

# Mizuho Americas Open

Sunday, June 4, 2023

Jersey City, New Jersey, USA

Liberty National Golf Club

## Rose Zhang

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome everybody to the media center. Thank you so much for your patience, as your newest LPGA Tour champion is highly in demand, and that is miss Rose Zhang.

Rose, congratulations.

ROSE ZHANG: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: You achieved your first LPGA Tour victory here at Mizuho Americas Open. There is another big achievement on your end that I want to highlight first and foremost. Tell us your exciting news.

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, I'm super excited. You guys will see me more on the LPGA Tour, as I am taking membership from now on, and I'll be playing in 2023.

THE MODERATOR: With this, Rose has accepted immediate LPGA Tour membership. You'll get CME points and official money for this one, so congratulations on that.

ROSE ZHANG: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Let's talk about your day today at the Mizuho Americas Open. What are your thoughts on the round today? I'm sure there were tons of nerves. Just take us through your day today before all the craziness started.

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, Liberty National is already a very difficult course to be playing on, and especially with the winds gusting up in the afternoon. Afternoon tee times are always hard on here.

But for me I really just had to stay composed throughout the round. You know, when you're under pressure birdieing is very difficult and going at flags sometimes is just not smart.

I didn't really give myself the most opportunities that I have given myself the prior days, so I've just been scrambling for pars. I'm fortunate to have really grinded throughout the

round and only managed two bogeys.

But I thought I played pretty solid throughout the day. My swing was a little bit fumbled, but apart from that, I was putting pretty well and my wedge game has really helped me.

THE MODERATOR: You had several big moments throughout your round. I think of the long par putt on 17, the long playoff putt. What would you say is the biggest moment for you today?

ROSE ZHANG: I would say one was 17, that par putt. Especially with me missing a little five-, six-footer on the previous hole.

I really had to tap into a really good putting stroke and commit to my lines, especially on 17. Had a really difficult lag putt, and managing to make that nine-footer really gave me the confidence to go to the next hole.

But the final shot on 18, the second shot, was one of the best shots that I've ever hit, especially with me being under pressure.

Managing to hit a 180 yard shot to six, seven feet, has really enabled me to put myself in a position where I can two-putt for par and seal the deal.

So, yeah, it was a very difficult shot with the wind pushing against me, but it went well. (Smiling.)

**Q. Rose, what a week. What did it mean to do this? Obviously Excel put on this event. What did it mean to you to do this in front of Michelle Wie West, somebody I think you've been compared to a little bit coming out this early? What did it mean to have that conversation with her, the moment with her on the green when it was finally done?**

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, I know that this has been said throughout the week, but I can't emphasize it enough. Michelle Wie is a true influence to the game of golf, women's golf. For her to come out and host and come out and support me is just so incredible. She's just such a great mentor, a great friend. Especially seeing her on 18,



that really brought me to tears. I really thought about all the efforts that she puts into this event to make it possible.

She's just been so supportive from day one, and especially with this week being my pro debut, she really gave me some words, just to have fun, go out there, and do what you know.

Especially this morning, she also texted me and she went out of her way to text me. That's not something that a lot of people do. But I take these words very seriously, and I'm sure that -- it's just a true honor. She was like, good morning, smiley face. Then proceeded with, go out there, we're proud of you, have fun, and just go kill it, get the job done.

So even simple words like that, it just shows that Michelle is very detail oriented with being around people, and I'm really thankful for everything she's done this week.

**Q. I asked you this yesterday. It's a two-part question: Did you expect this? What have you learned now that 72 holes are over and you have the trophy in your hand?**

ROSE ZHANG: Answer is no. (Laughter.) I honestly didn't even expect to make the cut, and the reason why I say this is because I don't think about my expectations a lot.

I think about playing the golf course. I think about trying to shoot the best score that I can. Obviously I have frustrations, disappointments with my game, but I never once think about where I finish, where I should finish, et cetera.

So with that my mind, the expectation for me winning did not even cross my mind. I was just playing my game. I was having a good time out there. This is the game that I love, and I'm so thankful to be a professional doing it now.

**Q. Finally, finals next week. Are those on your mind at this point, or are you going to let that sit until Monday or Tuesday?**

ROSE ZHANG: It is most certainly on my mind. I have no idea what I'm going to do with that. I've got an essay due, PSAT due for CS. We'll figure that out. I'm also moving on the 13th, so I have a busy week ahead of me, and that's not golf related.

