

ANA Inspiration

Sunday, April 4, 2021

Rancho Mirage, California, USA

Mission Hills Country Club



Lydia Ko

Press Conference

Q. Quite a performance, 10-under par 62. That ties the all-time 18-hole scoring record here at the ANA Inspiration. Take us through the round; at what point if at all did you regain consciousness?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I got off to a flying start, birdieing the first hole. I think 40 percent of the field or like 40 people probably made birdie for that pin position, so it felt good to be kind of with that percentage, and I had a really good second shot into 2 and was able to make that putt. I've been struggling to kind of take advantage when I've had advantage for birdie, and I felt like I did that really well, and I stayed patient.

No matter what the situation was, I was just focusing on the shot in front of me and hitting every shot with conviction, and I think at the end of the day that's all I can do, and if things fall your way and I have a great round like I did today, that's great. But no, definitely nice to finish this tournament on a high where there's so many great memories for me.

Q. If you can take us through 4, 6, 7 and 9, birdies there, that put you out at 29 to tie a 9-hole major scoring record, as well.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, on 4 I hit a 3-wood off the tee. They moved the tee forward with the pin position being quite far back and on the right, and I hit a great shot that the ball started like 30 feet left of where I was aiming, but no, it was one of the better places to putt from, that section of the green, and I holed -- it was probably the longest putt I've holed all week, like a 30-footer, and especially when you're playing well and you kind of hole one of those, it's a good momentum changer.

I hit it pretty close on 6 and 7 to give myself good looks for birdies, and I think that birdie on 9 after hitting an iffy tee shot and hitting a great driver off the deck for my second one, I think I took advantage of the couple good shots that I hit.

Yeah, I felt like I was just on the rhythm of things, and

especially the front nine. I think I hit all the greens or most of the greens, so I was having most of the time good looks for birdies, and it's a lot easier, I guess, mindset to be playing at rather than trying to chase pars. I think there were a couple times on the back nine where I needed to make up-and-down and I was able to do that.

It was for the most part stress-free, but I think when I got in the rough I had decent lies, and I think when it's your day, those things kind of follow. I just tried my best out there, but Patty has been playing amazing golf, especially at a major, and coming down the last at 18-under par or something, I think that's super impressive, especially only this year being the second year out for her.

Yeah, I was close, but just not there yet.

Q. You've had some amazing finishes across your career, especially at Mission Hills. Where does this one jump to on the list?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I finished really strong last year. On the last round I shot a 6-under or something and then got into the top 10.

To me going into today I didn't want to play conservatively. I just wanted to go out there and play as aggressively but as smart as I can, and I think to some point when you're so far behind, all you know is that you need to make as many birdies as you can. It was not a bad position to be in.

Sean gave me a little pep talk on his way to the Masters while I was warming up today, and yeah, this place has so many great memories, me jumping into Poppies Pond with my family and team and having my second major championship win here, and even though we don't technically have friends here, the members were out watching us, and they've always supported me and all of us and they love seeing the LPGA here.

It's one of our favorite stops. I love California, and hopefully -- I know this is the 50th year the LPGA has played here, but hopefully we'll be here for 100 and 150 years and 200 years, even though I will not be playing in 100 years.

Q. You mentioned Sean gave you a pep talk today. I'm wondering what he told you.

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LYDIA KO: Yeah, I was chipping and my phone rang, and I was like, it's either a scam call, which is a very highly likely thing, or Sean, and luckily it was Sean. I knew he was on his way to the Masters. He always goes like, "Whaddup, Lids." That's how he starts pretty much every conversation, and he said, this how many shot lead back I am, it's never like too far away. So he just told me to go out there, play my own game, and I said, yeah, I'm just going to have fun, play my own game and see where it takes me. He's said all week make sure to play with 100 percent conviction, and I felt like I was able to do that the best today.

I think that's a huge learning curve for me, as well.

Q. Was there any opportunity given your lie on 18, I'm not sure how familiar you were with the scoring situation, any opportunity or situation to go for the green with that shot?

LYDIA KO: I don't know if it was on the coverage, but I was like, dilemma, dilemma. I tried to hit the drive a little harder because I knew that would be the only way I would be able to have a comfortable kind of a yardage in. I knew if I hit a normal driver I could probably reach, but the longer you hit it obviously the shorter club in.

