

AIG Women's Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 29 July 2025

Lydia Ko

ED HODGE: Good afternoon, everybody. Delighted to be joined by the defending champion Lydia Ko.

Lydia, welcome back to the AIG Women's Open. Special memories of last year; you'll be hoping to take them into next week as well?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, it's in ways weird to hear that I'm a defending champion of this Championship. Obviously a lot of great memories at St Andrews last year. I can't believe that it's almost really been a year since then.

It's exciting. It's my first time to Wales. I'm just trying to get used to it here and kind of learn the culture a little bit, but it's been fun. Regardless of how my results go this week, I think it's going to be great to be playing as defending champion.

ED HODGE: Have you sensed some excitement with the Championship being held in Wales for the first time?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think this is the biggest women's sporting event in Wales. Hopefully that draws a lot of crowds out here. I think the last time there was a championship here was for the Men's Senior Open, and I heard the weather was pretty brutal. Hopefully with some nicer weather in the forecast, we have tons of spectators.

I think that's probably one of the best things about this event, the people that normally come out and participate love the game and just so passionate. Whether it is raining or blowing 30 miles an hour, they're here with us. I'm hoping that with this being the first time, it would draw a lot of attention.

Q. When you look back at how your game was at this time last year, what are you trying to recapture?

LYDIA KO: Obviously I had a great -- great is an understatement of the week that I had in Paris, but I think because I'd won the gold medal and gotten into the Hall of Fame, there's a bit less expectation. I was just excited to be back at St Andrews.

I had a lot of family members there, my team was there.



We were going to the local restaurants, and golf was important, but I think it was secondary. One of the greatest weeks of my life, in my career, happened that the chances of me winning, I think, was so slim in my mind. We had some difficult, windy conditions, especially the first couple days. I think it was just fun for me, and I was just trying to have more of an open mindset and just trying to be free rather than hit perfect shots.

I think that's really important on these links style golf courses. You could hit a really solid shot and be so far away from the pin, and that could be vice versa. It's just more about creativity, and I hope that will be kind of the strategy that I'll take towards this week. I think somebody that's really patient and just utilizes the wind really well is going to have a really good week.

Q. Success has come pretty early and quickly for Lottie Woad. As someone who knows what that feels like, what advice would you give her on how to navigate some of these early stages of her career?

LYDIA KO: Lottie and Rose, I think, won their first tournament as a pro on the LPGA. It was pretty -- Rose has had such an amazing career, and Lottie's off to a very hot start as well.

Just outside of her win last week, but finishing top 5, I think, in Evian and then winning the Irish Open the week before, she's been playing unbelievably. I don't know a lot about her game personally, but the little that I've seen, she seems super impressive and has that kind of cool, calm, collected demeanour, and that's, I think, pretty important as a player.

She's kind of come out with a bang, and I'm sure she's going to keep continuing to play well.

Q. Just following up on that, you know what it's like to have so much focus and attention when you're very young. What is the biggest challenge associated with that when it's you that's in the spotlight?

LYDIA KO: I think it's different in ways because Lottie is older than when I first came on Tour. She played, I think, three years of collegiate golf, two or three years of collegiate golf as well. She's been at a lot of those kind of



tougher moments. Obviously it's different than being an amateur and playing collegiate golf to as a pro, but I think she's been there and done really well in those pressure conditions no matter what kind of environment she's been in.

So I think there's a little bit more experience under her belt than what people probably give her credit for. But when I've seen the coverage or how she composes herself, she doesn't seem like she rushes into things or gets like overly emotional. I'm sure that's going to help her with that transition as well.

You can see with her success it comes with a great team around you, and I'm sure she has that, those kind of people to help guide her through those moments.

Q. Going back to last year at St Andrews, considering the circumstances and the weather conditions, you've had a chance to be retrospective about this, your victory, how high up in your standard is that final round that you played at St Andrews? One of your best? Your best?

