

Mizuho Americas Open

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Jersey City, New Jersey, USA

Liberty National Golf Club

Rose Zhang

Yana Wilson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Okay, welcome to both Yana Wilson and Rose Zhang here at the Mizuho Americas Open. Welcome both to the Mizuho Americas Open. Going to start with you, Yana. Very exciting announcement we just heard from Cheryl. You're the newest Mizuho Americas ambassador. Tell me about how that came about and how excited you are to wear that Mizuho logo on your sleeve.

YANA WILSON: I'm really excited. The relationship kind of blossomed between me and Mizuho from playing this first event back in 2023. And this event is amazing. You really get to network and build connections with these incredible sponsors. That's kind of what we did. I'm really pumped to have them on my sleeve.

Q. You're making your professional, first professional start at the Mizuho Americas Open; third start overall because you played here two years on the AJGA side. How different do you imagine that's going to be, or what are you looking forward to playing as a pro?

YANA WILSON: I feel like it's going to be a little bit different. The tees are moved a little bit back so some holes will play different than the others, especially the par-5s. Liberty National is still one of my favorite courses ever, so I am just really excited to be back and just trying to hit as many fairways and greens as possible this week.

Q. Rose, you're back going to be playing here again at Mizuho. How much does this event mean to you as the inaugural winner? I know I did not get to defend your title last year.

ROSE ZHANG: It's honestly a little bit surreal. Not only did I get my first Tour win, but it was my first start. A lot of buildup happened this entire week, and then to top it off with a win and on top of that just got my LPGA Tour card, was able to play the rest of the season, everything kind of stemmed from this event.

So it's honestly an honor to come back.

And being a Mizuho ambassador as well, it's just a really cool kind of sight to see once again. You got great views. Course is great. Just excited to get back into it.

Q. As you know, Mizuho Americans announced a five-year title renewal. What does that mean as its inaugural champion to see it continue on for another five years?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, Mizuho Americans has really just brought the women's game and elevated it so much more. It had an elevated purse money the inaugural year. And then on top of that, for them to continue having the relationship with the LPGA and support the women's players out here, I think it's honestly -- their vision has really shown through and really impacted the game as well as us as players.

Q. Yana, you had a great moment on Sunday on the Epson Tour. Talk about your first win and what it meant to have your hometown crowd there and everybody it sounds like came out to watch you win.

YANA WILSON: Yeah, it was really special to win in my hometown in front of everybody. I had a lot of people that came out there that I did not expect to come out there. Like I told you earlier, my seventh grade history teacher came out to watch with her husband. I haven't seen her since seventh grade, so that was really special.

Yeah, I think just having that good energy there really helped play well that entire week, and I was just really happy to do it during that tournament.

Q. I know obviously new to the professional ranks. On the Epson Tour specifically, just speak to the talent level out there that you've seen early on in your rookie year?

YANA WILSON: Absolutely. Just coming into Q-School, seeing how many girls names on the list that used to be in college and now have turned professional, there is so much talent out there and all a those girls are so hungry to get their LPGA Tour card and to win.



That just makes the competition harder. Everybody is playing their best golf. For me to play really good on this Tour says a lot about my game.

Q. Rose, I know we haven't seen you for a few weeks. To be back out here at the Mizuho Americas Open, how excited are you to be back out competing?

ROSE ZHANG: I feel really good. I feel really good about where my mindset is at. I feel like this past break has been a blessing in disguise in a sense. There has been so much happening in my life on and off the golf course that it's good to rewind.

Obviously I spent my days not really playing golf, so I think this week to get back into the groove of things, to be able to practice, be able to see the golf ball fly, it's a little bit relieving.

I think I'm excited to just keep on going and keep on building my game. I think this is just a little bit of a start to everything that's going to happen months after.

Q. And then I know obviously being -- you're still pretty young but you are a role model to a lot of the AJGA girls out here and a lot of people in golf in general. How excited are you to, again, have this opportunity to work with the AJGA players at this event and inspire the next generation?

ROSE ZHANG: It's honestly so cool, because I actually know a good amount of the junior players out here. I said that in the first inaugural event that I played here, but I had a lot of friends back in junior golf that I played with. And freshly turning pro, it was really relieving.

I played with Yana growing up and also played with Anna and I got paired with Anna in the end, so it was honestly a really cool type of experience to be able to be a Tour player and also be able to play with the junior girls.

I would argue that the junior girls are just as good. Even though their bodies haven't fully matured and they're not completely experienced with the big crowds, I think at the same time, they work so hard to get to this point. I was a junior golfer myself, and I know that all the girls have been working really hard to now.

So you'll get to see a lot talent out there, and I'll get to learn a thing or two as well.

