

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Friday, January 31, 2025

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Lydia Ko

Quick Quotes

Q. All right, very pleased to be joined by Lydia Ko after her second round here to the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions. Bogey-free round today; 5-under. What was working so well for you?

LYDIA KO: I hit the ball pretty well and I putted a lot better than yesterday. You know, I was a little bit worried about my long game going into the round yesterday but it was a lot better than I anticipated.

I gave myself a lot of good looks for birdies and I was missing it on the side that I normally don't miss it, so I was kind of confused.

I had a slight equipment change. It was the same putter but a different of the same putter yesterday. I quickly realized that I shouldn't abandon the putter that was so good to me last year, so I brought that back today. Even though I felt like a few more putts could have dropped, I still putted a lot better.

All I can do is just put a good stroke on it. That was most improved, so I feel like I'm trending in the right direction not only in the score, but just how my game played out.

Q. Any differences you noticed in your game today versus yesterday? Maybe yesterday shake off the rust a little bit and now you're back into the swing of it?

LYDIA KO: I hit a couple more greens today. Other than that, I still played decent. Few careless three-putts coming in and few short putt misses.

Sometimes it's about the momentum, right? You're shooting 1-under and if a couple drops and you're a few shots in under par, but when you keep missing it's hard to see the ball go in.

I feel like I kind of got into that run, but I made three birdies in a row today and couple of them were mid-range, so it



was good to kind of see a good difference.

But, yeah, I think I got off the golf course yesterday and I asked my mom, which is a perk of having your house so close, I was like, mom, I think we need to bring the putter back out. I practiced a little bit with it and took it out.

I'm sorry to my putter. I apologized.

Q. Did you request a new putter or how does that work?

LYDIA KO: It was a me problem or something I had created. Technology and like golf equipment is just advancing, and I tried to go to more of a face balanced style putter. Sometimes under pressure your stroke changes, and I was putting really good with the putter that I had used yesterday in my weeks leading up to this.

I had no doubt that I was going to struggle and see some of the misses that I saw. I think when you are under pressure, and as much as you are still having a good time, it's different playing competitive rounds than just playing a round with some of my friends out here.

I think the consensus was that sometimes when it's so forgiving or makes it easier, I think it takes the athleticism out a little bit. I know that sometimes I have pulled my putt or pushed it a little bit because of my gut feeling on how this putt is going to break.

I've holed a lot by doing that, and I think I almost try to cheat myself out by having a putter -- even though it's the same exact putter, just a little bit different in the spec to make my life easier, but I realize that there might be consequences with that.

Obviously it's not the putter's fault. It's all the puttees is fault. It's just having a difficult round on the greens to come back to something that I'm familiar with and I know that I've putted well with, was I think a good change for me.

But, yeah, it's never the equipment's fault. Last time I checked that putter I used yesterday was a putter I used to get the Player of the Year in 2022. Like clearly the results



back up my consensus. It's just I think sometimes like the saying they say if it's not broke why change it. I learned it the hard way yesterday.

It's not to say I'm never going to change my putter again or never going to change something again. We sometimes have to learn through our mistakes and decisions. I don't have any regrets doing that, but I was able to learn, so now if I do other putter testing I know what style to kind of look for.

Q. Remind me of the model of the putter?

LYDIA KO: It's a P5. It's not one of the standard Scotty Camerons, but I've been using it since the fall of 2021. I've only really gone out of that model for a short period of time in 2023. It's a putter that I've always gone into. I have a couple of the same putter and I just kind of change it around.

I came back to the putter that I played pretty much from Chevron onwards last year.

Q. I suppose you could just say that your putter from last year got the message being benched for a day, right?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, you know, it was weird. I traveled with two putters to Europe last year. I said, okay, I'm going to putt with the putter that I have been playing with at the Olympics because I know how it feels. I know what it's doing.

But I said to myself and I told my coaches, too, and I'm pretty sure Paul, that I was going to change at the end of the week at the Scottish Open to a different one.

Then I won. Sometimes blackmailing maybe works. You know, Mark said at one point, oh, your ball must have ears. It listens. When you say sit, it sits.

We were joking we play a little bit more expensive price to get equipment that listens. But, yeah, it's weird. Sometimes it works out like that. I think over my time I've just realized that there are always things that I -- certain things I look for in knew equipment.

I may have had different styles, models, but they all have a very similar characteristics to it, so I never veer that far off.

In ways sometimes it's good to change it up a bit because you start learning more about your game, and I feel like the last few years I've gotten a lot more -- my bandwidth of knowledge on golf clubs and equipment is a lot bigger, which gives me more flexibility and at times I'm not having

to learn from bad mistakes.

Q. You might have just touched on it, but what's the balance as a professional between sick sticking with something you're very comfortable with and has been successful, and yet trying to take advantage of new technology?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I haven't really changed my clubs at all since 2023, September. I've used the same model of irons. You know, have been using the Vokey wedges and, yeah, so a lot of them have not changed. Luckily for me I'm kind of in a position where I can play the best of what's out there and what suits me.

Sometimes it is pretty tempting to try the new X. They say it goes three miles an hour further or X amount of yards further. I was like at that point I should be hitting it 300 yards by now.

The technology is so much better. Now somebody that hits a draw you can find clubs that will help you hit a draw or a cut high or low. If we can use that to our advantage it's great.

It's really difficult to say one brand is better than the other because all brands are really good. It's just finding what works well for and you what you're most comfortable with.

Q. Is this the quickest you've ever taken a club back out of the bag?

LYDIA KO: Yes. Yes. One round and I was texting the Scotty Cameron team, and they've been really great. I'm not sponsored by them, but they've just been great to work with because I'll sometimes be like, it's this, it's this, and this. If I was in their shoes I was would be like, wow, she's a lot. But they're all super supportive and it's great to work with a team like that.

