

Maybank Championship

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Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club

Kelly Tan

Ashley Lau

Alyaa Abdulghany

Natasha Andrea Oon

Jeneath Wong

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Warm welcome to the 2023 Malaysian player press conference. (Applause.)

Following 40 successful years of sponsoring European Tour and Asian tour, con-sanctioned, Maybank now for the first time ever takes the next step by partnering with LPGA to create the most prestigious ladies golf event with a purpose of elevating women's sports by providing the best from all walks of life.

Today we have the pleasure of having local talents like two-time Olympian Kelly Tan, Natasha Andrea Oon, Alyaa Abdulghany, Janet Wong, and Ashley Lau.

Before I pass it to the media, let me start the ball rolling by asking a few questions.

Kelly, being a representative of Malaysia alongside other local players, how does this make you feel?

KELLY TAN: Yeah, I feel like this event is gonna be very special for everybody, and especially for us Malaysians. It's a great platform for the young talents to show their talent and play against the best in the world.

I got to play my very first LPGA event in Malaysia when I was 17, so it changed my life and brought me to where I am today. I'm sure this event is going to make a very significant role for this next generation, and I'm sure they're all very excited to play.

Q. Moving on to Natasha, congratulations on your LPGA Tour card. This is your first event. How does this make you feel?



NATASHA ANDREA OON: So basically I had a really good year last year. Going out on tour, being a first time pro and just getting the ins and outs of just pro life was very difficult for me. So just getting that tour card and knowing that I'll be playing on tour next year fully, all the events with a full field, and just playing my first LPGA tournament as like a confirmed LPGA Tour member in Malaysia is a full circle moment, because playing here gave me a lot of exposure to this kind of lifestyle when I was young.

Like Kelly, it also changed my life. Yeah, I'm really excited to get this week going, especially coming in as a more experienced player and playing with some of the best in the tour and in the world. You know, so just seeing how my game is faring now where it was before, it's definitely grown a lot.

Q. Next question to Alyaa. As an emerging talent in the world of golf, what does it mean to be part of such a tournament and what are the aspirations for the future?

ALYAA ABDULGHANY: It's quite exciting to play with some of the most elite golfers in the world. I'm excited. We'll have a home crowd out here to cheer a lot of the local players.

My goals haven't changed. I still want to be an LPGA Tour player next year and I still have the opportunity to do that in Q-School end of November. So I'm really excited to play here and get my game ready for Q-School.

Q. Thank you all. Moving onto Janet, what is it like transitioning?

JENEATH WONG: My dream was to play on the LPGA Tour, and I think participating in this Maybank tournament will bring out the experience that I won't really get in amateur golf. So I feel this will be a really big step for me in achieving my goal.

Q. Last question to Ashley. Could you shed light on the unique challenges that these conditions pose and how they might affect the game play?



ASHLEY LAU: I think we can all agree that the weather is really hot back here. I think for all of us we have been overseas for so long, and just coming back here, I mean, I expected it to be hot, but, I mean, it's like really, really hot. I'm sweating, and, yeah, just playing nine is enough for me.

I think we'll have a fun time and really enjoying being back home again.

Q. My question is for Kelly. You have had lots of ups and downs, and how do you stay focused and positive on your game? Something that you can, you know, sort of like -- you're a youngster but youngsters can learn from you.

KELLY TAN: I think I learned to deal with the ups and downs just through golf. I'm sure it's not any surprise to them. They know how the game of golf works. There are days that you play good and you get bad bounces and days you don't play good and get good bounces.

So dealing with the ups and down is just like our daily life I would say. We expect the ups and downs, so it's not a surprise. So obviously this journey is not easy. I think the public thinks you play on the LPGA Tour you're playing for big money and big purses. It's all like glamorous. It really is not.

Yes, if you do well you can be really good, but obviously there is a very small percentage of the girls in this world are doing great. But I think it's just the reality of knowing what is out there. For me, I have been playing this for ten years on the LPGA Tour. I have gone through lots of downs more than ups.

But for me, it's more like to go through those tough times, those tough years, it's what makes me better the next year. It is all worth it for me. I'm sure they know this is just the beginning of their journey. They're playing college golf and some professional on Epson. It's all good prep before they go on the big tour.

And I know you guys know this, at the end of the day it's just enjoy the journey, embrace the downs. I'm sure when you're winning and stuff everything is easy and fine, but it's those days that you're not, you're struggling, and those weeks that you're not seeing if you're improving or seeing the positive, those are the weeks that makes you stronger.

