

AIG Women's Open

Mixed Zone

Saturday, 24 August 2024

Lydia Ko



Q. What were you most happy with in your game right now?

LYDIA KO: I think ball-striking has improved a lot in these past couple months. You know, it kind of goes out of the window when it's this windy.

And I was standing on the range with my coach on Thursday warming up and I honestly think some shots were going as far sideways as it was going forward, which is crazy. Even I hit a tee shot on No. 10 and I aiming way left into the bushes because I knew the ball was just going to curve at least like 50 yards. You know, that's not what we normally are dealing with.

I know it's a good thing we are playing this type of golf course and not Sahalee in the wind. I don't even know if that golf course would be playable in gusts as big as this. I think the ball-striking has been solid. I think today I gave myself more opportunities than the past two days. So in ways, I think I got a little frustrated because I wasn't able to capitalise on some of the really good, you know, distance control and quality shots that I had had.

But it's difficult. It's windy. Sometimes you do look stupid because you miss the green from 60 yards, and it was a decent shot. But it's just, you know, there's a lot of variables when you're playing links-style golf course. I feel like I've been managing pretty well these past three days.

Q. How aggressive do you think you can be?

LYDIA KO: I honestly, I'm going to stick to my own game. Obviously some of the girls that teed off earlier today shot some low scores and jumped great up the leaderboard. Those are things that you've got to expect almost if it is meant to be calmer in the morning. But you'd obviously rather tee off at two o'clock than at nine and work your way up because every shot counts at the end of the day.

I think I'm just going to stick to the same game plan. I'm not entirely sure what the weather is going to be like and I think that's really the biggest factor around this golf course.

On 17, I hit a good driver and I had to hit 3-wood into the

green, and it's just -- it plays so different.

So in ways, I think playing smart golf is good. When you do have a number that you like or a shot that you get drawn into, I think just trying to capitalise on those opportunities. But if it's going to be another windy day, it's going to be difficult for everyone. I think just sticking to my game plan and what's in front of me is most important rather than get worried about what the leaders are doing.

Q. For young players looking at the leaderboard, do you think they know that Jiyai has accomplished as much as she has?

LYDIA KO: I definitely know. She has played all three of the Women's Open here, which is crazy. She was trying to persuade me to play golf for a really long time, and I was like, I'm good.

But no, what she's done is amazing. She played in Korea and then came over here as world No. 1, went back to Japan, dominated there. I don't know if there's a single place on Planet Earth that she has not dominated in, which is pretty crazy to say.

But I'm sure for some players, they may not be as familiar with her name or just her just because she might have gone back to Japan before they came on tour.

But I mean, I'm sure the majority of the golf world knows who Jiyai is, and I feel fortunate to be able to play some tour golf with her. I remember, I think our first round together, was the final round at the CPKC Women's Open in 2012 when I won in Vancouver.

We have both aged since then. She might be a lot wiser than I have in that period of time but you know, she's done so much for golf, and you know, I'm sure she's still a great role model. She gives me advice here and there. She's been kind of like a mentor, as well.

So yeah, I look up to her a lot and I was saying that if I played golf that long. And not that she's old but she's been doing this for a really long time, I don't know if I would want to do a 6.30 practise round, because she did on Tuesday, or Monday; and she is still in the gym working out when I was working out. I think that takes not only a lot of work



ethic but passion towards the game in what she does.

I think she's one of the players that I truly respect just as a person and not what she's just done and accomplished as a golfer.

Q. To give up her LPGA Tour card --

LYDIA KO: Yeah, picked her brains a little bit about that yesterday. I'm not going to repeat what she told me because that's not my story to tell. But I think it's very courageous because she was still playing great. She had multiple wins on the LPGA, and it's without a doubt that the LPGA is the biggest field and the highest competition for women's golf right now.

For her to go Japan where it's closer to Korea, I don't think it's an easy move because you're almost going back to like where you started. But I'm sure it didn't take her, you know, falling asleep and waking the next day and go, I'm going to play on the JLPGA. There's a lot of thought in everything that she put behind it.

