

# U.S. Senior Women's Open

Press Conference

Wednesday July 11, 2018

## Suzy Whaley

**Q. Suzy, what does this week mean to women's golf?**

SUZY WHALEY: That's a loaded question for sure, but for any of us that have played the game, from any point in time, from the time we were little -- I started playing when I was nine, to today, I think all of us started playing golf because we love it, we're passionate about it. We found joy in it when we were young. And to be able to do it for a living is something that's pretty incredible and pretty special to most of us.

But to be recognized and have the opportunity to cherish those that came before us in a historic way that's elevated to a major championship is something that I think speaks volumes to where women's golf is headed, how it's evolved, and I'm looking forward to what the next possibilities are. But this is certainly the impetus to start a lot of that.

THE MODERATOR: So you heard this was announced a few years ago, you had to go through qualifying. Talk about your journey in this so far.

SUZY WHALEY: Yeah, I remember the day it was announced. I remember thinking, I need to play in that field, how do I get that done, and then I remember looking up the exemptions and realizing I wasn't one of them. I thought, oh, shoot. I certainly didn't deserve it. But they had gone down the national -- I won the LPGA National Teaching Club Professional Championship in 2002, and when I saw that was on there, I thought, well, maybe there's a possibility, and I looked down the names, and I thought, oh, they didn't go back far enough. I immediately knew I was going to try to qualify. I knew what was on my plate. But this is something I would never want to miss.

I worked as best I could on my game in hopes that I would be prepared. I looked at the qualifying sites. There's only one in my calendar that I could make, and that was at Olympic, which certainly was daunting, but I thought, well, it'll be daunting for everybody, so I'll give that a go. I was out there for the PGA Professional Championship at Bayonette, and it was one of those days where it was chilly, it was a typical San Francisco day, it was foggy, it was misty, then it got sunny for 20 minutes and then it got foggy and misty and windy, and I had expected it and prepared for it, but you just never know when it's an 18-hole qualifier anything can happen. You hope you have your game that day. You



hope you can keep your emotions in check because of what it meant. It meant so much to those of us that were there. I mean, Dana Dormann qualified there, Kathryn Imrie qualified there. We wanted it badly, and sometimes when you want things so badly, you mess it up, and I was thrilled not to mess it up.

I'm honored to be in this field. To walk around and practice with the people that are here is something you cherish. I mean, I had the opportunity in the early '90s. I've got to tell you, I never thought I'd have it again. I played in a future events and sponsor's exemptions after I played in the GHO, but to be back in a competitive field with women who were on my walls when I was 12, who inspired me to be a professional golfer, and then to have the chance to compete with them in the same 18 holes of golf is something that I'll cherish forever.

**Q. Who was on your wall when you were a kid?**

SUZY WHALEY: JoAnne Carner and Nancy Lopez. I still have a signed hat and scorecard from Nancy Lopez from my first -- my parents took me to the Corning Classic. It was my very first Tour event I had ever gone to -- LPGA Tour event -- actually any Tour event that I'd ever gone to. This is a true story. I ran under the ropes -- because this is a time when your parents said go get as many autographs as you can and meet us back for lunch at 12:00. There were no cell phones. They let you do what you wanted, and my parents weren't concerned about where I was or my safety, and so my whole goal the entire drive there was to get those two autographs, and anybody else's I could possibly find. And my parents didn't give me instructions on autograph seeking, right; there was no rules of engagement. So I ran right up under the ropes, up onto the putting green, and asked Nancy Lopez for her autograph.

I've told her this story, and she looked at me and said, Well, hello there! And I said, may I have your autograph. And she said, yes, and she didn't shoo me away. She signed, she signed my hat, she signed my little pairing sheet, card, she signed anything I had, and she said, now, I'll tell you what, you'll probably get more autographs if you ask for them behind the ropes. True story. And I said, okay, thank you. And I ran right back out under the ropes and went on to somebody else, but I still have that card and I still have the visor, and

JoAnne Carner was on my walls, too. It was the first round of the event, yeah, it was Thursday.

