

Mizuho Americas Open

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

Jersey City, New Jersey, USA

Liberty National Golf Club

Asterisk Talley

Aphrodite Deng

Sofia Cherif Essakali

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right very pleased to be joined by three of our AJGA players, Asterisk, Aphrodite, Sofia. For all three of you, how excited are you to be here to tee it up with the LPGA Tour players?

APHRODITE DENG: Yeah, it's really exciting and such a great opportunity.

ASTERISK TALLEY: Yeah, it's great to learn from the other players here as a junior, especially getting that experience to play with pros for our career and the future. It's really nice.

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: Yeah, especially playing better courses and also longer courses and just learning from the pros and how they practice in general is just great.

Q. What does it mean for all three of you to get this opportunity, and is there anyone in particular you're excited to maybe meet or play against this weekend?

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: Yeah, I'm personally really excited to meet Nelly Korda. I've met her before, but seeing how she practices during tournaments is really nice to see.

ASTERISK TALLEY: Yeah, definitely meeting Nelly and the other pros that are so -- compose themselves well and always really play really well and getting to learn from them on and off the course.

APHRODITE DENG: Yeah, I think everyone here is really good, and it's cool to see how they play.

Q. For you specifically Asterisk, you played a couple of your events already. How different is it to have some your AJGA pals around this time around?

ASTERISK TALLEY: Yeah, definitely fun to have some



friends around to get that off-the-course feeling. Getting to kind of feel comfortable on the course more with friends around, but still getting to learn from professional players.

Q. Aphrodite and Asterisk, you guys are returning here. You've both played in this event. What's your mindset for this year and what have you learned from your past experiences at this course?

ASTERISK TALLEY: Yeah, I feel like definitely learning from the course last year, knowing the conditions were kind of tough, which is looking how it's going to be this year. Getting to learn the course a little better and seeing how we can compose ourself all week and getting to play really well.

APHRODITE DENG: Yeah, what Asterisk said, being able to play with the pros and see how they play on the course, yeah.

Q. Sofia, it's your first time here. What have you noticed? Is it fun being with the LPGA pros? How excited have you been?

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: Yeah, I've been really excited. I played some professional tournaments before, but never an LPGA event. Just being inside the ropes, even though I'm not playing with them, it's been really fun to see them practice and playing practice rounds with them. Seeing how composed they are on the golf course is really fun.

Q. There is a lot more social activities going on than a typical AJGA event. What's been your favorite moment so far this week where it's on the course or off the course at some of these great parties Mizuho and Michelle have hosted for you guys?

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: I think the welcome party was really fun where Michelle spoke about her career and everything in general. Seeing friends in general over there was just really fun.

ASTERISK TALLEY: Yeah, definitely looking forward to going to the city later. That's something I'm really excited about. Getting to hang out with friends and get away from golf for a little bit.



Definitely the welcome party was super fun, getting to see Michelle and getting to learn from what she says.

APHRODITE DENG: I think the pro-am dinner was really cool because you got to see a lot of people and talk to them.

Q. Kind of talking about the mentorship side, can you share who your mentors are and have talked to them, what you guys have chatted about?

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: So my mentor was Madelene Sagstrom, and I played nine holes with her yesterday. She was really, really fun and a lot chiller than I thought she would be.

And getting to play nine holes with her and seeing how she does her practice rounds, it was really fun. I still text her sometimes, just being like -- if we're going to have breakfast or lunch together.

ASTERISK TALLEY: I actually haven't met my mentor yet, so hopefully I can do that pretty soon. I'm really excited to do that later.

APHRODITE DENG: Yeah, I haven't met my mentor yet either, but I think we're going to get lunch.

Q. Who are your mentors, Asterisk and Aphrodite?

APHRODITE DENG: My mentor is Gaby.

ASTERISK TALLEY: I'm not really sure honestly. I still have to find that out and figure that out.

Q. Aphrodite you're from New Jersey and we are near your hometown. What's it like being here, being so close? I know you worked with your local caddie a little bit. Talk about that New Jersey pride.

APHRODITE DENG: Yeah, it's really cool playing in my hometown and a lot of friends and family are going to come out and watch me.

Q. What will a successful week look like for you guys?

ASTERISK TALLEY: Obviously trying to get the win of course at every tournament, but just trying to play well against the pros and getting a learning experience out of every tournament is something I strive for.

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: Personally my wrist has been hurting a lot, so I'm just hoping it doesn't hurt too much this week. Just having fun out there and playing really well.

Getting the most points possible since it's Stableford format. I am just really excited to play this week, and just hopefully will play.

APHRODITE DENG: Yeah, just enjoying views and playing to my standards.

Q. For Asterisk, I know you're part of -- well, you're on the points list right now for the LPGA Elite Amateur Pathway. Can you just speak to what having that opportunity as young as you are means to earn LPGA status via that points system?

ASTERISK TALLEY: Yeah, it's really special getting to have that points system and getting to have that like pathway to become a pro. It's super fun getting to strive for something at every tournament. It's really motivating to have that and really special to have opportunity like that as a young golfer.

Q. What did you learn about yourself at The Chevron a couple weeks ago? I know that was a fun exemption.

ASTERISK TALLEY: Yeah, it was a rough week last week, but it's good to have those rough weeks, peaks and valleys, because you get to learn how I can bounce back from that. Hopefully this week is going to give me a good motivator and confidence boost from last week.

Q. Aphrodite and Sofia, having some your fellow players that have played in some of the big events like Asterisk, did you pick their brains at all?

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: Well, Asterisk is one of my best friends so I don't really ask her about golf questions really. We just talk about other things.

Obviously if I have any questions she will answer them and really help me get better.

APHRODITE DENG: Yeah, I haven't asked her anything about golf yet.

Q. Obviously going to go downtown later. Are you going together, all three of you?

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: Yeah.

APHRODITE DENG: Yeah.

Q. What do you plan to do?

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: I think there is a scavenger hunt, and there is some teams that do that, so I'm really hoping I'm with Asterisk and Gianna who is not here.



Q. For all three of you, to have that friendship off the golf course as much as you have it on the golf course as competitors, what does that mean to you? Does it make you more comfortable out here to have your gal pals around?

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: I feel like I just look forward to coming here even more when I know that some of my closest friends are going to be here. Seeing them before or after golfing is just obviously really fun and we just get to chill and talk about everything.

Even the golf course and just everything this general and it's just really nice.

ASTERISK TALLEY: Yeah, definitely something that helps me look forward to a tournament a little more. It's such a great balance when you get off the course just getting to see your friends after. If you play bad they'll be there to comfort you, but if you play well they'll be there to congratulate you no matter what and they will always be there to talk about anything other than golf or just golf in general.

It's really fun.

APHRODITE DENG: Yeah, it's like really nice having friends here and you can like talk with them.

Q. Obviously this event has had two really great champions in Yana and Gianna, and this events has become one of those events you really want to win as a junior. Where would this rank? Obviously you're all super successful. Where would a victory here rank for you guys?

ASTERISK TALLEY: Definitely at the top. It's so fun just to put your name up with the champion. So you hope to be one of those players that you can kind of look up to and see like, oh, well, they won the tournament so I want to. It's something that motivates you win.

SOFIA CHERIF ESSAKALI: Yeah, me too. Would definitely be one of the top ones, especially getting to play the final round with the final group. It's really cool seeing what they do when they're preparing, so, yeah.

APHRODITE DENG: Yeah, definitely one of the top ones being able to win alongside an LPGA player.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time, ladies.

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