

Mizuho Americas Open

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West Caldwell, New Jersey, USA

Mountain Ridge Country Club

Michelle Wie West

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, very excited to be joined by tournament host and now player at the Mizuho Americas Open Michelle Wie West. Start of year four. What's been the most gratifying evolution of this tournament?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, this being year four is crazy to think of in general. We think back a lot to where and why this tournament was created, and I feel like every year we do such a good job building on that.

The why of this tournament is really the mentorship part of it. The juniors are a huge part of this event. You know, me being involved with it, my genesis of my career, it just really allows these 24 top girls, our next generation, to kind of play in an LPGA event, live the life of a pro. We match a pro with a junior and the mentorship part of it is a big deal of this week.

Another part is, which is again, all these are pillars within Mizuho's company. So it's very integrated within my DNA, Mizuho's DNA, the LPGA's DNA, and I think that creates a magical atmosphere.

Mizuho's companies virtue pillars is elevating women. With that comes to elevating the player experience. Year one we really dedicated this tournament to making sure the players feel special when they come here, they feel supported.

From the first year we've given every player a hotel room. This year, not being able to have the ferry transport us from the city to the golf course, Ford has really stepped up and given every person, player in the field, a vehicle which is also another way we want to make sure the players feel supported.

Another is dining. Obviously I'm a foodie. We all know that. I want to make sure that players are treated as athletes, and when they're here they are nourished, fed well. Another way we show up is just the player experience in general. Player gifting. We put a lot of effort into it. Delta and Starbucks gave every player \$250 gift card. It's the little things that really add up.

I want to make sure that juniors in the field come here, and a lot of times this is their first LPGA event, and I want their standards to be up where it should be and them to kind of be like, hey, this is what the LPGA standard is like.

So year four we're extremely excited. It's been amazing to see the top players on our Tour show up every year, year after year. It's not a requirement that they're here. It's a choice. We're extremely honored that year after year we get such a good field.

That just means everything to me.

Q. I guess the big question for a lot of people is why right now for you. I know playing at Riv in a few weeks' time but wanted to get a competitive rep in. Why did you want to tee it up here of all places?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, being able to tee up at my event is extremely special to me. You know, as you kind of touched upon, I'll be playing at U.S. Open at Riv, and it worked out perfectly with timing. I think I knew a few people to give me a sponsor invite, so that was an easy part of it.

Yeah, no, and I was telling -- I've been talking to my team and talking to Mizuho as well. I feel like as a tournament host it's actually super helpful for me to be on the player side of things and to experience that.

I can use this experience to hopefully become a better tournament host in the future and give feedback to the sponsors to be like, hey, this is where we need to keep elevating and this is where we're doing really well.

It's almost like I'm an undercover employee so to speak this week, so I'm really enjoying it.

Q. How much has it meant to you to set that standard for LPGA events and to serve your fellow athletes in this way as a tournament host, but also as big sister to a lot of young girls and athletes? I know you're really involved in the Ford Power Her Drive Program, but what has it meant to be able to be that energy?



MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, honestly the big reason why my post career, my post-retirement career has been the way that it is when I made a decision to step off the golf course, I really wanted to free up my mind space and mental energy and emotional energy to really give back and to really help the next generation of golfers.

You know, when you're playing, and I'm feeling it right now, it's so hard to divest your energy when you're playing golf. It's all consuming. It makes even more sense to me like why I chose to do what I did. It really cements it.

The Ford power Her Drive program, the Mizuho Americas Open, these take up time and these I can't do if I'm playing full time.

So I'm really excited that I'm able to invest my energy in the things that matter to me most. And, yeah, I hopefully this keeps growing into bigger and bigger. The Girls Inc. Summit yesterday, over the last four years has gotten more and more successful and more and more bigger, so, I'm extremely excited to see where that's headed as well.

Q. I know that a big part of this week is the mentorship program. Curious if there is anything that you -- and I know a lot of people look up to you for advice and get nuggets from you. Is there anything that you've taken over the last four years that one of the juniors has maybe instilled in you that you're like, oh, I forgot about that?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Just being around youth. You know, they have such a different energy, such a great energy, that every time I'm around them, I share space with them, it really does bring me back to the why. You guys all know my golf journey, being able to play in LPGA tournaments since I was 12, 13, and to kind of see them do the same, it's really cool.

