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Danielle Kang

Press Conference



CHRISTINA LANCE: Danielle Kang, thanks for coming in. We can feel the rain coming so we'll talk fast. A lot has changed over the last year. Year ago next month we were here; you got two back-to-back wins here in Toledo. What has the last year been like COVID, nonCOVID, wins, just the whole nine yards?

DANIELLE KANG: First of all, I really like your jacket.

CHRISTINA LANCE: Thank you very much.

DANIELLE KANG: She's wearing a Shadow Creek jacket, which I really like. To answer the question, a lot has changed, right? Time moves and nothing stays the same. That's what my mom always says. But it always changes for the good. It's always meant to be. That where you're standing is what it's supposed to be. You learn your lessons living your life and things go well and things go bad. I finished couple seconds. Personally, professionally, sometimes things go south.

But then all at the same time, a lot of great things happen, too. So in the last year since the last time I've been in Ohio, a lot has changed, but really happy to be back. I've got some good memories, and, yeah, I like the person that I am now compared to then.

So that's good, right?

CHRISTINA LANCE: Exactly, always on the move-up. This time a year ago you won the previous week at Inverness and won this week at Highland Meadows. We'll start at Highland Meadows. It was a come-from-behind victory there. It had to feel good to come back from that long break with the two wins. What do you think back and remember most about Highland Meadows, and then we'll look back at Inverness.

DANIELLE KANG: The win at Highland Meadows?

CHRISTINA LANCE: Yes.

DANIELLE KANG: Highland Meadows win, I was actually

talking about this with somebody else yesterday. I played awesome at Inverness. This tournament I played well, but I also did make a lot of mistakes, but ended up winning by one and came down to the last stretch.

But the last nine holes I played lights out and kept giving myself chances. I like the match play mentality that I went into with five down, six to play. That's how Ollie phrased it and kicked me into gear.

Yeah, it was really cool to win the second time in a row after winning Inverness.

CHRISTINA LANCE: The week prior at Inverness, I know you were there yesterday and recently for some Solheim Cup pieces. What is it about Inverness that seems to click with you so well, and how is it going to play for the Solheim Cup?

DANIELLE KANG: I really like golf courses that forces me to focus. I'm all over the place normally, thinking about random things. Inverness track from beginning to end you can't take your mind off it. There is a bogey right around the corner, but really great birdie opportunities that you probably should capitalize on.

With that said, long break coming back, I actually really enjoyed the time off. I felt like I utilized the time really well. I was in a better position than a lot of people because I didn't really experience a lot of sickness that people have and losing family. There was a lot of turmoil in the world.

For me, I just sat at home and played golf because golf courses were open. For me, it was a nice time off and I haven't had that for 13 years. Never been home for more than six weeks. For me to wake up every day and walk my dog, I had a routine. Going to Einstein's or Starbucks and eating breakfast without rushing was nice. Having to see a trainer routinely and working out, all that. I think that acelled my game to where I want to get to.

But it's all temporary, right, and that's what golf is. It's a year-round sport, and I feel like I need that time again. I'm just trying to take some time off with events so I can be ready and get myself back into gear.

CHRISTINA LANCE: Is it good to be back in somewhat of a routine. We showed up here last year, there was no

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build around 18. There were no fans. Is it nice to have that part of things back?

DANIELLE KANG: Oh, I love the fans. I didn't -- when everybody asks, Would you like fans, I think all of us responded kind of like, oh, it's not bad, but we do miss them kind of thing.

No, actually I didn't know what we were missing until they came back. We need the fans, and I hope it's full capacity. I know we have to be safe and everything, but it's really nice to have them back.

You've got something to play for and everybody that comes out here -- I mean that's a Wayne Gretzky code. He says any shot that you hit, any minute you play, somebody paid to come watch you play, so you give it your all.

It's really nice to play for people.

CHRISTINA LANCE: Absolutely. Questions.

Q. Real quick on the Solheim Cup. With it not that far away, how much do you start thinking about it at this point? And the American team in general feels like momentum is kind of building to that. Do you feel that as well?

DANIELLE KANG: Yes. To be really honest with you, I can't think that far. We've got this tournament, Dow, Olympics British Open; Solheim is my last finishing out.

So I want to be able to -- what my main focus for Solheim is is for me to be in good health and mindset and be ready to go and as fire as I can be for the next -- all the things that's going to make me tired kind of thing.

So I'm more focused on kind of a personal level. But with that said aside, I think it's really great. We have four people going to the Olympics that are on the Solheim Cup team, and that's amazing. That team is really strong.

I'm really excited to see who makes the Solheim Cup team. I know it's neck and neck with a lot of the players with Rolex Rankings and captain's picks and all that, but our players that are on the team so far are a really strong team.

So with that momentum build, we all played golf together at Inverness, and we're just really excited to represent USA in any way possible.

Q. How big is it for you to be able to play on a course where you've had that sort of success before? Like you said, you played so well that week last year and

now you get to be back there.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah. The first hole I played with the team I made like a 50-footer and Jessica said, Picking up right where she left off. The golf course is a good track. And not just for me, for a lot of players. Just going to bring in a lot of good golf. Going to showcase some -- a lot of excitement is the best way I can put it.

Q. You mentioned Ollie a little bit ago. How important is that working relationship between the caddie and the golfer?

DANIELLE KANG: It is very important because you got to spend eight to ten hours with the guy every day. So, I mean, you have to be able to get along with them, right?

But it's all different for everybody, to be honest. What's important to somebody might not be as important for me. Somebody likes when the caddies get the numbers as correctly as possible or with no mistakes or margin of mistakes of golf errors.

