

# Gainbridge LPGA at Boca Rio

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Boca Raton, Florida, USA

Boca Rio Golf Club

## Lydia Ko

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us here in the media center of the 2022 Gainbridge LPGA Boca Rio.

Lydia, 2022 Gainbridge LPGA Boca Rio champion. Congratulations. How does win No. 17 feel?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think it was a hard working day. You know, I only had one birdie and one bogey on my front nine, so turning at even and knowing that Danielle has been playing great and she's probably going to play great, and so many of the girls that was playing in the group in front was also making a lot of birdies.

So I think I tried to stay really patient out there and not get carried away on what everybody else was doing and just focus on my game, trying to make the lowest score I can. I think that helped me to just really dial it in and just kind of stay in the present, which I think is really important, especially when other players are playing well and I'm not making many birdies.

But to finish off with a few birdies in the last few holes was nice, and I think holing that putt on 15 was kind of the momentum shifter for me that wasn't the easiest putt. I kept turning more and more right because it looked like it was a swinging putt, and ended up being the perfect read.

**Q. Take us through that putt on 15. I know on the Golf Channel they said she looked as the putt came off the face of the club that you might have seriously misjudged it. Obviously they were wrong; you were right. Take us through what you saw and how you snuck it in.**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I normally line up my ball to where I want to start it. I lined it up and stood up to it and I said, I think this is still too low. I had already aimed quite a few feet out, and Derek had a point that was a few feet right of the hole, and I said, okay, I think this is going to be pretty quick.

The greens are much quicker today than the last few days. So I just kept aiming more and more right, and I said, Hey,

at the end of the day I just got to have the right speed. I don't think -- I obviously wanted to hole it, but it didn't really have a high probability of me holing it. So it ended up being perfect.

Sometimes I get frustrated because I end up trusting my feel over the ball. But in that case, that feel helped me out on that hole.

**Q. With the win you collect a \$300,000 winner's check and move to \$12,668,796 earned in your career. I know it's not about the money for you, but when you pass Se Ri Pak on the all-time LPGA earnings list, and money does have that kind of exemplary understanding of success, what does sit mean to pass someone like her on your way to win?**

LYDIA KO: I think as players now, you know, playing on the LPGA, I think we're very fortunate about the money we get to play for week in, week out.

I know that probably during the time that she played and even the generations before, it was nothing like this. Yes, I still feel like there is still a long way to go. With everybody involved with the LPGA and the commissioner, I believe that the women's game is going to keep growing and growing.

The future generations that are getting to be able to play for some of these big purses, I think it's great. When you're out there playing I'm trying to make as many birdies as I can and shoot the lowest score I can, and money is a kind of a bonus.

You look and see an amount next to your name and you're like, Oh, that was a good week for that. I think, yes, we are very fortunate to be able to kind of play for this. It was a great week at the office. But I think, you know, that's something I try not think about too much.

But definitely a huge honor. I think we are very grateful for the opportunities we have to be able to play these amazing golf courses and great tournaments for those kind of purses.



I know our major championships continue to grow, and I hope that all our events keep going like that with some of our amazing partners that we have with the LPGA.

**Q. One more from me. You jump into a tie for 32nd on the LPGA career wins list with 17 titles, and join Dottie Pepper, Ayako Okamoto, and Beverly Hanson. You also reach 21 points in the chase to 27 for the LPGA Hall of Fame. Is there any pressure that comes with each advanced point to that 27 march?**

LYDIA KO: Jerry asked me earlier in my interview, and my mom asked me earlier this week and so did my sister, Hey, like what if you're about to retire but you're one point away? Like would you retire? Would I continue to play?

I mean, I don't know. Like it would have to totally be a decision that I would have to make at that point. To be in the Hall of Fame, not many people have their names and be said that they're a Hall of Famer, and to have my name alongside some of the legends, it would be a huge honor.

It is one of my goals, but I still got a long way to go. And people may think, Hey, you're just one point away. That's one normal event win and then you're there. It's not easy to do that. It's not easy to win. Not easy to have a top 10.

I'm playing alongside the best female golfers and some of the best athletes in the world. To kind of keep putting yourself in contention and in positions like that, I don't think it's easy. I mean, Jin Young and Nelly made it look very easy last year.

I just got to keep playing my golf, focus on my goals, and if I have the opportunity to be in the Hall of Fame, that would be really cool.

**Q. Two-parter. Derek was saying he was not nervous on either one of your bunker shots on 18. Were you? What's the sense of satisfaction you have in rebuilding your confidence the way you have?**

LYDIA KO: Today I was able to make -- get up and down on I think the other two times I had been in a greenside bunker, and because of that, I think that made that shot a lot easier.