**Q. How meaningful is it to you that JoAnne Carner is hitting the first tee shot here this week?**

SUZY WHALEY: Oh, you know, I spoke about this earlier this week, but JoAnne Carner has a special place in my heart because she was one of my idols, number one, but number two, my very first professional event was at NCR in Dayton, Ohio. I qualified for the U.S. Women's Open. I signed up super late in the afternoon for a practice round in hopes that nobody would sign up with me, right, I was nervous as a cat, and my grandparents were there, my parents were there, my sister was there. We were so excited. If I remember right, it was probably like 2:30 practice round time. And I walked up to the tee, super nervous, and I hear this, hey, hey, and I turn around, and it was JoAnne Carner, and she was walking up to the tee. So I said, Mrs. Carner, go ahead. She goes, no, no, I'm playing with you. And I thought I would die, like, on the spot. I couldn't get the ball on the tee. True story, I could not get the ball on the tee. I threw it on the deck and hit drive off the deck and hit it about -- I don't know, I hit it in the air, and she goes, that's pretty good off the deck. And then she guided me around the whole 18 holes. I mean, she told me I didn't know how to hit a bunker, so she threw me in the bunker and taught me. I thought I knew how to hit a bunker shot but not to her liking, so she helped me. I was marking my ball in the practice round and getting out of her way like it was her turn, and she told me, no, that's not the way you do it, let me show you how to do to, and she literally taught me around the golf course. She taught me shots. She taught me a low shot from under a tree. She was amazing. She was amazing. She was preparing for the U.S. Women's Open and she's helping an amateur around the golf course.

So for me, it was the day -- my grandfather just -- he loved her, and she sat with him on a bench while he waited for me to come around a corner. Stories like that you don't forget. You just don't forget them. And then when I got on Tour and I was a rookie, we were at Wykagyl at the JAL and we played a practice round together, and she was still yelling at me most of the time about my game, and I was missing the fairways, and she said, whale I, why don't you just aim for the middle. I was like, that's a pretty good idea. Maybe I'll find a fairway.

But I cherish her. I cherish what she's done for golf. I cherish the fact that she's here. She's 78 years old. Everybody knows everything about JoAnne Carner, but she's here, and she's teeing it up, and she's going to play hopefully four rounds of golf, maybe two. But she's 78 years old, and she is still fighting for women's golf, and that to me is something that is inspiring.

She's paved the way for the rest of us, and I hope to do the same.

**Q. You played as a marker at Kemper Lakes a couple of weeks back; how helpful was that in your preparation for this week?**

SUZY WHALEY: Yeah, really helpful for the nerves for sure. For me -- and I told this to rod, too. It's not about the nerves for me. I just get all jazzed up when I get behind the ropes. I get super energetic about it, I can't wait to go, and then I mess it up, because I have so much energy, and I just love it. I love everything about competition. I love to be behind the ropes. I love to have fans that are cheering women on on golf courses.

So for me it was great because it made me get into that light where I had to make a putt. I felt compelled that I had to look at my four-footers and actually knock them in. In your average round of golf with my friends and my executives, especially because I play with a lot of men, those are usually "good." When I play with women, they are not good. At the end of the day, you pick up your ball often, and you can't do that, obviously, here. So when I play as a marker, it's embarrassing to do that as a marker because the crowd doesn't understand what's happening, so you actually have to make your putts and really focus, and you certainly want to focus for the player you're playing with. You want to play well. Oftentimes if you're playing well and making putts, you can kind of give the impetus to somebody else to make a lot of putts. You don't want to play poorly when you're playing in a major championship, whether you're a marker or whether you're just in the field. It was great. It was great to get back behind the ropes. I wish I had had two days. I lost my focus on four holes, not unexpected because I'm not used to focusing for 18 holes anymore. But it also wakes you up to realize, hang on a second, you've got to stay in the present, you've got to stay on this golf course. You can't think about work and other things you have on your plate. This is your priority for right now. Will I do that for 18 tomorrow? I hope so. I'm not going to sit here and tell you for sure I can make it for 18. But I'm sure going to give it a go.

