

# Gainbridge LPGA

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Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

## Lydia Ko

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Lydia, Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us. I think the question that everyone is dying to ask you is this is your home course. How do you feel about playing the first event essentially back at your home course?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously extra excited to play at a golf course that I play at for the majority of my off weeks and off-season. I was kind of surprised when I heard the tournament was coming here. I know there was a little bit where none of us were sure we were going to play this event. When I heard it was at Nona I wasn't sure if this tournament was going to be on my schedule, but being here at the course I pretty much live and practice at, I knew it was kind of a no-brainer for me to play.

Obviously super excited, and hopefully just have a great time out here. I know with Annika and a few other members playing this week I think it's going to be great for the other members to come out and watch us play as well.

THE MODERATOR: How do you feel that Annika is here playing and competing with you all again? What was your first reaction when you heard the news?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, before I think she made the announcement and committed to playing this event I had talked a little bit with her about it and actually with her father, and I know it's not an easy decision to make. I think her last competitive I think tournament was in 2008 or something. So it's been a really long time.

I think she is the GOAT, so it's pretty cool that I get to play in the same field as her. I got to play my first-ever round with her on Saturday here, and that was super exciting. I was like, Man, this is borderline line very nerve wracking.

But I think it's going to be cool. Maybe if we're on the opposite sides of the draw I'll be able to go watch her play as well.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking of playing with other players, a lot of our LPGA players, not a lot, some of them

are also members here. You posted on your Instagram stories Lindy Duncan. How has that been practicing, getting ready for this event with them?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, there is a bunch of us out here. Obviously Annika and Nasa and Lindy. Am I missing anyone? (Laughter.) Myself, Leona. So there is a bunch of us here, and some girls that aren't playing this week that do practice here as well.

I think we're just are very lucky to have great facilities to practice at, so it's nice that I get to have these girls and we can play and play for play for push-ups or a ten dollar game. It's great that you have company like that.

I tend to annoy Lindy a little bit, but I think she sneakily likes it, but who knows. But I really enjoy getting to play and practice with these girls and some of the other male professionals, as well. I think it's always great to watch everyone practice and play, and there are things that I can learn from as well.

THE MODERATOR: I have one question: March is coming up and it's National Women's History Month. We were wondering if there have been any phenomenal women that have inspired you outside of golf?

LYDIA KO: I mean, she is in golf, but Se Ri is I think probably one of my biggest role models, and I know I feel very grateful that her last few years on tour I was able to play on tour with her.

She's always given my me great advice, and I think because of her golf in Korea became such a big thing. I think that is why there are quite few of us playing right now, due to someone like her. She kind of paved the path for a lot of us.

Even though I am from New Zealand, being from that Korean descent, I think she's been a huge role model and inspiration to us. So I would say she's probably like my biggest role model and person that really inspired me.

I know she was the first like Korean player to come out on tour, and always being the first is never easy.



**Q. How has your off-season been? What have you been doing? Tell us a little bit about your preparation.**

LYDIA KO: We lost you a little bit.

**Q. Just tell us a little bit about your preparation for this, what your off-season has been like.**

THE MODERATOR: Can you repeat the question?

**Q. Sure. I'll try again. How has your off-season been? What are you doing to prepare for this?**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, pretty much right after CME I went to Korea and I took five, six weeks off. With the quarantine there that took another couple weeks.

I mentioned like a few days or a week ago I did a -- deviated septum surgery, so that took me out for two to three weeks. So I've only been back in Florida for three to four weeks, so ever since I've been back I've been slowly getting back into things, working out where my trainers, working on the swing with Sean.

So, yeah, I wish I had a bit more time to get ready for this event. That's the time I had, so I tried to be as productive as I can. I think this off-season probably the difference was I tried to spend a little bit more time on the golf course than practicing a lot just on the facilities, especially as this event was going to be my first one.

So tried to kind of see and understand and get comfortable with playing. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter how well you hit it on the practice days. You've got to be able to bring it on the golf course. So I think that was probably the biggest difference for me this off-season compared to the others.

