

The LPGA Drive On Championship

Wednesday, October 21, 2020

Greensboro, Georgia, USA

Reynolds Lake Oconee

Lydia Ko

Claire Hollingsworth

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, we will get started. Thank you for sticking with us through the technical difficulties this morning. I would like to welcome you inside the virtual media center here at the LPGA Drive On Championship at Reynolds Lake Oconee.

With that, I'm very happy to be joined today by 15-time LPGA Tour winner and major champion, Lydia Ko. How are you doing today?

LYDIA KO: I'm doing pretty good. I was able to play an early nine this morning, so I think I beat the rain a little bit as well. But it is beautiful. I think it was a great decision from commish to bring us out here. And I've never personally played in Georgia before, so I'm really looking forward to this week.

THE MODERATOR: We're coming off an off week as we get ready for the Drive On Championship here, but looking at 2020 as a whole, how are you feeling about your play after the KPMG Women's PGA Championship? I believe you had your coach, Sean Foley on site with you there. How much does it help when he's able to join you on the road?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I feel like after quarantine the time that I spent practicing and recovering and training, it was good to see the results kind of show some of that time. So hopefully I'll be able to keep working hard to have more of those moments.

But it was -- obviously I haven't worked with Sean for a very long time, but it was my first time where he was out there at the tournament with us. I think it's always a little different, like your tendencies on the range and on just your home golf course and your tendencies on the golf course at a tournament.

So I think it was really cool for me to have him there and for another pair of eyes to just check the way I swing it or

the way I play in those pressure conditions. I really enjoyed it and Sean said he enjoyed it as well. Hopefully he will be making more appearances down the road.

THE MODERATOR: Doesn't hurt to have him out here. With the start and stop to the schedule over the past few months, were you able to sit back and maybe unwind during last week at home?

LYDIA KO: I think one week off is a pretty short turn around, but luckily Georgia, here in Reynolds, is not that far from Orlando so we were able to drive. We don't have many events where we can drive, so it's nice where you can pack all sorts of food. I'm lucky that my mom travels with me, so a lot of Korean food packed for this one.

But the week kind of goes by really quick. I was able to have a few days off, work with my trainers, get some treatment, and do some work with Sean. Hopefully all those things combined will attribute to a fun week here.

THE MODERATOR: So I believe this is your first time at Reynolds Lake Oconee. What have you thought about the course? You talked about earlier that you were able to get nine holes in. How do you think it's going to suit your game this week?

LYDIA KO: I think the front and back nine plays a little bit differently. I think the back nine is more on the lake itself, so there are more open spots. Then the front is more a little bit more tree lined, you see the pines. But it is absolutely beautiful. I think the course is in really good shape.

I heard they redid the greens so I assumed the greens would be really firm, but I think they're playing fair. The course is in good nick, so I think it's going to be a lot of good golf. I love the variability of holes and lengths. I don't think it'll suit one type of player, which is one of my favorite types of golf courses. It doesn't suit one certain player.

So, yeah, should be good. I always love par-5 finishing holes, so should be an exciting finish.

THE MODERATOR: Before we open up for questions we have LPGA USGA Girls Golf Claire Hollingsworth on this call. Claire, I believe you have a question to ask Lydia.



Before we pass it on to Claire's question, before we pass it on to you Claire -- Claire, would you like to try talking again maybe?

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: Yes, ma'am. I just got back last week from the Tennessee State High School Golf School Championship where I quickly realized I need much more distance on my drives to compete with the better scoring girls and I need to get stronger. I read a recent article about you and how your workouts have changed during COVID. What advice would you give to a petite person like myself to create more distance during this off-season and pandemic?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think, I mean, everybody goes about their own different routines. Bryson DeChambeau has a very significant way of how he's gone to do his I guess gain strength and gain length and been very successful at it as well.

For me, I've been just trying to work with my trainers and make sure that I'm stronger both on the lower body and the upper body. For me personally, I felt like I could gain a lot more muscle and get stronger in the lower body, but I was struggling a little bit more at upper body. So we were focusing on what areas that I personally need to work on. Obviously that's different between me to you.

But I think a lot of people are saying, okay, the longer the better. Yes, obviously if you hit it long and straight that's great, but I think it's also important that you play your own game. We have so many champions, like Mo Martin. She's not the longest driver of the ball but she is a British Women's Open champion. I think sometimes when we see everybody that outdrives us, like tomorrow I'm in a pairing with Austin Ernst and Lexi Thompson, and I know for a fact I'm going to be the first to hit on the second shot on pretty much every hole.

