

T-Mobile Match Play presented by MGM Rewards

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Las Vegas, Nevada, USA
Shadow Creek

Alison Lee

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, joined here in the media center at the T-Mobile Match Play presented by MGM Rewards by Alison Lee. Welcome to the media center, Alison.

ALISON LEE: Thank you for having me.

Q. So first off we'll start, you had two top 10 finishes this year; finished last year very strong. What have you been working on both kind of mentally and physically since then?

ALISON LEE: Honestly, I feel like I learned a lot about myself and my game at the end of last year, end of last season.

I feel like I almost had this weight lifted off my shoulders at the end of last season. I finally was able to break through a little bit and put myself more in contention and get comfortable and used to being in that position.

Definitely towards the end of that last year, that first week in Korea where I was in contention and ended up going into a playoff with Minjee, I was so nervous. I definitely felt all the nerves. Really anxious throughout the day. Even leading up to the weekend.

I think by the time CME came around I felt like a little bit more sense of calm. I think a lot of that had to do because I kept putting myself in that position. But I haven't really been there in a while, so I just kind of took that into this year, and, yeah, that's how I've felt over the last couple weeks, like a little bit more sense of calm. Definitely obviously nervous, but they're definitely good nerves.

Yeah, like I said, I feel really good about my game right now. I'm hitting good shots. Feel really confident. Especially after the last two weeks, you know, putting myself on the leaderboard consistently, I feel really good about where my game is at.

Thankfully this time around we have a full season ahead of



us and plenty of golf left. So, yeah.

Q. Great momentum to start the year. Talking about this event in particular, what do you like most about this course? How do you feel like it might suit your game this week?

ALISON LEE: Yeah, I love this course. I love Shadow Creek. It's definitely like one of my Top 5 favorite courses I ever played. I definitely always love coming out here. It's always a challenge as well.

No matter how many times I played here it's always tough. Even though I know all the places to miss, all the places I need to be, even though you have all that inside knowledge, you still need to hit it good.

Yeah, that's what I love about this golf course. You can -- you really need to play smart out here, and if you don't hit good shots, you're not going to be rewarded in any way.

I feel like last week, even though the weather was tough touch on the weekend, it was definitely an easier course. You could get away with a few missed shots.

But out here, like if you miss it in the wrong spot it's really difficult to make par, which I really like about this golf course. It should be a good test and a good challenge for everyone in the field, including me.

I saw that the wind is going to follow us for the third week in a row. That should be really interesting. I've never really played out here when it's super windy.

I tend to stay at home. We don't always get huge wind out here in Vegas. We do once in a while, and usually those days I just stay at home because it's really, really tough to play in.

So I think that's just going to add like a huge extra challenge to everyone in the field this week.

Q. And with this event being match play, what is your strategy heading into match play? How do you approach it differently than stroke play maybe?

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ALISON LEE: I mean, honestly, there are 100 girls. Only 8 girls move on and play match play. So it's very much like I'm just going to try and have the same mindset as I did last week. Last week I got tied for eighth and I feel like I had a really good week.

So I still need to have a good week this week if I want to be able to make it to the weekend and play match play.

But, yeah, I would say the first few days just try and play my game, be patient. It's going to be really windy and tough out there. I feel like I've just been on constant repeat, trying to incorporate that in my mind over the last couple weeks, because we've had so much wind and it's really testing my patience.

I keep thinking, okay, this is the last day, this is the last hole I need to play in this, and then I see the forecast and it's supposed to be crazy again.

Yeah, just I just need to be patient I guess out there. It's going to be so challenging. This course is already challenging with no wind at all.

So, yeah, I don't want -- I don't know if it'll be fun, but I'm going to try my best to make it fun.

Q. As someone who has played this course probably as much as anyone out here, what's the difference between playing the first week of April and Memorial weekend like you guys had been?