**Q. Took Annika 34 starts to win her first LPGA Tour win and Lorena Ochoa 33, and Lydia Ko, ten. You do it in your first time. How do you put that in perspective against those players?**

ROSE ZHANG: I did not know that stat, first of all. That just so cool. I'm so blessed. I feel like I've been given this platform to try to do the best that I can, be an influence to younger generations, and that's all I kind of think about.

I don't think about the stats of, hey, in ten starts I'm going to have my first LPGA Tour win, or it's my first time, I should be winning.

So, yeah, these are not things that I think about. But I just can only say that this is just amazing, and I'm really just in a place where I want to improve myself and I want to keep on doing better and better.

So we'll be seeing what I do in the future. As of now I'm just soaking it all in.

**Q. How did your experiences at Augusta where you had to come back, too, help you kind of grind it out today?**

ROSE ZHANG: It's quite interesting, because I feel like once I finished out 18 and signed my scorecard I knew I was going back out there. It felt exactly like Augusta National. Even though playoffs are never comfortable, I felt like it was such a familiar position that I've been in before that when I went out there, there wasn't any other thoughts other than another shot.

At least you're done with the tournament. All have to do is go and play some holes, sudden death against an amazing LPGA Tour player.

So, yeah, when I went out there with Jennifer, and all I was thinking about was try to hit fairway, try to hit green, try to make putt. Very simple, but that's ultimately all I was thinking about.

**Q. First off, congratulations. Yesterday I spoke to you about the composure you held on the course, and you told me you're human, you experience butterflies. How were those amplified today knowing the position you were walking into?**

ROSE ZHANG: They were certainly amplified. I mean, this is the first time I've been in this position as a professional, given this is my first start. I knew I was doing something pretty special just because everything is so foreign, everything is so new.

I'm in this new position, so when I went out there I really just -- I really tried to enjoy it. I think that's the mindset that I had throughout the rounds that really allowed me to push through and figure out how to get that golf ball in the hole.



Sometimes in golf the more complicated you think the worse the result is. I clearly had -- I had moments like that where I overcomplicated things, and learning from those experiences I came back and tried to stay simple.

So I really went back to what I'm all about. I knew that people were supporting me, but they were supporting me for the better, and that's all I could ask for.

**Q. And you talk about that support, and during your trophy ceremony you mentioned how your fan group is named the Rose Buds. What was it like having all that surrounding you regardless of the outcome and not leaving your side throughout the entire week?**

ROSE ZHANG: It was actually incredible. I have never had support like that. I can't even believe that these group of men called themselves Rose Buds when they were out there.

Just even when I had a par putt that was probably like a foot they would be like, go, Rose. I would just -- throughout the week I told my caddie, this is actually hilarious. I never imagined anyone to be cheering for me this loud, and I appreciated every single bit of that support.

And, yeah, it was low key embarrassing just because I would have this small little par putt and make it, and they would just go wild. Or even if I hit it in the fairway they're like, go, Rose, every single time.

But I really enjoyed their presence. It was really fun. I think that's what the game of golf should be, being outspoken, being fun, silly, and going from there.

**Q. The last one from me: What is where your biggest motivator, whether it's something that you internalize or something that comes from external factors that you truly embody when you go out and have these big moments?**

ROSE ZHANG: For sure. So one thing that especially growing up, I grew up in a Christian household, and going into college I really wanted to have an identity outside of golf, because sometimes as an athlete it's -- you know, it kind of takes a toll on you if you think that golf is your whole world.

And for me, I realized this being Christian is my identity, and knowing there is a higher power watching over me and always working to become better as a child of God is something that I've been trying to work on and that I will continue to work on throughout my whole life.

But that's kind of my driving force, just to be faithful, be thankful. I guess be a good presence to those around me. That allows me to go out there and realize that I'm just a vessel just trying to do her own thing. I'm doing it for the glory of God.

**Q. Hi, Rose. Congratulations.**

ROSE ZHANG: Thank you.

**Q. My first one just for housekeeping, what club did you hit on this last approach?**

ROSE ZHANG: I hit a 4-hybrid.

**Q. Okay. Perfect. When did you first feel like you had a platform, and what's been the best advice you've been given on how to use it?**

ROSE ZHANG: I will say I've started realizing my influence on juniors in my area, especially playing AJGA and playing Rolex TOC, being Rolex Player of the Year twice.

In my last Rolex TOC actually there was a bunch of -- I was 17 and there were a bunch of 12, 13 year olds just entering the AJGA scene. They asked for my signature, and it's quite interesting because I'm in the same playing field as them.