Only took one round, but that's why I think the biggest test for any type of equipment, even shafts to balls, and club heads, you really have to play under pressure. Sometimes I wish I had more -- I was a bit more courageous and I wanted to try a few more things. I get a little timid and feel like changing, especially during the season, is not a good time.

When you feel like it's got to be done you obviously have to do it, but I just realized more what my tendencies are when I'm nervous than like what's wrong with the putter. It is just more what I do technically when I'm playing competitive rounds and it really counts.

Q. Nelly was in here but she switched the driver and



switched right back. She said it had an impact on her game as a whole because then she was doubting one part of her game. Did you feel like that yesterday with the putting?

LYDIA KO: I think I was -- everything is about momentum. It doesn't take much for us to get worried about the consequences of the next one. For her it may have been the driver and for me I was like, oh, am I going to hole this one? Because I want to hole it I'm getting a little bit more and more aggressive.

You know, being aggressive is great, but you also have to be smart. I think the doubt was creeping more and more in my mind and it wasn't so that I was blaming my putter, but I just realized that I am a little bit pushy in my stroke, which I had never thought I was.

If I have a club that's maybe a little bit too face balanced I'm not going to square the club face in time. Obviously it's finding the right equipment for you. She had an unbelievable year last year with her driver and I had a great year with my putter, so people may think, wow, why did you guys change?

I think we change because we believe at the time that that's going to make our scores better and we're going to play better. I think if you don't have the mindset of always wanting to get better, then I think you're not only going to stay at the same spot, but could potentially go backwards.

I think having the mindset of knowing there is always aspects in your game you can improve on is I think great. That's why the world's best and world No. 1 still does it.

Q. If that's the quickest you've ever taken a club back out of the bag, how long do you usually give some new equipment to settle in before deciding?

LYDIA KO: I changed my putter a lot in my rookie year. You know, it was a different brand to what I was using before then, too, so sometimes it depends if you're contractually obligated.

For me the last few years I haven't been handcuffed and I've had the freedom to try everything. But normally I say it's like my fault and I think it is my fault. It's obviously my fault when it wasn't, when I wasn't missing to the right in the practice rounds and I was all of a sudden doing that in tournament. But, yeah, it's normally like a couple months and then I go, okay, forget it.

I don't change a lot. Like I said before, I'm normally scared it change because I'm worried about the consequences of changing and then trying to figure out with what I have and

not put something else to kind of replace it.

Q. Don Cheadle mentioned earlier in the week his friendship with you. Can you talk about that friendship and the connection you have to him?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, we first met like 13 years ago. There is a photograph that the LPGA put up yesterday and I look and I am -- it's literally almost half my age. Yeah, he looks even better now. I look better I think. Yeah, I think puberty and all that hit.

But, yeah, he played -- I think it was one of the rare occasions where he came out and played a tournament like this almost in New Zealand. You know, I think he had a great time there, and every since then -- he was in Seattle and we had dinner in Seattle when he had the KPMG Women's PGA in 2016; then we played out in Scottsdale.

He's just a great person, and every time I play well and even when I was on the podium he sent a video. It was just really cool because he is so successful in what he does. I don't know many actors that directs and also gets Grammys, Emmys, Tonys, all of the above.

So he just speaks for himself, and for him to be such a huge supporter, I'm very grateful of that. You can see how much he loves the game. I'm just very grateful to be surrounded by amazing people like him. It's a huge inspiration, and being out there yesterday with him and Mike and obviously today being out there with Annika, who's obviously one of the greatest all-time female athletes, it's been a dream come true the past couple days.

It's really thanks to HGV and Mark for giving us this cool opportunity to meet these people and spend time with the greats of all different industries.

Q. Can you critique his golf game a little bit?

LYDIA KO: He made a birdie on a hole that I par'd, so he one-upped me there. Yeah, no, he hit some really good shots. It's different. It's different for us between a Wednesday to a Thursday, and imagine how different it is to him.

If someone told me to go act right now on this new TV series I would be as frozen as whatever. So it's just this is out of his comfort zone, and even for us, as much as we do this, it's not ever comfortable.

It's just really cool that I was able to share this moment with him yesterday. I really hope he has a great time this week and he comes again and again. Give a run for the trophy.

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Q. Leona was talking about your push-up bets you have. I think you've been doing that since COVID if my memory serves.

LYDIA KO: Yeah.

Q. What's the highest number of push-ups you've done on any single hole?

LYDIA KO: On any single hole the most I could do is ten, because I played that with Lindy Duncan a lot and then Leona has played, too.

If somebody makes a birdie you have to do five, if I make a bogey I have to do five, so the most you can do is ten. I think earlier this month I played with Lindy and I did like 25 push-ups in nine holes. It was in a span of a few holes.

So I was getting really frustrated, but then when you make bogeys you're like, okay. I'm like, why am I doing five for her birdie, too? That was just how we stayed competitive over COVID.

It's kind of what we do. It's silly because I'm sure a lot of people play for money and \$5 might be easier than doing pushups. It's become a fun game. You kind of laugh when the other person is having to do it on the next tee box or by the side of the green and other people walk by.

So she has helped me to be in better shape and she says my push-up form is a lot better than before. She has very like amazing push-up form, Lindy does.

So I'm glad I'm going up to her level.

Q. How is Leona's push-up form?

LYDIA KO: I haven't -- we haven't really done one as of late. When we go to the gym, we play, practice, and then we're all at the gym at a very similar time. She works hard and she's one of the hardest working people I know.

Obviously it's really cool to see all of us pros, especially here at Lake Nona, because you see everyone puts in a lot of work. It definitely shows and it's cool to be a part of that group.

I think without us really telling each other, it motivates all of us to keep working hard and be in check.

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