But I think it's just very courageous because most of the time, we always looking forward and see what we've done in the past and think that, oh, like what if I do this and I can be back to when I was No. 1 but she made the decision that she thought was right for her and I mean, look what she's done.

Q. (Off mic.)

LYDIA KO: There's that obviously group of players that are kind of similar in age with Inbee and So Yeon and all that. But I think she's been an inspiration, not only to the younger generation but I'm sure even towards her friends, too.

Q. How mentally exhausting is playing this wind Thursday, Friday, Saturday?

LYDIA KO: And Sunday (laughter) I would be shocked if it's not on Sunday.

I mean, it is, you know, tiring, especially because we played in the wind last week, too. I think in ways it takes a little bit of pressure off because you're not trying to hit the perfect straight shot where a ball just curves, like for me, from left-to-right, ten yards, let's say.

Like here, I know that I could potentially aim way left and the ball is still going to move a lot. There's some tee shots where I'm honestly standing there and I'm like, am I aiming too left? But I'm like, the whole world is on my left side. So it's just, I think in ways, it takes a little bit of pressure off

because you're not trying to be perfect. And it's been fun.

Like there's been some shots that I just hit and all I can do is just laugh because I've just never seen a ball move like that. Even Money (Pei-yun Chien) today, she hit a putt and she obviously wasn't expecting it to go in, and then like the wind pushed it in and we all just started laughing.

So it takes a little bit of a different perspective, and you've got to have that open mind to like play in these kind of conditions. Because if you think the ball is going to be like ai and robotic and do exactly how you think, I think it's going to be more of a struggle that way.

Q. (Inaudible.)

LYDIA KO: Honestly, something that was too good to be true happened and in ways, you know, I think I'm just so grateful in riding that, I guess, momentum. You go outside of that, I feel like I've been trending upwards, which is a great momentum. Like I mentioned yesterday, in Canada, I felt like it was a big step forward for my game. I think as a player, it's great to see the time and effort that you've put in with your team actually work and under pressure, as well.

I don't know if that just because I won the Gold, it doesn't really change the perspective on how I'm going to play tomorrow. And you know, a lot of people say, oh, you've got nothing to lose. But while I'm competitively playing, I still want to play the best golf I can.

So I'm still greedy. I still want to win every time I tee it up. I think everybody in the field feels the same way because if you don't -- if you're not that competitive, you probably don't want to do this for a long time. It's part of our nature and what we do.

But it's definitely nice to know that I can go back to my room and even if I have a bad day, there's a Gold Medal, you know, waiting for me -- and my husband. (Laughter) he's a true Gold Medal.

Q. (Off mic.)

LYDIA KO: I was actually telling myself this a lot at the Olympics; that I'm so proud of myself for having some of the highest moments of my career, and then having a really bad year, or going through a lull, and then, you know, getting back up.

Even last year, it was a struggle, and I remember I missed the cut in Portland last year, and I was having like Texas barbeque but I couldn't taste anything because I was crying so much with my sister, talking about what's going on, what's ahead; I feel lost; I don't know if I'm going to be able

to win ahead. You know, all those kind of thoughts that were going through my mind.

I feel like I've had my fair shares of ups-and-downs. I feel very fortunate about the things that have happened in my career, and I would never take anything back.

But our story hurts the most for ourselves, and I think some of the times I got really low, I got really mentally -- I was not in a good mental space. And the way that I was able to overcome that, that's something that I that I'm really proud of, and I think that's one of the biggest things that I said to myself coming down the stretch at the Olympics is I'm just proud of just keep pushing through.

It's sometimes because when things are all going good and it's sunny days, you're not worried or thinking about, oh, the rainy day that's coming ahead. You know, because all you're doing is just enjoying that. But I feel like all of those moments have made me the person I am today and I know that I'm a little stronger now than probably that girl that teed off here in 2013.

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