

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Tuesday, January 18, 2022

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Danielle Kang

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, here with Danielle Kang kicking off the 2022 season in style here at Lake Nona. How was your off-season? Looked like you were here, there, and everywhere, Vegas, USGA things. How was the small break that we got before coming back?

DANIELLE KANG: It was really nice, but I actually traveled a lot for the first three weeks. Went to see a lot of my friends. I did go to New York for less than 24 hours. I told former commish that I'm going to restrict his number now. Every time I answer his call he asks me to fly somewhere.

It's great news though. USGA has partnered up with ProMedica and now we have a \$10 million purse. No complaints there.

THE MODERATOR: No complaints with that. That brings us here. We have an increased purse here. We have a lot of increased purses around the season. Hilton Grand Vacations coming on. It's a really good time to be on the LPGA Tour.

Does that make you even more excited to get this new season started?

DANIELLE KANG: Every year that I've competed out here I know that we've been progressing in the right directions and the purses are getting bigger, more TV ratings, more TV times.

I believe that in five to ten years to come, I don't know where we would be, but hopefully we've done our part and just keep growing the game like we normally do.

THE MODERATOR: Now we are here at the lovely Lake Nona. This is a great tournament, a great event to see some of the biggest names in the women's game, biggest names in sports in general. What is this tournament like? You're a runner-up here. You've seen how all the events work. How can you explain it to the fans?



DANIELLE KANG: Playing with the celebrities is super fun. I hope that I get paired with my friends that I normally do. I come out here and -- well, they changed the venue and Lake Nona is a really difficult golf course, and I believe that if you have a home course, I think there will be a home course advantage.

There are a lot of little nooks and breaks on the greens that I quite don't know yet. Trying to figure that out. It'll be -- we're okay. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: It'll be a good week.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, it's really exciting to be here. I love that we have the Tournament of Champions event. I wasn't here a few years ago and right now the Hilton Grand Vacations has been incredible, before Diamond Resorts as well, to start off this event, to kick off the year with the champions, so it's really cool.

THE MODERATOR: Who are some of the friends you hope to pair up with?

DANIELLE KANG: Well, Lee Brice, I've played with him every year and I love that man. I'm hoping he's in my group again. He's not a good golfer. He just has the best vibes though. I love that.

I mean, you can tell by having Ollie on my bag. Just the same thing. He just has the best vibes and I like happy, positive people.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. I noticed you didn't make the weekend cut here ahead of Gainbridge last year.

DANIELLE KANG: There is no cut this week.

Q. What's that?

DANIELLE KANG: There is no cut this week. (Laughter.)

Q. No, but I found it very surprising considering how elite you are. What are the characteristics of the course that you feel like you're getting a handle on?

DANIELLE KANG: Funny enough, I actually don't



remember. When I miss a cut I just kind of forget about it. When I finish second I don't forget.

So I don't remember what I did here. I do remember the golf track as I play. I remember the Four Seasons Golf Course like the back of my hand. I'm a little weird that way. It'll be fine. There is no cut so we're good.

Q. I don't know if a lot of golf fans realize how tough it is to show up at a brand new course when you're told, Hey, it's going to be here, as opposed to having some reps and experience on it.

DANIELLE KANG: I'm a player that needs to play about 30, 40 times the same golf course for me to understand where everything is, so playing it once or five times is not going to really matter. I think making good notes in my yardage book is a big deal. I put a lot of arrows and things like that. I create my own green directions and stuff.

So -- sorry, I don't know what's going on today. Yeah, so it'll be -- the golf course is difficult. (Laughter.) There are so many movements.

THE MODERATOR: It's early in the year. You got to get practice reps here, too.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, I'm nervous in the press conference. There are people going and I go, hi. We're good.

Q. At the end of last season you said you were feeling uncomfortable. Where is your comfort now to start 2022?

DANIELLE KANG: I'm always uncomfortable. I have to get comfortable being uncomfortable, as my brother says. I've done some really good work this off-season. I'm happy with the progress, but I'm not where I want to be yet.

That doesn't mean that I can't compete. I know where my game is at, but physically, physiology, mental, physical, all of it, it's in the correct direction.

I'm excited to play. It's not quite solid yet, but it's better than it was, so it's good.

Q. You talked about that at the end of last year as well, so many different aspects, mental, physical. Was there a certain area you focused more on during the off-season?

DANIELLE KANG: I focused more on everything, but I was very diligent and consistent with all the workouts and all the mental coaches and the lessons and training, all that.