I had really good lies on all three of them. Even though I was kind of short-sided on a couple, it kind of allowed me to be a little bit more aggressive with how far up I wanted to pitch the shot.

For the fairway bunker shots, that's one of my drills I do with Sean. He says sometimes it's better for me to hit more balls there than like on the range.

So after doing that, kind of that as a drill, I think that has helped with the confidence in the fairway bunkers to say, Hey, not get too worried about my contact.

Obviously that's really dependant on the lie also. But I think with Sean getting me to practice that more, I think the more times you put yourself in that position you're going to be a bit more comfortable with that.

So I was hoping that second shot would reach the green. I was kind of gutted that it didn't. It was still a good shot. That bunker shot, I was kind of hoping it would be a little closer. I think it was like -- it was like a two-footer.

But, no, the closer the better. But I take it under the circumstances. I knew that no matter what, Danielle, if she was going to make birdie or par, I just wanted to be in there and make my up and down and see where that would put me at the end of it.

**Q. And then just rebuilding your confidence, what's the self-satisfaction? Not a lot of players experience dips and get back. What's the satisfaction getting back?**

LYDIA KO: I feel like there are, yes, parts of my game that still can improve. Two of my biggest goals were to have a higher greens in regulation percentage and higher fairways hit percentage this year.

I feel like if those parts are better, the scores are going to kind of come with that. I think that puts a lot less stress on the short game. So I think that was probably my biggest focus.

And to be honest, going into the tournament last week I didn't feel super ready. My long game didn't feel very sharp. No, Sean always tells me to trust my training, and that's what I tried to tell myself today. I saw a quote that Jon Rahm said last week like, or maybe early this week, and he said, It's not like about how many times you hit the fairway, golf, at the end you have to try and play like the best score you can in the circumstances.

And I think that kind of hit me to say sometimes I think you get too carried way about, Oh, it's in the fairway. But you're just trying to scramble if you're out of position and manage your way around with how you're playing and not try and like hit it and do everything perfectly.

That's something that happens on like PlayStation. I still don't play perfectly on PlayStation. You know, I think his quote really helped me to realize that, you know what? It's golf. Sometimes I'm going to hit great shots; sometimes

I'm going to hit not-so-pretty ones. I have to manage my way around and try and shoot the best score I can.

Today I don't feel like I had my A game, but I was able to make up and down when I was out of position and then not get too down when did I make mistakes.

**Q. We talked a little bit about that dip. Wondering if having such historic success at such a young age, did you ever have to fight off that this is easy? Did that contribute to the little dip in your career and now appreciating the way up again?**

LYDIA KO: I don't think it was ever easy. I heard people say, You make it look easy. I'm, always like, Trust me it's not easy. I think when someone is playing so well, like I said earlier, like Nelly or Jin Young last year, they make it look very easy. You know what? They're putting their 100% energy and still playing amazing golf. I think it almost doesn't get as much credit as it should.

I feel very fortunate about the things that happened earlier in my career. When I wasn't playing as well I think I wanted to like try and be the person that I was and try and be -- put myself back to when I was No. 1.

But Stacy Lewis, few years ago she said, Hey, you know, you can't try and be like your past. You're trying to be the best like player, best person you can be like now. I think hearing that advice from somebody like her, that really helped me to have the confidence and to just believe in the process of sometimes you're going to take two steps back, but you just keep working and working at just trying to be the best. I'm just trying to be the best version I can be today.

**Q. Congratulations.**

LYDIA KO: Thank you.

**Q. I wanted to ask a little bit more about that Jon Rahm quote. Curious as to why that resonated with you so much. Is he someone you really look up to, or was it just the right quote at the right time?**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, it's just I came across that quote on Instagram, and I don't know exactly who posted it. Maybe it was the PGA. I'm not really sure.

But I would say like the part of my game when I was struggling was probably the long game, and I feel like now it is so much better and it is more consistent. But I think sometimes I get carried away about, Oh, I missed that fairway or I missed that green.

It's not about trying to get a perfect score. I don't think you can get a perfect score. In bowling you can, but in golf, like unless I holed out on every par-3 and holed out for two on every par-4, there is no perfect.

I think sometimes I try and become too much of a perfectionist, and to kind of hear that I was like, Yeah, you're right. I'm just trying to play golf and not control everything out there.

**Q. That makes sense. I'm curious as to what you were up to in the off-season? Did you take some time off or were you working on something in your swing?**

LYDIA KO: I took some time off you know, over the holidays. I stayed stateside. Normally do I go back to Korea. But I stayed stateside, which was nice to not do a lot of traveling.

