

Kia Classic

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Carlsbad, California, USA

Park Hyatt Aviara Golf Club

Michelle Wie West

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the media center at the 2021 Kia Classic. We are here with Michelle Wie West, happy new mom. Happy to have you back on tour. Welcome back. How is tour life treating you at least the last day and a half?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, it definitely felt like the first day back at school. It was a lot fun seeing everyone. Didn't recognize a lot of people, to be honest. A lot of new rookies. Shows you how long I've been out. It's been a lot of fun so far seeing you guys, seeing all the staff, all the rules officials, so it's been great seeing everyone.

Q. The masks don't help.

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah. I don't recognize people as it is, and all the masks. It takes me a second.

Q. We're glad you have you back. You just finished up the pro-am. We've got a lot of people here that want to chat with you, so I'll just quickly ask. You've been posting lots of swing videos. We know you're getting ready to go back out there, be the proud mama for Kenna. How is the game rounding into shape as you head into your first week back?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, it's pretty amazing how like hours-wise how much less I put in than before. But I've been talking to my friends, fellow mom Jane Park, and we were talking about it. We really only have at the max two hours to practice and just being hyper focused, not even looking at your phone not even once and just knowing what you have to do.

So it's been a lot more efficient. Been having a lot of FaceTime lessons with my coach, David Leadbetter. We're all getting used to Zoom and the lifestyle, but it's been great. I'm just fortunate enough and grateful that I have the opportunity to come back out here and play, especially with having maternity leave and all that.

So I feel very grateful to be in the position I'm in right now.

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Q. And you feel like you're bouncing back into shape post-pregnancy and your wrist as well?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah. You know, my body is what it is. It's just -- every day I just, you know -- I just feel grateful that I'm able to tee it up with my body. Especially with the baby I have to be even more careful. There was one day where I went out there a little bit too hard and having to hold her all day, that's one thing I want to avoid. Just being able to hold her is my No. 1 priority, so definitely putting a premium on my body even more so.

So I brought like three bags of like recovery stuff, so I'm here. I'll have my hotel clinic going.

Q. We're glad you've got that priority. Kenna always wins.

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Exactly. Always wins.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. When did you start practicing in earnest to get ready to come back? How long have you been going fairly hard at it?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: I would say since new year I kind of put a time schedule on that. So, yes.

Q. And why the timing now? Like what was behind how you were looking at this year, and also what is your schedule going to look like this season, do you think?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, the influence of not having to fly was a big reason of why I chose play this part of the season. Now living on the west coast, just being able to drive here -- I can drive to desert; obviously have to fly to Hawaii, but that's going home. Still deciding about that just because of the baby. I just don't know with COVID about flying yet with her.

So just kind of it's a lot of things to think about. But that was my main reason. Just because I also love the west coast swing. I love Carlsbad, I love this golf course, and I especially love next week. ANA has always been a very, very special tournament to me to be at Mission Hills, so that was a big goal for me to get ready for that.

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Obviously going back home and playing in Hawaii is also a big goal.

So, yeah, it's just I think being in California, me being in California now was a big influence.

Q. How would you characterize where your game is tournament-wise, tournament ready? How do you feel? It's got to be a strange feeling out here and practicing.

MICHELLE WIE WEST: I mean, tournament-wise I don't have an answer for you. It's so long since I played a competitive round. But I'm pretty proud of myself for grinding it out there. I've been grinding. Like I said, I'm just grateful I'm out here. I'm enjoying myself and having a lot of fun.

It's been fun the last couple days to get the competitive juices going. Especially playing the pro-am today and playing our own ball, it's definitely getting my excited.

I'm definitely nervous, but also grateful to feel nervous again. The first time I felt nerves like this, you know, I said before being on live TV was the closest thing I felt to feeling the first tee jitters.

I'm excited out there and to be nervous tomorrow. It's definitely -- I can feel it brewing already, and already a lot of fun.

Q. Hi, Michelle. Welcome back. Nice to see you, at least part of you. Can you tell us a little bit about Makenna? Are your parents here helping you out? Will you be using daycare? What is the week like with her?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, both my parents are here right now. They flew over from Hawaii, which I feel very grateful that they did. We have both dogs here this week which is a lot of fun. It's a big family circus.

Last time I was here I just had Lola, but our family grew a little bit, and the more the merrier. It's definitely hectic, but, yeah, she's at home at the hotel room with my mom right now. We're doing grandma daycare this week. I met with all the amazing ladies at day care yesterday, and I think might go in. I'm easing my way in, especially with COVID. You know, just making the decision not to have a nanny and it's just all weird.

But I am easing my way into it, and it's hard. Even leaving her with my mom. Being just us for so long, it was just me and her and my husband that I'm learning to let go a little

bit. It's hard, but I'm learning to let go.

Q. What's the longest stretch that you've been away from her so far?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: This has been the longest stretch.

Q. Pro-am round?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, this past week being away from her for a couple hours. The most I've been away from her is two hours. That's a lie. That's a lie. When I did the match I was away from her for a day. That was really hard.

But for the most part I've been away from her for just like two hours at a time. It's getting -- the first day it was kind of nice. Oh, grandma daycare, I can do my own thing. Every day it's getting a little bit harder because I miss her.

