

LPGA MEDIHEAL Championship

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Somis, California, USA

The Saticoy Club

Danielle Kang

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome inside the virtual media center here at the LPGA MEDIHEAL Championship. I am pleased to be joined by Danielle Kang.

Danielle, you and Saticoy have quite a close relationship. Talk us through the connection you have to this club.

DANIELLE KANG: I grew up about 30 minutes from here, so went to elementary school to college in this area. Well, a little bit further away.

But I drove here to do short game practice a lot and I used to come out here with a couple of the men's Pepperdine golf team. Andrew Putnam and I played a lot of putting contests out here.

They gave me an honorary membership back then, and I just used to play the golf course however I wanted in the afternoon. So Tom, who used to be the GM of the golf course came out today and said I was a pain in the ass when I was 16, because I was hitting everywhere.

But I don't realize what I was doing back then, but obviously, 13, 14 years later I go, wow, what a brat.

THE MODERATOR: When MEDIHEAL announced that the tournament would be played here, how excited were you and what were the emotions you felt about returning to Saticoy?

DANIELLE KANG: I was super excited because it's closer than Wilshire and my friends that I know from that Westlake area can come out as well. I was more excited because the golf course is really difficult. I know that the greens are -- I mean, they're bumpy poa. That's just the beauty of Southern California golf.

I know that this golf course has small greens, always tilted, it's just narrow, trees everywhere, and I like that kind of difficulty. I don't believe that the scores will be that low. I don't even think I'd go that low out here, to be honest. I shot 85 here before.

It's a golf course that can throw a double and a triple here and there, and it's just a fun place to be.

THE MODERATOR: Before this event in particular a lot of people might have taken Monday to rest after competing two weeks in a row. You decided to go and caddie for your brother, Alex, in the Shriners Monday qualifier. What was that experience like for you?

DANIELLE KANG: It was -- so obviously we looked through the schedules, and as of right now, a lot of people wonder about the health and everything. It's really tough for me to play two weeks in a row and walk, walk seven, eight miles a day and have to practice, the whole thing.

I understand it's a job. A lot of people say, Hey, people have to do things they don't want to do either. For me, I have to perform the best I can perform, and in order to do that I have to rest.

But then we have the one in four rule, and that kind of was applied at Texas. It's like a \$25,000 fine. I'm not giving that up. So I went.

But it really was tough on my body and I had to go home to see Butch because we were going to Korea after this and I don't have time to go back home and do my physio. So as I'm flying home my brother goes, can you caddie for me? The one person I never say no to is my brother. I can't carry it, so I said, can you get me a push cart? It has to have three wheels minimum because I can't do the two wheels. He goes, yeah, yeah, no problem.

I woke up 4:00 in the morning, did the warmup, went and saw Butch at 6:30, did a lesson for a few hours, saw Nick Watney, and drove back, picked up my brother, went to the golf course, and caddied 18 holes. It was wild. It was a wild day.

THE MODERATOR: What was it like? I know you've caddie for your brother before, but what's it like on the course with him?

DANIELLE KANG: So last time we caddied we won at the



U.S. Open qualifier, so I believe I'm a great caddie obviously. But on a sidenote, this time was a bit different because I was actually tired. I never realized how hard it was because I wanted to complain that I was so tired. I couldn't say it out loud to the player. I just couldn't.

He kept handing me the ball on the green and I go, what do you want me to do with this? Oh, he wanted me to clean it, but I kept forgetting the towel, so I was very absent minded.

Before I was really on top of things, but this time I just wanted to just sit down after 5 and I thought to myself, my God, my caddie must have days where he just doesn't want to work. So I created a three-day pass thing where he can tell me three days out of the entire year where he just says, D, I don't want to work today. So I said, okay. So I gave him a three day pass. I don't know if he's ever going to use it, but I had to create that.

THE MODERATOR: Ollie is a pretty hard worker. He's very committed?

DANIELLE KANG: He's on my bag, he is the hard or working caddie I know. Listen, if somebody says he's an idiot, he my idiot. He's been on my bag for six years. He works the hardest out there, so that's all I can ask for.

Q. You have you mentioned you shot 85 here. What's your best score here, do you remember?

DANIELLE KANG: I think 6-under. I don't think it was lower than 6. Saticoy is really hard.

Q. Yeah.

DANIELLE KANG: Normally the greens are firm and fast and right now it's slow. It's slow and soft, so that's actually very different from what I see, because greens like this, if it's fast, it trickles in and you have to play that feel. When I was younger, I mean, I just smashed every putt I saw. It was just like a three-putt central out here for me.

Q. Sometimes when you're very familiar with a course you put a little added pressure on yourself thinking I should go down and get this course. But what you've just said, maybe you're not putting that added pressure because you know how difficult Saticoy course can play. Is there any added pressure because you're expected to do well here because you played here so much?

DANIELLE KANG: You know, I used to think like that. Lately just kind of changed my mind. I feel like I want to play well everywhere, so I just kind of play whatever is in

front of me. Sometimes -- listen, I really wanted to win in Arkansas. Finished second there, third there, fifth there. I really wanted to win. Hey, sometimes it just doesn't go your way.

