

U.S. Women's Open

Tuesday, May 31, 2022

Southern Pines, North Carolina, USA

Pine Needles Lodge and Golf Club

Michelle Wie West

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the interview area. We are here with 2014 U.S. Women's Open champion Michelle Wie. Obviously some news last week regarding your playing future. Do you want to talk about that decision a little bit?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah. It was kind of bittersweet always to announce that, but it's something that I've been thinking about for a while. Just to be back here where I kind of won the U.S. Women's Open, obviously not the same golf course but the same area, it feels so amazing to come back and see all the fans and see all the players.

It's been an amazing journey, and I'm very excited for what happens next.

THE MODERATOR: On that, being just a few minutes from your win, have you been to this area much since then, and what sort of memories come back when you are in this area?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: I haven't. It was my first time. I walked in Pinehurst Village this morning to get coffee. Funny enough, I don't remember anything about the week. It just looked like I walked for the first time. I didn't recognize it at all.

I think I drive by Pinehurst No. 2 I'm like, oh, that's a cool golf course. They're like, oh, that's Pinehurst No. 2. I'm like, I don't remember that at all. I think I just blacked out that week.

But it's amazing to be back in the area. There's so much history here, especially this golf course. There's a lot of history with the LPGA and just prestigious past winners.

It's amazing to be back here. I'm just so excited to see you all, and it's definitely going to be a while until the next time I see everyone, so I'm just soaking it in.

Q. You talked about your intent next year to play at Pebble Beach. Talk about what the U.S. Women's Open means to you.

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Oh, it means everything to me. It was the one tournament I wanted to win ever since I started playing golf. If I hadn't won the 2014 U.S. Open I would still -- I definitely wouldn't retire, and I would still be out here playing and chasing that win.

That win means everything to me.

Q. I know the competitor in you will want to come out and do your best, but how do you compartmentalize all that and soak it all in at the same time?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, I'm definitely managing expectations right now. I definitely haven't had the practice schedule that I usually do leading up to U.S. Open.

This week I'm just soaking it all in. Just seeing all the fans, seeing all the players, walking the walk. It's pretty cool.

Obviously the competitive side of me wants to win and do the best I can.

It's going to be a fun week.

Q. What, if anything, will you miss about playing regularly?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: You know, the competitive side of it for sure. I'll miss the players and the camaraderie out here. But I've kept in touch. I think still being on the board and still being so involved in the industry and the Tour, it's really helped me to really keep in touch with a lot of people.

Yeah, it's nice to see everyone in the flesh. I feel like the last two years everything was done over Zoom and over computer screens, so it's really nice to see everyone in person.

Q. Just to clarify, how many tournaments will you play?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Just this for this year.

Q. And next year, is it still open?



MICHELLE WIE WEST: Just the Open, yes. That's the plans for right now. But I've changed my mind before.

Q. It's very difficult when you're in the middle of something to have perspective on it. Now that you've made the decision to walk away, can you give us an assessment of your career?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: You know, first off, I want to say I have zero regrets in my career. There's always that inkling of wishing I had done more. But I feel like no matter what, no one is ever going to be 100 percent satisfied.

I have definitely had an up-and-down career, but I'm extremely proud for the resiliency that I've shown over my career. I'm extremely proud to have achieved the two biggest dreams that I've had, one being graduating from Stanford, and the other winning the U.S. Open. To check both those off the list means everything to me.

I'm very proud of myself. I've always wished I would have done more, but I feel like everyone kind of feels that way, so I'm definitely giving myself some grace and enjoying this last week.

Q. Out of curiosity, if we had found you 10 years ago and so we can read your future, and in 10 years you're going to be walking away like this, what do you think your 22 year old self would have thought about that?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: I probably would have laughed, to be honest. But I'm extremely fortunate. I'm so happy right now. I'm in a really great place in my life. Just yeah, I probably would have laughed.

I was always really bad at predicting the future, and I'm just really happy it panned out like this.

Q. You're only 32 but you've been out here 20 years or more already. How has the LPGA and the U.S. Women's Open changed in that time?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Oh, I mean, so much. Huge kudos to the USGA for really buying into the women's sport and the LPGA for just growing and keep pushing the boundaries.

