

# Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

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Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

## Danielle Kang

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Here with Danielle Kang, our 2022 Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions winner.

Congratulations, Danielle. One better than last year. It's chilly out. Let you get your coat on. Overall, what was the experience like this week, and now to kickoff the 2022 season with a big win?

DANIELLE KANG: The experience this year was very different from last year. We're at a different golf course, different title sponsor. I played with the CEO Mark Wang during the pro-am and that was really fun.

It was a bit different. I think I was more aware of where I was. Things that I wanted to work on, that's the things that I wanted to execute.

It was a bit of a different goal, and end result, I always want to win, but it was kind of more than that for me this year. I'm actually proud of myself for the work that I've done to feel the way I have today.

**Q. You said you worked this off-season on playing in the cold. Who would've thought you would need that crazy work this week. You worked on a lot things. Do you mind telling us what you've been working on and what you're the most proud of?**

DANIELLE KANG: One of the things I'm most proud of is to not let certain things get to me. I guess the tee times are different and this year, for some reason -- last year only it was three pros in the final group, but then they switched it back this year, so it did kind of rub me the wrong way when I was looking at the tee times today.

Those things I -- it might not mean a lot to other people, but for me it does mean something. To not let it affect me and to be able to execute and play the way I wanted to play and end up in the result I wanted to and not let the feelings bother me, is -- has come a long ways for me.



**Q. You had kind of an up and down back nine. Three birdies in a row there on 13, 14, 15, but then a pretty clutch bogey save there on 16. Could have been worse. Tell us about what happened there and how you kept yourself calm to make that bogey?**

DANIELLE KANG: That's actually going back to the things not letting me bother me so much, right? I'm trying to -- it is what it is. That's one of the worst sayings and the best sayings. I hit it -- it wasn't a good swing, but I was on a right-to-left lie on a right-to-left wind on a right-to-left shot and I ended up overturning it.

It told myself it wasn't because I had bad thoughts, it wasn't because I was coming down the stretch. I just hit a bad swing. The best thing I can do, I told my caddie, I have to save a bogey here at the worst.

So I hit the putt, first putt really firm. It was over 100 feet, and then I watched it roll by the hole. So that was important for me. So instead of freaking out about or panicking about the results, what if I don't make a bogey, what if I don't make a double; I was more focused on what I needed to do the best I can to hit the next shot with 100% commitment, which was to watch my putt, and I trusted that line and I made that bogey, so I was really proud of myself.

**Q. Good. You said you were paying attention to where you were on the golf course. Did you know how much of a lead you had over the rest of the field?**

DANIELLE KANG: No, I actually didn't know on 17 and 18. I missed the scoreboard on 17, so I didn't know where I was on 18 at that point.

But I was mindful on the 15th hole, the par-5, and the 14th hole and the 13th, because I know that those girls hit it far. I don't hit it as far as Gaby and Nelly. It's not reachable -- certain holes are not reachable for me. I don't have wedges. I had a hybrid in on 16 and I have a 5-wood on 18, so I have to be very mindful about where I'm going to be standing and the reality of, Hey, there is a bogey opportunity coming up for me.

But I knew that I played well up until 16 so I didn't to have worry too much about where I was going to be standing on 17 and 18.



**Q. How nice it to see the hard work you put in in the off-season pay off so quickly?**

DANIELLE KANG: It feels really peaceful actually. I feel peaceful today. I don't feel super excited. I don't feel unbelievably thrilled. I just feel like nice.

(Smiling.)

The work that I put in, everyone keeps bringing it back to last year. It was a tough year for me. It was a bad year for me. I fought through, but for the last seven, eight weeks I just dropped the fight. I didn't need to fight anymore. It was a new year.

I was just trying to gain weight, trying to change my nutrition, change the way I approach the golf game, more so than be so caught up in the way I felt and how I felt and what I'm going to do and what if I didn't do it.

I already didn't do it, so...

