

# U.S. Women's Open

Tuesday, May 27, 2025

Erin Hills, Wisconsin, USA

Erin Hills GC

## Lydia Ko

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming world No. 3 Lydia Ko. Just talk a little bit about what it feels like to come back to a USGA every year.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, it's always exciting. My first appearance at a USGA event was at the U.S. Am, then the U.S. Junior. It's something that I'm really proud of, seeing the U.S. Women's Amateur trophy on my locker and just being a USGA champion, I guess for now the only event that I could potentially win is the U.S. Women's Open, which would be a really cool thing to kind of add to that USGA resume.

But it's great seeing familiar faces, and we get exposed to new golf courses, so I think it's a different type of challenge for us, and now I'm really excited for this week.

**Q. You just mentioned a new golf course for you all; talk a little bit about the test that you've seen so far this week.**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, in all honesty I watched some YouTube golf before coming here and seeing how they played and just kind of get an idea of what the golf course is like. Obviously it plays very differently compared to when the men played here in 2017. You don't really know until you get here.

But the course is difficult. It's fun. I think you need a lot of creativity, and as for any U.S. Open, the course tends to change in regards to firmness and the green speed from Monday to Sunday.

Yeah, I'm excited to see how the course changes over the next couple days, but yeah, it's a great golf course. I think it's fun.

I don't think it's, like, for one type of player, which is something that I tend to really prefer because it kind of brings the whole field into it. Hopefully I can hit some good shots and get a few good lucky bounces and kind of go from there.

**Q. Whose YouTube channel did you watch?**

LYDIA KO: I watched the Bryan Bros, and I think Wesley Bryan was trying to get his revenge from 2017. And I think it's the series where they do it with Grant Horvat, and it's going to major championship courses.

I think they played at the ANWA course recently with Alexa Pano. I got into YouTube golf because of my husband, and I won't be shy to say I watch it on my own now. It's probably not the preparation that many of the other players did, but it was just a good way for me to kind of see the golf course.

**Q. You said a few times this year that you were enjoying life on Tour maybe more than you have ever before. Why do you think that is?**

LYDIA KO: I think just getting in the Hall of Fame and winning the gold at the Olympics, I think there was like an internal handcuff that I had kind of put on myself, whether it was pressure or expectations, and I think with that all kind of being done, I think I was just able to play with a lot more freedom, and I think there was a clear case at St Andrews where I was just enjoying being here, enjoying the town, and I think I kind of slowly crept up the leaderboard, and I feel like that's what I've been doing pretty well since then.

It's nice because it's a bit more eye opening, and I'm going to some of these areas that I've been to before, and I'm kind of venturing out, maybe going to a different restaurant and not being as, like, golf course-hotel. I think that's how it should be, and in ways I regret I didn't do that earlier, maybe because I was a bit more focused and it gave me more opportunity.

It's hard to say what was the right way to do it, but I think those things have made me feel a little bit more relaxed on the golf course.

I was talking to my mental coach and I was saying that I noticed that -- even if I'm not playing well, I'm not thinking about, okay, what score am I going to shoot, but more, okay, what are the things that I can do on the golf course even to test out and see if that works and if that's going to

help me.

It's been more of, like, an experiment in ways, and I think that's helped me to kind of turn a round around or not have as long phases where I'm not hitting the ball well or putting well. It's a different type of mindset, but as much as I'm playing, I still want to play well and have the chance to get Culver's with you this week.

Yeah, it's fun, and I think because of all of those little ups and downs in my career, I think it has given me the opportunity to be in this kind of mindset now.

I think if anything was a little different, then I wouldn't be where I am right now. It's hard; it's a whole process that brings me to where I am today.

**Q. As somebody who broke out at such a young age, I'm curious, do you ever speak with some of those teenage golfers now coming up? And if so, what is your main advice about going through that, that pressure?**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I played Mizuho, and when you make it through the weekend, you get the opportunity to play with a few of the AJGA girls. It's honestly so impressive. I played with one of the players, and I was like, wow, you should be playing the same tees as me. I think she got a better score than me.

It's impressive. In ways I think age is just a number. But my caddie and I were joking that when you're that young you're almost fearless so you go for every pin, you're a lot more aggressive, but over time, whether it's the good and bad, it shapes you a little bit differently.

That was also a similar conversation I had with Yani on Sunday, and we're a lot smarter now, but at the same time it may look a little bit more tentative; but I think that experience kind of reflects what type of player you become.

