

# Mizuho Americas Open

Wednesday, May 31, 2023

Jersey City, New Jersey, USA

Liberty National Golf Club

**Katie Li**

**Yana Wilson**

**Gianna Clemente**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome everyone back to the media center. I am here with three of our AJGA juniors competing in the field at Mizuho Americas Open this week.

On my left and left of the screen we have Katie Li, in the middle, Yana Wilson, and on my right, Gianna Clemente.

Welcome ladies, and congratulations for being in the field this week.

My first question I'll start here with Katie. Being our New Jersey native from the age AJGA in the field this week and getting to compete close-ish to home, just tell us how prepared are you for this event and how excited you are to be here.

KATIE LI: I wouldn't say I'm any more or less prepared than any other event, but definitely more excited because this is home grass, home ground, and I think I have some school friends coming, so it'll be a lot of the fun. I'm super excited.

**Q. How far away do you live from Liberty National? Any experience with the course before this event?**

KATIE LI: So I'm around 35 minutes out, and, yeah, I've played the Polo junior tournament here. AJGA hosted it I think two years ago.

**Q. What does the course look like for you? How does that familiarity help?**

KATIE LI: When I played the AJGA it was match play so it's -- now that it's stroke play or Stableford it changes the course a little bit. Still, I think I have a good sense of where the nooks and crannies are to be in proper placement for birdies.

**Q. Yana, coming in this week one of the top ranked**



**players on the AJGA this week. How prepared do you feel to tackle Liberty National?**

YANA WILSON: I feel pretty prepared. It's a pretty tough course. Definitely championship style course. You know you got to hit the ball well, chip good around the greens.

Which I'm kind of used, because in Vegas we play with a lot of tight lies. I feel like that has kind of prepared me.

**Q. You're also coming off some professional experience. You played on the Epson Tour a few weeks ago, right?**

YANA WILSON: Yeah.

**Q. How does that experience help you for this week?**

YANA WILSON: It's super cool playing in a professional field two weeks in a row. I feel like that experience has really helped and kind of just get me prepared for this event.

I'm very excited to play with the pros again this week, so it'll be a lot of the fun.

**Q. Gianna, you have a ton of LPGA experience, especially last week, Monday qualifying a bunch of times. So tell me how prepared you are as well for this week.**

GIANNA CLEMENTE: I feel really prepared. Definitely been playing a lot of golf recently. It's, as she said, a super challenging course, and I think we're all really excited for the challenge.

The professional experience definitely does help, but it's a new week, new course, with new people, so just taking it day by day and trying to have as much fun as I can.

**Q. How happy were you to not have to Monday qualify this week?**

GIANNA CLEMENTE: I actually really like Monday qualifying. Hopefully I'll have a couple more of those opportunities this year.



But, yeah, it's nice to not have to qualify for anything. You know you're already in. It's a nice feeling.

**Q. Speaking of the rest of the year, top-ranked amateur in the world. Do you have any sponsor invitations, anything coming up on the LPGA Tour that we can look forward to?**

GIANNA CLEMENTE: We're working on it. It's definitely a constant work in progress. It's very difficult to get exemptions as a junior and amateur. I'm in the Monday qualifier for ShopRite next week, so hopefully that will go well and I'll Monday qualify again.

Hopefully I'll get more opportunities in the near future.

**Q. Could you all tell us who you were paired up with as far as an LPGA pro this week to play a practice round with, the big sister program?**

GIANNA CLEMENTE: I was with Paula Creamer. Played nine holes with her yesterday and she offered a lot of great advice and told me a lot about when she was younger and when she was a junior and amateur. It was really fun to hear that from her.

**Q. What was her best piece of advice?**

GIANNA CLEMENTE: I talked to her dad a lot about caddieing and just seeing her grow through junior and amateur and eventually into professional golf. He told me a lot of stuff just about caddieing and watching your daughter grow like that, and he's still out here watching her.

So I had a couple good conversations with him, which was really nice.

YANA WILSON: Yesterday I played with Andrea Lee and she was by far the nicest professional I've ever met. She was super down to earth, super cool. Gave me a lot of good advice about the course, and just super nice about everything.

The day before that I played with Yealimi Noh, just 18 holes. She told me how was it to go from junior golf to professional golf right way.

And then yesterday played with Andrea Lee and she went four years at Stanford.

So I got two sides of the story to see what path I should take I guess.

**Q. Did you know Andrea's story before you played with her?**

YANA WILSON: A little bit. I do know she attended Stanford for four years and played on that team and was successful doing it. So, yeah.

KATIE LI: Well, I played with Lilia Vu for nine holes yesterday and it was really interesting to watch her play a practice round, because as a junior I want to constantly learn how to be better, make my practice more efficient.

So it was really interesting to watch her do that and see all the shots she hit. I want to compare how she hits balls versus how I hit them.

Yeah, that was really beneficial for me.

**Q. I also saw I think you posted on in Instagram that Rose Zhang is your idol.**

KATIE LI: I love Rose Zhang. (Smiling.)

**Q. Can you tell us more about that? Why?**

KATIE LI: I really respect her. She's probably one of the nicest people I've ever met, probably one of the best golfers I've ever met. She's so humble.

Before I met her I heard people talk about her and about how nice she was, but I was like shocked myself when I met her when I was younger. I was star struck, too.

But she's someone that I like want to model after, 100%.

**Q. Gianna, something different for you this week. Different caddie on the bag. I know dad, Patrick, has been your caddie, at least last year for the three Monday Qs. What was it like having Phil on the bag and what led to that change?**

GIANNA CLEMENTE: So the AJGA, we're only allowed local caddies this week, so definitely not my first choice. But I spent the whole day yesterday with Phil and he's a really nice guy. Knows a lot about the course and he offered a lot of local knowledge that was really helpful.