Ollie jokes around saying positive vibes. I just need somebody to be upbeat and happy, because you're just -- it's just the two of you on the golf course. I mean, I have my team. My agent, manager, coaches, physio, all that. But at the golf course it's just me and him. I need to know that he has my back.

Just like when I play Solheim. You know your teammates have your back and I have theirs. No one is going to go and try and miss a putt. No one wishes that you miss something or not play well.

So I need a caddie -- why he's so important to me is that he's as invested in it as I am.

Q. How many different roles does he play for you? It's more than just carrying a bag.

DANIELLE KANG: Oh, he's like my best friend out here, so...

On the golf course he's -- you know, it's just we just play games. We have fun. He helps me keep focused. At the end of the day work is work, right? So we have our routines and have what we need to get done.

A lot people think we're goofing off, but we have our set thing we need to do, and he knows -- I mean, golfers are difficult. We're all really weird.

Actually I probably shouldn't say that. I'm very difficult and I'm pretty weird. I need things -- a specific routine and

order and how I do things. I'm stuck in my any ways.

So he knows that routine, and having that ready for the player to go with that momentum is important.

Q. How do you think you're playing going into tomorrow's first round?

DANIELLE KANG: Been playing all right. Played pretty good last week. Today I didn't play that great, but I think that's -- I mean, it's golf, right? Every day is different.

Game feels solid. I just want golf to come easy. That's when you're playing really good. I worked with Coach Pat Goss. He looks at my short game. So he drove down from Chicago and looked at my short game yesterday, so my short game is getting tuned in.

But it's not just about tomorrow. It's about building your game to be better, so...

CHRISTINA LANCE: Zoom questions.

Q. You talked about this a little bit, but could you reflect on what it's been like playing through last year in the COVID era on the LPGA?

DANIELLE KANG: I'm thinking. Sorry. It was -- I don't know. Now that it's past I don't really think about it. I just remember it being a little bit more complicated than it is now with the testing and picking up wrist bands, to no fans and everything was very emptied. We had to eat in the hotel room, all this stuff.

But I don't know. I don't know. I'm not really looking back on it. I'm just really happy the fans are back here. I actually was really excited because I was at Inverness yesterday and they were telling us about how the grandstands are going to be.

So having I think 60,000 people on the first tee, that's going to be so awesome. Fingers crossed, but still. Yeah.

Q. What was the biggest challenge for you over the last year in terms of handling the pandemic?

DANIELLE KANG: Handling the pandemic?

Q. From the golf side, yes.

DANIELLE KANG: I didn't like being isolated. Asia was tough for me this year because I'm a very -- I am very needy. I need people around me and I bother a lot of people. I call my agent for an hour if I need to. I just always need -- I don't know, I like having people around

me.

Not being able to go to their rooms, not being able to eat with them, that was tough on me. Just I can't go anywhere. Just play golf and come home and you workout 20 minutes and then you go here. I don't know, that was tough.

But, I mean, that's a first-world problem, so I'm kind of complaining in that sense. But I dealt with it. Whatever hand you get dealt you got to play your cards.

It's not a big deal. You asked what I didn't like. That's what I didn't like.

Q. How did it impact you the most?

DANIELLE KANG: How did it impact me?

Q. Uh-huh.

DANIELLE KANG: I got really down. With that said though, it just all momentary, right? You have to be able to pick yourself up and look on the bright side and figure out the positives, think about things that you should be thankful for.

If we keep focusing on all the things that were hard and difficult and what it was like, we never move forward. I can just keep looking back and think about how much time I got to spend with my family and how I got to experience that.

You know, I mean, one day I'm going to look back and say, I remember when LPGA told me I couldn't leave my room. I mean, that's a story you can tell. Sometimes it's shitty things happen, it's a story down the road. So it's all good.

CHRISTINA LANCE: It is nice to be able to go get food again like a grown up.

DANIELLE KANG: Yes, it is.

CHRISTINA LANCE: It's the little things, right?

DANIELLE KANG: You say that now, but I did Uber Eats last night, so...

CHRISTINA LANCE: True. Not because you had to, because you wanted to.

DANIELLE KANG: I actually did kind of had to. But, yeah, you're right. It's nice. I like it when my friends cook for me. I just want to go and hang out, but there are rules. You just got follow the rules. Rules are rules.

CHRISTINA LANCE: On the other hand, we played safely for a year and we've gotten through it. Again, fingers cross. No, it's not over yet. But we're here and back and got fans and ready to go. Isn't that the whole point?

DANIELLE KANG: That is the point. I think sometimes we forget it's still going on and it is happening, so we have to be mindful of that and that it's not something that -- people did lose a lot of the people, close ones. Like I'm thankful that that didn't happen to me, knock on wood.

But we just have to be mindful of that. That's all I could ask.

CHRISTINA LANCE: Yeah, we got some rain starting; probably going to get some rain over the next couple days. Overall, how do you hope things will go for you this week here a Highland Meadows as you try to defend?

DANIELLE KANG: I hope to defend. For some reason I like winning things back-to-back.

CHRISTINA LANCE: You've done it before.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, at the amateur, at the Shanghai, so two of my wins are back to back. Technically I'm hoping that I can defend.

And yeah, it'll be good. I get to play with Inbee tomorrow so I'm really happy. I get to play with one of my best friends and it's going to be a nice cruising round.

I always play golf with her in Vegas, so it'll just be as a round at home, which is nice.

CHRISTINA LANCE: Awesome. Well get some rest, stay dry, and we'll see you tomorrow.

DANIELLE KANG: Cool, thank you.

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