When doors get closed on us, we just keep pushing, and I'm just so proud of everyone on Tour and the USGA for really buying in and setting the level right.

I had someone come up to me at player dining today saying that they were named after me, so that made me feel really young.

So I'm at that phase in my life, which feels great. But no, I'm truly so proud looking back at where our purse was before and now \$5.5 million purse, the winner gets over a million dollars, it's amazing.

Q. As you pivot towards working behind the scenes to promote the Tour now, what lessons can the Tour, its players, take away from how you've marketed your career as it promotes the next set of stars?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, you know, I just think that we have to -- as female athletes, a lot of times we get told, oh, your sponsorship is only worth this much. You should only ask for this much.

We're kind of in that mindset, and I would encourage female younger athletes coming up to say, no, I know my worth, I know what I deserve, and ask for more.

Q. Is there a moment in your career where you did that and successfully worked in your favor?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yes, for sure.

Q. As we look ahead to what the future holds for you, how excited are you? You've done so much for the game over the course of your career, but now you're in position to do even more. How excited are you to leave golf better than when you found it?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: I'm really excited. LA Golf, a company I'm invested in and on the board of, we just announced we're pledging to go forward with a new women's initiative where we want to kind of change the sponsorship landscape, and like I said, just show that female athletes deserve better.

We're coming out with a full healthcare benefits plan, paid maternity leave, paid mental health days, and travel, just making everything more seamless. I just know as a female athlete, travel is not as glamorous as what people think.

We're lugging our bags on and off carousels every week, bags are getting lost, and we just want to create a more seamless experience for female athletes and just kind of show them what they're really worth and respect that.

Q. I just had a follow-up on that. From a practical standpoint, who will that impact from the LA Golf? Like how many players are we talking about?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: We haven't really picked out the nitty-gritty. It will be the girls that we sponsor, and more further will come out later. But it's just an overall pledge



that we will put -- prioritize this and put our dollars where it's needed, especially for such a small company like LA Golf, that just really proves that we're really prioritizing the women.

Q. You talked about winning at Pinehurst No. 2. Obviously there's a lot of similarities here beyond just geography. How could you compare and contrast the two courses?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: I haven't played a practice round yet. I'll let you know afterwards. But just from looking -- I was studying the flyovers this weekend, and looking at the flyovers, they look very similar.

I'm very excited. I love North Carolina golf. I just wish it was 10 degrees cooler and less humid. But I'm just so excited. It's just there's so much history around this place, and just to be walking here and playing, it's a huge honor.

Q. I saw you giving Stanford some love when they won the NCAA tournament, and also Rose Zhang when she won. There's obviously a lot of rookies out here and amateurs. From your experience on Tour and kind of the big things you learned, what advice would you give to successful amateurs out there right now and rookie LPGA players?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, first off, I'm so proud of Stanford women's golf. They've been killing it. Rose and Rachel and everyone else on the team, and Anne as a coach. They're absolutely killing it, so it's really great to see my alma mater doing so well.

I guess just the advice I always give them, it's a grind. I think a lot of times people just glamorize being a professional athlete, and I just think you have to know and accept and love the grind that it is and just go out there and be resilient and work hard and just be grateful for every small win.

I think a lot of times you go out there and you're like, oh, I want to win a major, I want to win a tournament, and you have these big goals, but it's also really important to celebrate the small wins, as well.

Q. I'm curious, you mentioned that you're going to miss the competitive aspect of golf. Are there other things in your life where you feel like you'll be able to channel that once you do step away?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, it's funny, when I do live broadcasting, that's like the closest that I feel to the adrenaline of playing golf. Hopefully I'll be able to do a couple of that a year.

You know, it's something that you'll never be able to recreate, unfortunately, and I guess fortunately. I don't know. That's the hardest part about moving away, it's because there is nothing else that will recreate that feeling. But also I've done it for a very long time, and I'm just looking forward to spending more time with my family.

Q. Are you going to be watching any NBA Playoffs this week?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, I definitely will. Thursday the first game, so I'll be watching the TV for sure. Hopefully it's not too late.

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