

# Mizuho Americas Open

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Jersey City, New Jersey, USA

Liberty National Golf Club

**Cheryl Gilberg**

**Ricki Laskey**

**Stephen Hamblin**

**Dan Fireman**

Press Conference



We didn't want to just do another tournament or put our name out there for brand purposes. We really wanted to make a difference. A lot of things we talked about were, one, had to have a purpose. It had to align with our values. Needed to be in the New York City metro area for several reasons, including that's where our clients are.

And last, it had to be played at one of the best golf courses in the country. So here we are. We have the Mizuho Americas Open. Even more than that, we knew we needed to make an impact on the player experience.

So as Michelle alluded to before, providing the player accommodations at a five star hotel in New York City, the ferry that goes back and forth, and I think we really set the bar there.

We've noticed there have been several other title sponsors that have followed suit. I think at the end of the day what we like to say is investing in women's sports is good business. It's good for our clients, our employees, and our nonprofit partners in the community.

**Q. Speaking of setting the bar high, a five-year commitment makes a big statement. Mizuho Americas is one of the LPGA title sponsors to make that commitment through the year 2030. You will be staging this event next year at and incredible venue in Mountain Ridge for 2026-2027, and then returning back to Liberty National 2028 through 2030.**

You are also on network television this year, two hours on CBS on Sunday. How do you plan to continue to elevate this event?

CHERYL GILBERG: I think that's a really good question, because my team, every year we can back, and this is the third year, but each year we look at what can we do different next year to have more of an impact.

CBS Network TV is very important. Where we host the tournament is also very important. So while the next two years we're taking it on the road, we found a wonderful place at Mountain Ridge, just as prestigious, so we are super excited about that.

THE MODERATOR: All right, as we look more into the five-year title extension announcement that happened last week, I would like to welcome some of the key members that helped bring that amazing announcement to life.

First, I would like to welcome from my left to my right, Cheryl Gilberg, Chief Gilberg, excuse me, chief marketing officer of Mizuho Americas.

Rickie Laskey, chief business officer of the LPGA.

Stephen Hamblin, executive director of the AJGA.

And Dan Fireman, executive chairman of the Liberty National Golf Club.

Welcome all to the stage.

Congratulations on the incredible news with the five-year extension of the Mizuho Americas Open.

Cheryl, I would like to start with you. Can you just talk about what this commitment means to Mizuho and why the LPGA has been such a great fit for you?

CHERYL GILBERG: Yeah, sure. Actually to quote my CEO who is standing in the back, Jerry Rizzieri, a few years ago he was telling us a story. We have an annual client outing, golf outing. We had Nelly Korda join us for a guest speaker.

There were having this conversation about the difference between women's and men's golf and the disparity between the player experience, so that really jump started our discussions with the LPGA. We started coming up with certain ideas. How, if we got involved, could we do something that would be meaningful and have an impact.



And then we'll come back to what we call our long-term home here at Liberty. We are committed to raising the purse. We will raise the purse over the five years each year.

We also just recently, or actually today announced that Yana Wilson, she is our newest brand ambassador. She is our 2023 Mizuho Americas Open champion, and she just won on the Epson Tour last week. So we're very excited.

She's rocking our logo there on the left sleeve, but more than that, we believe she embodied our values. And finally, our brand campaign for the last two years has been a name worth knowing. That is really a big initiative for us, for our clients, perspective clients, perspective talent in the industry to get to know who we are as a corporate and investment bank and learn we're a name worth knowing.

We've extended that to A Name Worth Knowing Award. This is the inaugural year, the first year we're giving it out. It's to honor an amateur who in financial need that needs the assistance for golf expenses.

We're excited this year. We'll bring you up in a minute, but Yasmina Oralkhan is right here, and she's our first recipient.

**Q. Moving on to Ricki. As Cheryl alluded to, we've really seen this tournament set a new standard for the player experience. They take care of the accommodations at NYC, the ferry across the Hudson is super fun, and we have an incredible venue here at Liberty National. We've started to see other tournaments follow suit with that and help elevate the way that the LPGA membership is treated. How important is it for a company like Mizuho to help set that standard?**

RICKI LASKY: Thanks, Emily. It's great to be back at the Mizuho Americas Open. This is such a special week on our LPGA schedule. It really is one that the players look forward to all year.

I have to say, back in 2022 when Cheryl and I started speaking, it was very important to Mizuho Americas, if we were going to go into partnership. To raise the bar for our women's athletes, and really differentiate from anything else we did on the LPGA Tour schedule.

That's exactly what we created here.

So I'm so proud and grateful to Mizuho Americas, to Michelle Wie West. You have an iconic legend LPGA player who is our host for the week. It's so special for not

only our players that want to come back and share time with Michelle, but all the amateurs that are with us this week.

The \$3 million purse really set a standard for non-majors across our LPGA schedule. Really helped lift other events up. The Liberty National is truly just a special, special place. We are thrilled to be here this year and Mountain Ridge next year.