I had a schedule. I know people mentioned on Instagram that I go out a lot in Vegas and have fun. I do go to a lot of sporting events. That's just my fun. When people ask me what do you do when you're not playing golf, I go watch other people playing sports.

With that being said, it's just been a very consistent routine that I've had, so I was kind of nervous coming out to a tournament because this is the most inconsistent schedule because every day is different.

I think there was a quote that somebody posted that I said that sometimes we wake up at 4:00 and sometimes at we wake up at noon. People said, Boo-hoo, you get to sleep in until noon.

Well, actually it's just sometimes you have to sleep at midnight. Depends on if I can get my workout in. Sometimes you don't eat right and you don't have time to eat. You have a late tee time, you finish at 8:00, you run home, it's 10:00 I got to sleep, wake up a 5:00. It's that kind of things I can't balance as well yet after ten years.

So it's still a work in progress trying to figure out. My physio is back so I'm really happy with about that. With Corona he hasn't been around, COVID, sorry, he hasn't been around. But he's back, so it's all good.

Q. At the CME last year you talked about distance you lost with your driver. Has that come back, and is there anything you did, whether changing the shaft or the head or anything?

DANIELLE KANG: It has come back, but I call it wifi. It's wider. So my misses are bigger but my distance back, so I get some random little blocks, but it's narrowed down in the last two weeks.

But the golf course is wide out here, so I think more so you have to know where you're going to mishit your second shot. What is it, No.4, is that a par-3? No. 5 Par-3? I hit a good shot yesterday and ended up rolling back 45 feet. Didn't realize that there was a hill there.

Those are the things that I think are more important this week more so than distance.

Q. You talked about being comfortable being uncomfortable. Any tips or tricks or practices that you do to help with that?

DANIELLE KANG: Probably reps, and I actually have a sports psychologist named Micah, and he actually helps me really check into the present moment. I'm always

uncomfortable. We've figured that out.

But trying to have that second or two seconds of just comfort and bringing back to the present moment is something that I work on every day. I slept over at Amy Yang's house last night. I'm going to throw her under the bus because she made me meditate and stare at nothing for 20 minutes yesterday.

That was different. I go, 20 minutes? What? So I just -- she made me sit there. Took my phone away, everything. I just -- I don't know how she does it, but things like that I have to work on.

Q. Did you feel better after that?

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah. I felt calm. I'm not usually calm, so...

Q. That's good. You mentioned being a sports fan in general. Are you an adapted Raiders fan now or...

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, I root for them. They're home team.

Q. What was your take on the whole rooting for a tie or playing for a tie thing in the playoffs?

DANIELLE KANG: Well, I didn't -- so I don't know, I was on the field that day, which was really fun. I did leave during overtime because I needed to get my car out of the parking garage. It's going to take two hours. The Raiders fans are dedicated, so especially I'm starting to learn that Vegas sports fans are dedicated and I'm probably one of them that go to almost every single game courtesy of MGM Resorts. They really put me up at suites and nice tickets, so a lot of my greens and I go.

Q. Last question from me: Hypothetically, if you could win the race to the CME Globe by tying, would you go for the tie or just try to win knowing you could also lose?

DANIELLE KANG: I don't think you --

Q. I know it's not possible.

DANIELLE KANG: Like just in general would you go for a tie? No, I wouldn't go for a tie. Either you win or you lose. I've been living like that for 11 years playing golf. We normally lose every single day. Our winning percentage is less than probably two percent, less than one percent. I don't even know what the percentage are.

No, it's either win or lose, right? Even second place you're

first loser. Just got to go for it. Might as well.

Q. Did you make an ace on the first day of the year? Is that what was on Instagram?

DANIELLE KANG: Yes, TPC Summerlin. I had to beg my friend David Lipsky to play golf with me because no one will play golf with me on the first day. They said, We're not waking up at 8:00 am.

Q. Did you feel like that was a good omen for the year?

DANIELLE KANG: I didn't look at it as like a year thing. Just thought it was pretty cool to make a hole-in-one on the first day of the year.

Q. Your first round of the year. How many aces do you have?

DANIELLE KANG: 13. That was my 13th.

Q. Holy cow.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah. I mean, how about if you just trip over a curb. You're not going to say that's a bad omen for the entire year, right? Whatever.

Q. Right, but is it positive? You could go with it. How many of those are in competition?

DANIELLE KANG: I want to say four.