If you can get through those, you just got to know the light is at the end of the tunnel.

Q. General question to all five of you ladies. I'm sure you are in different parts your season now. Some of you may have already completed your season. Some

at the tail end. So playing back home in a big money event, \$3 million U.S. dollars, what are your goals and expectations? How does it fit where you are in your season right now?

ASHLEY LAU: I think for me, just being back here feels really special. I think this is the first -- the last time I played back here was when I was an amateur. I was 16. So I think just being back here I'm in a different position now.

But I finished my season, so just looking forward to this tournament, and after this, I'm just taking a break from golf. It's been such a long year, first year out here on tour.

I think as Kelly said, you got to embrace the ups and downs. It's just not easy out there. I think from the outside it looks all rainbows and it's not. It's so hard.

But just being back here feels so special, and playing back home, playing in front of home crowds, it's just a special place for all of us. Yeah, just really looking forward to the week.

ALYAA ABDULGHANY: In terms of my season, this is my second to last event of the year before I go back to the States. I'm a different player than I was in Malaysia. In terms of that, my game plan doesn't really change. I'm going to stick to my routine and prep for what I can and really just enjoy this week, do my best.

And the money isn't really the biggest thing about this week. Although it is one of the biggest purses for a non-major for the year, which is great, really exciting, but that really doesn't change my game plan.

KELLY TAN: Yeah, mine is the same. This is my second-to-last event hopefully for the season. Yeah, like Alyaa said, I don't think the money is what we need to be focusing about. At the end of the day, it's still one shot at a time. The goal is to play good and for me to build confidence.

I'm going to take this week, and I know it's going to be hard playing at home and all the expectations around us, but I think those are positive things, because people believe in us. I'm going to channel that towards my positive energy and really go out there and do my best and see where I can put myself.

I want to walk away from this week telling myself that, yep, that was a confidence boosting week. Wherever that puts me, it's not a big deal for me. Yeah, I am proud that Maybank has the highest purse outside of non-majors in this region. I think we're all super excited. I know players are pumped to be here, and it's going to be a great week.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

NATASHA ANDREA OON: Hi, Edward. Edward has been covering us since we were all young.

KELLY TAN: Since I was young, too. This goes way back.

NATASHA ANDREA OON. This is so nice. Well, in my career right now just got my full tour card, so yay for that. How am I going to go into this week, expectations and goals? I feel like there are probably quite a bit of expectations from the public. I'm just trying to not think about that and kind of go into this week -- I got my friend on the bag, and if you guys don't know, he's won Club Champion three times here so knows the course.

So I'm just trying to enjoy the week, kind of see where my game is. LPGA is a different level. It's a top level. It's like if you want to compete with the best this is where you got to be.

So just trying to see how I fare against them, if I can learn from them, if I can kind of like learn how to get into this lifestyle more. It's totally different than Epson. Epson is kind of like, how do you say it, it's kind of general-ish and LPGA is super intense, super intense.

But Epson totally trained me generally for this life. Okay, I'm not making sense here, but anyway, I just want to really enjoy it. That's all. I am so blessed and grateful to be here and see all of you covering this.

So blessed that Malaysia wanted to hold this event, and I want to enjoy every single moment of it and get to know you guys.

JENEATH WONG: We just finish our fall season at Pepperdine, and I don't really have much expectations or goals here. I just want to do my best and see how I go. I just want to get the most of it from the tour with all the experience playing with all the top elite players. I just want to get the experience and learn from them.

Q. Question for Kelly. Kelly, are you under pressure to do well? You play in Japan. Do you still think that you have time, enough time to keep your tour card?

KELLY TAN: Yeah, it's golf. Nothing is impossible. If you're falling, I don't think I'm that far off. I'm on the bubble of keeping my card. Let's face the facts. Unfortunately this event, my points will not be counted unless I win because I was a sponsor invite at a no-cut event.

I will not play Japan next week and I have an event in Florida, it's the Pelican event. So, yeah, I don't need to do anything spectacular to save my season. There is no

reason why I cannot.

Like I just answer to Edward's question, at the end of the day it's all about confidence boosting for me right now. If I can play confidently I know my game is good enough. That's all I'm out here to do.

Q. This is a question for Natasha and Ashley. You both talked about how the last time you played here was as an amateur. How does it come to now that you're playing your first Malaysian professional event back here as professionals?