**Q. What sort of confidence do you take from your results last year?**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I don't know exactly how like -- I think last year obviously after the quarantine was probably the most consistent I had played, even when I was world No. 1, so that obviously gives me a lot of confidence. I felt like there were more opportunities where I was in contention, and at the end of the day I think the more times you do that, the more comfortable you get, and you kind of get used being in that situation.

So, yeah, definitely gave me a lot of confidence. I've had weeks where I started off really strong and didn't finish well or I had weeks where I didn't start strong and I was able to bring it back.

Yeah, so it was -- I think it gave me a lot of confidence, and obviously when the off-season hits, you don't really know where your game is going to go from the start. I think I'm just trying to play with more of a free I guess mindset and just believe in myself and go out there and accept what comes my way and be grateful to be out there playing.

I think that way just makes it less result-orientated, and I'm focusing on what I can control.

**Q. Just want to know if you are committed to playing the Tokyo Olympics if they go ahead later this year?**

LYDIA KO: Yes. I would love to be at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. I think being in the 2000 Rio Olympics winning the silver medal was great and bringing that for our country.

But I think outside of that, it's just very proud moment to be able to be in the probably biggest, most global stage and to be able to represent your country.

I think not many people get that opportunity, so if it does happen this year, I would definitely love to be there in Tokyo represent New Zealand.

**Q. I've heard a number of players say when things are going great, you're winning all the time it fields he feels like it'll never end. When you don't play that well you wondering if you'll ever get back there again. Is that something you can relate to?**

LYDIA KO: Both. But I think when I was world No. 1 a lot of people just said, Man, you just make it look so easy. I was like, It's never easy. I don't know what you're talking about. Coming down the last stretch in every moment is stressful, and I'm sure when you're playing well you feel like -- I think the biggest thing is when you're playing well you just get a lot of confidence so you ride that momentum. Even if you're not playing well, you feel like you're able to recover a lot quicker and kind of take that next step in more of an easier way.

But definitely when you put in the time and you don't see the results coming, you do get frustrated on, Hey, will I ever be able to be more consistent or be able to hit the ball better or putt better?

I think there is a lot of doubts during those times, but I think especially working with Sean, I'm trying to realize and understand that I can get so result orientated. At the end of the day, all I can do is try my 100%, have a lot of fun out there, and whatever happens, happens.

I think that's a big goal of mine this year, and it was kind of the case the end of the year last year as well. Just doing the best in what I can control, and what I can control are things like having 100% commitment over a shot before taking the shot or preparing myself well before an event.

If things go well and results follow, that's great. But I think I just got to accept the things that are coming my way. I think it's a much healthier, happier mindset to be playing at. I think when I do those things better, I think the results kind of come with it.

So I think I'm trying to be less focused on, Okay, I want to do this. I want to get to this rank. When it gets like that it becomes so narrow minded, so I'm trying to be more free and just play with a lot of belief and just enjoy being out there.

**Q. Couple more questions. First of all, when you played with Annika Saturday, who won?**

LYDIA KO: So it was Annika, Lindy, and Haley Moore and I. I was like, Yeah, I'll play with Haley. Unfortunately, I did not play well on the front nine. Haley must've had a sore back from carrying me. So I was very unhelpful that front nine, so we lost I think quite a few down.

So I said, Hey, feels like we've gone down. Can we do another match on the back nine? I think all four of us played pretty well. We ended up winning by a really small margin on the back. Overall, Annika and Lindy won, but at least we could say we got credit to say we won the back nine.

**Q. I want to ask who did the push-ups. Another thing is there is a lot of focus on Annika this year, but it's also a return of Yani Tseng. Any thoughts on her? And I'm trying to think when you first started winning in Canada, where was she when you first turned pro and what do you make of what's going on with her?**

LYDIA KO: Probably one of my first encounters with Yani was when she won the Australian Women's Open. I think she gave all her earnings -- I think there was a flood, like flooding in the area or somewhere in Australia. I remember her like giving all her prize money towards that.

I was the lo am that year, so there was -- I obviously knew who Yani was, because at that time I think she was probably the most dominate player and just literally winning like -- it seemed very easy for her.

I had seen her on TV, so it was really cool for me to be able to watch her and see. And not only was she a great player, but a great person. And to give back to people

there I thought was just absolutely incredible and something I feel like I could really learn from.