I think that experience in the long run is much more beneficial than probably the 15-year-old self that I was playing in Canada.

**Q. Your record shows that your first U.S. Women's Open came up the road at Black Wolf Run. I was wondering what you remember about that year, and what do you wish you would have known then that you know now about a major championship?**

LYDIA KO: I was very nervous. I remember I couldn't even line up my ball on the first green. So I tried a couple times and I gave up because I was like, this is not working.

That's when I think I really realized that this meant a lot to me, and the U.S. Women's Open is different to any other event I had actually played in previously. Yeah, I think on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, you're getting ready, you're more focused about your course management and the now, but then when the tournament day comes, I think the adrenaline and all that kind of kicks in, and I just remember being so nervous, and that golf course was really difficult.

I don't know if my knowledge now will help me from, like, when I was playing back then, but I just realized that it was definitely a different test at a U.S. Women's Open.

**Q. Players have often described this as the one that they want the most. Do you feel that way now? And do you feel like pressure has held you back at this championship at any point?**

LYDIA KO: I think this, like, would be the one that I'd say, oh, I wish I was a U.S. Women's Open champion. I think it's a very -- like it may seem like a large pool of people that are the past champions, but it's actually quite small, and I would obviously love to be part of that U.S. Women's Open club.

I don't know, I think the hardest thing about a U.S. Women's Open is we don't really go back to the same golf course, and it takes a very long time to return to the same course.

So unless I'm playing for I don't know how many years, like maybe the Pebble one would be the only one that I'd have the chance to maybe play again, it's hard because it's like a new course every year.

The schedule only gets busier, so to come out and do events, practice rounds is difficult. But yeah, there's a lot of pressure, but I don't know what kind of mindset I'm going to have going into this week. But I'm really excited. I think you need to have a really good short game and kind of an open mind to how you're going to play around this golf course, and for the most part, I feel pretty comfortable.

I know -- I said to myself on Monday, this course is hard, but if it's hard for me, I feel like it's going to be hard for everyone. It's not like it's hard for a certain type of player.

I think in that way, I think it just gives me the freedom to be out there, concentrate on how I want to go about things, and hopefully if I do a good job with that, that will give me some good opportunities.

But I think this is also the type of golf course you need to



hit a lot of quality golf shots and also get a little bit of, like, fair good bounces and luck, as well. I think when you win, you end up kind of going through what happened the past four days, and all of those kind of come into mind.

**Q. What was your impression of Yani, her game right now, playing a practice round with her?**

LYDIA KO: She's playing so good. I honestly didn't know that this one was the one that she was missing out of the -- I guess the four since she started playing. I was like, Yani, this is the year.

I was talking to Juli Inkster last year, and we were talking, and she's like, so what's your goal now? I said, I would love to win the U.S. Women's Open, and she said, well, I won my first one at 39. I said, Juli, that's 12 years from now. I was like, great. But a lot of time.

Yeah, so as I told Yani then, hey, 30s might be the new thing, and she's like, you think so? She was obviously hitting it really good and she's obviously worked so hard. I believe that we will all have ups and downs, but what she did during that extremely scary period of her career, like no one can take away that from her.

I think that's just in her golfing DNA. It's hard; I've had really difficult times and been baffled and unsure if it's ever going to come back, but now coming to think of it, I think it's in there, but it sometimes takes a long time to kind of be able to bring it back up and have the right people to help you through that journey.

But it seems like she has a great team around her, and she was playing great, and I think she has a local caddie this week, so she's obviously going to get a lot of good local knowledge.

Yeah, she's such a sweet player that it's just really hard to not root for somebody like her. As much as I want to win, I am like, if I see Yani win, too, I'll be super pumped.

**Q. So follow up the earlier question, just the freedom and how much fun you're having, is some of the openness of the way you've spoken about your career and where it's going or when it might end, has that contributed at all to that mental freedom at all to just sort of let it come as it is?**

LYDIA KO: I think we are -- this industry, I think we're around a lot of people a lot of the times, and in ways I think it's weird, it's ironic, because I've felt lonelier even though I'm around a lot of people.

In ways I think just being honest with myself has been the

best way to kind of go about things. I think when I was younger, I was a little bit more closed off even to myself on how I was feeling and even how I was assessing my game, and I think when I honestly gave a little less crap, I think it just let me be me because I can never be the past me, and I don't know what the future me is going to be like, nor can I be like any of the other 150 or so players out here.