Q. Okay.

DANIELLE KANG: I want to say four, but might be three. I made five in one year and that's the year that I won two cars in two weeks.

I made the third one in Hawaii, and if I'm wrong, the fourth one might have been in a tournament. Might not have been in a tournament. But I did make five that year.

Q. Did anyone buy you a drink after this one?

DANIELLE KANG: Probably bought David a Starbucks, but...

Q. Okay. Just curious, one more thing. Do you write down goals for the season? What do you and Butch talk about when you think about how you want the season to shape up?

DANIELLE KANG: I think it's a bit different than last few years. We approached this season as in where I want to

be the next week, where I want to peak.

But more so than the game, I think we're more focused on how I feel and where my body is to be able to do the swing he's taught me. To be able to produce the speed that I can produce on the range.

I sometimes don't. I go up to the range and I'm swinging probably seven miles per hour slower. Those are the things we're trying to be consistent with.

That's about it. We can't focus so much on the results, becoming blank or I have to win blank. I mean, at the end of the day I just have to get consistent and feel comfortable every week that I play.

Q. What specifically has to happen physically for you to be in the place to get the extra seven miles per hour?

DANIELLE KANG: I think figuring out my routine on the road, figuring out my workouts a bit better. I didn't have injuries last year, knock on wood.

Same thing: Just being able to fire and engage and be efficient. Every day I wake up it's a bit different right? If it's cold my body tightens up; if it's hot I'm ready to go. I play really well in heat. I do not play well in the cold. We can all look at my stats. I miss the cut almost every year in the British Open.

But I'm trying to change that. Even this year during the winter Vegas was very cold, so I went out there blowing probably 30 miles per hour at 40 degrees. I tried to keep playing because my caddie's dream is to win the British Open, so I need figure out how to play in the cold and warm up as fast as I can in the morning so my driver is not ready to go by the 15th hole.

Being able to dial in speed. I learned that it's not up to the superintendant or the LPGA to make the greens consistent. I need to figure out how the greens are rolling in the morning and dial into the speed. Just little things.

Q. Thank you. I love that you're wanting to win a major for Ollie, a specific one.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, a specific one.

Q. You mentioned that with a Diamond Resorts, at that course you played it several times; here at Lake Nona maybe not as much. What's the mindset going into this tournament knowing that you only maybe played it a couple times but this is like a pretty big tournament to start off the year?

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, it's a pretty big tournament and the golf course is difficult. It's a good track, great design, greens are so fast.

I think for me, it is the beginning of the year. Normally I'm always ready to come out of the gates and ready to just burst through the door. This year I feel more kind of calm about it.

Yesterday I played, didn't play very well, but I still just don't know the golf course. So the best thing I can do is know the green speed and around the greens, being able to make par, and know that I'm not going to make eight birdies out here, just like the Diamond Resorts -- the Four Seasons Golf Course.

It's different. So that was more resort course; this is more golf shotmaking. So I am pretty stressed out with the golf course starting first week, but just got to do the best you can and treat it like a major and take the shots when I can and be able to be aggressive when I can as well.

Q. I'm sure you get asked this all the time, with all the celebrities out here and being a tough golf course, is that still a distraction for players out here or more of a calming sense that it's still a fun tournament for the fans and celebrities and players?

DANIELLE KANG: Seriously every year I've played with Lee Brice. He's a big distraction. He's a big guy and he's not good at golf, and I'm going to say that again. But he is a fun. It doesn't really bother me.

It's kind of -- I wish I could play with him four rounds in a row. We tried that last year. Didn't work. He roots me on while I'm playing. He's like the best hype man ever, so I don't really care if he's shooting 100 next to me. I focus on my own game like normal.

Week in, week out you can play with players playing well or not playing well or that gets angry and that doesn't. Shouldn't effect you. You still have to hit your own shots, so...

Q. You picked Annika's brain about this course, anyone who is out here?

DANIELLE KANG: Annika, yeah, I saw her yesterday. Said hi. But I don't know. The golf course is interesting. You have to just know the golf course. I mean, I played five holes and I'm pretty sure every hole I made a mistake. Oh, I shouldn't go there. Oh, I should not go here.

I should have known that, played here before, but it takes



time for me. So I think being very aware, mindful, and being focused probably would help me more so than anything else this week.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back. Enjoy your afternoon. See you later.

DANIELLE KANG: Thank you. Bye guys.

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