

KPMG Women's PGA Championship

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Springfield, New Jersey, USA
Baltusrol Golf Club

Nelly Korda

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Pleased to be joined now by Nelly Korda, the 2021 Women's PGA champion. We haven't seen you in a little bit. What has it been like preparing for this week's major championship?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, I've been out since New Jersey, a couple weeks ago. I think it was like four or five. But it was nice to be at home obviously getting ready for this major championship. Started kind of practicing a week and a half ago when I was all cleared to go two weeks ago.

Yeah, just been kind of grinding away. Got out here, played nine yesterday, played 18 today, and going to play the back nine again tomorrow and tee it up Thursday, and I'm very excited.

Q. What are some of your opening thoughts on Baltusrol?

NELLY KORDA: The first four holes are very crucial. I think if you get through the first four in even, I think that's a very big goal for the week is getting through the first four holes, and they're big, monstrous kind of holes.

I know the first hole is typically a par-5 for the members and it's a pretty long par-4 for us. Then 2 is a very positional hole. 3 is also a pretty long hole. Then 4, obviously, that's kind of the signature hole over the water.

The first four holes are pretty crucial, but overall I think the golf course is very strong. The par-3s are pretty long, and it's going to be a pretty interesting test this week. It's an amazing golf course.

Q. You won your KPMG title at a place with a lot of history. As you come to another place with a lot of history for your next major, Pebble Beach, what does that add to the chase of going after majors?

NELLY KORDA: I feel like a major championship is a



major championship at the end of the day. I know that's kind of the goal is to perform the best that you possibly can at these majors, and I think it's just a cherry on top to play at these golf courses that have so much rich history.

But honestly, they're amazing pieces of property. When I just walked out here yesterday and I played the front nine, I couldn't believe what kind of condition the golf course was in. I think that the women's game is really making a step forward where we get to play all these historic venues.

Q. Last time you took a break you came back and played really well. Do you take any solace or does it help your mindset knowing that you have that history after taking a break?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, I guess. I feel like every single time I've kind of taken a break, it's been for something else. Last year was the blood clot at the beginning of the year, and this time it was just my lower back that I just wanted to make sure it didn't turn into something worse.

But yeah, it's sometimes nice to reset after playing. I played eight events. I think I just skipped two throughout the beginning of the year. So it's nice to take a step back, get a break in a sense.

I think it also makes you appreciate playing out here, traveling and getting to do what you love when it's kind of taken away from you and you have to take a forced break.

Q. How different is this golf course in what it demands compared to a course you've seen regularly on the LPGA Tour?

NELLY KORDA: All of it. You need length. You need to hit the fairways, and you need to position really well. The greens are really big and they're undulated. They're going to be fast. I don't know what the weather is going to be like. I feel like it's kind of changed every single day.

I know that there's going to be some rain, but it's going to just take an overall really good score out here to win. Like your game has to be good and on all cylinders.



Q. From this big northeastern style with the big greens and the thick rough, being able to run it up to some of these greens, how do you practice differently for that, judging runouts and stuff like that?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, as I said, it just depends if they get rain. Right now they haven't gotten any since I've been here, so it's running out and it's firm. It has a little bit of a linksey style to it that you can run it up, and if you get in the rough you have the opportunity if there's not a bunker in front of it to run it up.

It's going to be, I feel like, a fun test this week. I enjoy these kinds of golf courses where you have to kind of think a little bit more, and it's a very demanding golf course, as well, and the ball-striking and the putting, everything has to click for you to week in order to perform well.

Q. Was it a shot that you hit or was there a moment when your back really started to flare up? Any insight as to when you started to feel that?

NELLY KORDA: Just kind of when I got back from New Jersey. It didn't feel right already there. When I got home, I just talked with my doctor, and he recommended that I just take a couple weeks off to just rest it before something else kind of flares up from it.

Q. Is this the same area from Aronimink when you pulled out from this tournament?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, I typically -- that's kind of what my back injury is. It's just low back, yeah. There's a lot of torque in the golf swing, so I fell like I'm not the only golfer that kind of struggles with the low back.

Also when you're traveling four weeks in a row, different beds, flying out right after your round. Sometimes you just tweak it and you just need to take rest.

Q. Are you pain-free now?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, all good.

Q. This golf course is unique, closes with two par-5s, two of which you've really got to hit the fairway. Give your thoughts on those two par-5s and why is it critical to hit the fairway on those holes?

NELLY KORDA: I feel like it's very critical here to hit it on every fairway.

17 is a very long par-5. It's going to take obviously a very good -- it's pretty narrow, the tee shot, and then there's a lot of bunkers in play on the second shot, if you're laying

up. Probably it definitely will not be reachable, especially if it's into the wind. I think that's what it's projected to be.

Then even the third shot is really demanding with the bunkers around the green. So overall I feel like that's a really strong and long hole.