Again, I'm just fortunate to have my mom here. I can just do my own thing and not have to worry.

Q. And the best advice you received from another mom or Inkster or your own mom maybe?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Best piece of advice I think is just the support that I get from everyone. You know, it's just fun. I played with Stacy Lewis the last two rounds and it's incredible. Our conversation, I don't think we talked about anything else besides our kids. It was so fun just seeing -- just getting all the support.

Even talking to Juli, talking to Brittany Lincicome, all the moms out here. I talk to Jane Park a lot. And just the support that we give one another. You know, it's hard. It's hard to leave your kid for that long, especially one of our first weeks being working moms. All working moms know. It's a tough first week to leave your kid.

But the support we all give each other, I'm very fortunate about that.

Q. Couple things. First I guess what did you miss about golf? What makes you excited to be back out?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, like I think I mentioned this a little bit before about the nerves. You know, it's fun hitting balls on the range, fun to kind of mess around, hit a couple chips, but there is nothing like hitting golf shots that matter and you kind of feel those first tee jitters. You feel all the nerves coming out.

I've missed that. I'm really most excited about getting my competitive juices going again and being that fierce competitor that I know I am.

Q. Where have you prepared? Have you been down at Stanford practicing, or how has that worked out in the Bay Area?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, I'm a member at Lake Merced so it's been great practicing there. It's tough, the conditions, as we all know are always tough, and that little cool corner of golf course, TPC Harding, you have Olympic, it's just great golf courses.

I also do a lot of practice down at the Stanford range. You know, the coaches have graciously allowed me to practice there from time to time. It's just golf heaven over there. I feel so lucky that I get to practice there.

Q. One last thing. Obviously the U.S. Women's Open is here in a couple months. How much is that on your radar? What would that mean to you if -- I assume you're planning to play in that.

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Oh, yeah. I mean, to have the U.S. Open 15 minutes from your house, that's pretty ideal. I still have yet to play it because I think it's a little bit too hilly for me to go out there and push her in the stroller. Lake Merced I can handle, but I've heard Olympic is a little bit hillier.

But I can't wait to go out there. I heard so many great things about the golf course, and excited to sleep in my own bed.

Q. Have you never played there?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: No.

Q. You had mentioned being nervous on live television, and quite frankly you were very good at that. Is that something that continues to be in the back of your mind as something that you want to do at some point?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, for sure. It's something that I really enjoy doing and hopefully will have the opportunity to do more in the future. Like I told the networks and my agent, playing is my first priority. I'm going to do that as long as I can.

Maybe I'll sprinkle in a week or two, but I told them playing right now is my priority, and I'll see if there are weeks TV can fit. That's something I want to do in the future, so right now, playing is definitely my focus.

Q. Solheim Cup assistant captain. How is that working out for you? Not thinking too far down the

road, but how is that working out for you?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: It's been great. It's been so much fun seeing Angela in person. We've been on so many Zoom calls and phone calls that it's so fun to see her in person. I haven't seen Pat yet but we're scheduled to meet later to go over some Solheim stuff.

It's been so much fun, the three of us on Zoom. We always have like a glass of wine in hand, so it's always fun to chat, catch up, and talk logistics. So far it's been a lot of fun. I felt like I haven't been much help being out seeing the girls. It's been really great being able to chat to a lot of the rookies on the range, and hopefully I'll get to see some players, American players play this week and be able to contribute a little bit more in that aspect.

Q. I know it's still early, but has it been what you expected going from player and still potential player to those leadership roles?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: It's a bit weird, but like Angel Yin, she shouted from across the green in the most Angel Yin way, I forgot you're assistant captain.

But I think a lot of players kind of think that way, and same as well. I don't want to be looked at differently, whatnot. We just have such a great team with Pat Hurst being our leader, our captain.

So I'm just out here to assist. It's in my job title, so all I want to do is assist to my best ability.

Q. Have you given any thought to if your daughter demonstrates a talent and enthusiasm for golf, would you be excited to teach her and what sort of things would you tell her?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, I mean, from day one since she was ten years [sic] old she's been coming out to the range with me, so it's been so much fun having her out there watching me play. When I go out and play Merced, like I said, I carry my bag and I push her and I kind of put the stroller so she can see all my shots. I think she likes it. She hasn't complained so far.

She's now crawling, so she really likes to crawl on the green and pick the ball out of the hole. She loves golf balls, so I'm hoping that's a positive sign. But, you know, whatever she wants to do. If she wants to play golf, she doesn't, it's up to her. I know my husband would really love her to play golf so we can all play as a family. I think that's a big goal for us as a family. It's whatever she wants to do.

Q. When did you sort of develop? When was it obvious it was something that you could be good at and that you liked as a child?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Pretty young. I was really interested in going out because I was fascinated with the golf cart I think, as all children are. That's how parents reel them into the game. But I just wanted to drive the golf cart. I just wanted to hang out with my parents and they were playing this couples club and would go out and watch them play. I was fascinated by how they played, so it was kind of natural. I played a lot of sports, I played everything, and was pretty bad at most of them.