ASHLEY LAU: Yeah, it's very different. Just like I guess I did mention this, like I was an amateur, I was 16, so it's just a very different position for me to be out here.

As a rookie out here, just feels a little surreal to be around LPGA players. I'm just kind of soaking every moment in and just trying to enjoy the course out here. This is our first time playing at the West Course, right? So it's a little different than the East Course.

But yeah, just it's so different, special, and really want to soak every moment in and enjoy myself out here.

NATASHA ANDREA OON: So as an amateur we were in the LPGA program, and then we went and I qualified, I think for two years. In those two years I remember just being really happy to be there and just not expecting any of it. Like really like no expectations. You're an amateur. You're 16. Best in the world is here. Just go out there and have fun. If you skip into the water and fall down, who cares?

So that was really the theme of the week, really just this is like Disneyland. But for this week coming in as a pro with everything I've gone through, college golf, Epson Tour, knowing the ins and outs and being more strategic as a player and having now the distance and the accuracy and the experience, I think the expectations have got more intense.

So the focus is definitely different. There is so much more emphasis on being competitive and trying to win instead of just, let's give it our best shot, see how it goes. So there is that.

We're all human, but definitely there is kind of like, oh, there is a chance. There is a chance. So I think that's just really the biggest difference. I'm just a different player, different person. I have a different body coming in.

Q. Kelly, I think you have played in all the previous LPGA events here. Do you think that this time we have

the strongest local field? You have three Epson Tour players and Jeneath.

KELLY TAN: Yeah, no doubt. Statistically it shows that I believe there is only three players outside of top 20 that's not here; am I right? Yeah. I think this is a very, very strong field, and I'm glad everybody was so excited to come here. It's going to be a battle. Yeah, even for Malaysians, I think we have very, very young talented and rookies that have just turned pro.

I hate to say this. I'm sitting here and going to be turning 30 and the oldest. I don't like this. Previously when we did these I'm always one of the youngest. I guess time has gone by.

But I'm proud of them. It's not an easy journey and I'm proud they're understanding that. They're all now mature. When you asked that question where they have been, I can tell they have matured. Their game is way better, they have gained strength, and this is on the first year of playing professional golf.

Jeneath, this is only your first year in uni, so they have come a long way. I feel like women's golf in Malaysia have come a long way. I'm excited for the next youngsters that are coming up. I'm sure we're all going to do our best and try and make Malaysia proud.

Q. Like to congratulations late all of you for being here. It's good to have you, and especially Natasha for winning on the tour. But my question is for Jeneath. I'm not sure if you're the youngest, but you certainly look like the youngest. I'm just kidding. I was wondering if you could share with us on a different thing. Congratulations for this. You played in the U.S. Open and qualified on merit. You were not invited. That's excellent. Can you tell us two things. One, how was your experience? And the other thing is what do you and your team think playing in a tournament as big as that, how that can help you in an event like this, and generally jury for your career?

JENEATH WONG: For the U.S. Open I definitely learned a lot, especially from all the top LPGA players. I see how they approach the game a lot more different from the amateurs. How they plan during the practice rounds is different than the amateur players.

So I took a lot from that. I think how you guys can help is probably give us more opportunities for like amateur or aspiring golf players, like more opportunities to play in these big tournaments. They can learn a lot from that and they can probably achieve their goal faster.

So I think it'll be a good opportunity for them.

Q. Which do you think are the most stronger points of your game? I think you haven't played here a lot so haven't seen much of your game. Maybe share briefly the stronger points of your game and where do you think you and your coaches will be working on like try to improve your game further?

JENEATH WONG: I think my strongest part is probably hitting the greens. I'm quite accurate hitting the greens in regulation. I think I struggle a bit on distances. I don't hit it as far as other players so I have a bit of longer clubs coming in or something like that.

But it's not really affecting me too much. Just trying to go out to the gym a bit more. Yeah.

Q. You play a round yet?

JENEATH WONG: Yeah, just finished today. It was super hot but it was good.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you everyone. Before we wrap up, can we get a few words from our ambassador, Kelly Tan.

KELLY TAN: I think I told most of these girls around me, you know how to play golf. I'm not here to tell you how to play golf. At the end of the day you need to go and enjoy yourself whether you hit a good shot or a bad shot.

And drink a lot of water this week. I mean, most of you are playing in very, very high confidence, and at the end of the day that's all it takes. It doesn't matter if you're playing Epson Tour or Maybank Championship. If you're playing with confidence, just ride that and be confidently out there and enjoy yourself.

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