The accommodations, five star all the way. When we go across Hudson on the ferry, it's so special, so different from anything else that we do on our Tour.

And the way we're treated here at Liberty National with the dining, the player experience by far is second to none. So everything that Mizuho Americas has done to elevate not only this event, but the LPGA Tour as a whole, we are so grateful for our partnership.

We are extremely grateful for the five-year extension. We're looking forward to what the next five years brings to the LPGA Tour. Really when we decided to differentiate and we talked about how to do so and to bring in the AJGA and these elite amateurs to really be mentored throughout the week by the top athletes in the world, to really get a taste of what it's like to be out here on Tour, is really, really special.

**Q. Stephen, as Ricki just mentioned, the format of this event where LPGA players play alongside the AJGA juniors. It's one of the most unique events in golf. In its inaugural year the Mizuho Americas Open was named the AJGA Invitational of the year. In the past two years, both of the junior champions, Yana and Gianna, went on to become the Rolex AJGA Player of the Year. This year we'll see Yana become the first player to go from playing in the junior field to the professional field. Congratulations, Yana. Talk about how this event has changed the game for junior golfers.**

STEPHEN HAMBLIN: Well, it's just one of the most special and unique events in the world of junior golf. It takes a tremendous partnership to do that, with Mizuho, the LPGA, Liberty National, the Fireman Family, Michelle Wie, and Excel. It took everyone to do their part, and we really had some lengthy conversations about it. Would this sit well with the LPGA players. They just embraced it.

This mentoring, this is Michelle Wie's idea, which I think is phenomenal. Can you imagine being 16 years old and you're going to play in an LPGA event with your idol for four days? It's just incredible. It's an incredible opportunity. We thank you for your partnership. Just

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fantastic.

And the extension is going to help our ACE Grant. We're going to have more of a donation. It's a financial assistance program for young men and women who have the talent to play on a national level but don't have the financial wherewithal to do so.

Plus they've upped the travel stipend for our girls. We never wanted a girl to say, gosh, it's great that I made it to this, but I can't afford to come.

So we have with this wonderful stipend, which is the largest on the AJGA now of \$2,500. So these families don't have to have the hardship.

If you remember, Tiger said that his family had to take out a second mortgage for him to play junior and amateur golf. Those days are gone with the help of companies like Mizuho.

**Q. That's incredible. Dan, we're coming up on 20 years since Liberty National opened its doors. Wow, you've made such an impact on the golf community over the last two decades. You've hosted some of the biggest events on the PGA TOUR and the LPGA and AJGA as well. We're coming back here in 2027 so we'll miss you. But you will welcome us back and the LPGA and AJGA in 2028. What does the Mizuho Americas Open mean to you and to this club and to its membership?**

DAN FIREMAN: Well, thank you for that question, because it means an awful lot to our club and membership and my family. When this first was presented to us around 2022, it was a very interesting idea.

Obviously we wanted to do something that was not just an event but something that could make an impact on people's lives. So having this hybrid approach where you have the juniors playing with the professionals, in many respects giving them an opportunity to see what it could be like to be a pro one day.

I asked them one question once. Of the 24 girls, how many of them will go pro. They said maybe a third. So two thirds, they're going to get this experience and look back when they're my age and say, I got to do something incredibly special.

As a young person to get this is great. And then what's great about Liberty National is when we most events, we have this incredible setting and a really great golf course. It just amplifies whatever that event is.

Having partners like Mizuho, Excel, AJGA with Stephen, and the LPGA, Michelle Wie, this whole collection of people really have collaborated to make this happen.

The greatest example of how this has come to great success is Yana. I don't want to over-say it, but Yana won in '23. In '24 she won with me, a special event I invited her. Sidenote, I had an open spot at one of these tournaments here, Tiger Woods event. I brought Yana and also another young gun, Miles Russell. We happened to win, so third time in a row.

Anyway, the point is she's got a lot of wins here and I have a really good feeling about her this week. She just came off a great weekend where she won on the Epson Tour.

Congratulations.

I think she was 8-under on Saturday and 4-under on Sunday. I think the birdies are going to keep rolling here for her.

It's been a wonderful honor to be a part of this. The idea of hosting it for another five years, along with Cheryl and Jerry and their commitment to charity, as well as their willingness to be a part of what we're doing here at the Liberty National Foundation is just an incredible, incredible thing.

Thank you.

**Q. I know how much the LPGA loves being able to call Liberty National home. In addition to being an amazing host venue for professional golf, you also have a handful of other initiatives like you just mentioned. Tell us a little bit about those, especially the Liberty National Foundation and the Torchlighters Club?**

DAN FIREMAN: Absolutely. Again, Mizuho, are part of this Liberty National Foundation and made a commitment to be part of it over the next several years. I just want to say thank you for your leadership there.

For many years we would donate to different organizations, and some cases golf organizations like the First Tee. As part of those we were hosting events, whether it be First Tee trustee events or might have been a PGA TOUR event, and through that experience we really loved the idea of hosting events and being able to give back.