I think I would be fine by myself, but it's always nice to have somebody to carry the bag and help you along. So, yeah, so far it's going really well. Hopefully that will keep going.

**Q. Tell me about that Four-Ball win a couple weeks ago with Avery. Looked like you had a lot of fun.**

GIANNA CLEMENTE: Yeah, it was really fun. Definitely a really long week, but it was really fun. It was really enjoyable. I think Four-Ball is a little bit more fun just -- it's a little bit more casual.

Obviously still means a lot, but it's definitely a little bit more casual because you have a partner to back you up.

Match play is always really fun. I love match play. There were a couple tense moments towards the end, but match play for us was really fun. We had a really good time.

**Q. Yana, I feel like you stormed onto the scene last year. I remember that incredible shot you hit over the water that everybody lost their minds about. Were also the 2022 U.S. Girls Junior champion. To have that kind of experience and you show up to this week, does that help you at all? I know it's the girls championship, but still got to provide some valuable experience.**

YANA WILSON: Yeah, I had a lot of confidence after winning the U.S. Junior. Honestly, I have no expectations going in any week. Like Gia said earlier, different course, different players, different conditions.

So I don't really have any expectations going into this week, but I do have that confidence from that win.

**Q. And then Katie, learned you're going Duke, correct, letter of intent?**

KATIE LI: Yes.

**Q. Have you sought out any of the Duke alums on site this week to maybe talk about their experience, or do you have any contact with some of the LPGA players that were Duke alums?**

KATIE LI: I have not seen them yet, but I'm going to try it hunt them down at some point. I do have Leona Maguire's phone number and I'm really looking forward to talking to her more.

**Q. What led to the decision to go to Duke? I know it's a storied college.**

KATIE LI: Dream school. Since I was young my parents were like, you got to go Duke. I was like, why? They're like, it's Duke. I was like, okay.

But when I first visited I knew it was the place for me. I loved the coaches. Campus is one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen. Food is great.

So it was a no-brainer.

**Q. For all three of you guys, you're not just playing with LPGA professionals, but you are also getting thrown through the wringer of doing press conferences. What's that experience like, getting the full tour life for the week been like for you?**

KATIE LI: I mean, like being a pro isn't all about golf I guess. I'm learning a lot about that right now, this month especially.

But it's fun to know what goes on behind the scenes, and it's not just, be good at golf, only be good at golf. You got to be nice, too. (Smiling.)

YANA WILSON: She's right.

No, I absolutely love kind of this tour vibe and just hanging out with all the professionals. I grew up playing a lot like on Drive, Chip & Putt and kind of working my way up. Drive, Chip & Putt two years, and then Notah Begay, and then U.S. Girls Junior.

I do say I love the media attention. I think it's cool because you have all that out here. Being on here is very exciting for me and always a treat to be out here.

GIANNA CLEMENTE: Yeah, I think adding on to what she said, I've always loved the media as well. That is something I went through a lot last summer and into the fall with all the LPGA events that I played in, Monday qualifying three times.

The media wanted to talk to me a lot, and that was something I was kind of used to but not as much as -- I was really like shocked as much as I got. Like especially at my second LPGA event. I was like, whoa, this is a lot of attention. It's definitely something that you have to get used to. You either like it or you don't.

In both our cases we definitely do. (Smiling.)

**Q. Yana, your life has changed a lot in the past year, committing to Oregon. You have had some pretty cool events on the schedule. Firstly I want to ask, how excited are you for Pebble?**

YANA WILSON: I'm super excited. I've never played Pebble before but heard only good things about it.

For it to be the year of returning of the champions is going to be really cool because I get to reconnect with some past champions that I already know.

**Q. And Oregon commitment. How excited are you and**



**what went into that decision?**

YANA WILSON: I'm really excited. Oregon is a great school and they have amazing facilities and the coaches are just the best. Shoutout Coach D. He's awesome.

Going with one of my really good friends Kiara O'Meara, who is also in the field this week, so that will be a really good experience.

THE MODERATOR: I will close with this one. This is the first time ever that the AJGA has played in an event alongside the LPGA Tour players. How important is this opportunity for you guys that Mizuho Americas Open and Michelle Wie West are providing?

GIANNA CLEMENTE: I think it's extremely important. Definitely something we've all been looking forward to for a really long time. Every since the rumor that the tournament was starting we've all been looking forward to it a lot.

As juniors we don't get these opportunities very often. So definitely really exciting for all of us.

I think we are all really excited to play with all of them.

YANA WILSON: I just want to thank Michelle Wie and Mizuho for all their efforts and support and everything they do for us this week. This week just amazing, and it's not comparable to any tournament that I've ever played in before.

It's really awesome to be here.

KATIE LI: Yeah, but it's not just playing with them, it's learning about how a whole LPGA tournament functions. Big thanks to everyone that helped host this event, because without them, I don't -- I hope that I'll get to experience this in the future, but like at least I will have at least once in my life inside the ropes.

THE MODERATOR: Just one or all can answer this. How important is it for the growth of women's game in general having juniors experience this alongside the pros?

YANA WILSON: Yeah, no, I think it's so important. I love that this tournament paired us with kind of like a big sister. We kind of got to learn and see what they would do on a day-to-day basis or week-to-week basis.

It was just really cool learning from all of them, and it's definitely an experience that we'll all never forget.

GIANNA CLEMENTE: What she said. (Laughter.)

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much ladies and enjoy the rest of your day.

GIANNA CLEMENTE: Thank you so much.

YANA WILSON: Thank you.

KATIE LI: Thank you.

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