Monday night is the junior welcome party and was talking to them, a big part of it it's not only just your golf game, it's really being a pro. I told the juniors this year, you know, you are expected to be a professional this week. Even though you're a junior, things aren't going to slide.

You have to be responsible for your caddie. If they're not going doing a proper rake job, you need to speak up for yourself. These are things that young women need to learn. It's such a great environment for them to learn that. It's hard. It's hard speaking to a caddie. It's hard being a boss.

We're trying to explain to them you are the boss of your team this week. If someone in your team is not up to the standard, then you need to take action. These are things

about being professional.

And I love these instances because I think as women, as young women, we -- it's extra work needs to put in to believe in yourself to do so. So it's little things like that that I think will help in the future for them.

Q. And I know that there are so many players that come out here and say unless they know they can win they won't be out here. Curious about some of your expectations for this week.

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, no, I would definitely not just be practicing to be like hey. I mean there is a part of that. I don't want embarrass myself. There is that aspect.

But I definitely want -- it would be really cool. As a competitor it's hard not to kind of want it, yearn for it. That's the whole reason we're out here.

For me truly it's not just about this week. It's really about I started practicing end of November, end of December, and the past six months truly has been really is special ride for me.

I did it without anyone knowing. I didn't make announcement. It was just something that I really got to share with my daughter. She's now almost six and every day -- obviously spend less time with my kids just because I'm back practicing, but it was nice to kind of share stories and be like, hey, today things didn't really work out but I worked through it.

These are things that if I wasn't playing in the tournament I wouldn't be able to share these stories and these journeys. It's been really cool to be able to share that with my daughter. And she wrote me a long letter. At the end of it she wrote a check mark, yes or no. She wants me to report back if I won the tournament or not. So I got homework from her for sure.

So, yeah. (Laughter.)

Q. When was the moment when it dawned on you that competitive was going to be in the rear view mirror and the next phase was going to take on? Was there a particular moment or tournament or conversation that you had when that situation was now going to go in a rear view place?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, 2023 with Pebble. That was my last competitive round. Before that, I had played sparingly. It was a long conversation. I don't think it was one moment, but it was a lot of little moments leading up to a definitive feeling that I was done.



And even though I'm coming back and playing Mizuho and U.S. Open, I still holistically feel very done. These feel like bonus points almost. I feel extremely grateful and lucky to be given the space to come back and be in this space again.

Yeah, holistically it probably happened somewhere along the way around 2022, 2023 where definitively I felt it then.

Q. What's the most lasting memory that you have from your competitive days?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: You know, it's the camaraderie. It's kind of like the players. You know, before I was here a few days ago I was in Jupiter and got play with two of my best friends on Tour, Jessica Korda and Marina Alex. I had to be in Florida for one day and I said, we need to play. I need to touch a club. I'm having anxiety about playing. I need you guys to come play with me.

We talk about it all the time. It's just so fun. There so many great memories about being stuck in rain delays. It's always like the shared misery, but that kind of always comes up with the fun part. Playing six weeks in Asia, those memories.

It's been really fun to kind of be back out here and see the players. There is a lot of new faces, a lot of young names, and I think that's also super exciting. Excited to make new friends.

Q. You're mentoring junior players this week. Who were your mentors?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, I was extremely lucky when I was 13. I got paired in a pro-am with Meg Mallon, and since that day she kind of took me under her wing. I was very fortunate with having Meg Mallon, Beth Daniel, Karrie Webb as some of my mentors and have them as my sounding board. I got super lucky.

Q. Do you see opportunities forward in professional golf that men and women will be playing more together? Do you see that happening, and how do you envision that unfolding?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: I hope so. With TGL I see that as a perfect opportunity for men and women to play together. I think that it's going to be super exciting for that to happen.

Q. My question is unique on the Tour because you play professional golf as well finishing study at Stanford. So Rose said you are her mentor and you encourage her and inspire her. My question is talking

about the next generation, are you going to encourage those girls to take same path?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: You know, I think everyone has their own journey, their own path. I'm here to tell you that if you were to choose to go to college and golf, it is possible. It's not easy, but it's possible.

If I never want anyone to feel limited. I want every woman out there to feel empowered and to feel like they have every choice in the world to make.

You know, for me personally, education was important. Talking to Rose a lot, that seemed like it was important for her, too. Meg Mallon told me the same thing. I was in the same boat talking to her, being like, hey, I really want to go to Stanford but I also want to turn pro. What do I do?

