANG: It plays an incredible amount -- I don't think there are words to emphasize how important it is for me just because I knew that I loved the environment. I could grow so much being at school and seeing all these athletes and incredible people building startups, kind of carving their own path to life.

I haven't been more inspired by any groups of people, and that diversity really allows me to open my horizons a little bit more and not only think about my golf game, but also think about myself as a person.

And I think that ultimately helps me when I'm out here to understand how to grind and apply that process a little bit more to my own life.

Q. And one last one: You talked about trying to find the confidence with the new putter. How much does a day like today erase a lot of the doubts you had with this putter?

ROSE ZHANG: I know, my putters have been quite interesting. I've had a love-hate relationship with almost all of them. But this one in particular I think I'm going to keep it a little longer in the bag, for sure.

Hopefully my dad doesn't bring it on a train again and we can go about our business.

But to be fair, I think I just needed a little bit more confidence in my stroke, and visualize my putts a little bit more. I went back to really practicing the fundamentals, just making a bunch of putts, and that's definitely prepared



me a little bit more. Whereas before I sidetracked in that area.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much, congratulations again, Rose.

ROSE ZHANG: Appreciate it.

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