

AIG Women's Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 17 August 2021

Lydia Ko



OLIVIA McMILLAN: It's a pleasure to have you join us today. Thank you so much for giving us your time. Congratulations firstly on your Olympic Bronze Medal. How are you feeling coming here into the AIG Women's Open.

LYDIA KO: It was a pretty quick turnaround from the Olympics to the Scottish Open last week, and I feel like the weeks are blending in a little bit, but yeah, I'm getting used to the time zone here finally, which is nice, and getting a little bit more of a constant sleep.

But yeah, excited to be here. I've always loved playing over on this side of the world. Links golf is a lot different to the type of golf courses we normally get to play, so super excited. I think my first Open was in 2012 which was in St Andrews, and the last time it was in Carnoustie was 2011. I really wanted to play this golf course and being here this year, I'm super excited.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: You said you played some holes here at Carnoustie, you played the last seven or eight. What were your impressions of the course.

LYDIA KO: This might be the trickiest British Open I've played yet. I've heard a lot about this place. I've watched it when the guys played a few years ago, and obviously it's held the Championship quite a lot of times.

I think you have to be strategic around here. Somebody told me, "Hey, like don't go -- like make sure to keep out of the bunkers." But I think that's the case at pretty much every links golf we play. But there are some holes where it is a bit more of a factor than some of the other golf courses.

It's tricky but at the end of the day, everybody plays the same golf course. You play with what you get and I'm just going to enjoy it out here. It's going to be a great experience and I'm excited to be at a golf course where there's so much history.

Q. Can I just ask you about Nelly's run of form at the moment and how you think that might translate to links golf, is that something she should be able to pick up in

stridor is it a very different environment which might be more challenging for her?

LYDIA KO: I mean, when you look at Nelly's game, she's obviously very long and also accurate. She's a great putter. Her iron control is amazing. Her short game is great. I go could on and on and on about how great Nelly's game is and she has an incredible mental strength, as well, on top of it. I think that's why she's had, is it three wins?

And then obviously the Olympics, the Gold Medal, which makes four, and a bunch of Top 10s. She's very impressive. I think her game is a game where it doesn't fit one type of golf course, and it definitely can translate well to here where she is plenty long and also accurate.

I'm sure she's going to have a great week. Golf day-in and day-out can feel different, but she's been playing so good and so consistently well, so I'm sure she's one of the names that we'll be seeing. I wouldn't be surprised if we saw her around the top of the leaderboard.

Q. I was very interested in your comment after The Scottish Open saying that you had decided you would play aggressively. Just looking at the par 5s where you were 9-under, and I think you were probably the third-most successful on the par 5s. Did you view that as something you're now trying to reach in two if you can and see that as important in your overall scoring?

LYDIA KO: For me, my goal -- well, one of my I guess strategies at the Olympics was to play a little bit more aggressively, especially because there is only three Medalists, and I think that was kind of the mindset and then I continued that for when I played last week. I think last week some of the par 5s were definitely reachable. I hit driver, 9-iron the par 5 15th on the second or third day.

So obviously it's very different, like Dumbarnie was great and a really good lead-up for this week but it's also a very different type of golf course to here. The whole length is a little bit longer, and especially with links golf, the wind is such a big factor where one day you could be hitting a short mid-iron into a par 5 and the next day you could be not reaching it in two.

Yeah, I think I'm just trying to stay in that kind of strategy of



playing aggressively but at the same time, if I am out of position, making sure that I'm not making careless mistakes. So, yeah, I'm a little longer I think in general off the tee than I was I think a couple years ago. So that obviously makes it a little bit different to play. Sometimes I'm having to take different lines off the tee at some of the golf courses we have been playing for a while.

So it just depends. And I think here, at links it's a little bit different because sometimes you're hitting different shots that you may not at some other golf courses.

Q. Can you just talk a little about the level of confidence that you have coming into this major following on from Tokyo, the bronze, and of course the incredible final round just last week, or a couple days ago.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously medaling in Tokyo gave me a lot of confidence coming into last week. Last week my ball-striking was really good, and then I was able to kind of back up my putting over the weekend on top of that, which I think was probably the reason why I was able to finish on a high on Sunday last week.

I'm just trying -- this is the third week in a row. It seems like it's a lot of weeks but at the same time with travelling and Tokyo was one week that felt almost like two weeks, there's a lot of like mental things outside of just playing a week of golf, as well.

So yeah, I think I've just been trying to stay confident and work on the things that I feel like needs a little bit more work and just keeping it simple and just making sure that when I'm out there playing, I'm playing with freedom and hopefully the last couple weeks translates into this week.

But all in all, I'm just going to have a good time and whatever happens, happens. Just not be so result-oriented and enjoy my time here in Carnoustie.

Q. It's renowned being a links golf, when the wind gets up it can be really tough. Has it been calm so far? Are you expecting a lot of wind, because obviously it changes the course a lot when it blows.

LYDIA KO: I think it says the max average was 13 miles per hour over these next few days. So it was a calm and sunny day, so it was probably the best we're going to be able to play the golf course. I haven't played the golf course today. It seems a little breezier than it was yesterday.

Day-in and day-out is different. Wind direction makes a different. Wind direction I think, especially, can make the

whole golf course feel like a totally different golf course to when you play it with a different direction of wind.

