

U.S. Women's Open

Tuesday, June 2, 2026

Pacific Palisades, California, USA

The Riviera Country Club

Lydia Ko

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming to the interview area Lydia Ko. Lydia, I know this is special for you, Riviera, a course that you love. Talk about being here this week.

LYDIA KO: I played here during the Genesis Invitational pro-am in 2024, and it's actually my first time back since then. It's little bit warmer than then.

It's nice to be on this side of the ropes. When I played a pro-am on the PGA TOUR, I didn't want to step on people's toes. I was just enjoying being out there playing with Adam and seeing the other players in action.

Yeah, it's nice to be more in my comfort zone, as comfortable as a U.S. Women's Open gets. Very exciting. I always love playing in California. So enjoying this week so far.

Q. Very different course than Erin Hills. What are you seeing out there?

LYDIA KO: Erin Hills was one of the most unique golf courses I've ever played. I don't think it's -- it's unlike any other courses I've played, and I've played quite a few, I feel like.

This course is very fair. I think it doesn't suit one type of player, which is the type of golf course that I really like. Yeah, it's obviously very hard. It's, I think, a true example of a course being difficult without having crazy bunkering and crazy greens. Yeah, it's a solid course.

I wish I'd almost seen more of maybe the Genesis Invitational and see maybe how Jacob Bridgeman won and the players in the past.

But at the end of the day, I think when you play solid golf, any type of golf course, it doesn't get you that far away. Hopefully I'll be able to do that.

Q. I think last year you did some studying on YouTube. Any YouTube studying this year?

LYDIA KO: No. Maybe I should have not done that last year -- no, I'm kidding. I still enjoy watching YouTube golf. I still enjoy watching the Bryan Bros.

Yeah, it's -- I don't know if many of them have been out here, to be honest. I haven't played in L.A. in a really long time and competed in L.A. in a really long time. It's fun. Yeah, I've always enjoyed being out here. It is warmer, and it's probably some of the best places to be in in the United States right now. So there's really no complaints.

Q. How do you feel like this golf course is going to set up for the women?

LYDIA KO: I think it's fairly long. The wind direction is going to be a huge factor. I hit pitching wedge into one of the greens two days ago, and then I hit 5-iron today. It's not like the wind has been very strong.

So just with the combination of how strong the wind is and what time of the day you play, the course is going to firm out a little bit more.

Yeah, there's a few holes that are shaped right to left, a few holes that are shaped left to right. So I think that it doesn't really suit one type of player. Apart from No. 1 the other par-5s aren't on the shorter side.

So I truly think it's just advantageous for the person that necessarily hits it 20 yards further. I think it's got a lot of character.

I think that's why it's going to be difficult but fun and fair. You don't often get to go to super fair courses, and I think this is a true testament of that.

Q. You've been incrementally chasing an LPGA Tour record this season so far. You're getting pretty dang close, and a nice check her this week would help you in that pursuit of Annika's money record on the LPGA Tour. What does chasing that record maybe mean to you and to add your name and overtake her in the top spot on the money list?



LYDIA KO: To be honest, it's hard to compare myself to her record just because she won 70-something times and 90-something times worldwide. I think I've won a decent amount, having 23, but like 70-something is a completely different level than what I've done.

We're playing in a very different generation right now. You win CME, you get \$3 million. Jeeno has played two tournaments, and she's won like \$6 million-plus, including the Aon she won one year.

It's cool to be, I guess, compared to that record and hopefully surpass it at some point, but it's like very hard to kind of like compare it because we are playing for a lot more money than she did back in that day.

For me, like the win count is probably a little bit more meaningful. Not that the money isn't meaningful. Obviously we're very grateful that we get to play for a lot more money, and the last few majors, it's been like a million dollar purse increase starting in L.A.

So it's very exciting for the women's game, but record-wise, no, I just feel like I'm like an ant and she's -- I don't know what the biggest bug or living thing is, but she's that.

So it's kind of hard to compare that just because we're playing for so much more now. Hopefully in years time, they play for so much more than what we do.

Q. What have you learned about yourself playing in so many U.S. Women's Opens across your career, from the first one you ever played in until now?

LYDIA KO: I still get nervous compared to my first one at like Wolf Run. I could barely line up the ball on the first green. So that's how nervous I was.

Yeah, I think the experience definitely helps. I think the only couple times I've really been in contention is during Pine Needles and Cordevalle. Cordevalle was very close. Maybe if I was in that position now with the experience I have, maybe my strategy on the 9th hole may have been different. Even if that happened, maybe my mindset going into that back nine was different.

I do think that that wasn't my time. Brittany played amazing, and clearly that championship was not for me. I do hope there is an opportunity for me. As players, we're trying to excel and play at our highest level in major championships. It's a lot easier said than done to just peak at those moments, but I do hope that there are more of those because I know that there's probably not a crazy amount of majors left for me ahead.

Q. Megha Ganne was in here yesterday, and she was mentioning how recently you've been a great resource to her and also the Stanford golf team. I was wondering what kind of advice you give to up-and-coming golfers like Megha who have these high aspirations?