So I was pretty excited that I was good at golf.

Q. So nice to have you back. We all look forward to seeing you play in week. This past year has been testing in so many ways and each of us have our own methods of grounding ourselves during these times. What kinds of mental and physical changes have you made or added to your daily routine that have allowed to you feel more prepared as you head into your first event in almost two years?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, especially having the baby, you know, really taking time out of the day to focus on me has been super important. It's kept me sane. Really utilizing her nap times, just been working out on my Tonal. That one hour that I have I usually do like a quick 30-minute Tonal workout and been really getting into yoga and Pilates.

Felt like the days where things get a little hectic when she naps and I would have some peace and quiet and I get to do a little quick yoga or Pilates class, it just refreshes me.

And also just making sure that I eat right. Still strangely have all my pregnancy cravings, so making sure I have a nice slice of cake now and then.

I think during this quarantine time and being a new mom, I think learning to be forgiving to myself and to just kind of let things go, let things happen the way they should happen has definitely been a learning curve for me.

Q. To follow that up, we saw Annika Sorenstam make her appearance at the Gainbridge Championship exactly a month ago and has even admitted that her son has inspired her to get involved with the game of golf again. Can you talk a little bit about how maybe this has been similar to your case and how having a baby girl has encouraged you to pick up your own golf clubs again?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, yeah, for sure. I thought I was done, to be honest. After KPMG in 2019 I thought I was done, especially when I found out I was pregnant later that year. I thought that cemented it. I thought there was no chance of coming back, and I told my husband that. He was like, No, no, just think it through.

Then we found out that Makenna was going to be a girl and that just changed my perspective of everything. It was crazy how just that one little fact just changes everything.

Then I started to think, you know, I kind of want to do it. I want to show her in real time that I can -- that I play golf. It's one thing to have her watch YouTube videos, but it's another thing to have her watch me with her own eyes. Seeing me go out there, it work out hard, and try to lead by example.

That moment that Tiger had with Charlie, that is the first thing that popped to my mind and that's been a huge motivation and that's been a new dream of mine.

Q. Early in your career I remember your driving distance was really something that helped you stand out. Wondering as you return to the game this week, what would you say at this time is the strongest part of your game?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: I have to say I think my distance came back a little bit. You know, I tested all the new clubs of Callaway. I have the (indiscernible) in the bag, and it was pretty incredible. Definitely the numbers boosted up from my previous clubs, and I'm trying to just swing more free, trying to go at it. Definitely not Bryson speed, but I still feel like I kind of got it. (Laughter.)

Q. And then just one other question: Heading into this week do you have a goal in terms of making the cut, finishing top 10, anything like that?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, my goal out there I told my caddie, I want to go out there and every shot I want full commitment. That's something that I struggled with in the past, especially with my injuries kind of being forefront in my mind. I want to go out there and commit 100% to each shot.

Goal-wise obviously I want to win. I'm not out here just to make the cut or just to do whatever. But I'm really enjoying my time out here. I want to have fun, and I know that's when I play my best, is when I go out there and have fun and really enjoy the game. I'm going to do that.

Also as a competitor I want to kind of show everyone what I got. So I'm just going to go out there and take it shot by

shot and enjoy myself, try to make my daughter proud.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned Callaway, and just today we announced they joined the LPGA family as an official marketing partner. What brought you to Callaway? They clearly have done so well for you, and this is just a next step in their long-term relationship. It has to be great for you to have partners who are also seeing the value of partnering with the LPGA Tour?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Yeah, Callaway was definitely my first driver. I remember my grandmother gave me her clubs and one of the clubs that were with them was a great Big Bertha. I remember them cutting it down and that was my first driver.

I used to play with that for the first couple years, and so when I was testing other clubs that was definitely a fond memory I had of the company. They have done a lot of great things to support women's golf, especially coming out with the new line, Reva, and making it not just about golf clubs but a community. To make it as inclusive for women that are just starting out to play.

They know it's an intimidating sport, so Callaway is definitely trying to do a lot of things to make the game more inclusive, more fun, younger. Them being a marketing partner of the LPGA I think is going to do a lot of great things. Saw a lot of fun content out there today with the teams, so I'm excited to see what comes out of it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll wrap it up with one last question.

Q. Back to the schedule for a second, what events are you going to be playing in past ANA?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: I'm taking it step by step. You know, I'm planning on doing Hawaii and L.A. and obviously U.S. Open and Mediheal and Merced. Aside from that, I'm just taking it step by step. You know, just taking it day by day. I want to play as much as I can.

I just have to see with my family what feels right, especially during these kind of strange times. Hopefully by the summer we don't have to worry about it. Just playing it day by day.

Q. Will your husband be coming out with you maybe next week?

MICHELLE WIE WEST: I hope so. You know, with all the protocols and especially with the NBA, he has to get tested every day and sometimes twice or three times a day, so makes things a little bit hard for him to come down here.

But we've been talking about it, and hopefully we'll see what can happen. But, yeah, I think it's going to be a little bit of a long stretch until we can see each other.

THE MODERATOR: Michelle, great to have you back.

MICHELLE WIE WEST: Thank you.

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