I think everyone plays the same stuff, so I think for me it's just being focussed on how I need to go about these holes and how I can take advantage of some of the shorter ones and some of the tougher ones, just making sure that I'm playing smart, and par or sometimes bogey is not the end of the world.

Q. You followed your Bronze Medal in Tokyo with a runner-up finish in the Women's Scottish Open. How important is it to continue that momentum, particularly going into the week of a major championship?

LYDIA KO: You know, this is my last tournament in pretty much like a month. So after this, I get a little bit of a break which is really nice, so yeah, it would be definitely nice to cap off this stretch of events on a high. I really enjoy playing links golf. I know at times when I'm out there playing, it's really tough and you know, there's a lot of things to think about.

But I haven't had, I think last year was probably my second-best finish at this championship, so I would love to be able to play more consistently well over here because it is a type of game that I enjoy playing.

Yeah, I'm just going to enjoy it and not get too stressed or too worried about the results because those things I can't control, and just do a good job of the things that I can control and be committed and trust; have trust when I'm out playing.

Q. You've essentially been winning, well, professionally golf for ten years, you were 14 when you won your first kind of professional title. Can you look down the road and see what Lydia Ko to like to achieve in the next ten years?

LYDIA KO: I kind of set a goal of retiring when I'm 30. I hope to not be playing when I'm 34. I love this game but I feel like there's also a lot of other things that I would like to do in my life.

I try to not get too focussed on what may happen. Obviously I have goals and doing the career Grand Slam is definitely one of my biggest goals as a golfer. But I think the thing is just being injury-free and being able to play and with our sport, or with anything, we need to keep doing constant movements. There's a little bit of the wear and tear, and I think being -- not being injured is also a very big thing, as well. So yeah, I don't know what I'll be doing. I think only time will tell, but for now, I'll just enjoy it and be grateful that I have the opportunity to play on Tour.

Q. You're only 24, but at times do you feel like a veteran given how long you've been out here?

LYDIA KO: I mean, this is my 8th year on Tour, and I used to be the youngest one on Tour, and now there are girls that's like three, four years younger than me, which makes me feel a lot older.

But at the same time, there are ladies that have been playing on Tour longer than I've been alive, and it's pretty amazing just seeing them and how they are putting themselves in contention and playing -- still playing great golf, even till now, and still being so passionate about the game.

I think that's the great thing about golf is that if you can and you want to, you're able to play the sport for a really long time. There's not that many sports that you can do that for.

Q. I think 2012, this will be your 10th Open; Hoylake, Royal Liverpool 2012. What do you remember about that test and the links experience, and was there a lot of things you learned from that first outing as an amateur then?

LYDIA KO: I think we had horrible weather that year. Like, horrible. Like raining sideways. I think I finally shanked it and they blew the horn and I was like, "Yayyy." It was one of those days it didn't matter what you shot because you were so excited to come out of the golf course out of the rain.

But that was really tricky. That was actually quite an interesting one because I think they had -- it was very high winds on that first day, so that first day got canceled I think, and then we had to play -- I was in the afternoon, so I was never out on the golf course then.

But yeah, that was a really tricky golf course. That was one of the trickier ones we played as well, but that's when it was kind of like welcome to the British Open. I was like, wow, they said it's summer over here; I'm experiencing the British summer. But that's part of it. I think everyone to some extent, you kind of half-expect that it may rain or be really windy, and you just have to prepare for that.

Q. You're up to sixth in the World Rankings now. Is that something that you think about and do you think about getting back to No. 1 as an ambition for yourself?

LYDIA KO: I honestly haven't checked the Rolex Rankings in a really long time. I personally think that as long as I do a good job of what I can control, which is being committed,

playing with conviction; those are the things that I can do, and you know, and the results are something that I can't really control. If I play good and somebody plays better, that's also something that I can't control.

For me, I'm focussing on what I can do. Rankings, results, they all come; they are secondary and they kind of work itself out. So yeah, definitely obviously yes, it would be great to be world No. 1 but to me, the rankings is not the more important thing, and for me it's just to be in contention and for me to enjoy being out there on the golf course. That's more important to me. I feel like when I'm having fun, I'm able to play better golf. So yes, but I'm not really focussing on that.

Q. You said you played the last eight holes yesterday. I was wondering what you thought of 17 and 18 and the strategies, because they are quite unique holes in many ways, are they not?

LYDIA KO: 17 is a beast. 18 is also a beast. 17, there's that creek -- there's two creeks, and then it's a long hole itself, but because you're really -- unless it's pumping downwind, I would always be going in that middle section. I hit a hybrid off the tee and hit a 5-wood for the second shot. It's pretty rare that you would hit a longer club for your second shot into a par 5 compared to the club off the tee.

The good thing about links, and especially on 17, is that you can roll it up. So even if you have a longer club in, it's not like you have to fly something and get it to land softly. I think the majority of the field will play it that way. It's not like it's just playing long for a certain type of player. It's definitely a unique hole.

18, I think if you hit a really good drive down there, I think you're able to go for birdies and I think especially around this golf course, the tee shot is going to be so important to keep it in the fairway, and I think the more times you keep it in the fairway, the more chances you've got and the less mistakes you're able to -- well, bigger numbers you're able to make.

So yeah, hopefully I'll be able to hit four really good drives down the 18th and give myself a good chance coming in.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: That's all we have time for today, and I would like to thank Lydia so much for joining us. We wish you the best of luck here at the AIG Women's Open.

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