ISAO AOKI: Throughout my career, I won a few times in Japan and Europe. But winning the Sony Open was very special to me.

ANNC: I don’t believe it!! That’s in the hole!! it’s impossible!! What a finish!!

AOKI WATCHING: I’m amazed that I could swing like that 40 years ago! Watching it back, it was definitely my best swing ever.

IASO AOK: Japanese nation has idolized Hawaii as “islands of everlasting summer.”  For me to be able to earn a victory there, it was a turning point in my life.

ISAO AOKI: I also think it was a gift from God.

ANNC: Isao Aoki the first Japanese to ever win on the PGA TOUR and one of the most memorable shots in golf’s history.

ISAO AOKI: My victory served as one of the catalysts for the future generations to dream big and challenge in the U.S.

SHIGEKI MARUYAMA: I was able to make it to the PGA TOUR because I saw Aoki-san win the Hawaiian Open when I was a kid, and I wanted to be like him.

RIP OF JAPANESE SUCCESS OF MARUYAMA, MATSUYAMA, ETC.

ISAO AOKI: Nowadays, we are seeing a 10, perhaps closer to a 5-year cycle in the success of Japanese golfers. I would like to see many young players win at an early part of their career to gain confidence and have success on the global stages.

ISAO AOKI: There have been many “senpai,” maybe myself included, that have gone on to play the game in the past.

**MANY OF THE JAPANESE LEGENDS OF THE PAST HAD MAJOR SUCCESS INTERNATIONALLY – THOUGH THERE WERE A LIMITED AMOUNT WHO TOOK THEIR GAME TO THE U.S. CONSISTENTLY…AOKI HIMSELF DID SO IN THE MID-70’S AND CATALYZED THE CURRENT TREND WE SEE TODAY.**

ISAO AOKI: In my case, I was curious. I wanted to see how golf was played in the United States, and what kind of players were there.

**AND GAINED MAJOR NOTARIETY IN THE 1980 U.S. OPEN AFTER FINISHING SECOND TO JACK NICKLAUS.**

ISAO AOKI: Even though I lost, I look back at what I accomplished and can accept that defeat with no regrets.

ISAO AOKI: It was around my 10th year of playing on the international stages. That Sony Open was actually my 100th international tournament. It was a significant milestone for me.

ANNC: There’s the man checking his card, affixing his signature, Jack Renner.

JACK RENNER: Well, I've seen this many times before. As you can see, he's coming over the bunker there.

ANNC: And now the big swing from Isao Aoki. Hard pitching wedge…

ISAO AOKI: That was my best swing ever!

ISAO AOKI: Brian was on my bag back then. He said “Isao, it has to be a 9-iron or it will come up short.” I said “no” and chose the pitching wedge.

ANNC: Oh and it’s a beauty. I don’t believe it!! That’s in the hole!!

ISAO AOKI : Mmm!!!! (good reax with a big thumb up)

JACK RENNER: (LAUGH)

ANNC: I can’t believe it…it’s impossible!! What a finish!!

AOKI WATCHING VIDEO: The fact that I holed out with that club says so much about the amount of adrenaline that was running through my body.

ANNC: And Jack Renner didn’t turn, he said, “did he make it?” They’re just telling Renner now that the shot made it. Isao Aoki has just stolen one from Jack Renner.

JACK RENNER: I couldn't see anything at all. All of a sudden there was kind of like a moment, just a quick breath of silence and then an explosion of just a roar. I just thought it was I thought he hit it close.

ISAO AOKI: As I made my way up to the green, I was in shock and completely lost of who was talking to who. I remember picking up the ball from the cup in a daze.

ANNC: Aoki finished at 20 under. Renner in shock and close to tears is at 19 under.

JACK RENNER: I just never had it out of my mind that I was probably going to be in a playoff. Turns out I didn't have to play the playoff, but it wasn't in the way I kind of was hoping for (chuckling).

JACK RENNER: There’s nothing I can do about that I shot 19 under. It’s just one of those things, obviously it wasn’t meant to be.

JACK RENNER: What had been no relationship, it kind of became, as I say, shared experience made us brothers. He had a really good sense of humor. And he was fun to be around.

AOKI WATCHING VIDEO: Two weeks after winning the Sony Open, I happened to see him when he joked that he didn’t want to see my face! It was that dramatic of a tournament for both of us. The event formed a friendship between two of us.

JACK RENNER: He had a contingent of fans that week and he felt very much at home there. Per capita, I'm not sure there's a better golf country anywhere on earth. He definitely blazed the trail for all the all the good Japanese players that have come.

ISAO AOKI: It was a sensational event, birthing the first Japanese player to win on the PGA TOUR. Furthermore, Hideki Matsuyama won the same event 39 years later.

ANNC: In 1983, Isao Aoki won on this golf course becoming the first man from Japan to ever win on the PGA TOUR. Japan’s greatest winning export Hideki Matsuyama is the winner at the Sony Open in Hawaii in dramatic fashion.

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA*:* I’m very happy, this is the first tournament that a Japanese player won on the PGA TOUR when Isao Aoki won here and to follow him up, I’m just over the moon.

**THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TWO WINS – NEARLY 4 DECADES APART – POINTS BACK TO FATE…STARTING WITH HOW BOTH NEEDED TO ACHIEVE VICTORY IN COMEBACK FASHION.**

HIDEKI MATSUYAMA*:* Even at the turn when I was five back I could hear the cheers from my countrymen. That really spurred me on.

ANNC: Boy this is on a good line. What a shot! Whoa!

ISAO AOKI: As Hideki eluded to in his winner’s speech, I also closed the tournament with eagle. We both were able to leave a strong impression, in a good way. It was extremely touching to hear Hideki say in his speech that he was very happy to add his name to the tournament history where I had won previously.

**AND NOW – THE FATE OF JAPANESE GOLF IS ON THE SHOULDERS OF HIDEKI AND THE NEXT GENERATION – STILL INSPIRED BY THE SPARK THAT STARTED IT ALL.**

ISAO AOKI: For the game to keep evolving, these young stars would have to hang tough and push forward. There are a plethora of external pressures and hopes put on their shoulders. But I really hope they would breakthrough.

ISAO AOKI: From the skills standpoint, they are on par with the American or European players. It will come down their mindset.

KEITA NAKAJIMA: Every time I see Mr. Aoki, I always tell him I’ll try my best and he always tells me, “don’t try your best, just play your own golf.” That really is the most important and often the most difficult thing to do but that’s what I try to do.

ISAO AOKI: Time continues to evolve, from 5 years, then 10 years, and so on. While there are struggles in every period of time, I hope everyone finds a way to leave a mark of their own. Because of you, there may be next generation that gets inspired to follow in your footstep. Similar to Hideki reflecting on my victory (in his winner’s speech at the Sony Open), I hope the inspirations get passed down from generation to generation.