Same thing with BMW Korea. I finished second. Look, if people say are there tournaments that you want to win? The places I finished second are the places I really, really wanted to win. So a Tournament of Champions last year I finished second. I really, really wanted to win that event. I won it this year.

So eventually things I want will come if I keep manifesting good vibes and energy. I would love to win in Saticoy, Korea, Japan. There isn't a place that I wouldn't like to win, right? Oh, crap, I won here. I don't think anyone ever says that.

Q. How are you physically? Much was made about the back. How are you physically?

DANIELLE KANG: I'm all right right now. A little uncomfortable, but I'm okay. Funny enough, I'm just -- I didn't know we got carts today. Ollie did. He's like, it's good for you. Just walk, D. I'm pretty sure I wanted to throw a club at him.

So, I mean, it's okay. We just have to keep pushing through. It's going to take a little time. The rest of the year's schedule is on week on one off for me, so back to back to back, I won't be competing in Pelican for that reason.

I'm excited because I think I've come really far in a very short amount of time for me. I expedited it as much as I could. That kind of effort, it's not just me. It's the team that has helped me get out here and I have I have to emphasize that. I even flew to Vegas just to see my team to put me back to where I could want to and then function on my own.

So I'm like for focusing on next year on being consistent with the body, yeah.

Q. Just what's it like being back in Ventura County and just driving in and seeing old sites? You mentioned friends and family from Westlake. Are you going to be able to carve out any time to go home? What's it going to be like for you?

DANIELLE KANG: Well, it's already Wednesday, so when we're at a tournament we can't really do that much. LA 30 minutes is down the street. I live in Vegas now where 30 minutes is across down.

My friend Micky (phonetic) drove up yesterday and went to ice cream spots and things like that. Today I will just go see one of my best friends, Hillary. That's all I can do. They're going to come out this weekend.

Yeah, I don't think I'm going to drive all the way around everywhere. It's just nice because I remember things and there are stories that I was telling my caddie as I was walking around here.

I got in trouble because I went from the wedge area and blasted it over the trees into the 11th green and from the 11th green I hit drivers on the 10 green. I mean, there was no one there, but these are the stories. I flipped the cart on 1. I broke a golf cart out here. David Lipsky was in the cart. He almost died.

It's just the stories are endless. Around here every golf course I went to there is a story Lindero Golf Club, there are stories out there, too. So it's fun.

Q. What steps have you taken to expedite the process?

DANIELLE KANG: Really, really like just dedicated diligence. I think sometimes like I actually thought about there is no way I'm the only person that sometimes things doesn't go with your way. We all think that.

I wanted to say something at Arkansas like I wish when people see me that I just want them to have hope they you can do it too. Whatever the struggle is you're going through, you're to get through it. It might not be how you want it or why you got there, but that's -- the first few months when I found out earlier in this year, I didn't know how to approach it.

As soon as you start attacking the having the team around and you building the trust and trusting that process, and you have to dedicate it. Like I love to play. I didn't want to sit at home and watch people play majors and miss out. I didn't watch it because it drove me nuts to watch it. I didn't watch any sports. Just watched Netflix.

That competitiveness I was thriving on. I just want people to know, the next step, get up now, and whether it's to brush your teeth and get going, waking up early. I had to switch my sleep schedules. Practicing and how to practice is different. Butch and I figured out how to practice. We got a biomechanic person. My swing does look different.

Heather my physio and PT looked at on my biomechanics on my body to how to swing better, to Butch calling Chris Como -- it's just there is a lot to it.

It's different. So even Butch asked me when I got home, Hey, what happened with that 5-wood? I said, my swing is not holding under pressure. I don't know it as well under the gun, so I'm gunning it really far, hitting it really short. Swing is different though.

Those are the things that I just have to keep achieving, that first thing that's in front of me. Whether it's to eat, brush your teeth, to put your clothes on to go out. That was hard for me, to get up and to go. Because I mean, it was a lot of things.

So I think like one step at a time is how I got to expedite it. Sometimes we just sit there and go like -- that stalling is what gets all of us in any job or anything you do.

So that stalling, if you tell yourself, Danielle, get up, do it right now. Get up right now. Walk the dog. Go putt. We're going to putt right now. If I can't putt today, okay we're going to chip now.

Just move on to the next thing. That's what I worked on for a long time, and it actually expedited the process.

Q. When did it click for you that you had to start doing that, get up?

DANIELLE KANG: My mom. She's like, you need to find your routine again. She was right. Like I wasn't myself. I gained a lot of weight. I know people are like, you look skinny. That's not what I want to hear. All women know what our favorite weights are. So I gained 18, 19 pounds and I was crying every night that I gained that much weight.

But then you have to stop yourself. It's okay. We're going to get better. We're going to lose the weight. We are going to work out. I can't run, so I'm going to learn to run.

They told me I couldn't run, and people that know me, I'm stubborn, I ran five miles, couldn't walk for the next two days because of my back. There was things like, hey, let's start with the gravity running. That's how we started with the UFC.