LYDIA KO: It was one of the most solid rounds. It's just really hard to compare the Women's Open to any other championships because the elements we deal with are very different to maybe a U.S. Women's Open or some of our domestic events. It's hard to compare it because links golf is a particular type of golf, and the wind -- a 20-mile-an-hour wind here is obviously very different to a 20-mile-an-hour wind in Florida.

I think in ways, I think I just dealt with that kind of moment really well, but I didn't realize I was tied for the lead until I saw the leaderboard on 16. In my mind, I thought I was like kind of like top 10 somewhere. I just wanted to have a strong finish and see where that put me. I didn't think I was like in contention for the win. I think I played a bit more freely and just kind of stuck to my game plan.

Maybe if I'd seen the leaderboard more, maybe my course management might have changed, but I think during that time for 90 percent of my round, I didn't really know what situation I was in. So it just made me focus on that shot in front of me. I think that made me able to play really solid and not really worry about anything else.

It's hard to say it's like the best round in the world, like a middle round, because it is so different. I haven't really been in that kind of a position before at the Women's Open before. It's hard to compare in that sense.

Q. You referred to the lower expectations you had entering last year's Championship. Is there a

revitalization of that pressure based on the fact that you were the crown winner last year and you're playing again this year?

LYDIA KO: I don't think there is more added pressure just because I am the defending champion. At the end of the day, if you win, it's not something that someone can take away from me. So I don't have to prove to anybody that I can win the AIG Women's Open. In that sense, I think it lets me be free and just kind of focus on what this week will bring.

I think the great thing and the tough thing about this Championship is that we play new golf courses. St Andrews and Woburn, I think, were the only two courses that I've played twice. When you come to these new courses, there's not many people in the field that have played here before. So it's like a clean slate, and nobody really has an advantage. It's just trying to get familiar with the golf course.

This is a very different type of links golf course that I've played compared to the past. It's going to be a challenge. Regardless if you're the defending champion or you qualified in through the qualifier yesterday, I think it's going to be a really tough week.

But I would rather it be tough than be calm. As much as I love sunny weather, when I'm coming to play the Women's Open, I expect it to be rainy, windy, and that's what I've gotten to really enjoy about this Championship.

I hope it brings all those elements. Maybe not as crazy as what the Men's Seniors had it, but to some extent I'm sure we're going to see it all, and that's what I kind of loved about it.

Q. What did you know about Wales before coming here?

LYDIA KO: The only thing that I knew outside of the flag was that there were words that had very little vowels, some words that just look like a bunch of consonants. I met someone yesterday that said the pronunciation is almost like French and Spanish. This might be one of the most difficult languages I've ever heard.

I've heard there's a lot of sheep here in Wales, and that's what New Zealand is very known for. So it feels like somewhat home. But people have been very welcoming and nice. I know we're in the south part of Wales, so there is less Welsh, I think, spoken in this area. So I haven't been fully exposed to that Welsh culture, but I love it.

We're at a great Airbnb, and I'm trying to enjoy this as

much as I can, but the flag is about the only thing that I'm confident, and that's about it, yeah.

Q. I'm not sure if you got a chance to look at the tee times yet, but you'll be going out with Lottie on Thursday and Friday. Can I get your thoughts on what it will be like to see Lottie up close for the first time?

LYDIA KO: I just saw the tee times as we were walking up. It's a triple L group -- Lilia, Lottie, and myself. Yeah, it's going to be fun. Lilia is obviously a past champion, a couple years ago, so playing with her is great. It will be my first time playing with Lottie, so I'm excited. She's coming in with a ton of momentum, and I think there's going to be a lot of people that's going to come out and watch her.

It's going to be really cool for me to see and see the things that I could possibly learn from her and why she's playing good. I don't think the ranking you are doesn't -- just because you're a higher ranked player doesn't mean that there's something that I can't learn from somebody else. She's obviously playing great golf. I've seen her swing, and my coach has sent me a video of her swing as well because there's aspects that I'm kind of going for that she has.

Yeah, it will be really cool to just be inside the ropes, pick her brain a little bit. I think it's going to be -- it's a great group, and I think it's going to be a great couple days.

ED HODGE: Lydia, thanks for your time, and good luck defending the title.

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