

BMW Ladies Championship

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LPGA International Busan

Jin Young Ko

Press Conference

Q. I would like to start with before today's round. What was the mindset, and what were the goals you set for yourself as you entered the final round today?

JIN YOUNG KO: The first round was kind of disappointing. And so before the second round, I felt like I had nothing to lose. And so I really wanted to go out there and play a game where I would have no regrets.

And then in the second and third round, I felt that I got a lot of birdies and my swing was where I wanted it to be. So I thought, going into the fourth round, that if I give it my best shot, that I would have a shot at winning.

Q. And you started the day four shots back of the leader, quickly eating into her lead with your front nine 30. Take us through what that front nine was like for you and what was working so well.

JIN YOUNG KO: In the front nine, I was striking really well. So going into the putting, I was really confident. And then looking back on the four rounds and even to the Founders Cup, I was putting really well.

And after the front nine, I learned that I had three pars and six birdies, and my life best score was 8-under. So I wanted to really attack the course in the back nine. And today I recorded 8-under, and I'm kind of disappointed that I didn't get to break that personal record of my life best score, but I still did my best, and I think that I really gave it my best in my first playoff ever.

Q. Did you realize when you made the turn, when you both birdied No. 9, that you were tied for the lead at that point?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yes, I knew.

Q. How crucial was that birdie putt on No. 12 do you think when it came to continuing your momentum, and how long was that birdie putt? Take us through that hole.

JIN YOUNG KO: Actually at No. 11, it was par-5 hole, I tried to get too long, but then it went over the green, and I

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parred that hole. So going into the 12th hole, I knew that I had to focus and that I really needed to do well.

And with the 12th hole, the tee shot and the putting all went as I would have liked, and that was I think why I birdied that hole. And I knew a birdie putt was really important. I felt that I did not know how the game was going to change if I did not succeed, so I knew it was going to be very important to get that shot.

And I think in terms of the distance, I think it was about four meters.

Q. Like you said earlier, you make it into your first ever playoff. What are some of the things that went through your mind, and what did you say to yourself to get yourself ready for your first ever playoff?

JIN YOUNG KO: Actually, I wasn't that nervous going into the playoff. I think I was feeding off the confidence I had during the round.

When I was heading to the tee ground, I turned to Dave and I told him that this was my first playoff ever, and he smiled, and he said, "Welcome." And that helped me ease those nerves.

Q. Take me through that second shot to that, just how far were you from the pin, and when you saw it stop, what were you thinking?

JIN YOUNG KO: I think it was 185 meters to the hole, and I knew that Hee Jeong played a great shot, and I knew that if I didn't birdie that hole, that we would probably go to another playoff. So I was a bit more aggressive the second time around. And I also missed the green left at No. 18 before the playoff. So I focused on avoiding that same mistake.

Q. You said all week how much of an honor it would be to win the 200th win by a Korean player. It's now real. And now that it is real, how does that feel, and what does it mean to you to make history like that today here in Korea?

JIN YOUNG KO: Before the event, we were at 199th, and I think I contributed about 5 percent to that 199th, and I was really satisfied with that.

But this is a tremendous honor. And I think it's very fortunate that I am the player, the 200th win player, and I actually think that it's really fortunate that it was an event

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held in Korea as well.

And obviously being the player of the 200th win of the Korean player was not a goal that I was working toward, it just happens so that I was really focused and I did my best and this came along.

So I'm very happy and satisfied.

Q. With the win, you are also projected to return to the No. 1 ranking in the Women's Rolex World Golf Rankings. I know that's always a goal for you. Was that a goal coming into a week like this? What does that mean to you to possibly be projected to return to the No. 1 spot?

JIN YOUNG KO: I wasn't too conscious, actually, of the ranking. I always feel if your game is in good form and you keep at it, you can reach that ranking.

I felt if I kept at it and worked hard this year I might have a chance within this year. So I did return to that spot earlier than I expected. I'm going to do my best so that I can maintain that position.

Q. What will you do after this tournament? Will you have some time to celebrate before you refocus your efforts back on competition?

JIN YOUNG KO: Before the Pelican event, I have some time off. So I'm going to take some time of in Korea. And the season isn't over, so I don't think I'm going to have a huge party to celebrate. Hopefully I can wrap up the remaining two events in flying colors as well and have a huge party at the year's end.