I went and played Kapolei again, which I had a lot of great memories from the 2021 LOTTE Championship. Yeah, it was a pretty chill kind of off-season. I think when I was working I was -- it was pretty busy because I put a few new clubs in the bag. I was trying to get adjusted to numbers and see if that club is actually good for me.

So it was a lot of club testing and also working the last couple weeks a lot with Sean and pretty much doing the same feels as what we been working on, but getting more consistent with that and making sure that my old habits aren't creeping in.

Yeah, it was busy when I was working, but also took a lot of the time off, which is nice.

**Q. I just wanted to ask you a couple quick questions. The win at the 2021 LOTTE Championship seemed to act as a bit of a springboard for you. What was it at that event that changed, seemed to make you propel to what you've been doing ever since?**

LYDIA KO: You know, I started off my season, 2021 is season really well. I came in tied second at the Gainbridge I think. Yeah, at the Gainbridge at Lake Nona. And then I had a top 10 the week after.

I played average at Kia, and then I had a great final round at the ANA, which is now the Chevron, to put myself in second there. I think I had a lot of good momentum and that final round at the Chevron helped me I think with just playing freely, playing confidently, and I just had a lot of fun out there in Hawaii.

When I go to Hawaii normally I'm so focused on my -- on the tournament and just trying to get my practice done, but

like last year was the first time I went on hikes, went to the beach, and I kind of enjoyed Hawaii and enjoyed that week in general.

I think that that kind of took my mind off a little bit of getting too result oriented. You know, winning there definitely I think proved to myself that, Hey, I can be back in the winner's circle. I think sometimes it's that little thing and it's about putting belief in myself.

You know, no matter if everybody else is saying, Hey, you can do this, just stay patient. If you don't believe in that, then I don't think it's like -- that all matters. For me to win there I think was proof to myself. I think that's why it was such an important week for me.

**Q. Congratulations. We picked a winner for our cover star.**

LYDIA KO: Good timing.

**Q. And we had Danielle as our last cover star as well and she won the first event. Sum up in three words the emotions you're feeling right now.**

LYDIA KO: Three words: Excited, cocktail, sleep. (Laughter.) I'm a little -- I could do with sleep right now, thank you. I had a cocktail. That's why I said cocktail. I feel like my cheeks are getting red, too.

THE MODERATOR: Last one I have for you and we'll let you out of here. Early in the season and there is a long way to go, but how much does a win set up for the rest of the year at this point of the season?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, this is probably the earliest I've won in a season.

THE MODERATOR: First LPGA win in January.

LYDIA KO: Oh. Huh?

THE MODERATOR: Your first LPGA win in January.

LYDIA KO: Oh, yes, yeah. I was like, I won in January? When was that? Yeah, being my second event and winning it definitely is a good momentum going into the rest of the year.

Like you said, it's still a long way to go; still 20 something more events to play. But, yeah, starting off the season at my home club at Lake Nona was definitely a nice way it kind of cruise into 2022. I'm not playing next week, so I get few weeks off.

I really wanted to take that time to kind of work on my game and get adjusted to my clubs. It's just one of my favorite swings, the Asia swing and the west coast swing, so really excited for that. Yeah, if somebody asked me, Hey, do you think you're going to win this week, I'm not really sure I would've said yes because there were some shots that I hit and I was like, Wow, that is ugly.

So to be able to have a top 10 last week and then win this week, it makes it extra special. I think it also motivates me to work harder. I'll be back in the gym with my trainer tomorrow and see my coach on Tuesday.

THE MODERATOR: Love it. One more.

**Q. Were you watching Danielle's putt on 18? If you were, what were you thinking when she hit that?**

LYDIA KO: You know what? I felt like she was going to hole it. She puttied so good today. I feel like the ones that even didn't go in had high chance of her making.

No, I think at that point when somebody is putting such a good roll on it and reading the greens is well, it's -- I think I just had to expect that she was going to hole it. That's why I knew that I needed to like make an up and down at worst. Or if I could hole it, that would be great.

But, yeah, you know, I was looking at it, but I don't think when any player is out there you're willing the other player's putt to not go in. You're willing it to go in and you're just trying to play the best golf you can.

If I play good golf and somebody plays better than me, then it's all credit to that person. So, yeah, I think I was willing it in. Obviously with it not going in it gave me a chance to not go in the playoff, which makes it a little less stressful.

**Q. Looked good for a long time.**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, yes. It was a great putt.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks. Lydia. Congratulations.

LYDIA KO: Thank you.

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