**Q. You mentioned 18 tomorrow; you're on the final green, you're lining up a putt, somehow a young --**  
SUZY WHALEY: For eagle let's hope.

**Q. Somehow a young girl darts under the ropes, comes on to the green, asks for your autograph. How do you handle that situation?**

SUZY WHALEY: Yeah, I sign. I can tell you, you think about experiences that shape the way you look at the world, and I've had a couple of them for golf. My mom for sure, the instant I loved the game, instead of yelling at me for a rule I knew I'd broken, she encouraged me

and got me an outfit, right, to go play the game. It was never about a penalty, right? You run under the ropes, totally absurd, and Nancy's amazing rookie performance year where she's winning -- I'm sure she had security guards, whatever the case might be, she doesn't scold me and tell me I can't be up there, she encourages me and reminds me that maybe if I could stay behind the ropes I could get more. At the end of the day, it shapes you.

You know, I would never deny a child or anyone. It's an honor to be asked for your autograph, and you stay, you sign.

**Q. Did Kelly advance to match play?**

SUZY WHALEY: No. She pulled Allisen Corpuz this morning from USC. It was a tough match. They both played great. Alison holed it out on the 13th hole from the fairway, made a couple birdies, Kelly did, too, but she did not advance. But she's in good spirits. She played well. She's on. That's one thing great about Kelly. I wish I had that talent. She moves on much faster than her mother. She does. I drag it with me for a little while. She seems to shake it off and get going. She didn't get that from her mother. She got that from her dad, I think.

**Q. Those of us from Chicago are looking at it as a great year in the market for women's golf, having KPMG, this event, also the Women's Western Amateur was here with a lot of the great amateur ladies that play the game, as well. Could you reflect a little bit on your time around town here and what you've seen and what these events have meant and how they've gone and maybe reflect on how KPMG was viewed in the eyes of the PGA?**

SUZY WHALEY: Yeah, I mean, Chicago has these iconic venues, right, for golf, amazing championship golf courses. And whenever you have a city who encourages women's golf to the elevation that Chicago has, you know, I can only applaud that. I love being here. I mean, to be here in particular, and Kemper Lakes -- Kemper Lakes has traditionally only been a male-contested venue, and that's one of our goals with our partnership with the LPGA and the PGA of America and KPMG is to ensure that women are playing the best championship venues they possibly can play, on network television, with great purses, and with the opportunity to inspire and empower other events to elevate what they're doing, as well.

I feel great about the KPMG Women's PGA Championship. We looked to make it the best major in women's golf. We continue to strive for excellence. We want to improve it every single year. We look forward to going to Hazeltine next year, and then, of course, Aronimink. We announced 2023 on the lower

course at Baltusrol, which is really exciting. That's where we recently held the PGA Championship, as you're aware.

You know, I think we have to lead in ensuring that women's golf and these best female athletes in the world are receiving the attention they deserve, and it starts here. It starts at home. So we're proud to be a part of that.

As far as the Chicago Golf Club, the historic nature -- when you walk around a golf course that you're playing in a major championship and you know what's happened here in the past, you know that they've had a championship in 1897, I've got to be honest with you, it gives you the chills. When you look back off of 12 and you're halfway through the golf course and you look back at this clubhouse, it's something pretty special when you look across that fescue and realize that this isn't a golf course that many have even ever had the opportunity to play, and we're here for a week. My husband asked if I was playing today, and I said no. He goes, are you out of your mind? He said, what is wrong with you? Why aren't you playing today? I said, well, I thought I'd take a little rest. He goes, a rest from what? So I mean, good point.

So I smiled and giggled a little because actually when you think about it, he's actually right, I should have played.

**Q. How old were you with the autograph thing and what tournament was it?**

SUZY WHALEY: You know, it was Corning Classic. I don't remember how old I was but it was Nancy's rookie year, and she was on like her fourth or fifth win. I was born in '66. I want to say 12 or 13. I want to be I was 12 or 13. It was right in that range.