Q. Congratulations. I understand that In Gee Chun cited you as her role model. Although she lost today to you, you were in the same group with her. So what was your impression of her having played in the same group and in the playoff with her? And my second question is it seems like you always want to get better and improve. What is driving force behind that desire to improve all the time?

JIN YOUNG KO: Like you said, I played with Hee Jeong today, and I talked to her, we're like friends personally. And it was great to be with her in this very important event.

And I actually thought I could learn a lot from her, and I did. I knew that she did three bogey-free rounds, and so I knew she was giving a really solid performance. So I was nervous starting the event today. And I really wished her well because I knew that she wanted to come to States, and I hope to see her on the LPGA Tour as well.

Of course, as we know, luck was a little bit more on my

side today. So I felt sort of bad after we were done. But I think just seeing her up and close, she's in great form, from driver to putting to her swing. So I think that she is a really strong player. And she could actually join the Tour right now and she would be able to compete I think, and I hope to see more players like her join us on the LPGA Tour.

As for the second question, I think for me, what's important is whether I'm satisfied or not with the round, regardless of whether I won. So, for instance, today I think I did well overall, but I should not have made mistakes like I did on No. 11. It was not a time to make a mistake, and I did. And I think that shows areas where I can improve.

And I would -- I'm going to look back at the round today and look at what I need to do to shore up my game, and I'm just going to do my best to perfect my swing, my putting.

And so for me, I think the more difficult process is when I'm preparing for events and when I'm training. And it's also more fun at the time when I'm actually training because I think it's fun to feel the improvement that you make after hard work. So that's what's really a driving force for me.

Q. Congratulations. I heard, I think it was your coaches said, that you train like a junior player, and that sometimes when you're training, you're so focused that it's difficult to get a word in. I think after the second round you gave yourself 100 for your swing. So I'm curious to know going forward which part of your game do you hope to work on further.

JIN YOUNG KO: Actually, I think I performed very poorly at the Tokyo Olympics. I was not satisfied with any of the rounds during the Olympics, and that's why I opted to pass for the British Open, and I wanted to work on my swing, and I had about a month.

During that time I would go to the range around 8 a.m., and I would finish around dinnertime. And so it was just the driving range and the gym, and I was going back and forth between practice and gym.

And I think that during that time you kind of discover which areas needs improvement. And when I was a junior player, there were days where I felt like I was going to die from all the practice. And sometimes, even if you turn professional, I think you need that mindset from time to time. And so I think, yes, that's what was needed.

Q. I think earlier in the year you were not in tiptop form, and you described it as hitting adolescence or hitting puberty when you go through a very turbulent time. And I think you were more bothered by that than your fans. So I would like to ask you when you

experienced the most difficulty in the first half of this year and what helped you get through.

JIN YOUNG KO: I think the most difficult period this year was early this year. My swing, I wasn't satisfied with my swing. I wasn't making greens. And there was really no flow to my game.

And then early this year my grandmother became very ill, and that was a time when I was prepping for majors like ANA and the U.S. Open. And I could not come to Korea because of COVID, and I had these majors, so I still had to prepare and practice, and that situation was very, very difficult.

During the week of ANA, I think I slept maybe three to four hours a day because I was crying so much, and that was when I was going through what I described as kind of my adolescence or puberty regarding golf because I came to think what's the use of all this? I was very skeptical about why I was playing golf when I couldn't be there for my grandmother. I'm actually the eldest granddaughter, and my family was going through a difficult time. I couldn't be there for my family.

And I really place a high value on happiness. So golf is a means to get there. It's not an end for me. So at the time I became really doubtful about why I was playing golf. But I think time heals everything. And after Singapore, I came to Korea, I was able to meet my grandmother, and it just gave me a lot of comfort.

Q. I would like to ask what you think your strengths and weaknesses are in terms of golf. And you said you were going to check your swing in the following week when you were in Korea. So I would like to know specifically what you plan to do.

JIN YOUNG KO: I have to say my strongest point and my weakest points are meshed together and similar. I don't know if that makes sense, but I feel that's the case.

And looking back just at today, I think I'm not entirely satisfied with my tee shots. I was satisfied with my iron shots, they were going the way I wanted them, and I was confident in terms of my putting.

I think for the following week I'll be practicing. And my coach/teacher will guide me, and I'm still a student in my coach's eyes. So we'll practice, and we will try to do our best in the remaining events.

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