But that's when I really realized that, hey, like people know me. It's important to I guess be a good presence to them, be a good role model. They are kind of watching your every move to gain inspiration.

From there, going into college I really realized that I do have a platform of people and they're all rooting for me, but also trying to gain inspiration from what I do from my practice, work ethic, to what I do off the golf course, to relax, recover, et cetera.

So, yeah, it's just been ongoing from there. Escalated a little more.

**Q. I don't know if you've had a chance to look at your phone. Any really cool messages on there or an exchange that you had with your father or someone who is there in person that was really meaningful?**

ROSE ZHANG: My phone is currently in my golf bag and I don't know where it is. I am a little worried to look at that phone, but I'll be looking at messages really reliving every moment that I've had today.

**Q. Congratulations.**

ROSE ZHANG: Thank you.

**Q. Now that it's all said and done, is there any part of you that is kind of happy it went to a playoff? As far as the script of this thing goes with the way you tore it up the past two days, finishing the day at 1-over wouldn't be the ideal storybook ending than beating out an former major champion. Is there anything to that?**

ROSE ZHANG: I will say it's good for the story. It's good for the storytelling part of it. I've done this before, especially at ANWA, so I'm just so thankful. I can't begin to express how amazing this day has been. Being under pressure, having the thrills, the crowds, it's just -- I don't know. I can't explain how great, how well written this whole day could have ended.

But that playoff definitely provided a little bit of flavor, some thrill for everyone, so hope you guys enjoyed the show. (Laughter.)

**Q. We certainly did. It was great. Last one from me. When we spoke earlier in the week you said that you definitely did see this as a new step, new change. Is there any part of you that feels the transition is over? You just beat out a major winner in a playoff to win your first-ever professional event. Have you flipped the switch to pro?**

ROSE ZHANG: Transition has just started. I will say that this has been an incredible experience, but I have not seen anything thus far.

Going forward I understand that there is going to be a lot of bumps in the road, and I'm expecting a lot of obstacles that I'll have to uptake and uphold.

But I think this is just the start. This is just a steppingstone. It's crazy that this is my first win, first professional win already, but no doubt there is going to be a lot more things happening down the road.

I'm just going to be continuing to learn inside the ropes.

**Q. Rose, how difficult was it balancing the early-week obligations, whether it was media or sponsors, with preparing for the golf that you played?**

ROSE ZHANG: Of course. I generally feel like I've -- since I've had practice with media and playing afterwards from big amateur events, such as NAAs and Augusta National, you know, this week seemed more normal for me; but at the same time it wasn't.

It was definitely amplified more with me turning

professional with everyone kind of wondering, hey, why did you decide now? Why here?

But for me, I generally just thought that this week was just another tester for who I am, and I knew that balancing golf was going to be very hard.

Immediately after media I would tap into, okay, it's go time. You have to work. You have to be able to play on the golf course, put your ball where you need to, and go from there.

I really tried to make that quick switch in between.

**Q. Rose, was there any point today where you're sitting there and the birdies aren't going and you're scrambling for par that you're sitting there going, I'm losing this?**

ROSE ZHANG: Well, I never really looked at the leaderboard until 16, so I had no idea where I was in terms of position. But I knew that the golf course was playing hard. My two playing partners who are amazing, Jeeno and Anna, they were struggling on the golf course, so I had no doubt that there were probably a lot of other people out there struggling because the course is playing really tough today.

But I knew that scrambling pars was all I could do. If I couldn't put it close to the hole I'm going to have to be scrambling. Never really thought about where I was in position. I had to get that ball in the hole somehow.

**Q. There was a guy who said, incredible few weeks for Rose. Defends her NCAA title and wins her pro debut, Go card. Tiger Woods.**

ROSE ZHANG: Tiger Woods? Oh, my gosh. That's crazy. What can I say to that? I think the reaction itself says everything. It's just so amazing that he's even keeping up the tabs with me.

**Q. Final question: You can play anywhere you want now. Atlantic City is not in the cards?**

ROSE ZHANG: Atlantic City?

THE MODERATOR: Next week.

ROSE ZHANG: Oh, yes, it will not be just because there is a lot going on next week nongolf related. I plan to stick to that plan.

THE MODERATOR: Well, she does have to catch a ferry, so thank you so much, Rose. We appreciate your time.



ROSE ZHANG: Thank you, appreciate it.

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