

Hanwha LIFEPLUS International Crown

Wednesday, May 3, 2023
San Francisco, California, USA
Harding Park

Nelly Korda
Lexi Thompson
Lilia Vu
Danielle Kang

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Here with Team USA. The U.S. Team, who's the No. 1 seed this week, starting on my left, Lilia Vu, Nelly Korda, Danielle Kang, and Lexi Thompson. Lilia, since you're on my left, the youngest player on the team and no team match play experience yet on the LPGA Tour, what are you most excited about this experience?

LILIA VU: I usually love team play and match play, so I'm super excited to play on the LPGA level match play events having a team and these three amazing teammates with me so it kind of takes weight off my shoulders, and I'm excited for this week.

Q. Nelly, you're the No. 1 ranked player in the world and in the field this week. Tell us how much you had in terms of putting these pairings together, how much input you had here or how the pairings came about in general.

NELLY KORDA: I think we all did it together, honestly. I don't think any one of us has a bigger say or bigger voice. I think it's very much so we're all doing this together, and I think that's the best part about this event, is that we all have input and it's all equal.

Q. Will you give us a little insight on how you came up with the pairings that you did this week, for tomorrow at least?

NELLY KORDA: I mean, honestly, we thought that it would be better to pair -- I mean, Lexi and I probably hit it a little further, and then -- sorry, we fly it. Honestly, I don't even know how we picked the pairings.

LEXI THOMPSON: We picked them, and that's what we



are. We agreed.

NELLY KORDA: We're not opposed to mixing them up, as well. We just thought that it would be good for day one to pick them the way we did. There was no game plan.

Q. Danielle, I know you were qualified to play in the event in 2020 before it was canceled. I know you're really excited to be here this week. Can you tell us about how excited you are and how excited you are to just have the event back on Tour after it was canceled?

DANIELLE KANG: I really love team events, like a lot of other girls probably do, too, and having the International Crown come back on the schedule was really exciting for me because it's something I haven't done. I use it as kind of a check box in my career, and being a part of an International Crown team as the top four player in the United States that gets to represent, so being a part of that team is a huge honor.

Q. Lexi, you're the only one on the team that has played in an International Crown before, so I want to know what sort of advice you imparted on your fellow teammates here this week.

LEXI THOMPSON: What advice? I mean, they've all -- I can't say I've really given any advice. I think the big thing about team events is just being there for each other and feeding off each other's energy and each other's games and personalities, which we've all played a lot of golf together and we all get along very well, so that's always helpful.

I've played in a few of these, but also Solheim Cups and team matches are very similar. Solheim is just USA against Europe, and this one is a great opportunity for other countries to represent their country.

So it's similar format and team aspect, which we all very much enjoy, so we're just happy to be here.

Q. Just hoping you could all talk a little bit about the golf course and your impressions of it.

DANIELLE KANG: It's long.

NELLY KORDA: I think the tee shots are pretty tricky,

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especially if the wind picks up. Overhanging trees. I think definitely it's going to be a ball-striking week.

I think it's very equal when it comes to the defense off the tee, how narrow they are and the greens, too. I think overall it's a very strong golf course.

LEXI THOMPSON: Yeah, it's a great layout. They have it playing somewhat long and it's a softer -- with the dew on the ground and it being cooler, it's going to play longer out there.

But it's a ball striker's golf course, tighter off the tee with overhanging trees. A few of the holes set up for a right-to-left shot, maybe a little bit of a higher flight.

But it's demanding. That's how a golf course for this kind of tournament should be.

LILIA VU: Yeah, the course is narrow. I heard they brought in the fairways for PGA Championship and they never basically opened it back up. Demanding off the tee. Going to be longer. It's colder out here. I played here for my regionals in college and it kicked my butt. It's pretty tough.

DANIELLE KANG: All I've been practicing is chipping just because I can't get there, so I will be short gaming around this golf course. I'll be scrambling all day.

Q. Lexi, I know you were battling a bit of an injury at Chevron. How is that now?

LEXI THOMPSON: Yeah, it's fine. It's better. I did the treatments that I needed to do, and getting better each and every day.

