

Mizuho Americas Open

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Jersey City, New Jersey, USA

Liberty National Golf Club

Yana Wilson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, I'm joined here in the media center at the Mizuho Americas Open by Yana Wilson. Yana was the 2023 AJGA champion portion of this event. Talk about how excited you are to be back this year and looking to defend your title.

YANA WILSON: Yeah, I'm really excited and grateful to be back this year. This course is obviously really special, and being here in New York City is really special to me because I love it here.

The energy, the fans, everything just makes this tournament amazing and special. So I'm really happy to be here again.

Q. And just looking back on last year, talk a little bit about what comes to mind walking back around this course again. What are the memories that pop into your head from your win?

YANA WILSON: I played a couple practice rounds here and I just remember I was like just making great -- I made some great, incredible shots here last year.

Just walking back this year I just remember them, oh, yeah, I made a long putt here, made a long putt there.

Just playing with the pros, too was obviously really special.

Q. And you were part of media day and a few other activations. What has it been like to go through that with Rose and Michelle by your side?

YANA WILSON: It's been really special. I kind of got a little taste of what the pro life I guess kind of feels like, so that was just such a cool opportunity. Being able to go on the field at Yankee Stadium and just getting to hang out with Rose and Michelle and asking some of their advice, just hanging out with them was really cool.

Q. And just talk a little bit too about Michelle's influence not only on you, but the game of golf. Her being a tournament host starting last year has been

huge for the game it seems like. You seem to have a front row.

YANA WILSON: Yeah, it was really special. I've been watching Michelle play since I was seven or eight years old. She was my first like idol growing up. My dad is from Hawai'i and she is also from Hawai'i, so my dad knew a lot about her.

Her being the tournament host makes it really special, especially looking up to her at such a young age, and actually getting to know her and to be just hang out with her I think is really cool, especially being so young and idolizing her.

Q. She touched on it a little bit last night on the Tonight Show, but the key part of this event is juniors playing with the professionals. How important is that to you that you have this opportunity and that she's created this opportunity to be able to play alongside pros in this tournament?

YANA WILSON: I think it's such a special opportunity just because it's pretty rare for amateurs or even juniors to play alongside professional golfers and get that experience, because it's just such a different life out here. You get to see what they go through every single day.

I feel like it's really special that she kind of let us at a young age see what this life is like and just see if we really want to take this path or not.

Q. What are some of the lessons you might have learned playing alongside pros last year? That wasn't your first time playing alongside pros, but just looking back at the chances you had to play alongside professionals, what are some takeaways you learned?

YANA WILSON: I learned a lot about course management and how to carry yourself throughout the course. I notice the pros never really made any mistakes while they were playing the round of golf.

They would never make any score more than bogey, and I feel like they're just so disciplined. I feel like that's something that a lot of the juniors and amateurs can take



away from. Even I feel like tempted to go for pins that are tucked and you just see them make birdie from like making a 20, 25-footer going from the middle of the green.

I think that's one of the biggest things I took away last year. I was just trying to play just like the girls I was playing with. They would just hit the middle of the green and make every putt. That's kind of what I tried to do and it worked.

Q. You spoke about having these opportunities to play with professionals, but to have the opportunity -- I mean, junior golf and young women amateurs have the opportunity to play at Augusta National, places like Liberty National. What do you think that does for your preparation as you have both collegiate and professional aspirations?

YANA WILSON: Yeah, I think that's huge. Playing at venues like these is just great prep for us juniors and amateurs for the Tour. I know most of us in the field want to take that path of the professional route after high school or even college, so I think just being able to play there is something really special. I think it's just great prep for us in to the future off golf.

Q. Do you have a pinch-me moment when you're teeing it up somewhere like Liberty or Augusta?

YANA WILSON: No. It's insane. I don't even think I realized like I was at -- like I was Augusta however many times. It's just so surreal being here or even there.

It's just something really special.

Q. One of the big things of the LPGA is LPGA USGA Girls' golf. We always talk about little girls, big dreams. We just announced yesterday we're going to have a national championship for that program. As a player that's played pretty much every -- played in one; let me correct myself -- and pretty much every junior event you could imagine, how cool do you think this is to have a girls' only national championship?

YANA WILSON: I think that's really cool. I didn't know that until you just told me. I think that's really special and really going to grow the game and push more girls to want to get into golf.

I feel like the game of golf, especially for the girls, is growing so much year by year. I remember growing up my class of 2024 was the strongest class and I think still is.

But we had so much talent, and I just see that with the younger generation kind of coming up. I think that's really special that they're creating these opportunities for us.

Q. One last question: Last year you met Goose, your former caddie.

YANA WILSON: Yes.

Q. Learned of his unfortunate passing. Wanted to ask about your relationship with him and what he meant in your golf career.

YANA WILSON: Absolutely. Goose and I became very close after we won together here. We actually -- our bond was very strong on the golf course when we were playing. We became very close very fast and we kind of kept in touch after.

He's a great friend of mine. He is just somebody you would love to know and would always want to be around, so just having him in my life was something really special. He was such a positive influence to me and my golf game.

It was honestly such a blessing having him in my life. I am forever grateful that I met him.

Q. Now that you're about to graduate and one of the older girls on the junior side, what advice do you have to give to the younger girls in the field this week to just enjoy every moment of this event and really maximize the opportunity?

YANA WILSON: Yeah, absolutely. So my mindset coming into last year was just learn from the pros. I think everyone that's a junior playing in the event this week should just have that same mindset. Just learn from the pros and have fun, talk to them, ask questions.

This tournament is probably one the most like beneficial just in terms of getting to -- I don't know, getting to like learn more from the pros. So I think that's probably the best advice I would give. And just have fun.

Q. And as you're about to play golf at the next level, what's been your most favorite thing about junior golf or what are you going to miss about this aspect?

YANA WILSON: That's a good question. I think the most I'm going to miss about junior golf is kind of just the camaraderie. I know I'm probably going to get that in professional golf too as I move on to the next step, but just knowing these girls for years I'm going to obviously miss them. I was friends with a lot of them.

And also just the team events, too, that we get to play, like the Ping Junior Solheim Cup, Wyndham Cup, all that. I think I'm going to miss all that too because those are my

favorites tournaments to play in throughout high school, so, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you very much, Yana. Best of luck this week.

YANA WILSON: Thank you.

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