**Q. And then that stretch I guess starting about 11 you really took control of the tournament. Talk about that stretch and the three straight birdies.**

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, so 11 I hit a really good wood. Was it 3-wood? Yeah, I hit a 3-wood, and then I had a really crummy lie, but I kind of have to accept my feelings, because that's what I'm working on, accepting my feeling and dropping it. So I was so angry with that lie because it was so soft and there was rough behind it.

I quietly said to my caddie, I'm raging right now. Because it could have been anywhere; why here? I said, It's fine. Just let me range, just let me get angry for five seconds and then I dropped it. I knew I could hit that shot. I practiced it during the practice rounds, and gave myself a really good up and down.

One of the best holes I was really proud of is 13. It's a really difficult par-3. I probably have never misread putts more than I have in Lake Nona. I aim left and miss left, so I completely misread, completely miss speed, and I've had a couple four-, five-footers coming back because I misread it.

On 13 I changed my line three times and I just trusted my feel more so than what I saw. That was a huge putt for me to make for birdie. I think that got the momentum going on to 14 and 15 as well.

**Q. How far was that?**

DANIELLE KANG: Like seven, eight feet. How far was

that Ollie? Eight feet.

**Q. Danielle, of all the shots this week, I think the one that may have brought a tear on the old-timers' eyes was the bump and run today on 15. You just don't see that shot very much anymore. Can you walk us through what your thinking is there?**

DANIELLE KANG: I been working a lot of bump and runs. Now that you said old-timers, sorry Butch, but he makes me practice a lot of bump and runs. I chipped with a 46-degree there instead of trying to hit a 50 or a 54 because it's more so like a putt.

So as long as I got the green speed down, which I have, I saw how the ball was going to roll and react to the green. I wanted that topspin, so I just hit it just as close on the green as possible and let it tumble.

**Q. Looks like you kind of stand the shaft up a little bit there.**

DANIELLE KANG: I stand the shaft up, put the ball back, out the toe down, and I just hit it aggressively through the ball.

**Q. Trying to play it off the toe a little bit?**

DANIELLE KANG: Yes. I did that on 18th hole as well.

**Q. And do you get a better feel when it's coming off the toe?**

DANIELLE KANG: It comes off like a putt. You just can't be afraid of it, right? If you hesitate it's going to duff or chunk or going to catch a little bit too much toe spin.

But as long as you're aggressive it's always going come out with the nice topspin that you can create with your putter.

**Q. And how often do you do that in competition or is this one of the first times?**

DANIELLE KANG: No, I been practicing that a lot. I actually use that shots quite often than not. It's the easiest shot in golf, to be honest. You just got to tumble it and it'll go to the hole as long a read the speed and the line right.

That's my go-to when things are not, let's say, the most pressured or I have to hit a good shot. On 18 I wasn't going to hit any other shot than that. I don't see any other thing.

**Q. Yeah. It sounds like Steve is trying to get a golf tip**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

from you.

DANIELLE KANG: (Laughing.)

**Q. So you wouldn't know it now, but how difficult was it out there and how good was the 68 in the conditions today?**

DANIELLE KANG: I played so well today and yesterday. It was so cold, incredibly cold. My body is just not moving as well as it would in the heat. It does affect me more so than probably other players. I don't know how they feel, but were personally speaking the minute the temperature drops the driver goes shorter, my irons are going shorter. I'm hitting 5-woods and rescues coming into the par-4s when I had 8 irons in.

But I know that and I'm aware of it. I know the swings that I can make and can't make when it's cold, so that was one of the most difficult changes for me is the weather. Not the wind, not the rain, just the cold, the icy coldness.

**Q. What do you think of the atmosphere on 18? You're trying to get up and down and it's like the base is thumping. It's like a party out there. It's probably hard to concentrate.**

DANIELLE KANG: Didn't bother me one bit. I don't even know what music was on. I heard nothing. I was just more focused on doing what I needed to do. It's more distracting -- few days ago they kept turning it on and off and on and off. That's distracting because it's so loud, so I didn't know what was happening, or if they were going to turn it on when I was putting or when the cue was. As long as it's background noise, it is what it is.

