

# AIG Women's Open

Press Conference

Sunday, 25 August 2024

## Lydia Ko

OLIVIA McMILLAN: We are delighted to welcome our AIG Women's Open Champion, Lydia Ko.

Incredible effort. How are you feeling?

LYDIA KO: It's been a crazy past few weeks. You know, something that was too good to be true happened, and I honestly didn't think it could be any better and here I am as the AIG Women's Open Champion this week. Obviously that being here at the Old Course at St Andrews, it makes it so much more special.

I just loved being out there this week. I had a lot of family members here with me. I played here when I was 16 in 2013, I think I was 16. I was 16. I don't think I got to really enjoy and realise what an amazing place this is, and now that I'm a little older and hopefully a little wiser, I just got to realise what an historic and special place this golf course is, and it's honestly been such a fairy tale.

Yeah, I'm on Cloud Nine, really.

**Q. You had some great shots but how good was the second shot at 17 given the conditions and the challenge you were faced with that shot?**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I said what a time for it to -- what a time for us to play that 17th hole; and for both Alexa and I to have parred that hole in those conditions, that was probably one of the best shots I've hit.

On 15, I thinned my 3-wood into the green and hit into the bunker. So my biggest goal is to make solid contact. And honestly it was so windy and rainy, I saw that the ball was heading towards the pin but I had no idea that it was on that second tier.

But yeah, in ways, because it was -- because of the conditions, I could only hit one club. It was 3-wood or a 3-wood. The back was completely out of play because I couldn't reach it.

So it's nice to just be able to make an aggressive swing at it, but yeah, that's probably one of the best, you know, punch shots or shots I've hit coming down the stretch.



**Q. Winning in Scotland with a Scot on the bag. Talk how important Paul has been this week and since he picked up your bag?**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I said he's one up on me. He won in Carnoustie with Anna, and now here.

Paul is a very positive person. I think when the conditions are tough or things aren't going your way, it's easy for all of us to spiral down and be a little bit negative.

But he's always got a positive outlook on things, and obviously he has a lot of experience growing up playing in Scotland. And he was telling me that one of the rules officials joked last week that they don't know how there could be any professional golfer in Scotland, you know, with the weather; nobody would want to play golf.

It's been great to have somebody, like a veteran like him to help me, and for us to have I think three wins together, it's been great.

I know that when we first started, I wasn't playing my best. I think the first event we worked together, I shot an 81 on the third round. If I was in his shoes, I would have had not as much of a belief in my player because it's not really a common score that I think all of us shoot on a day-to-day.

But he's stuck it out with me. He has really believed in me, and I'm very grateful to have a team that has kind of been on this journey no matter if I'm playing really well or not.

**Q. When you leave the 16 tee, you have a two-shot deficit. What does that do to your mind?**

LYDIA KO: I hit a pretty solid shot on 16 but it didn't cut as much as I thought. I was in the rough and got a little bit of a flyer. So I ended up being in the fescue past the green, and I just didn't want to make two consecutive bogeys coming down the stretch. No matter if I was fifth or leading, I think the position didn't matter. It's just I didn't want to end my championship that way.

And I had my 3-footer and I looked back towards the leaderboard that was there, and it said I was tied for the lead. The 3-footer kind of seemed a little bit longer at the



time. Because I thought it was a straightforward putt, but then I was looking at it from all sorts of directions. I was like, Wow, I don't want to keep making mistakes over and over.

So you know, holing that, and 17 was going to be difficult for every single person that teed up this week. I just wanted to finish in a way that I could be proud of, not just the score but with my commitment and my approach to these shots.

So yeah, 16 was when I first knew that I was tied, and then I just -- my goal was to make par on 17 and then make birdie on 18. Because I just wanted to make birdie on 18, period, this week.

When I hit -- just before my second shot on 18, I realised that I was tied for the lead, and I knew I kind of felt like the girls coming in would also birdie the 18th.

So I wanted to make sure that I birdied and just give myself a chance at it, no matter if I go in a playoff or end up not winning, that was kind of beside the fact there.

So I kind of accomplished and did all the small goals, and I think that made me a little bit more focused on what was right in front of me instead of thinking, oh, am I going to win or not. I mean, it's no lie that sometimes when you're about to win, you start thinking about what you're going to say in this speech and all that. But there was no time for that. I was just so focused on what was in front of me, and that just made it a little easier.

**Q. The lie on 16, it was hard for us to tell what it looked like.**

LYDIA KO: It could be worse. It honestly wasn't that bad, and I knew it wasn't going to be perfect. I tried to bounce it into the slope and feed it down.

I felt pretty confident with my short game. I put in a new wedge -- like new grinded wedges this week, even compared to last week because I thought the conditions would suit this grind better.

Yeah, it ended up being really useful around the greens and it was a perfect shot. I couldn't have hit that shot any better. But I did get lucky with the grass because it is a bit of a hit-or-miss when you do hit in the long stuff.

**Q. You've been really honest in recent years about both the highs and the lows. Now that you have another major championship victory, how hard was it to wait for the third one?**

LYDIA KO: I honestly -- like the only bit I remember of winning the Chevron Championship, the ANA at the time, was jumping into Poppy's Pond and holding my nose going down because I didn't want to get water up my nose. That's about it. It feels like it was such a long time ago.

