

Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific Championship

Press Conference

Wednesday, 11 February 2026

Eunseo Choi

Vivian Lu

Caitlin Maurice

Darae Chung



**Women's
Amateur**
ASIA PACIFIC

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and thank you very much for joining us at the Women's Amateur Asia Pacific Championship here at Royal Wellington. I am joined by some of our first nation representatives. We have Caitlin Maurice, Eunseo Choi, Vivian Lu, and Darae Chung.

Ladies, can I get you to start by explaining to me what it means to be proud and representing New Zealand here in this championship and on home soil?

Darae, we'll start with you as the Wellington local.

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, I'm so honored to be here and I'm really grateful that I'm able to play at home this week. It's really exciting, and I've been training for this for the past three months. Yeah, I'm just ready to get out there and have a lot of fun this week.

VIVIAN LU: I'm really excited to play this event at home. I think this is like my seventh Women's Amateur Asia Pacific, so it's really good to be at home on home soil with home crowds, so I'm really excited to get going.

EUNSEO CHOI: It feels so great to be playing at home in Aotearoa. I've always been telling a lot of people how amazing it is, so it's great to be playing here and representing New Zealand.

CAITLIN MAURICE: Yeah, living overseas over in Europe it's really fun to come home and play with the other Kiwi girls, be back around staff and people I know and get to play in front of family and friends.

Q. Eunseo, yesterday you joined us for a bit of a fun outing in Wellington. Can you tell us about what you and the other girls got up to yesterday?

EUNSEO CHOI: So yesterday we went down to the Wellington Waterfront to have photos with the Wellington sign so that was really cute.

Although it was a bit chilly in the morning, the sun started coming out, so it started getting warmer. Then we went up to the Cable Car lookout, the girls really enjoyed the view, so we were just like travelling around Wellington a little.

Q. Darae, welcome back home. Obviously spent a lot of time here over the years. Tell us what you sort of the thought when you saw the course and everything that's been done ahead of this tournament? Take you by surprise a bit?

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, John Spraggs is the head greenkeeper here. He's done such a great job with the course. It's in excellent condition. It's set to a world class standard, so yeah, not surprised. I feel like they do such a great job here all the time.

But yeah, I'm so grateful that we are able to play in really good conditions. Yeah, I mean, the weather is also awesome. It's really, really hot.

Q. You said you've been preparing for a while. How have you been preparing in the Oregon winter for sunny, 20 degrees?

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, luckily we have an indoor facility in Oregon and so we're able to sort of simulate what it's like to be in 20 degree weather.

And also our coach tries to help us sort of simulate what it would be like in different states or countries as well. Also I played a tournament in LA, so I was actually there too before, at Pepperdine, and LA was really, really hot, too.

So I feel like we were able to experience that before coming here.

Q.someone else that's not so familiar with this course. Just your thoughts on it and what you think (indiscernible.)



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CAITLIN MAURICE: I mean, the course is in amazing condition. Yeah, I am sure there will be some tough pins out there, a bit of placement off the tee. If the wind gets up in the afternoon like it has, it's been quiet in the morning until about midday, so just knowing your numbers around the course; can be a bit tricky.

No, I think there'll be some low scores out there for sure.

Q. And just New Zealand, playing at home and coming up against the top Pacific nations, how do you think you're going to feel?

CAITLIN MAURICE: I definitely feel a lot more nervous because we're playing on like my home field and I want to perform well, but it's very much more exciting just knowing like that I know what kind of grass I'm playing off.

I played a lot of junior golf at this course so I'm really excited to just see how much I've improved going on and just competing against like other world class amateurs.

Q. The Ducks did quite well in the playoffs. Just wondered perhaps what sort of support do you get from your college to come out here or play a tournament like this considering...

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, I mean, like you said, our college football team is quite huge. That's actually great for us because it all rolls down to other sports.

But, yeah, our coaches are willing to support us to come to these kinds of events so we're very grateful for that. I guess we get like extra clothes or extra shoes when our football team does well. That's the biggest support I can think of.