**Q. Kind of hinted at it earlier that you didn't know where exactly you were on 17 and 18. Looked like coming off 18 you weren't aware that you had won the tournament. When did that news get to you?**

DANIELLE KANG: So it's never over until the last shot drops, right? So I didn't know if I was up by two. Someone could still hole out, I could sign the wrong scorecard. I didn't know exactly how many I was up by, so I was kind of confused.

So if it was -- I was only up by two, there were still people -- I didn't know if they can make eagles. That's why I didn't know. I knew they were close. I just didn't know how far apart we were, basically.

**Q. And then also you had to play away from the pin at 16. What was that decision making process?**

DANIELLE KANG: 16th hole?

**Q. Yeah.**

DANIELLE KANG: So on 16 I wanted to hit this weird shot and my caddie kind of went against it. I know I had to make a bogey. Doubles are too penalizing.

So he said that you can go to the right side, but I told him I don't think I can stop it with it on the green, and I also didn't want 100 foot putt.

He's like, What other shot are you looking at? I said I could have some fun and try to pitch it into the hill. He's like, Yeah, we're not doing that.

He basically said to me, Hit the best shot you can on the right side and when he kept reminding me that I think you can hold it on the green, I ran up and all I think all he thinking was I just needed to putt.

So I saw the shot and hit it. The best thing I did was watch my putt roll by, so...

**Q. So you're chatting about playing in the cold and there are certain swings you can't make. Curious if you can talk about like which types of shots you feel like you can't make in the cold?**

DANIELLE KANG: I don't really hit good draw shots in the cold, and that's my go-to. I always hit probably a 3-, 5, to even 15-yard draws. I'm always a right-to-left shot player.

And then in the cold my body can't go through -- lower body doesn't go through as well, which means I change to more of a cut. I worked on a lot of fades and cuts this off-season and I was more comfortable with them, and that's what I played.

**Q. Awesome. When you're talking about hitting that bump and run, is practicing bump and runs more also part of the British Open prep that you talked about earlier this week?**

DANIELLE KANG: Yes and no. I think I'm just trying to widen my arsenal and my tools, right, and trying to be able to chip with 8-irons and 9-irons. I hit couple 9-iron shots around the greens, 46 degrees.

It's actually going with what I feel more so than what I think is right. I learned that there is really not a correct way to play golf, and the better that I am with more clubs, I felt I have more opportunities to make -- probabilities to making par and saves, and that's what I've tried to widen this off-season.

**Q. You had said that you want to win a British for your caddie. Where is he from?**

DANIELLE KANG: He's from Leicester, England. Yeah, he's freaking out over there.

**Q. That's his dream?**

DANIELLE KANG: That's his dream. So I basically -- I just want to give ourselves the best opportunity for me to contend at the British. That's the best way I can put where I'm going to stand at the British Open.

I've not played well out there and my results have shown that I don't compete -- don't contend as often, but I can't just sit here and say that's my weakest link. If that's the weakest, I have the best range of improvement. So I worked really hard on trying to play in the cold, on slow greens, and work on a lot of bump and runs.

It helped out today and it wasn't the British Open, so that's good.

**Q. Is this win on that note mean more to you because it is in the cold and in the wet and in the windy with Ollie? Does it mean something a little bit more special?**

DANIELLE KANG: I think it's more special because a lot of stuff that I did during the off-season, it was really hard. I mean, I've actually gained nine pounds, so I worked really hard to gain that weight.

I feel really good. I don't feel injured, tired. Those are the things that I worked on doing, a lot of different types of analysis and people helping me out. I have a great team back home. They're probably not going to listen to this, but Nicole is my nutritionist, I got my mental coach, I got Duncan with my strengthening, Heather with my physio.

It's just nonstop with all these group of people building and helping me better, like create better footing.

So those are the things that it's hard to do, so it's -- I'm just more proud of myself that I actually did it.

THE MODERATOR: You did it, it's real. Congrats Danielle.

DANIELLE KANG: Thank you.

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