It's just having people not criticize you for being self-destructive and correcting you and being able to focus on what you need to accomplish is how I got here.

So I don't know. Like you said, I want to play well in Saticoy, but I don't know if I wake up tomorrow and I can't do as much. I'm going to do my best.

That might be frustrating, but I'm doing the best I can do today so that I'll be better tomorrow.

Q. What changes did you make to your swing?

DANIELLE KANG: You know, you can call Butch. He's going to be really mad. You should clip that. Please call Butch for any swing, anything that we have worked on. Butch Harmon is welcoming your call.

Sorry, Butch.

Q. On a big picture thing, you mentioned at CME last year you're viewing this season as kind of a gamble. Obviously this health was unforeseen, but what have you learned as the year is winding down?

DANIELLE KANG: I learned that like everything is all right, I guess. I learned -- I know this sounds really cliché, but I actually learned a lot because what happened or what's happening right now.

My life sometimes hasn't gone the way I wanted to, and I know that a lot of people's lives are like that. Everybody feels that. So that's why I want people to know, Hey, whatever it is, your problem, it's all relative. Nothing is too small or too big.

I want everyone to know you can get through it. So that's how I learned, is, yeah, I want to be a 15-time champion. I don't know how many times I finished second. How many times I lost by one.

But people that root for me, that get that excited, that vibe is why I want to keep playing and I want people to watch and be excited, is everyone knows it's not easy to get here.

Just know you can get there. It's easier for me to see the results and to compliment the results than to compliment yourself that you did a good job. Everyone kept saying it's so -- what's the word in English they kept saying? They were like, Ah, so close. I wish it would've happened like this. No, no, no. Trust me, I'm fine. Like I'm really happy. I actually probably accomplished more than I should have this week. I can say that genuinely.

But other people want more, and that constant wanting more and not appreciating what you already got is what I learned this year. (Video froze.)

How I practice, how I approach competition. So I feel more like myself than I have in a long time, a bit more free, so I'm happy about that.

THE MODERATOR: I will wrap it up with one more question. Na Yeon Choi announced her retirement yesterday. You had a lovely Instagram story relating to

her. Her last event will be the BMW Ladies Championship. What has Na Yeon, her career, legacy meant to you as both a competitor and friend?

DANIELLE KANG: So I mean, as a colleague, right, if I can say that Na Yeon Choi has had an incredible career. Sometimes it's just unfortunate for me to see these legends not be glorified on the level they should be.

They only look at how many you won, the records you have, how you're playing now, whether you're playing good now. It's just -- if I think about the struggles that she's went through growing this game -- I mean, she's played for years and she grew the game and she was world No. 1.

I mean, it's not easy to get there, even from childhood. So I want women's golf to get to a point where you recognize Na. Not because you're Serena Williams or because you're Nadal or Federer. People that got there also got there.

So for me, Na Yeon Choi, when she announced her retirement, I felt more sadness than relief for her, because I didn't feel that her last few years of her career she was appreciated as much as she should have been.

Same thing with Inbee park. We have legends playing here right now, and sooner or later they're going to retire. Everything turns around sooner or later. I'll be gone too in the next ten -- who knows. Those are the things that we have to appreciate, that these girls went so far and accomplished so many things to make this game growing and better. I know we're just focused on now, but I just sometimes wish that people could take a moment to see what they've done and appreciate that now.

I just sent her a nice thing -- I just said thank you for growing the women's game. I'm a huge fan. I love her demeanor on the golf course. She is feisty but she's a fighter. Even if she's not world No. 1 now, even if she's not top 50 now, I mean, she grinds and she fought to the last shot that she possibly could.

It's not just the results for me. That's why I'm biggest fan of Na Yeon Choi, and I forever will be.

Q. Could you tell us how you plan to attack this course? I know you're familiar with it. Is it the type of course that you can set it up and say I'm going to -- knowing where the pin placements are going to be, or do you have to wait each day?

DANIELLE KANG: So this golf course is -- it's really a ball-striker's golf course. You have to manipulate it off the tee and into the greens. That's something that I'm good at

I believe, and I have to just rely on the fact that I am going to be feeling good and trust my swing. That's when I just start calling Butch Harmon.

After that, around the greens I just have to stay patient. This isn't a golf course where I'm just going to go and try and make a bunch of putts. If you can make a bunch of putts out here, you have every right to win. I don't really see it.

It breaks -- it's like 4% to 5% break. Greens are really tough. So that's how I'm going to attack it, is more with my ball striking and giving myself best chance for pars and birdies than trying to score as low as I can basically.

Q. And do you have a particular club that's really working for you at this point in your game?

DANIELLE KANG: You know, my 5-wood is really good. (Smiling.) Ollie calls me the daddy of fairway woods right now. I am so sorry I said that, but that's what he calls me. I used to be really bad on the fairway woods and took me months to get that back.

He's like, daddy is back. I was like, thank you. So I'm really proud of my woods. Cool.

THE MODERATOR: Incredible. Well, I appreciate the insight and for spending time with us. Thank you and best of luck this week.

DANIELLE KANG: Thank you.

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