LYDIA KO: She finished her collegiate career on such a high. I actually watched them play the first couple rounds of the stroke play section. It's amazing. I never played collegiate golf, so the little time that I do get to spend with the Stanford women's golf team is kind of like an inside experience without me being actually on the team.

The work ethic they put in not only in their golf but in their academics is very impressive. I find golf alone very hard, but for them to balance two and have a lot of success in golf while doing that is impressive. Obviously that's thanks to the team and the support staff that they have.

I do think that players that are coming off a very elite collegiate level are a little bit more prepared than maybe the 15- or 16-year-old self that had turned pro. There's a lot more opportunities for players to have their, I guess, entryway to playing major championships, whether it's with the WAAP or other high level amateur championships as well.

I don't know if there's like an exact answer of what my advice would be, but I feel like they are coming in with a lot of experience themselves, but it's just trying to balance your schedule. It's hard when you're -- when you know, okay, I'm going to be at this day at regionals and this day at nationals, but to kind of balance all that, I think that was probably some of the hardest bit for me when I turned pro, playing all year pretty much.

But that's something that you've got to learn and pretty much try and listen to your body. I think that's the best way to have a sustainable, long career.

Q. Hello, my name is Jamie. I wanted to ask today how do you keep yourself from giving up when you haven't been playing your best?

LYDIA KO: I truly believe that golf is never over until the glove comes off and the putt finally drops on the final hole. Golf is one of those crazy games. You've seen where players miss five, six cuts in a row, and then they win the next week. You feel like the odds aren't in your favor, but golf can do it to you.

I feel like sometimes I hit it decent, I putt it okay, but then I have a 30th finish. Then some weeks where I feel like it's a little scruffy and then I finish in the top 10.

So there's no like right or wrong answer, and I think because of that, I think that helps me be more motivated and kind of, I think, not give up and just continue striving.

It's going to be hard. It is like a crazy roller coaster at times, but when there's a down, there's always room for you to get up. I think that's kind of the mindset that I try and take.

Q. In your experience, how does the popularity of women's golf differ in the U.S. and Korea and some of the other countries that you have experienced? Also, how has it changed since you first started out?

LYDIA KO: The popularity in especially Korea, Japan, even when we play in Thailand is pretty crazy. It almost feels like we're playing a major championship over there.

Do I know why? I have no idea. I do think where we play, the logistics of everything, has a huge factor on how many people end up coming. Cincinnati is a good example. The course that I won at, TPC River's Bend, is like 45, 50 minutes away from downtown Cincinnati.

But we moved this year to a course that was pretty much in Cincinnati, and we so many more people come out, a lot of kids come out with their parents. That's what we want to see, right? The future generations coming and being inspired and wanting to be us in the near future.

I think sometimes the type of golf, where we play has a huge factor in that. I do think women's golf has grown a lot. I've seen a growth in, like I said, dads coming out with their young daughters, and I hope that there is more growth from that. I think golf has just become a lot more diverse.

I think what we used to think of golf has kind of gone outside of that from, like I mentioned before, YouTube golf, like golf content creators and TGL, now we have a WTGL that's starting up later this year.

I think all of those platforms like is, I think, going to have a positive factor in growing the game. It's going to be a lot wider demographic to watch the game, and that's what I'm probably most excited about. It has grown. I don't know why it's grown more in other places and less in others, but where we play is a huge factor. I think that's going to be probably part of the strategy on where we play down the stretch.

Q. This course has hosted the men for a lot of tournaments, but this will be the first women's tournament here. I'm curious how important that feels

to you, if at all, that a women's event is hosted at Riviera? Is it important to bring women's championships to places where men have made golf history? If so, why do you think it's important?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think the Women's PGA Championship, I think a few years ago, started taking us to golf courses where typically men have played. It's quite interesting and nice to be able to play these golf courses where you used to only see pictures of or be like, oh, must be nice for the guys to play there.

I think Aronimink was kind of one. I was lucky to play there. I know it was during the COVID time. They just played there; they've played there before. Riviera, Pebble Beach really wasn't part of the rotation, and that got added. I know there are future sites, I don't know when, 2030-something, hope to be watching that.

It's great that there is like no label of this is a men's championship golf course. I think any golf course when it's set up right and set up right for the players can be a very high caliber golf course. So for us to have Riviera in the rotation is very exciting.

I think to add to that, having the L.A. Olympics here and that being at Riviera, I think is going to be -- this is going to be a great test for how that's going to play out as well.

I'm sure there's going to be some players that are going to play this and going to play that in a couple years. Yeah, it's awesome that the boundaries have really been broken in that sense. I hope that there are more courses down the line that we get to go play that typically men have.

Q. I think the perfect follow-up for that would be does it make you think about --

LYDIA KO: No (laughter). The L.A. Olympics? The only thing that I would be like very excited for is because they're adding the mixed team component. I love team play. I really don't get that opportunity that much in a year, twice a year with Dow coming up next week and Grant Thornton Invitational at the end of the year.

That will be the only thing that I'm very jealous that I'm not a part of. Who knows? I could be a part of it in a different place rather than just competing, and I do take pride in competing for New Zealand at the Olympics, and I really hope that I can be a part of it somehow in some shape or form. But no. Three Olympics, and that stress was enough.

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