Obviously starting on tour, you know, I got play with Yani little bit, and when -- especially when she was out here at Nona as well. I did some practice with her. But I think she is one of the sweetest people in the world, so I always enjoy her company. Obviously she didn't play any of our events last year; it's been a while since she's played.

I think she's going to do great. A talent like that I don't think goes away. Obviously she's had some injuries along the way as well. So I think the most important thing for her is to be healthy and happy, and I think the whole golfing world would be super excited to see her playing great golf.

Yeah, it's obviously great that Annika is playing this week. I think it's going to be a great hype for not only our tour, but women's golf, people who really like to watch her. So I think it's just going to be a great week.

Hopefully we all do well. Yeah, no, they're just great people. I think when you know what amazing people they are you just kind of root for them no matter what.

**Q. You could probably speak to this, but is there a downside to winning so much so young?**

LYDIA KO: I don't think so. (Laughter.) I think a lot of things happened for me at such an early age, and obviously things that I could have only dreamed of. Even my first win in Canada, it happened like without -- I don't know when it sunk in, and definitely didn't sink in like when this tournament finished. It took a while for me to kind of understand that whole situation. Might have taken a year after that for me to understand that.

But I'm sure at points I might have said to myself, Maybe if those things didn't happen early then there wouldn't have been as much expectations. At the same time, I think because those things happened early I was able to come out on tour a little earlier and a lot of opportunities were given to me.

So I think you just got to be grateful for everything that's happened. Let's say even if it was just the end of my career right now, I think I've got so many things to be thankful for. So I think that just also at the same time just motivates me and just going to push me to become a better version of myself.

At the same time, I can't try to be the person I was when I was world No. 1 or winning at those moments because I'm just not the same anymore. Experience changes you. I just have to be the best player, the best person, I can be at

this moment and not compare myself to my past.

THE MODERATOR: I just have one question before we go ahead. This week we are continuing with the AON Risk-Reward Challenge. This is your home course. You know these holes here at Lake Nona. No. 15 is going to be the Risk-Reward hole. You've played it many times. Knowing it's part of the challenge this week, what are some of your strategies to just maximize as much as possible to get as many -- to get those birdies and possibly eagles?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously every course the risk-reward holes are very different. Some could be par-4s, some could be par-5s. Here for example it's a dogleg par-5.

I think the wind direction will be a huge factor, and obviously the pin position. The toughest pin position will be the back right. It's a pretty small shelf there, so that's definitely going to be more of the risk taking time, especially if you're maybe going home for two.

But yeah, no, I think you just -- I have to play strategically, and obviously this is a great program and awards that we have on tour. But at the same time, we have to think about the situation and that position we're in.

But, yeah, I hope it's a lot down -- like it's downwind, because it just makes the hole a lot more interesting. Even if it is downwind, it requires a pretty good drive and a pretty accurate second shot.

Yeah, hopefully that hole will not be too beastly and our risks will be rewarded.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Quick question before we wrap things up. You mentioned you were in Korea a couple weeks ago. How was that, just to go back and relax, and then what was your most memorable like food dining moment?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, you know, I obviously love going to Korea to see family and friends. I don't have many opportunities to go back, so it's nice to see especially family. And, yeah, probably one of my favorite moments just going back was going on a little one night trip with my friends and just spending time with them and talking about different things sure catching up on a year's worth of stuff.

I think those are -- it's like small things, but when you look back, those are the things you really think are memorable and things you cherish. So that, and, I mean, all food in Korea is good. I have a thing for corn dogs. Yeah. They call it hot dog over there. Like most of the time I think the corn dogs here are just batter and a sausage or a hot dog, but in Korea they like mix it up with mozzarella cheese and

half cheese and half sausage. I could go on and on and on.

I'm not huge into like fried food, but if I really wasn't thinking I could have multiple of them. So that's probably my favorite thing. And sometimes in L.A., like Koreatown, they have that.

So, yeah, I always try and find it wherever I go. Korea I feel like is always a place where I feel like I get to see my family and friends, and that's probably any favorite aspect of it.

THE MODERATOR: We're so glad to have you back and well relaxed. Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us. Good luck this week.

LYDIA KO: Thank you.

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