

# ANA Inspiration

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Rancho Mirage, California, USA

Mission Hills Country Club

## Danielle Kang

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome into the virtual media center here at the ANA Inspiration. We are happy to be joined by Danielle Kang. Danielle, how are you doing on this lovely day?

DANIELLE KANG: The weather is so nice. Just trying to enjoy the day outside.

**Q. I was going to say, you can't get better than this, especially since we know the temperatures will be up later in the week. You come into this major championship week with two top 10 finishes. Just explain what's been going so right with your game.**

Three top 10? Oh, yeah from Diamond. I was talking about the last two events.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, okay. Sorry.

**Q. No, you're fine. Just recently had two top 10 finishes. Where do you think your game is as we prepare for the ANA Inspiration?**

DANIELLE KANG: Well, golf game is always a work in progress. I think working on the right things with Butch, I always say that. Competitively, and yeah, there has just been a lot of things that I've wanted to kind of tie up.

Top 10s were good. I think I played -- I did the best I could. I don't know, it was a little sloppy yet I saved some shots here and there. I think just trusting my game and working towards the bigger goal is the main thing.

**Q. We saw a lot of low scores at the Kia Classic. You were one of them. What was going so right, do you think, and what were some of the things you've been working on since then?**

DANIELLE KANG: To be honest, I'm just trying to control my emotions and mental game more so than anything. Physically with golf, technicality-wise and the mechanics and all that, it's there.



Butch and I have done some really great work and I can rely on the work that I've done, but I think it's more so the emotion on the golf course that I have to figure out how to deal with and maintain through the 1st hole to 72nd hole.

That's something that I'm working on. Hopefully gets better.

**Q. And something that of course with the pressure of a major championship I feel like is on a lot people's minds, how to improve that mental game. What is something that you have been working on specifically for Mission Hills? It's the first major full season. What does that do for your confidence after having a T7 finish like last week?**

DANIELLE KANG: This golf course is immaculate. I love coming back here. I told my mom today we've been here over ten years, we've been coming here since I was amateur. You always want to play well here. The golf course is a testament to all aspects of your golf game from tee to green, around the greens, sure if you miss a green; the firmness of it, understanding the lies and where to miss, everything.

It's golf course knowledge, trusting what you have. Mental preparation coming into a major week, obviously everyone wants to do well at a major. It's an added pressure of wanting to do well in California and perform well in your first major. You can't blame the golf course conditions because it's so perfect.

So I think just trusting my game and being able to be confident in my own game and staying focused is probably the most important thing that I'm working on this week.

**Q. Mission Hills is definitely a little different than we last saw it in September. What are some of the things you're noticing about the course? You just said it's in one of the purest states we've seen probably in the last few years. What are some of the differences that you'll go about this course that maybe you didn't go about in September?**

DANIELLE KANG: I believe that the grass was different. It was overseeded and right now it's rye rough. The rough is a little more thicker. It was bermuda back then if I remember correctly. It's just the golf course itself here,



there is an underlying bermuda always underneath that bent and rye grass. Going to need to read the greens as well as you can and trust your game.

Yeah, honestly, today I'm just thinking, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, when you tee off, you tee off, right? Today I'm going to have a lot of fun. Today is the first day I can say I'm going to fully just have fun without any expectation because I get to play with Annika today. I thought that was pretty exciting.

**Q. Yes. Speaking of fun, before you even step foot to compete competitively you will be competing with Annika Sorenstam, someone who you like to say is one of your mentors. Tell us how this came about, this charity match and how excited you are to be teeing it up alongside her today?**

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, so when you're asking me about the tournament all I'm thinking about is today, what I'm going to do when we tee off. I am playing alternate shot, best ball, and scramble with her today, so, I mean, that's pretty -- it's up there in my Bucket List.

I played with her for the first time in my life at Lake Nona. Never watched her play in person. Only seen her on TV. So today I think it's just -- I don't know, I'm excited, nervous. I don't know why I'm so nervous around her all the time.

But she -- I got a call and said that Annika requested to play with you, would you like to play. I said, yes, without even knowing what day or what time or anything like that and realized it was Wednesday before a major, et cetera. But I go, okay, it's fine. Nine holes? Yeah. 4:00 is usually the time I play practice rounds, so it's perfect.

**Q. I was going to say, feels like it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Is that how it feels for you?**

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, it is. To be able to play with one of your role models, whenever we may be, to be able to compete with her, is pretty fun.