ALISON LEE: I would say what I noticed today is -- I mean, it's still warm and pretty firm out there. In general, it's not playing as firm as it does later, more into the summer.

When we played in the summer last year I had quite a few tee shots where I would have to layup and hit 5-wood or 3-wood, and this year I have no problem hitting driver because it's quite -- not running out as much.

I would say the greens are still firm but a hair softer than the summertime, which is nice. That helps a lot.

And with the wind, you know, picking up this week, I believe the LPGA wants to keep the green speeds at 11, to 11 and a half. I know they wanted to make them around 12 to 12 and a half, so they are going to keep them slightly slower, which is so slower than we usually play in. 11 is still pretty quick.

Yeah, I would say overall, that's the main thing. Any time you have a course that's really firm, really fast, that makes

the course a lot more difficult. Yeah, I would say the rough I feel like, too, this week, compared to when it's more in the summertime, it's slightly more grabby and thick.

So, yeah, I would say honestly I think based on the forecast it's definitely going to play a little more difficult now than when we played in the past, especially since now we're playing stroke play versus match play.

In the past you can play pretty aggressively depending on where the pins are and stuff like that. Now you really, really have to play it safe this year. If you miss it in the wrong spot and play almost too aggressively and go down a ridge or end up on the wrong side of the green, it's so easy to make bogey.

It's definitely going to be a different mindset and course management I think for all the girls here this week who have played in the past. It'll play very, very differently, yeah.

Q. So I've always found you to be very thoughtful and patient about everything. How tired are you of the scenario of when are you going to get a win, and especially being in contention so much lately, every broadcast that gets brought up?

ALISON LEE: Yeah, it's been tough. I feel like over the last couple weeks I feel like I played pretty good. I mean, not to use this as a excuse, but I feel like the last couple weeks I was not in the good wave. I played Friday afternoon both weeks last week and that's when it was really windy and it was calm for everyone who played Friday morning.

I feel like that definitely put me back a couple strokes. That would've been huge for PV. Even last week just a couple strokes, couple more birdies would've really helped me.

But this week I got really lucky. I'm in the good wave, playing late-early. It's supposed to be super windy Thursday afternoon and I'm playing in the morning.

So, yeah, I'm just going to take that and try and use that to my advantage hopefully. Yeah, everyone who plays in the morning on Thursday on the second round is going to have a huge advantage.

Yeah, obviously looking back at the last few events it's been tough coming up a couple strokes short or sometimes only one stroke short, but I feel like I'm playing really good golf right now and I can't complain.

Obviously I want that first win really badly. I've tried to take myself, like take a step back and look at this whole year,

the whole season of 2024, and I want to win more than once. I don't want to just have that first win and move on. I want to win multiple times out here, establish myself as a dominant player. I want to make the Olympics and Solheim Cup this year.

I feel like I have really good momentum coming into this season and I feel really good about my game now. Hopefully if I keep this up, if I can keep my game in this -- keep in form like this, yeah, hopefully I can get more than one.

Q. Speaking of dominant players, wanted to ask about your thoughts on Nelly, what she's doing now and what's it like when you see her name on the leaderboard.

ALISON LEE: Yeah, I mean, Nelly is one of the those players I feel like it's super easy to bet on. I feel like before you even tee it up, if you know Nelly's game you know she's going to win at least five times. At least. I feel like last year she wasn't able to get as many as she wanted.

That really fueled here this off-season into working hard. To see her win three times in a row is super amazing. Seems super easy, like she didn't even have to try that hard to win. That just shows how good she is.

Yeah, she's always I think someone that anyone out here competing against her needs to look out for.

Q. Does and then on the opposite end, sponsor's invite, McKenzi Hall, who is a junior at UNLV. I don't know if you've played with her locally or not. As someone who came out here pretty young yourself, what is in store for her this week?

ALISON LEE: Yeah, I mean, I met her last night at the pro-am party. I've never played golf with her or anything like that. Yeah, I mean, to have your first LPGA event at a course like this when the conditions are going to be like this is going to be a rude awakening for her for sure.

