

U.S. Girls' Junior Championship

Saturday, July 21, 2018

Yealimi Noh

Final Round Press Conference



Q. I was hoping you could talk a little bit about sort of what this has been like to kind of be in this zone, to play as well as you did in Kentucky last week and then again this week. Players talk about being in the zone for basketball or other sports. What's it like in golf to play as well as you have for this long a stretch? What was working, I guess, also?

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, so I think the start of the month of July, I started out with the CWAC at MPCC, which was also match play, so I was able to win that one, and it really boosted my confidence for match play because the furthest I've gone in a USGA event is probably round of 32, so I wasn't super confident in match play. But playing at MPCC, same weather -- actually not really, but same kind of feel of the course and weather, kind of, really helped me have a lot of confidence in match play this week.

In Kentucky, after I finished Kentucky, I only had a day to rest and come straight here, so I was really feeling the momentum, I guess, from winning and coming straight here.

Q. What about the endurance of this week and the long days? Today, I believe, you played 49 holes. How tiring was that, and why did you guys agree to keep going after playing 18? I imagine it was tempting to wait until tomorrow?

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, it's been really, really tiring, and I've never walked this many holes in one day. I think we agreed to play more, continue, mainly because we both have another tournament that we have to leave for tomorrow, so just changing all that would be difficult. We were able to play pretty fast and get through today.

Q. Where do you play next?

YEALIMI NOH: I'm leaving for the Canadian Women's Am tomorrow.

Q. Canadian Women's Amateur?

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, it's in Vancouver, I believe.

Q. Kind of put into words what it means to be a USGA champion. You've been chasing this since 2014 when you were 12, and now you're going to have your name on a trophy here with some of the greatest names in girls' golf and some of these

women have gone on to become Hall-of-Famers, you'll be on the wall at Golf House forever. Put into perspective what all that means.

YEALIMI NOH: I mean, it really hasn't sunk in yet. It's been such a long day, too, I just haven't gotten to chance to fully realize what this -- the amount of this means, but it really means a lot to me. And to be able to win it right after Junior PGA, which is a really big accomplishment of mine -- I knew I could do it, but I believed in myself but I was a little unsure because match play I haven't always had the best results actually.

Q. Your name is going to go on a trophy with the likes of Mickey Wright, JoAnne Gunderson Carner, Nancy Lopez, Amy Alcott, Lexi Thompson, this year's Women's Open champion Ariya Jutanugarn, Inbee Park. These are some Hall-of-Famers and future Hall-of-Famers. Your name is going to be on there for the rest of eternity.

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, it's so cool. It's just amazing, and especially the timing, I believe, was -- I think that the timing of just winning this and having my name there is just so great because I recently decommitted from UCLA and I told everyone I'm going to GoPro, and a lot of people, as you said, didn't think it was a good idea, and just having this win and like last week's stroke play win and then match play win, it means so much to me because I feel like I've kind of at least a little bit proven that I can do it. If Inbee Park and Ariya, everyone's name that's there, I really believe that -- if they did it, then I can do it, too, so it means a lot.

Q. Next year you're going to be in the Women's Open, and you've got a chance to play with some of those players.

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah.

Q. Put that in perspective, what it means to you to finally qualify -- get into the Women's Open now and maybe some of the players you want to glean some stuff from while you're there?

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, it's just really amazing. This year especially because my friend, actually Patty Tavatanakit, she is a really good friend of mine, and she got tied fifth at the U.S. Open, and I just was amazed. It was really cool because now next year I have the chance to possibly do the same. Yeah, just watching all the players and how they control

themselves, how they react and just being on the course, I think I'll learn a lot from them.

Q. Getting to today's match, especially the championship match, holes 8, 9 and 10 seemed to be really pivotal. Your length seemed to be a factor. You birdied 8 and knock it on in two in 9 and kind of seemed to take momentum there. Talk about that stretch and how your length played such a key role. I believe you were 17-under par on the par-5s this week.

YEALIMI NOH: I didn't know that. That's cool. Wow, yeah. I think it really gave me a big advantage because a lot of players had to reach the par-5s on three. Even reaching it on three, like the greens are so tricky that you have to hit it in like the perfect spot, especially on 9 with that back pin. I think just being able to -- even if it's like a super long putt, just having it on the green and having the chance to two-putt for birdie was probably one of the biggest things, factors of this week.

Q. How are you feeling right now, 49 holes, Alexa played 51 today. It's the longest I can recall of any USGA final day, this many holes being played. I know you're 16 years old, you're young, but at some point when do the legs and the mind start to get fatigued?

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, like after probably the first 12 holes I was just like -- actually just starting on the first hole, I was like, oh, my God, my feet are already dying. I'm really happy that I had a caddie. I think I definitely wouldn't be able to do it without my caddie this week. It's the first time a friend has ever caddied for me in all the rounds, too, and she just really helped me stay calm, and she helped me make good decisions that even I was like, are you sure. But it ended up being right, and she kept me calm and laughing on the course all the time.

Q. You two are going to be adversaries in a couple weeks. She's playing in the Women's Am as well as you are. What's that going to be like?

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, it's going to be so fun, being at the Women's Am, same feel, match play, and hopefully if one of us doesn't make it that far, we can caddie for each other.

Q. A few minutes ago we talked about some of the names that are on that trophy. Among the players, the top-level players in the women's game today, are there any in particular that you really look up to or look to to emulate in some aspect of their game or their attitude toward the game?

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, I really like Ariya Jutanugarn. I think I can kind of relate to her with her length, too. She hits it really far, so we have a similar kind of game.

I like how she's super -- she has such a great attitude. At the U.S. Open, too, I was really impressed by her and inspired. During the playoff she was super nice about everything and really calm, and she always smiles before she putts, so it's really nice to see.

Q. Going back to your performance on the par-5s, especially No. 9, that's kind of a scary looking shot from up there on the right side of the fairway. I guess for a 16 year old maybe fear doesn't enter the equation as much, but where do you get the confidence to stand over kind of a long, high-risk shot like that?

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, I wasn't super nervous because I knew I pulled it off before, so I knew I could do it again. I'm really confident in my shots, like the trajectory and the direction, and especially after -- on No. 18 on the first round -- or today on 18, just hitting that shot between the trees and getting on the green really helped me believe in my shots the rest of the par-5s.

Q. That was an amazing shot.

YEALIMI NOH: Thank you. I was surprised. I was like, oh, my God.

Q. In five days you turn 17.

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, I do. Oh, my God, I do.

Q. What kind of celebration are you going to have?

YEALIMI NOH: Yeah, this is an early birthday present, probably the only thing I wished for. Oh, my God, I'll be in another tournament on my birthday.

Q. I don't know what your plans are, but the semifinals next year --

YEALIMI NOH: I think this is my last U.S. Junior. I'm going to finish it off with a win.