Q. Lexi, not the ideal start to the season for you early. How would you compare the state of your game today versus earlier on this year?

LEXI THOMPSON: Well, I got second in my first tournament I played this year, so that was pretty good.

Q. Is there any difference in your game from Chevron having rehabbed your wrist now to here now?

LEXI THOMPSON: Just trying to get healthy, and I'm here this week with my teammates and I'm going to represent well.

Q. Is there anything you're working on in your game at the moment?

LEXI THOMPSON: Everything.

Q. Danielle, you mentioned the importance of team events. What do you think needs to happen this week for the tournament itself to be a successful event in your eyes?

DANIELLE KANG: I'm sorry, can you repeat the question?

Q. You mentioned the importance of team events. What do you think needs to happen this week for the tournament itself to be a successful event?

DANIELLE KANG: I think I don't believe it needs to happen. I think having a Hanwha sponsor bringing an event back to the United States and bringing a tournament back on the schedule and having eight countries here --

NELLY KORDA: With the top players in the world competing against each other, representing their country, I think it all says itself.

I mean, I'd say we're the No. 1 seed and we're playing -- on Thursday we're playing China that's an 8 seed. But if you look at the way China has been performing recently, they're playing amazing.

Not one match is going to be easy this week, and I think that's what's great about this event, is there are so many strong players in each one of those teams, it doesn't matter if you're 1 or 8. It's every match is going to be tough. And it's match play so it's a completely different ballgame.

Q. Lexi, you're one of a handful of players who have played in all the Crowns that we've had so far. From a player's perspective, how have you seen it change and evolve over the years?

LEXI THOMPSON: You know, it was great the first year that we had it. I think every tournament that we have on this tour gets better and better. I think we improve on little things here and there.

But the International Crown itself, I think just the sponsors itself just have great hospitality for us. They keep on improving on the event and make us feel very welcomed, whether it's through the dining, the volunteer staff, and just making everything so easy for us during the week.

They care, the sponsors here at International Crown and Hanwha. It's amazing what they do. It's great to be part of it and it's an honor to represent our country, and I think the sponsors make the difference in the tournament, so we're just happy to be part of it.

Q. Nelly, most people think because you guys are No.

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1 that you're the favorites coming in. Do you feel that way? And if not, why not?

NELLY KORDA: I mean, I don't think we feel like favorites. We have the home game, right. We're in the U.S. we'll get the local support.

But overall, as I said, I think we're playing China the first round; they've been playing amazing. Match play is just a different ballgame. If you look at it, let's say I'm speaking of Solheim Cup, on paper let's say the past couple years the U.S. has been stronger, but we've lost the last two times.

I would say just in general, match play versus stroke play, it doesn't matter. When you're out there competing, I think we're all equal because everyone on that team is strong.

Q. From a team aspect, what do you feel like -- outside of the fact that you have to score better than the other team, what do you think you have to do around this golf course this week to make you guys successful versus other weeks?

NELLY KORDA: Get the ball in the bottom of the cup. I mean, at the end of the day, I feel like the energy that we have as a team has been really good, and as Lexi said, we're going to feed off of each other, stay positive, and have fun.

This is such a great opportunity. We get to represent our country. We're playing in San Francisco at a really amazing golf course, Harding Park. I think at the end of the day, the people that enjoy themselves the most have a great bond and play some good golf are the ones that are going to win.

Q. Lexi, since you've played in this before, are the pressures different here than a Solheim Cup?

LEXI THOMPSON: I don't know about different in any way. We're representing our country. We want to represent well. Golf is such an individual sport. We don't get the opportunity to be alongside a teammate and a partner, so we don't get the opportunity -- I can only speak for myself on that matter, the pressures and everything.

There might be a lot more people at Solheim Cups watching, but hopefully we get big crowds out here supporting us, as well. But we want to do our best every time we tee it up, but especially representing our country and having a partner by our side we want to do our best. I don't know if there's more pressure than a Solheim Cup or different-wise, but there's a little extra added, I guess.