Three of the par-5s are reachable, so obviously I think they're going to make one that's not reachable, so I would say 17 is going to play as a three-shotter, and then 18 obviously if you're in the hunt you have water down the left and pretty thick rough down the right, and if you're in the right rough, it makes that second shot pretty hard over the water.

I feel like just in general, this rough is really thick. I've tried to hit 6-irons out and they come out as knuckle balls and dead left, and I feel like it's just going to be a very crucial golf course to hit the fairways and greens.

You're going to see some -- if it plays firm and fast, you're going to see a lot of people having 30-footers for birdie.

Q. We talked about your physical stamina, but mental stamina and this stretch, what did that two-week break do for your mental stamina, and how do you maintain that as we look ahead to this major and another in a couple weeks?

NELLY KORDA: Yeah, as I said, when it's kind of taken away from you when you're having to take a forced break in a sense, you appreciate the life a little bit more. I feel like I love the game of golf. I love competing. I have so much fun doing this and traveling. It just makes me appreciate it more.

A little bit more hungry.

Q. There's quite a bit of anticipation with this being Rose Zhang's first major as a pro. From a player's perspective, what's your sense for the amount of buzz she's bringing to the sport and could bring to the sport in the future?

NELLY KORDA: I think it's great. It was amazing to see that she won her first week out as a professional. I think it's going to be really good for women's golf. Hopefully we have some great battles coming down the stretch over the years.

Q. Is there anything about her game that really sticks out to you as far as what it is that makes her special?

NELLY KORDA: Honestly, if I'm being completely honest, I haven't seen her play at all. I'm sure I'll see it now a lot, so

maybe in a couple events if we're paired together, I'll give you my opinion. But I'm sure -- she had an amazing junior career, college career, and she's gotten off to a really hot start, so I'm sure all parts of her game are really good.

Q. Being as young as you are and kind of dealing with these health situations, what kind of mental toll has that taken on you?

NELLY KORDA: I mean, I've played this sport since I started walking, so I've dealt with injuries. I think coming from a family that has played sports throughout their entire life, it just comes with it. You look at so many athletes, they all go through something. I can only speak on let's say tennis where you see Nadal, who battled with so many injuries throughout his entire career.

It's something you constantly learn from. I think the best thing about this sport is that no one knows anything, or any sport, is that you're constantly learning. So when I can learn from something, I hope that I can take that in and make myself a better person and golfer.

Q. You mentioned the thick rough. Is there any tentativeness with your back coming out of the rough this week?

NELLY KORDA: No, I honestly wouldn't be playing if I wasn't 100 percent.

Q. In your opinion who do you think is the best player in the women's game right now?

NELLY KORDA: I don't know. I would say this year we've had a lot of really good golfers, a lot of really -- I think Jin Young Ko, she's won twice this year, right, so if you're just going off statistics, I would say Jin Young. There's so many good golfers out. Rose is one for one, so she's pretty good.

I feel like it's hard to say on the women's side because people really heat up. I know that Minjee has been playing really well. Leona played really well last week. The person that's playing the best would be the No. 1 player in the world, and that's Jin Young, so I would say Jin Young.

Q. Gabi Ruffels is in the field this week. I know you guys are pretty close in age. Not sure how much you two know each other. What can you say about her battle over the last couple months with missing Q-school and being the No. 1 player on the Epson Tour now?

NELLY KORDA: I actually know her brother Ryan pretty well. We're the same age, so we've actually become pretty

good friends over the last couple years. He lives in Orlando. I don't know Gabi that well. I know Ryan a little bit better. But I think it's amazing.

Obviously it's hard to look at the positives when you do miss Q-school and you miss signing up and then you come out and play really well, so props to her for being mentally tough and taking that, I guess, in a sense in a positive way and coming out and dominating the next year.

I think she's a really good golfer. She hits it really well. I think she's strong, too. I think overall she has a good game, and hopefully we see her out here, too.

Q. You had the win late last year. You've played nicely early this year and along the West Coast. When you have a break like this, is it like starting anew, or do you pick up some of that momentum that you had built?

NELLY KORDA: No, I think it's like starting anew. I think all the momentum that you had kind of goes away because I didn't touch a golf club for two weeks. I think all the momentum that you had the first week back, you start fresh, but then obviously -- it's like going to the gym after a really long time. The first week is kind of tough, but then once you get into the groove of things, you kind of get it back.

Q. Every major champion on this golf course has hit a fade going all the way back to 1960. Is that typical of major championships? Is it just this golf course? How do you feel that fits you?

NELLY KORDA: I hit a draw, so I did not know that.

Honestly, I'm trying to think. I mean, yes, I think if you know how to hit a draw and a fade, it benefits you. I've hit a draw, and I feel like I'm curving it away from the trouble, as well. I don't think it matters what you play as long as you hit it in the fairway and you get it on the green and get it in the hole. That's what matters, right?

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