It's just I think that being, like, more free is not in the sense of, like, other people, but I think maybe the internal freedom has helped me a little bit. But there's still obviously a lot of things I want to work on as a golfer, as a person, as a daughter, like whatever.

But it's just, I think, time kind of makes me realize a lot of these things naturally, and sometimes you really can't force it.

I think if I had this mindset 10 years ago it honestly wouldn't have made sense, but it's just all those periods of time just kind of made me the person I am today. I'm proud of that, and I'm excited for what's ahead. I think it's because I'm just so grateful for what has happened, the lows and the highs.

**Q. After you achieved last year, you said achieving the career Grand Slam is a new goal of yours. How much of that is a priority and something that's top of mind for you this week?**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I'm probably going to have less chances at playing these majors than how many I've played so far. But that's the great thing about these Opens; people come out of retirement and play some. Kids that are still in high school play. Lucy Li played when she was 11. Like that's the no-boundary bit of the Open, and I think that's the cool thing about it.

But yeah, I think if I don't get into Hall of Fame, oh, I wouldn't retire. That's not how I connect it. But I think as long as I'm playing, it's always good to have a goal so that when I'm working on things, I'm always going forward and not trying to think, oh, did I this, so who cares. So it's just more to just keep myself more motivated. But even -- hopefully not, but even if I never win a U.S. Women's Open, I don't think I'm going to wake up from my sleep and go, I never won.

I'm obviously very proud of the things that have happened, and I would be over the moon if I -- especially like this week, to come off with a trophy. But I don't think that's going to, like, connect me more so to my identity later on.

**Q. How would you assess the setup, what you've seen so far this week, and have you been able to play a few**

## of the different tee boxes?

LYDIA KO: I played on a couple tee boxes. That's another thing about the USGA championships; you have to play more to kind of gauge what kind of tees and how much creativity the rules officials are going to do and set up the golf course. When you're on the LPGA we know some of the tendencies of our rules officials, so we go, okay, someone is setting it up so the pins are probably going to be a little bit more tucked than some of the other rules officials 6789 so you kind of understand their habits.

But I don't think if you can play enough to be able to gauge it yet out here. I think that's the great thing about this golf course, that I don't think a hole necessarily needs to be long on the scorecard to be difficult.

There's some greens, especially on the back nine, you could have a pitching wedge, 9-iron into the green, and it would be a really good shot to be within 15, 20 feet.

I honestly don't love when sometimes golf becomes all about, oh, you play on a 6800- or 6900-yard golf course. I think holes can be really tough even if it's short, and it's just about the pin positions and the course and the environment that kind of sets it up.

But yeah, I think it's going to be kind of a game-time thing where I'm going to realize, okay, today is going to be a little bit more of a conservative course management or it could be a bit more aggressive.

## **Q. What are your impressions of this place, not just necessarily the course but where it's located, and also, where are you staying in Wisconsin and what's your commute like?**

LYDIA KO: I actually have no idea where the town I'm staying, but I think it is the nicest town in the area. They have, like, strip malls and everything. I did not know that this was like dairyland, and I only found that out because they said they have a cheese tasting here.

I love my cheese, and I heard it's cheddar cheese. I love my cheddar cheese.

Yeah, there's a lot of things that I like in the area. It's obviously very quiet. It's kind of hard to gauge if there's going to be a lot of people coming out to watch us this week or not, but hopefully with this course having held the Public Links and the Open, a lot of people that have come before will be able to come out and watch us play.

But it's nice, we've had some really nice weather, and sometimes we bring bad weather energy in, but I think for

the most part, it's going to be good.

It's nice to go to -- the USA is so big, especially coming from a country like New Zealand, so it's pretty amazing to see how different places are, depending on what state, what city you're in, and it's a new nice experience for me.

## **Q. What are your thoughts on the new commissioner once he starts in July? What are your expectations?**

LYDIA KO: I honestly don't know too much about Craig. But all I have heard about him are, like, nice things. He's done so many great things within golf, from TopGolf to PGA of America, et cetera. I'm excited. Obviously when there is a change that high up, the dynamic could be a little bit different, but I think he's the type of person that's been around long enough to kind of know what to do, and I believe that the LPGA as a whole, we have a great team that has been around for a long time and some new people that will be able to lead us in the right direction.

Women's golf, women's sports is on a high, and I think we're just going to ride that, and I'm excited to just see our tour grow, and yeah, excited to get to know the commissioner better, too.

THE MODERATOR: Lydia, thanks for the time this week.

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