I am pretty sure she's played here quite a few times, so I think that helps. She's a local, too, which is nice. She can have bit more ease being at home and being a little bit more comfortable.

Yeah, I hope she is just takes it and just has a lot of fun. Like I said, it's going to be tough for a lot of girls to just have fun this week because it's going to be a lot.

But, yeah, I hope she enjoys every moment of it.

Q. You talked about the course already. I'm going to

ask in a little bit different way. There is a mystique about Shadow Creek. What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about Shadow Creek?

ALISON LEE: First thing that comes to mind, I mean, for me, I would say bliss. Like I come out here a lot -- not a lot -- but I come out here once in a while to practice. You have a huge short game facility back there in the back that you can spend all day on. The course is amazing. It's never too crowded out here.

If I do come out here, I feel like it's just like any golfer's paradise or playground out here. You can come out here and practice all day, play 18 holes. Every single hole you play out here is different. Like it's so distinct. Every hole has its own specific features and things that make that hole great, and they're all different.

Definitely a course you would never expect to be right in the middle of the desert. Yeah, I would say I think everyone feels that way when they come out here. This place is super awesome. I feel really lucky to be able to come here once in a while to practice and use the facilities.

So, yeah.

Q. Being in Vegas, you live here, but people from all over the world come to Vegas for the experience. Golf is a huge part of that. How do you describe what golf in Vegas means and that overall experience?

ALISON LEE: For golf specifically?

Q. Just in general, the Vegas vibe, the Vegas as experience as someone who lives here. Because golf kind of intertwines with everything is what I'm talking about. Just the experience of Vegas, what is the first thing that comes to your mind about that?

ALISON LEE: Yeah, that's why I moved here. I moved here about seven years ago. I'm from LA originally. I moved here because I knew if I ever asked my friends or family to come visit me if I got lonely the answer will always be yes.

So that's why I chose this place. Any time I ask my friends or parents if they want to come for the weekend it's always yes. There is so much to do. You can go play golf at so many golf courses, whether private or public.

There are a lot of attractions. You can go watch a bunch of shows. I feel like every time my mom comes here to visit me, she's seen more shows than I have because she'll come with her friends and stay at my place.



You can go hiking. The food is really good.

There are just endless things to do here, which is nice and why I love it. I think that's why you see more golfers moving here. In the last year quite a few golfers have moved here. Collin Morikawa, Kurt Kitayama, most recently KK, Isaiah Salinda, Rico Hoey, Rose Zhang just moved her; Allisen Corpuz just got a place her. I live her. Jenny Shin lives here.

There are so many golfers that have finally discovered all the things Vegas has to offer and has been moving here.

Q. Specifically about MGM, what's the hospitality like that they provide this week?

ALISON LEE: Yeah, they have been great. I've been an MGM ambassador for, gosh, I think almost ten years. They've been really great to me. I mean, that's in addition to why all my friends and family will come. They're like, let's go to the spa or go get a free meal at one of the restaurants.

That's another addition, too, to like a lot of the pros who live here who are MGM ambassadors. We will get together and we will try one of the new restaurants or a nice restaurant on the strip that normally we wouldn't go to because it would be couple hundred bucks per meal.

MGM takes care of us in a really great way. I'm really happy that they've stepped forward and they're having an event like this for women's golf on one of the top golf courses in the country.

It's not very often that we'll play at a Top 100 golf course unless we have a major. To be able for them to open up their facility this week and give it to us, I think it's super awesome. It's so expensive to play out here, so they're losing thousands of dollars every day having us out here.

It's really cool they're able to shut it down and open it up for us.

Q. I know you played Sahalee back in 2016. Curious what you thought about that week and thoughts about going back there this year?