Q. Vivian, can I ask you, you're playing in this championship for a sixth time. That's setting a new record as most appearances. How have you evolved as a player over this time and how has the championship evolved?

VIVIAN LU: I remember my first one was in Japan and I think I was 14, so not that much older than our youngest player.

I remember -- I feel like it was like not that long ago but it has, and I'm definitely a lot older now. But I think I've just matured a lot. I can stay more calm now. I think when I was a little younger I used to get quite flustered like being in big events. It was quite a lot.

I feel like I'm a lot more calm, yeah.

Q. Eunseo, welcome back. I see you're playing tomorrow with Janet and Soomin, who finished first and second last year. Can you tell us how much you know about them? Have you played much with them before, and will that inspire you or do you just focus on your own game?

EUNSEO CHOI: Okay, so Soomin and I played together last year in Vietnam, so that was really fun because I got to know them. I've seen them around like at international tournaments a lot, so I do know them quite personally as well.

But definitely I'm going to be more motivated and very much just try to focus on my own game because I know how much of a great player they are, so I just want to focus on myself.

And Jeneath is my teammate at Pepperdine, so we kind of practice every day together. We kind of always see each other. So I think we'll just have some fun out there tomorrow, yeah.

Q. We haven't had yet a New Zealand winner. Can all of you just express maybe what it would mean for golf in New Zealand growing women's golf if one of you were to win this week?

CAITLIN MAURICE: I think women's golf has grown a lot over the past few years and it would be amazing to have a New Zealand winner to push the game forward and get more girls into golf.

And I think it's so cool how much good media there has been around this event, all the volunteers and support. It's been awesome. The fact that everyone from New Zealand knows this tournament is happening is really cool.

In the States they put so much media on golf over there, and it's cool to see that happening in New Zealand.

Q. Whilst we're speaking about winners, the champion of the WAAP obviously gets in three major championships this year, including the AIG Women's Open. We can't be in New Zealand and not ask about Lydia Ko, who won the AIG Women's Open a couple years ago in St Andrews. How much is she an idol for you girls, and were you watching her win and would you love to be competing in a championship alongside her?

VIVIAN LU: Lydia is so amazing. I've had a couple opportunities to practice with her, one back at home and one like two months ago in San Francisco. She's just so

humble. I think even though she has such a great golfing history, like won everything there is, it doesn't feel like she feels like she's better than us.

Whatever we did, she was so welcoming and she helped us so much. Any questions that we had she answered them so honestly. I think she's an amazing role model for all of us.

Q. Caitlin, you mentioned it seems like everybody in New Zealand knows this championship is happening. It seems like we'll get some really big crowds. How exciting is that for you?

CAITLIN MAURICE: Yeah, I think it's super special. I been getting a few messages from people saying they're going to come out and everything, girls I haven't played with since junior golf and they're like excited for it to be at home. Even some friends overseas know about it, so I think that's really cool.

Q. Do you think you work off that energy as well?

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, I think it's always exciting to have people out just watching you. I think one of the most exhilarating feelings is making a putt and everyone clapping for you and cheering for you. You'll never forget that feeling, and so it'll be really exciting to have people, coming out to watch us.

Q. Darae, this is your home course. Tell us what it's like being here. (Indiscernible.)

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, I mean, all my family and friends are here. I feel like a lot of people who have watched me play golf since I was little are going to come out, especially on the weekend.

Yeah, I guess people would expect me to win especially because I played here since I was like 12. I think expectation and reality could be different, so all I can do is focus on the process, focus on each day as it comes, focus on where my feet are, and just keep my head in the game, and then, yeah, we'll see where the outcome takes me.

Q. And so the course, have you always mastered it? What are your thoughts?

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, I wish I could master golf. I feel like that would be like a genie wish or like a world dream.

Yeah, there are definitely some challenging visual lines out there for sure that maybe I've had since I was little. I also think there are some shots where I'm really confident and I have a good game plan.