Q. Rose, since you didn't have school and you couldn't practice, what did you do with your time?

ROSE ZHANG: I did rehab. (Laughter.) Well, I actually

got to be in Vegas for a while and it's kind of the first time that I really sort of felt like I'm living there.

I got to join the UFC Institute and be able to do some rehab there. Just doing chin-ups with a bunch of WWE fighters, it's very intimidating.

But I will say I enjoyed my time there. I took some time off. My mom and my dad were there, and then I had some friends also come visit. So it was honestly a more relaxing time. I did spend a lot of time reading. I spent a lot of time having some quiet and reflected a little bit on everything that's happened.

That's why I say I worked really hard on getting my mindset better and a little bit stronger, which I think will help me in the next couple months. It doesn't have to be right now, in the present, but I think that my game will slowly trend eventually.

Q. Are you feeling any pain when you hit golf shots now? Is your practice limited?

ROSE ZHANG: It's a little bit limited. This is my third day playing golf. I will say I'm not exactly the most prepared. I will say that I've been watching a lot of golf and I feel like that helps me a lot, just to see what other players are doing, kind of even know the game a little bit more.

I feel like watching television and always seeing how other players are playing, and with the commentators, they have about insight, so I was able to bounce back and forth between the LPGA and the PGA and learn from there.

I will say that the body is feeling really good. It's a little bit tight just from not rotating as much.

Q. Good to have you back. If I could ask Yana a question. Hello. I'm curious how this event played a role in your decision making of turning pro, if at all?

YANA WILSON: Yeah, absolutely. I think this played a huge part in my addition to turn pro, just because I got to play with the pros firsthand and just see how my game compared to them.

And playing the first and second year, I really did feel like I was ready to turn pro, maybe not start on the LPGA Tour, but definitely the Epson Tour, and just get my reps out there.

Honestly for me, I didn't really feel like going college was a good idea for me just because I wanted to get those extra reps in early and maybe just struggle out there, but learn. Yeah, I just feel like this tournament played a huge role.

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Q. Congrats on your win. I should have led with that.

YANA WILSON: Thank you.

Q. Yana, what as far as your mental makeup kind of allowed to you make it decision when you talk about college wasn't the right decision for and you getting the extra reps. You've got to be mature. What is it about you that you felt like you were ready to make that leap?

YANA WILSON: I just feel like I guess my level of talent and level of work ethic was up there pretty equivalent; maybe not with the LPGA Tour players but on the Epson Tour maybe.

So getting those reps in early was just the big key for me, getting used to the traveling and working with caddies and dealing with money and dealing with sponsors. I feel like I just needed to -- I feel like I wanted my life to be more of that than studying and trying to balance golf and studies at the same time.

Q. And then the experience of winning, and I don't know how you celebrated, but what was that like to celebrate that? How did you celebrate I guess?

YANA WILSON: It was really cool. It was my mom's birthday. I did want to win it for her birthday. She hasn't seen me win a golf tournament since I think Mizuho, so that was really cool to do that. We went out to Korean barbecue and had dinner and I had to jump on a red eye flight to be here.

Q. Rose, can you tell me a little bit more, was there a particular UFC fighter you had some fun conversations with, exchanged tips on your sports?

ROSE ZHANG: Well, I'm not really in an octagon, so I can't really give specific advice there. I've never really watched the UFC to be fair. My brother is a big fan. I was doing PT on the table and my PT that was working, Heather, looked at a photo from someone that came in and wanted her to see an athlete's injury. She just simply looked at it and said, amputation.

I was like, how bad is it to have your whatever be amputated? She was like, oh, do you want to see it, so casually, no change in demeanor. I was like, wow, you could not -- it's quite gruesome. It was really not great.

I was just like this is the type of place where they've seen everything. In my head I'm like, whatever I have is really nothing compared to what they're doing out there.

Q. That was like a leg injury, arm injury?

ROSE ZHANG: It was -- oh, the amputation in particular, it was someone's middle toe. I don't even know. That's why I didn't want to say it.

Q. With your injury specifically, what was the rehab process like? Was it more neck? More shoulder? How are you feeling playing golf the last few days? Is it something you think about? You're past that?

ROSE ZHANG: It was honestly quite boring. I had to start out with very simple exercises. I couldn't move a couple times throughout the month just because it was an ebb and flow process. You have the spasm in the neck, and you have to recover a little bit. Then you have it again. Maybe it goes on the other side. And then you have to go through the whole process again.

I can't really say I had the complete, most smooth recovery. I will say that I'm pain-free right now, which I'm very thankful for. I never realized -- obviously it goes unsaid, but the neck is very important for anything that you do. I just remember being in the car and any sort of movement obviously caused a lot of pain.