NELLY KORDA: But you also have like the team sport -- or not team sports, but in the team aspect of these competitions you have people that you can lean on, as well.

LEXI THOMPSON: Exactly. It's not just on you.

Q. Danielle, I know you grew up in Southern California, but you were born here in San Francisco. Is there any sentimental value to playing here in your hometown at Harding Park, and do you have any memories growing up playing this course?

DANIELLE KANG: I didn't play here growing up because I didn't start golf until I was about 13 years old, but I have good memories of San Francisco. I used to visit up here at least every here, even when I moved to Southern California. It just feels like home when I come into town. I can walk around the city without maps and I know where to go and, kind of like that cold breeze and air. I already know it's going to be a lot of 5-irons 4-irons and 5-woods for me into the greens, but I don't think it's any different for me than any LPGA golf course.

So just going to rely on -- it's the team aspect, and ensure Lexi that I'm going to be on the green and make pars and so that your teammates, you know, can attack a pin if they want when they have wedges versus me having a 4-iron kind of thing.

LEXI THOMPSON: That's a little extreme.

DANIELLE KANG: Anyways, yeah, so I'm really happy to come back to here, and San Francisco -- I'm hoping good crowds will come even if it's a little bit cold outside.

Q. I overheard you on the 14th tee, normally the 18th tee. You had a take about San Francisco food, that it was underrated. Care to expand?

DANIELLE KANG: Oh, yeah. So a lot of people say LA has amazing food and New York has incredible food, but honestly San Francisco has bomb food. I feel like it's underrated with the restaurants and stuff, so I was just commenting with the gentleman that was a member at Olympic Club and we were eating burger dogs.

Q. What did you think of the hot dog bills on 13?

NELLY KORDA: Good. I needed that. It was a nice little pick me up.

LILIA VU: Absolutely.

Q. I know the U.S. Open is coming up in a couple



months and you guys are focused on this event, but with it being at Pebble for the first time, what do you think of that venue, being the first U.S. Women's Open at Pebble Beach, and have you guys been able to go out there when you're in California now?

NELLY KORDA: I personally never played it.

DANIELLE KANG: I haven't played it.

NELLY KORDA: I'm super excited. I think it's going to be a great Women's Open. I just saw that they actually announced that we're even going to have ShotLink out there.

I think it's going to be a really cool experience just not playing it, but also just in general the golf course and what USGA is doing for us and kind of elevating the major.

I think it's just going to be a really cool and fun event, and I think all of us are just going to soak up all the history, too. And the views. I've heard they're spectacular.

Q. Anybody else have any thoughts on Pebble Beach?

LEXI THOMPSON: Well, it's an amazing venue. I only got to play it for the first time towards the end of last year. I got probably the most perfect weather. It was about 70 degrees and blowing 5 miles per hour and everybody was like, don't get used to that.

But it was just an amazing experience. I think it just shows that the women's game is moving in the right direction and that we're playing historical venues and just great places like Pebble Beach.

I think it'll be a very special week for us ladies.

Q. Lexi, the format change on Sunday, different from any Crown before. Can I have your thoughts, opinions on it?

LEXI THOMPSON: I was trying to figure it out for a little bit. I think we were all trying to get used to the change and figuring out over the emails that we got.

Yeah, I think it's good. I think it's a good little change. We'll see how it works out Sunday and see the feedback that we get on it.

But with the first three days being ball best, we'll feed off that and go into that last day and hope for the best and take it from there.

Q. I want to ask about the numbers on your back and

why you chose each of your numbers.

LILIA VU: No particular reason. I don't know. I just felt like 13 is my lucky number. I was actually trying to get 222, but only two numbers, and Nelly told me she was trying to get 13 but I took it first, so she settled with 28.

NELLY KORDA: I mean, I was between three numbers, but 20 is the day I was born, so pretty easy.

DANIELLE KANG: I was a long history on No. 17. It's just my favorite number. Yeah, it's a long history.

LEXI THOMPSON: I picked 22. It's kind of a family number. It's my mom's first husband that had passed, it was his favorite number and it kind of just follows my family everywhere and kind of see it, so it's definitely special and close to our hearts.

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