I know that people ask about the Solheim Cup to the team events and all that, but being able to be partnered with Annika who I'm pretty sure I never would've been partnered with her in anything, right? But that's pretty cool.

Going to be really fun day. I'm just a little nervous about getting hyped up for three hours.

**Q. It will still be fun.**

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, that's something what I'm

nervous about. I don't want say anything crazy on the mic. I commentate a lot, so...

**Q. It is different. You'll be able to get the first sneak peek of the course conditions I feel like before everyone tees off tomorrow. You're one of the last ones to go about this course. The charity match is just another part of the tradition and legacy of the ANA Inspiration. This is the 50th edition.**

So what does it mean to you to be a part of this tradition and legacy and be able to compete in its 50th edition?

DANIELLE KANG: This is like our Masters, right? There is so much history here. I know that sometimes people talk about Augusta being Augusta, but for us Dinah Shore is Dinah Shore. It's the history that makes the golf tournament. All the great players, all the great women golfers played here before us that have left the tradition for us is -- to be a part of that is pretty amazing.

To be able to play with one of those ledge end today is a once if a lifetime opportunity. Going to enjoy it as much as I can and take the little happiness that comes my way and enjoy.

**Q. One of the biggest traditions we have here is of course the jump into Poppy's Pond. What would it mean to you to jump in it for your first time at the end of the weekend?**

DANIELLE KANG: Inbee Park actually asked me earlier -- not this week, but earlier this year -- what major do you want to win, and I told her I want to win the ANA Inspiration.

She goes, Okay, you do that. And then we talked about which majors we want to win and she goes, yeah, you need to win that one. This is something that you should win because it's pretty amazing.

What it would mean to me is just, I don't know, I can't really put it into words right now. I could imagine. There is always an imagination of what my goals and achievements and how it would feel and all that. When that day comes I'll let you know.

**Q. I know how close you are with Inbee. We had her in here earlier and she's also at the peak of her career again. What is it like to be able to still get that advice from her as you're gearing up for the first major of the season?**

DANIELLE KANG: I wouldn't say peak of her career. She's just steadily up there.



**Q. Just consistent.**

DANIELLE KANG: She lives there, you know. Yeah, I don't think many people know she's literally like my older sister, my adopted mom. I joke around that I'm an adopted child of her and her husband. They feed me, they drive me, they buy me ice cream. She has been there for me through thick and thin. You know, supported me since the beginning.

And whether it's when I went up to world No. 2 -- it was a really weird feeling being at world No. 2, and she was the only player to give me a call -- like, is one of the main people to give me call and say, Let's go to 1, we can do it, all that.

To hear that from a world No. 1 was very inspiring and I wanted that so bad. When I started coming down then she has another thing to say about why you came down and like how you're going to feel when you go back up there again and things like that.

So her motivation and how she inspires me to be the player I want to be. She's so competitive and so driven -- along with all the greats, you know -- so having her by my side I think has been really, really helpful, especially for the last few weeks.

Honestly, I think I finished top 10 last week because of her. (Laughter.)

**Q. Why is that?**

DANIELLE KANG: Just a lot going on, and if it wasn't for her I don't know if I would've finished the tournament, to be honest, and I got paired up with her, too. Which was interesting, because I was just -- I had to be -- she just was constantly trying to make me feel better, whatever it was.

I don't even know if she was worrying about her game. Next thing you know she's 6-, 7-under par. I go, All right, maybe I'm distracting her enough. I don't know. I'm just really thankful for her friendship as well.

**Q. As I begin to wrap it up, this major is the start of what will be a consistent basis of tournaments. For you, what is it like to be able to prepare mentally and also physically for the summer ahead of us?**

DANIELLE KANG: We got a long year ahead, a lot of tournaments coming our way. Schedule is a little hectic. People keep asking if I'm going to play a certain event. I don't know what's going to happen. We're all going through this pandemic, and it's getting better slowly but

surely.

The fact that we're going to Asia, I think that's exciting. I know we'll be quarantined and safe as possible. But coming back we got Solheim Cup; hopefully that still happens, because we want the fans.

And same thing with the Olympic Games. We got five major to play this year. Hopefully, knock on wood, that schedule goes as smoothly as we can.

But for now, we have got, what is it, three, four tournaments under our belts, and this is the fifth one. Good start to the year.

THE MODERATOR: Danielle, I appreciate the time. Thanks for talking with me.

DANIELLE KANG: Thank you.

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