

*Hafa Adai!*

# Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

February 19, 2006

## Oliver tells all about JWC experience

**By Shan Seman**

Reporter



For Sasaki Oliver, the experience of playing alongside a professional golfer will serve as a plus in helping him improve his game.

Oliver, who recently returned from competing in the 2006 Johnnie Walker Classic Pro-Am in Perth, Australia was paired with pro golfer Peter O'Malley, who is currently ranked 150th on the PGA.

Oliver earned his trip to the JWC after winning the Tournament of Champions last year. The names of all winners were then raffled to determine who will travel to Perth, and Oliver's name was drawn.

"I think all the envelopes were written Sasaki Oliver so it was unfair," Oliver said jokingly.

Also taking part in the JWC was Noriko Togawa, who won the women's flight in the TOC and earned her trip courtesy of an impressive performance in Guam.

During his stint in the tournament, Oliver was paired with professional golfer Peter O'Malley, who ranks 150th in the world. The two combined to finish with a five-under 67.

"It was different," Oliver said. "Playing in that kind of level and environment is totally different from playing here. Alongside with the pros, you get to play with the best in the world and with a lot of spectators. The environment is different, the feeling is different, and the game is different."

Oliver had a decent individual score of seven-over par 79, and said his experience enabled him to get tips from the best in the game.

"I got some tips about playing the game. He knows I can hit the ball because I kind a over drive him all the time by 10 to 20 feet, but he is always in the fairway.about 90 to 95 percent of the time. For me, most of the time I'm in the rough.

"We can hit the ball, but placement is very important. Getting off the tee, you don't have to be that long but you just have to have good placement to set up for your next shot to go to the green," Oliver added.

The Pro-Am was held at the Vines Resort and Country Club, which has two courses-Ellenbrooke and Lakes-both of which are par-72 courses.

"The course was so beautiful, so for me to be playing there was just phenomenal," Oliver said.

Oliver added that another interesting factor that separates the pros from amateur golfers are that the pros do not use golf carts on the course.

"I walked a little but rode the cart most of the times. The pros, they walked the whole time. I think that really helps because you get more time to loosen up and relax yourself and get ready for the next shot. You get to read the yardage and distance and think about how to play your next shot."

In describing his experience, Oliver stressed that players on the professional level were really focused on their game.

"During the tournament, they're all about business," he said. [But] off the golf course, they're just like us. There was the Johnnie Walker Social and I got to hang out with a lot of them. It was the golfers behind the bar where they were the ones serving the drinks and it was a fundraiser for charity."

Among the players Oliver said he shared experiences with include Fred Couples, Retief Goosen, and K.J. Choi, among many others.

Meanwhile, Oliver also toured the area a bit during his stay and interacted with several people.

"The people were just wonderful. Western Australia is just great. The weather wasn't bad because it was almost like it is here during the summer. It's dry and the heat was a little too much but overall, western Australia was great. The people were nice and were got around very easily because of the people.

Meanwhile, Togawa was paired with JWC champion Craig Stadler.

"I watched him play and he looked like he was having a good time and was comfortable with the course," Oliver said.

Oliver was also accompanied by Ray Camacho.

Oliver, who began playing golf in 1999, said he looks forward to competing in the TOC again, as well as other tournaments in hopes of applying what he learned to improve his game.

Last year, Joe "Kamikaze" Camacho, who coaches Oliver, represented the Commonwealth at JWC in Beijing, China.