Even though it was in the rough they had cut the rough so nice that it gave me like questions in my head, okay, should I go for it, should I not, because I knew I was like five shots ahead of the person behind me, so even if I go for it and worst case make bogey or double I'm not really falling back.

Lots of questions.

Obviously glad that the superintendent mowed that place really nice for me, but if I had turned over my 5-wood just a little bit, it's not holding, and Patty at that time hadn't played 17 yet, so I tried to lay up and hit a shot close, and I said maybe I will do the Karrie Webb, but I was 30 feet short from that.

Q. There was a point in your career in your teens where these sorts of rounds looked kind of fun and routine almost. Do you feel like you're getting back to that mindset?

LYDIA KO: I was actually thinking in my head, I wonder if like on the coverage they're going to be like, oh, Lydia Ko is back. I hope it's not the sense that I'm back to a position where I was or where I could be. To be honest I just want to be the best version of myself right now.

I've had so many different experiences, ups and downs, since I was world No. 1 to this point, and I think at the end of the day I'm not going to be the same person anymore. All I can do is keep working hard and be at the position that I'm meant to be.

I think everything happens for a reason, and I'm at this position for a reason, so I've just got to keep working on the things that we've been doing and see where it takes me. I feel like sometimes when you're getting closer, you lose the patience and you feel like you're almost there, but I think at those times you have to be even more patient, have to focus on the little aspects in your game and just take it one shot at a time, and if it's meant to be, it's meant to be.

Q. When was the last time you had a putting round this good?

LYDIA KO: Great question. Maybe the first round at Lake Nona. I played really well. I just kind of got off to a good momentum, but the last few weeks I've been really struggling. Last week on the last day I think I putted one off the green and still three-putted, and then three-putted three more times on top of that.

I think there was a little bit of frustration, and to me speed is such a big key, and I think I just have to work on my drills and keep working on being more confident and keep it simple, and hopefully putts will drop more.

Q. You had said that you clarified with Sean when you said conviction versus commitment. What's the difference and what does conviction entail?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, he was going on and on about it because I was like, yeah, playing with 100 percent commitment. And he's like, no, I think it's 100 percent conviction. I think conviction you're right at it, doing it. I was like, okay, okay, okay, 100 percent conviction.

I think the area that Sean has really helped me is to sometimes call me and he'll say a few things and I'll be like, whoa, that was way too much. Not like technical stuff, but he kind of gives me like a word slap, like wake up, and I think that's what we all need at some point. Sometimes you just get in the way of your way.

I know that sometimes I get in the way of myself, and at the end of the day all I can do is -- it's me against the golf course, and sometimes the me part is the really hard thing to get over. He's been really helpful to clear those questions and kind of build the confidence in me.

To be honest, coming into this week, I wasn't really sure

where my game was at. Obviously I played really well coming up into Kia, but Kia was kind of a flustered week that I wasn't sure how this week was going to go, but he said, you're playing well and you've got a good chance at it. At some points I kind of didn't believe him, but I think he's been great to just build that confidence in me, and he's been a huge help outside of -- obviously from the technical standpoint, but outside of that, too.

Q. You just said you didn't want them saying that you were "back." Do you feel like you went anywhere?

LYDIA KO: I think this was another Sean thing. He said, we're always in the position or we're at the place that we're meant to be at at that time. He said just because I win an event or I miss the cut, that doesn't make me a better or worse human being, and I think that just kind of strips everything back.

At the end of the day like golf is a job, but a hobby is something I love doing. Like what happens on the golf course shouldn't affect how I judge myself or how I feel like off the golf course.

I'm just going to keep working hard with my team, make sure that what we're working on are the right things, and keep it simple. We'll see where it goes.

Sometimes I know it's not all going to click like the first couple rounds this week, but you just bring everything together. It's not all about having your "A" game all the time. If you do, you have days like today. But you're just -- I think I just need to be super patient and just stay positive and see for the rest of the season.

Q. You start your warm-up routine on the range with a few one-handed wedge shots. Do you always do that, and what purpose does it serve?

LYDIA KO: There's not a lot of purpose. I kind of do a few with my right hand and some with my left hand, and I kind of watch out to make sure that nobody is in front of me when I do my left hand because I shanked it a few times when I was practicing.

I like to use the bounce a lot, especially when I'm chipping and pitching, so when I do it with the right hand, that's kind of the purpose of it, but it's more for just casual giggles. S and giggles. Everybody knows what the first word is.