She was like, why not do both? I was like, oh. I just needed someone to tell me that. I needed someone to tell me that anything I want to do is possible.

I'm just here to tell people that anything you want to do is possible. Will it be easy? Absolutely not, but it's possible if you want to do it.

Q. Which aspect of your game is the most difficult to excel at this week?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Putting. (Smiling.)

Q. Well, physical, mental, or emotional?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Definitely mental. I don't know physical. I feel pretty old right now and everything hurts. But I would say mental for sure.

I get hit with moments of being nervous and I freeze up. To be fair, I feel like I have a lot of really good clarity on the feeling of being nervous and whatnot. Been talking to a lot of players about like what to do, how do you do when you handle being nervous.

But kind of getting back into the mode of playing there is really only a few things I do when I get nervous. I need to just not do them. That's easier said than done.

Yeah, it's all difficult.

Q. You mentioned TGL and you're a committed WTGL player. Curious what you think of the new logo that was unveiled yesterday, and also what to you hope WTGL can do for LPGA athletes?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, from day one I get very



excited about the aspect of playing co-ed matches. I think that would be really exciting. I think these players, LPGA players, have such amazing personalities. You can kind of already tell with the press conferences that have been coming out.

I think any platform that can give LPGA players a sounding board and opportunity to showcase their talent, personalities, I think TGL is perfect for that. I think we're going to reach new audiences hopefully.

With the innovation and technology, I think it's a perfect place to showcase everyone's talents. With our broadcast, you don't really see all that information. It's not so different on the PGA TOUR broadcast. You have ShotTracer. It almost looks the same theoretically, right, on the screen, but for us you don't see the ShotTracker, you don't see that much data on the screen.

So I think the fans are going to be really excited to see all that data.

Q. So Mother's Day weekend coming up. I was hoping you could offer some perspective on the challenges the modern LPGA mom faces in trying to win?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, it's hard. It's really hard. I think in a sad way, you kind of see the numbers of moms being out here dwindling down. I think that is just the harsh reality that being a mom out here is tough. I know that I've been having a lot of internal discussions with Craig about what we can do as a Tour to help alleviate some of that.

I think that's really a big topic for us. We never want to make it feel like the Tour is too hard or not helping the mom out enough where they feel like they need to make a choice. It comes back to I really want to help empower women to feel like they can be out here.

The moms out here are super moms. I see it firsthand. It's not easy. Even though there is daycare, it's not even -- it's so hard. The amount of stuff that moms need to lug around on top of the golf bags and on top of everything else, it's hard.

But at the same time, I think being a mom gives you such a fresh perspective on everything. I think your kids really give you energy, and I think it really gives you the sense of fresh energy that a lot of moms I think feel.

So, yeah, it's just tough. It's tough in general to be a mom, but it's a great task. It's a great privilege to have.

For Mother's Day hopefully we can do things here to make them feel extra special.

Q. Is there something you could share that you've mentioned to Craig that you think would improve mom life?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Not yet because it's still a work in progress. When we have some things cemented and applicable, I'll definitely come to you.

Q. Awesome. Just your thoughts on the run that Nelly Korda is on right now, and how you think the LPGA can position itself to take advantage of it.

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, she's unbelievable. The talent that she possesses in her pinky alone is unbelievable. The stretch of golf -- I mean, we seen it a couple seasons ago too, now. Just every year she's getting better and better. She seems really happy off the golf course, which is what I care about.

I hope mainstream media really picks it up more. I think the LPGA is doing a great job of showcasing our talent. The broadcast is -- us being live every week is huge.

And just I think just do everything we can to support her and just showcase her personality as well, too. You know, I think it's good.

Q. Thank you. Good luck this week.

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Thank you.

Q. Yana Wilson, your inaugural junior winner, is playing in this event as a rookie. How cool of a full circle moment is that for you?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Oh, it's amazing. Year one of the Mizuho Americas Open we were all talking internally, wouldn't it be great if our junior -- it's crazy to think that four years later this is actually happening. She played last year as pro as well, but this year earned her card. She is a full rookie on the season.

I'm extremely excited to be playing with her on Thursday. Her and I have gotten pretty close, so that was a fun pairing to see. But this is proof in the pudding. This is exactly why we're doing that. Everyone here is good enough to be a pro one day. We're here to show them that and give them confidence and to use this as a jumping board.

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