ALISON LEE: Yeah, I love it. Sahalee is also in my Top 5 like favorite golf courses of all-time. I love like west coast golf and golf in the Northeast. Like I love tree-lined golf courses. I think that golf course is super challenging because it's really narrow. It's beautiful with all the tall trees lining down the fairways. I'm really, really excited to be back.

I know when we played there last time the conditions were super amazing too. I remember just being in awe of the facilities, the grass, the fairways. Like everything looked super pristine, so I'm really excited to go back.

Q. You mentioned earlier tracking Solheim, tracking or aiming to make the Solheim team, aiming to make the Olympics. Is that something you're actively tracking or how are you keeping tabs on that?

ALISON LEE: Yeah, of course. You know, at the end of last year I didn't think I even had a chance to make Olympics. I was first alternate basically. Stacy asked me if I could be first alternate for Solheim Cup, so that was pretty crushing.

So to end a season like that and to see that I had potential to maybe make the Olympics, I mean, that would be a huge dream come true. I can't lie, I've been checking that website ever Monday morning. I definitely checked it Monday morning right after the conclusion of last week.

So, yeah, I mean, all my dreams are slowly becoming a reality. I'm just trying really hard to stay patient. We have so many events left before the field will be set for the Olympics. I believe it's right after KPMG.

Yeah, I'm just really -- like I said, I've been thinking about it a little too much now, so I need to try my best to kind of stay calm and patient, because we still have a few months left of golf and anything can happen. I'm just going to try and take it one day at a time, one tournament at a time, and hopefully everything falls into place.

That was kind of the mindset and goal I had going into this season when I was practicing this off-season. I would say my main big goals were hopefully winning my first LPGA event, making Solheim Cup team, and hopefully making the Olympics.

I mean, those are really big dreams, really big goals. I don't want to get too ahead of myself. I mean, obviously as of right now I would be going to Paris. I don't want get too worked up or too excited about that.

I'm just trying really hard to take it one day at a time. Like I said I can't lie. It's definitely something in the back of my head. I'm trying really hard to push it away and keep focused on what's today and what's tomorrow and not let next month's problems get to me.

So, yeah, just trying to take it one day at a time.

Q. Talk about the level of appreciation for the golf you're playing now. What within your golf game are

you seeing that's allowed you to take these steps and capitalize on the mental side of it you've improved upon?

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ALISON LEE: I would say a lot of it has to do with confidence. Like being in contention, like proving to myself that I can shoot these low rounds and see my name on the leaderboard.

Because a lot of the time, I mean, you can feel really good about my game, about your swing, or the opposite. You can have a really bad warmup right before your round and you feel like shit basically. You can still go out there and shoot a low number.

So you never know where your game truly is until you tee it up on the first or second day and see what you shoot out there. For the last couple events to be able to know that I can shoot a low number and put myself in contention regardless of the conditions really adds confidence to myself. It proves to me that all the hard work I put in is working, and just trying really hard to trust in that and trust in the process.

It's really easy to get really down on yourself when you're out there when you have a bad shot or bad hole or bad round. That's how I felt when I was in Singapore. I feel like I had a lot of expectations for myself and I had a really, really bad first round. I felt like I was spiralling a little bit. I had to remind myself it's just one day. Anything can happen.

So, yeah, like those last few weeks playing good, it just adds confidence to my game I think and just adds that a little bit of edge I think you need. That's what you need if you want to come out here and win. Like you need to be confident. You need to play aggressively, too.

Just knowing where your ball is going to go and knowing that you can hit the ball where you want to, it allows you to play more aggressively and allows you to play offensive golf versus defensive golf.

Instead of worrying about where your drive will go or saving par, you can kind of think differently with your approach to certain holes or your game or the round.

Like instead of worrying about making a par or bogey, you're like, I'm going to make a birdie here. I know I can hit this pitching wedge within 15 feet and I can make a birdie here. It's just like a different mindset. Like playing good just adds a little bit of confidence to that.

So, yeah.