Q. I wanted to ask you what was going through your mind after you started with birdie-eagle?

LYDIA KO: My mind, I was hoping I would not make bogeys. No, this is a golf course that I've noticed

throughout the rounds, the rough is getting -- was getting longer, and I just tried to stay patient and go hit one shot at a time, hit it on the fairway, hit it on the green and give myself good looks for birdies.

Obviously it was probably the best start I could ask for, but you just can't get too ahead of yourself. For most of my front nine I felt like I gave myself a lot of good looks for birdies, and that's all you can do, and if it drops, it drops. If not, oh, well.

I think all day I had in my mind that God has a plan for all of us, and I just have to believe that and have faith and go on my journey. I might not know what that journey is, but I feel like it's all laid out there, so all I can do is just try my best at that exact moment.

Q. In reflection, you've received a lot of criticism in the past for making some changes, chasing some distance, but do you have a sense of relief, pleasure, happiness or an indication that some of your choices have paid off?

LYDIA KO: To me after a round like today I'm just happy that I got to finish strong in this event and be in contention and be just right up there.

I think I can never get too ahead of myself, obviously, after rounds like this. It gives me a lot of confidence to say, hey, we're trending in the right direction. But I think when things are going well, I think it's even more important to focus on the swing feels that we're working on or the things in my short game and make sure to kind of take it out to the basics.

To me I think it's more important just focusing on the present and not get carried away about what's going to happen in the future and what happened in the past.

Q. The tournament as a whole, how satisfying is it given that it wasn't a win but that final round, how satisfying was that?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I was a little bit of a mess the first couple days. I made a lot of birdies -- I made more birdies than bogeys thank goodness, but I was making a lot of like clumsy mistakes, and it kind of fed on from what was happening last week. I was just excited that I could be back in this kind of position and be under this adrenaline.

Always no matter if it's a major or just any other event we play, I think it's great to finish your tournament on a high. I was like, oh, you know, I wonder if I hadn't made a few of the clumsy mistakes early in the week what could have happened. There can be times when you go, oh, what

could have been, but I feel like I have to focus on what were the things that I did well to just be in this position.

Even though I haven't won, I think it's probably he owe if somebody said, hey, you're going to shoot 62 today, I'd be like, oh, yeah, definitely give me the ticket to 62 and I'll just sit in the shade all day.

So yeah, I think I'm obviously pleased with it. Like I said earlier, Patty played amazing golf, and I tried to chase her, but she was just a bit too far away.

Q. In terms of the final day, given the fact you've won here before, is that almost a confidence booster, just hanging in there and continuously making up strokes?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I have a week off next week, so hopefully gather everything and work on the next stretch. Yeah, no matter what position you end up being in, having rounds like this definitely is a confidence booster, and I think it gives me the confidence that hey, no matter how far behind I am, if you have some amazing rounds like this, you're never out of it.

Golf you just never know until that last putt drops on the last hole, so I think that's just going to be my motivation.

I felt like I tried to play with 100 percent conviction and commitment, and that's going to be my focuses throughout the season and pretty much throughout my career.

Q. Did you at any point start thinking about 59? Because we were.

LYDIA KO: Oh, yeah. No. I wasn't. Maybe I should have, I don't know.

No, I just tried to play that one shot in front of me. I had a stretch in the middle of my back nine where I was trying to make up-and-downs and I was able to do that, and I was really focusing on, okay, how do I hit the next shot well and how do I hit it with authority and just being smart about my play.

No, 59 did not come across my mind. Maybe if I was like Annika, it would have come across my mind, I don't know. You feel like, oh, three strokes, you can get that from anywhere, but three strokes when you're out there playing is huge, trying to make three more birdies is really tough.

Hopefully I'll be able to have a run for it again down in the future.

Q. Where does this round rank for you in terms of one of your greatest rounds? And secondly, what do you

think this will do for you going forward?

LYDIA KO: This is probably one of the most solid rounds I've played. I felt like most of the shots that I had in front of me I was able to hit it pretty well and execute it, and when things are going that way, I feel like you're playing with confidence and the next shot in front of you, you're trying to hit it close or trying to hole it. Yeah, definitely one of my top rounds, especially being at a major championship and on the final round.

Hopefully I'll be able to kind of feed off this and kind of take a step back and see what went well throughout the week and what are the things I need to work on and kind of get those things sharper for my next stretch of events.

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