I've had my fair share of ups and downs between 2015, 2016 to 2024. A lot of things have happened. When things are going well, it's kind of hard to think about when you're not playing well because all you're really doing is just enjoying that moment.

And on the other hand, when things aren't going well, you feel like you're never going to get out of that lull. I've been in both of those positions. And you know, I thought, you know what, I'm very fortunate to say that I am a Major Champion and a two-time Major Champion. I've got nothing to lose in that sense.

. My husband, I remember, asked me this like last year, and he said -- it was a very, like, aggressive question. But he was like, "Would you rather have our dog and not win a major again?"

Or like, "Not happen and win a major?" I said, "No, I want to have Kai." Because I'm really proud to say that I won a major championship. Like he's the new love of my life.

Like I said, you know, I won't -- even though I'm a golfer and to win a major championship is probably the biggest thing for all of us, I said, "I wouldn't trade it," just even if it guaranteed me my third major win.

Now I can say I have both, which is pretty cool.

But yeah, it's difficult. We are all trying to peak at the five majors but it's hard to kind of time that; and how do you time that? You're just waiting for that moment. You know, of all the majors, I didn't think this one would be the one for my third time just because I haven't really been in contention very much.

I told Money, Pei-Yun Chien, yesterday that I haven't really teed off at 2-something p.m. at this championship before. Because she asked me, "Like, do you guys always tee off this late?"

I said, "I don't know, I haven't really teed off this late before." Of them all, I probably thought my chances would be the slimmest.

But I had so much fun this week, and I just really enjoyed it. Sometimes when I hit like bad shots, I just laughed because that's all I could do. Just was trying to salvage the par from there.

So I think I had a different perspective on how I played this golf course, where normally I think if it was this windy, I would be complaining about the draw or the wind or all that.

**Q. You're in such a special place here in St Andrews. What are your plans to celebrate tonight?**

LYDIA KO: My sister said she was talking to my husband, and I don't think any of us expected for me to win; that she was, "Oh, let's go to the Thai restaurant and just eat after the round."

I don't know if it's open then, so I don't know if that's still on the menu. But I've been fortunate enough to stay at the Rusacks Hotels, and I'm like -- I always eat a burger, like most of the time I eat a burger after Sunday's round. So that's a high chance I'm going to do that.

I'm fortunate my mother is here this week, my sister, my husband. My brother-in-law left this morning, but to have family and Paul to kind of celebrate together, we're excited.

But I have a 5.50am flight to catch tomorrow. So I think there won't be --there will be very little sleep before I take that flight.

**Q. The Gold Medal was huge for the Hall of Fame chase but now that you have this third major, how does that change your perspective, those two things happening within a month of each other in your career as a whole, and how are you different since the last time you won a major?**

LYDIA KO: It's just so many things have happened. I'm pretty sure I was still in my teens when I won at Mission Hills, and, you know, my mom, I said it in another interview. My mom says I was so much better when I was 15. I was a better golfer when I was 15 than I am now.

But now I can say, hey, maybe this statement is wrong. It's been the whirlwind of a past three weeks. It's been crazy to get into the Hall of Fame by winning the Gold. These are things that I could have never imagined because they were just too good to be true. To say, Oh, like what are the odds that that's going to happen at the Olympics, and then a couple weeks later I'm going to win the AIG Women's Open, I would have thought somebody was like honestly messing with me. But here I am, and it's just been unreal. I feel very fortunate.

But I think one of the coolest things about actually winning this week is having Stacy won here in 2013, and now I'm the next champion here at St Andrews, I think that's one of

the coolest things for me.

Because she's always been -- her and her parents, actually, have always given me advice and words of wisdom; and to say that I won the Women's Open at a venue that she has won, I think that makes it very special. I feel like I'm following in the footsteps of somebody that I really respect.

Yeah, I don't think there's a word in the dictionary that can explain what just happened. But somebody put it into perspective before I won the Gold, they said, try to think of like getting into the Hall of Fame as like a gas station on the way to my final destination and not like my final destination. I think for a while, that was my goal. I was making it seem like, okay, that was my end point, and I think after hearing that, that put it into perspective of saying, you know, what it's not like I'm going to get in the Hall of Fame and say, "Bye-bye, Golf."

I'm still planning to play. I think that just make it easier to say, you know, if it's going to happen, it's going to happen, and I'm also going to focus on what's in front of me. I think this past three weeks was kind of like a representation of that scale.

**Q. Has next year, the tournament goes to Wales. New Zealand has a good record there. Are you looking forward to going there as defending champion?**

LYDIA KO: Are you talking about the rugby? I'm pretty sure this is like a rugby question.

Yeah, I've never been to Wales personally. So it's exciting to go to these new venues. I'm not entirely sure if the Women's Open has been there before. Royal Porthcawl, right? Yeah.

I'm excited to go. We saw a preliminary schedule, and like I'm going to do this and do this. Hopefully my family can go with me there. But I think that it's one of the coolest things is I've gotten a little older is I've been able to enjoy these places a little bit more. Whereas before, it was very hotel, golf course, hotel, golf course. But now going to some of these different restaurants and just taking all these views and the venue in a little bit better.

So yeah, I'm excited to go to a new country that I've never been to, and it's going to be pretty crazy to say that I'm going to be the defending champion there in Wales.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Thank you very much and congratulations once again. It's a delight to have you as our champion.



Thank you.

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