To be able to do like very simple tasks and sleep really well, I think it's definitely a blessing. So I'm taking all the positives out of it. Now going back into the golf game, the fact that I see the ball fly, the fact that I can rotate and not feel too much pain, that's honestly all that I can ask for.

I think this week will be a great experience for myself just to get back into the flow of things. I've been working with my swing coach as well the last two days. You know, I have a lot of things that I'm willing to improve on and work on.

Q. Your thoughts on getting back at this time? Obviously U.S. Open at the end of the month and then July, the majors. Thoughts on being able to get back with all that lies ahead?

ROSE ZHANG: Yeah, of course. Like I said, I think this week will be a great test for my mental, my game. I think that there will be a lot of conditions out here the next couple days that will be very similar to the majors. Weather doesn't really look too great, so we'll be playing in some rain. Be playing in some tough conditions.

I'm willing to really learn a lot from the next couple days and put myself in the best position I can. I think that will obviously lead to the majors, gaining experience. I think everything is about just learning, especially in this time.

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I'm sort of rebuilding my own profile as a player, rebuilding my swing a little bit, the chipping, the putting. I think everything will come together by the time the majors come around.

Q. Yana, you won this tournament in 2023 as an AJGA junior, and now on the professional side you are serving as a role model for those junior players. What advice would you give to the juniors out here competing in this event for the first time?

YANA WILSON: I would say just soak it all in. I think playing in front of these crowds with professionals is something very rare that you get to do. Only really this tournament does it. Unless you get an exemption into an LPGA event or a major.

But that would be my piece of advice. I would say soak it all in and really just enjoy the moment and enjoy it all.

Q. Rose, you hosted your first AJGA Invitational earlier this year. What did that opportunity to host an event for the organization mean to you, and how does to feel seeing some juniors competing there now competing alongside you this week?

ROSE ZHANG: It's honestly really cool. I see a lot of the familiar faces, and like I said, I also have a couple friends that are out here and in the field. I think that their games were really great. I spent the last -- the entire Invitational just watching my friends play, just watching the girls compete.

Each of them are very hungry. I think that it's very -- like they show almost no fear. I think that is something that even the pros can learn to do out here.

But I think for the most part, just having them out here, it brings a little bit of comfort. It will be a very easygoing vibe. I felt that in the inaugural event. I think that's what's special about this tournament and this entire format as well.

Q. Yana, congratulations on the win.

YANA WILSON: Thank you.

Q. Wanted to ask you, you won a ton of junior tournaments throughout your career. Did this one feel different in any way?

YANA WILSON: Yeah, winning the Mizuho in 2023, that -- or what do you mean, the --

Q. The Epson Tour win last week.

YANA WILSON: I'm sorry, the Epson Tour. Yeah, honestly it did feel a lot different. I haven't been in contention in a long time, so I think just getting used to the nerves, especially coming down back nine, was pretty tough, because I know all those girls are so hungry and they were playing their butts off.

One girl was behind me, because I was kind of looking at the leaderboard a little bit, and she was firing a low round. So just trying to keep my head in it and keep playing my own game and not try to focus on who is behind me. Keep trying to extend my lead was really important.

But I just did everything I knew what to do as a junior, so I feel like that experience, winning as a junior, really helped me win that professional event.

Q. Obviously the goal is to get out to the LPGA. The win goes a long way toward maybe reaching that goal. Doesn't guarantee you top 15 though.

YANA WILSON: Yep.

Q. What is your focus going to be like the rest of the season? Are you purely focused on Epson or are you going to take other opportunities?

YANA WILSON: Yeah, purely focused on Epson. Yeah, exactly. My goal this year is to get my Tour card. Kind of like my smaller goal throughout the year is just to play really consistently, as I have been. Just stay focused on kind of the process and not so much the result.

So just taking everything one shot at a time, keeping my head in a good space, and making sure I'm healthy throughout the season.

Transitioning from junior golf where you only play once every three months to professional golf where you play once every week for like three weeks straight, it's very different.

So making sure I'm healthy and I'm doing everything I can to keep my body right is very important to me as well.

Q. After Q-School and maybe not having the status you needed at the start of the year, was there ever any doubt that crept into your mind? Why did I turn down Oregon? Was it just I'm going to focus on finding my opportunities?

YANA WILSON: Absolutely not. I think I never regretted turning pro early. I knew that I wasn't in the best spot



because I barely got into the first event based off my ranking for after Q-School, so I had to kind of play my way in.

After the first tournament I needed a top 10 to get into the second event. I did that. Then I needed a top 10 in the second event to get into the third event.

Yeah, just riding on my confidence and knowing how good my game is. But, no, never any doubts of turning pro. I'm really happy with my decision.

THE MODERATOR: Well, thank you guys so much. I appreciate your time.

YANA WILSON: Thank you.

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