So we expanded those relationships to include the AJGA, Western Golfers Association, the Veteran's Golfers Association. Also a couple others. The Tiger Woods Foundation and the Underrated Tour with Steph Curry.



The idea is to bring the membership together, to help mentor these kids, and also be a part of these tournaments in a way where not only are they participating, but they are also sharing in the common values of what we're trying to do here.

I feel like as a family, to have this beautiful place and not be able to give back to the game of golf, I think it just wouldn't feel complete. The Liberty National Foundation has pledged \$100 million over the next 20 years to these types of organizations. With the help of Mizuho and others it's really going to come to fruition.

**Q. For Ricki, you look at the LPGA celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. Can you speak to what having companies like Mizuho, venues like Liberty National, will do to help to continue on the next 75 years of history?**

RICKI LASKY: First of all, great point. 75 years is an incredible run, and we're really looking forward to the next 75. We couldn't do it without incredible partners.

The momentum in women's sports, as Michelle alluded to earlier, is just this incredible wave right now. We're riding that wave along with other women's sports, but we can't do it alone. We do rely on our partners to lift us up.

It is an investment into women's sports, but there is also a return on that investment to each one of the companies that we do business with. So we're so grateful to the partners we have. We have a lot of things we're looking forward to in the future. I think the run way is -- we're just getting started.

I think it's just the tip of the iceberg now. Hold onto your boot straps, because the next five years we're really going to take off.

**Q. Dan, it's bit of a challenge to host both tours at one venue. Speak to how proud you are to have both the tours at Liberty National and have had them in the past and have them here going forward?**

DAN FIREMAN: It's really changed the dimension of Liberty. Just being involved with this tournament I got to meet several players. Kiara Romero, Megha Ganne, Yana Wilson. All they of them have deals with Liberty where they represent us, and they come back to Liberty with the membership and participate in events.

So that's been a really wonderful thing.

Also we got involved with some of the boys, too. Miles

Russell is another kid we sponsor. He's come to this event and is going to play in the pro-am tomorrow. We're proud to develop these young people, not just through charity, but actually participate and play with them and have the memberships do that.

And then just the women's game in general, an opportunity to be a part of that, to help amplify it, it was really important. I didn't want this just to be a men's golf course or venue that would only host men's events.

For me, I didn't have a lot have experience going to women's events, and the first time we had it was just spectacular. Every year since has been better and better. I can't thank you enough, with Mizuho. They're just incredible partners, and the way they positioned this event in New Jersey, New York, the media, I mean, they did an incredible job. Yeah, it's been very meaningful to us.

**Q. This question is for Stephen. The renewal of this relationship just offers a rare platform for the juniors that receive an invitation. How valuable is this collaboration in continuing to shape the development of these young golfers and the long-term impact?**

STEPHEN HAMBLIN: Well, you see it with Yana here. I mean, it's gone full circle in two years. It's incredible. It just shows all the efforts here, all the programming, all the mentoring and treatment of these young ladies is just creating I think confidence and comfort in them.

A lot of people haven't recognized the fact that playing a course like this set up for an LPGA Championship, for the juniors to have this opportunity takes a lot of doubt away. They've seen the course. They've seen tough hole locations, long golf courses.

So it's preparing junior golf for the next level in a huge, huge way.

For the LPGA and Mizuho and Dan and his family to want to host this and do all the things, all the special little things to help develop women's golf, is really unique and special.

**Q. We talked a little bit about the finances of playing golf. Stephen alluded to it with the grant. You have a great recipient this year, your very first one. Ricki, when Mizuho Americans came on there was only a handful of tournaments that ever offered player accommodations. Now we have several. Any od talk about the financial freedom, how important it is for these players to have the financial freedom and support to pursue their dreams out here?**

RICKI LASKY: Well, it means everything. I'll tell you,

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when Cheryl and I first started talking I believe we had two on our schedule that offered accommodations. Today we're over ten and growing.

It's not only the accommodations days. It's the player enhancements that they see throughout the week. It's missed cut stipends that we've added to other events and our majors and other regular events.

It's really trying to anticipate what the players need to be successful. It's the mental health opportunities that we offer. We have Dr. Julie on site this week to assist them with mental health needs.

We have RPTs. We have strength and conditioning coaches on site now at almost every event. So it's imperative. We know they're going to work with their coaches and do the things inside the ropes. It's very imperative for us to give them opportunities outside the ropes, both financially and otherwise to be successful.

CHERYL GILBERG: Yeah, I think everyone has really touched upon it. The player experience was really the impetus of the whole idea, and that's really what we surrounded everything. That thought was in I think every decision that we made throughout the last few years.

In addition to the unique format, one thing we didn't mention was our partnership with Girls Inc. here. We have a full-day program going on right now, so it's the player experience and really that next generation. So it's the next generation of golfers and also just the next generation of young women in general.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you all for everything you've done to make this event an amazing one, and I look forward to the next five years of the Mizuho Americas Open.

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