So, yeah, like I said, all I can do is just focus on the process, talk with my caddie, and try and hit each shot as I want to.

Q. The forecast, the wind might get up.

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, I mean, the wind is quite tricky here, especially it being the valley. So, yeah, just relying on my compass and the yardage book and seeing the wind direction and how strong it's going to blow.

Yeah, just really having those conversations with my caddie will be really crucial, and at the end of the day being really confident with whatever game plan I choose and accepting the results.

Q. So do you get assigned a caddie? Do you have a caddie, a local?

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, so I contacted a person here. His name is EJ. It's a policeman and also represents Wellington. I've known him since I pretty much started playing golf. I asked him to be my caddie. He's a member out here at Royal Wellington and knows the course really well.

He's just a really calm person and that's who I needed, so, yeah, I asked him to caddie for me.

Q. Following on a little bit about playing in front of your home crowd and how you handle that, I understand that potentially might have been some conversations or messages relayed from the likes of Dan Hillier who played here in the AAC in 2017 and potentially even Lydia about how to play in front of a home crowd. Do you care to elaborate on those conversations, what the advice might have been?

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, I actually took the initiative to message Lydia about a week before coming out here. I just asked her like what she does to combat the nerves or the pressure of playing in front of a home crowd, because she's come to New Zealand to play the New Zealand Open previously, and, yeah, she responded to my message which was really awesome.

She's just really cool like that. Yeah, she just advised me to work on my process and to really focus on myself. Like you are your own best friend, and how you talk to yourself, how you carry yourself on the course, is really crucial to your performance.

I thought that was so cool that she messaged me. Yeah, I'll take that advice into this week.

Q. Wondering if each of you can nominate what you think is the hardest hole on the course and maybe will be the most pivotal hole in deciding the championship.

CAITLIN MAURICE: Good question. I mean, we've only played a round and a half, but, I mean, the back nine, the last few holes. 18 I think the pin position will be important. Whether you can reach it or not and if you do chose to go for it that'll be a huge hole.

Even 17. Around the corner? Yeah, the line you take off the tee there, you can have some tricky pins.

EUNSEO CHOI: I think like the last couple holes of the round, but I feel like No. 4, either depending the wind as well. Like if you're a long hitter maybe go for it. And then if you're like in between, it's like are you going to be aggressive and is it going to be worth it.

And especially the green is a bit tough on that green with like the slopes coming down, especially with the wind because it can roll off into the hazard.

So just smart play on that hole will really determine like how you finish.

VIVIAN LU: I think 14 was a really good one just because you can go for it or you can layup. I think that could really change the way you finish. Like if you get your drive on the green in one and make eagle or birdie, like can change the momentum you have on the finishing holes.

DARAE CHUNG: Yeah, I agree with Caitlin. I think the last couple holes are quite difficult. I think 16 has been sort of a pivotal hole over the years. I've seen in a lot of tournaments where that hole has separated the winner from the rest of the group or it's like changed the winner.

Yeah, depending on pin placement on the last day that could be quite a fun hole. Then 17, 18 are two good holes coming in to finish. So, yeah.

Q. Last one from me: If I can put you on the spot, any of you have in your mind what a winning score will be this week?

VIVIAN LU: I said 15-under, yeah.

EUNSEO CHOI: I would say 16-under. Yeah.

CAITLIN MAURICE: Depends on the weekend. There might be some weather coming through. EUNSEO CHOI: Depending on weather can either shoot very low on the day or go a little bit low, but not too -- it really depends on

the weather as well, so, yeah.

Q. Any of you can answer this one. When you look at what it would mean winning this, entry into major championships and what it could do to your career, is that what motivates you most about doing well here this week? Is it what lies ahead for women, are there other factors motivated to perform across the next four days?

CAITLIN MAURICE: That's obviously a big motivator for me. Of course winning is a biggest motivation for me because who doesn't want to win, right?

So I think just being in my home, back at home in New Zealand and just being able to play in such major events is really a big steppingstone especially when you're going professional.

I think that's what motivates me the most.

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