You got to play to your own game and strengths, and obviously being longer is great and getting physically stronger so that you're not going to get as many injuries down the road. But I think if you play within your strengths you're still able to compete at a very high level.

THE MODERATOR: A great question from you Claire and a great answer from you, Lydia. I know you and Claire have your own special relationship, too. Do you care to go into detail what happened earlier this year when you got to surprise her?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, Claire was I think just on a Zoom call with USGA Girls Golf thing and I was asked if I could do a little surprise appearance, so I surprised Claire there. I hope it was a great surprise. I had heard a little bit about

Claire's story and kind of being from a similar background, and I thought it would be really cool to do that.

I was really excited to meet Claire. Obviously we haven't met in person yet, but to be able to meet her virtually and a couple DMs with her mom has been great as well.

But with her DriveOn story coming out, I think that just came out today, I saw it, and I think this just shows -- I think her line is, I'm small but mighty. I think that's what she is.

Sometimes I think our physical appearance or our race or gender or shape or size, I feel like that people kind of judge people on that way. But we're all the same on the inside, and I thought Claire was an absolute superstar. I hear she's been doing really well in her tournaments, so super cool to be able to hear those kinds of great news.

And she's probably going to be on the LPGA someday, so hopefully I'll retire before that so she doesn't kick my butt.

THE MODERATOR: I love that. You're right, we did launch Claire's DriveOn spot, which is our first nontour DriveOn story that we get to tell. We're going to be able to play it. If you don't mind, we'll pass it off to the DriveOn spot.

(Video shown.)

LYDIA KO: Just kind of gave me like chills just right there.

THE MODERATOR: I was going to say, I know you told me you were able to watch the story this morning, but how does that resonate with you when you're able to watch it again?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I mean, it's super cool and I think the big thing is Claire is comfortable in her own shoes. I think that is -- it sounds very easy to be in that position, but I think she obviously is with an awesome family and she is a very awesome girl. For me to be able to have this little connection with her is a true honor on my part. I see it and it just shows how strong and powerful she is as a girl, but she's a strong and powerful woman. I think it just shows woman empowerment.

Hopefully this is not the last DriveOn story outside of our tour players. Hopefully it will get a lot of attention and more girls that are maybe in a similar situation to Claire are able to come out and say, Hey, I can do this. It doesn't matter if I'm a little smaller or shorter than other girls or other kids my age. I'm comfortable being me and I'm proud to be me. And I think she's got so many things that she can be proud of for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Incredible. Before we pass it on to the media, I believe Steve, you have some questions of Claire that you would like to ask real quick.

Q. Hi, Claire. Glad you were able to compete in your state championship this week. I understand that you went back to China either earlier this year or last year. Tell us about that trip and what were your takeaways. What did you learn?

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: So, yeah, we did go back last year. We went to four different provinces and we went back to my hometown to see the orphanage where I came from. They turned it into a special needs home and that was really nice to see. We donated box fans because they don't have electricity in the thing, air conditioning, so we donated some box fans there.

And, yes, sir, it was a great experience to see everyone else and how they live and everything.

Q. And did it make you appreciate more golf and all of the things that you've had being over here now?

LYDIA KO: Yes, sir, because there you don't really always get to choose what you do. It's just something that you are like born into and have to do that thing. You don't have an option.

Q. Thank you, Claire.

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Steve, and thank you to Claire there. That was wonderful. I will now open it back up to questions to Lydia. Again, if you do have questions for Lydia, please make sure to use the chat function and I'll be sure to pass it on to you when it's your turn.

Beth Ann?

Q. If I can ask Claire a question first, is that okay?

LYDIA KO: I was like, don't ask me.

Q. I want to ask Lydia too, but I want to ask Claire a question. Hi, Claire. It's pretty cool to have your own TV commercial. Just wondering what you thought of the final product and just what this experience has been like for you?

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: The commercial, it was amazing. Yes, ma'am, it was truly a great experience, and I never would've thought that I would have my own

commercial.

Q. So what do you hope people who watch it take away from it?

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: That any obstacle you have you can do something. You can do it regardless of your size or any of your obstacles you have.

Q. Awesome. I thought it was a fantastic commercial, so congratulations to you.

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: Thank you.

Q. So Lydia, you were obviously extremely successful as a youngster and as an adult, too, but back when you were 15, do you remember feeling outsized and outmatched at all? You had such early success, but was there a point where you worried about that?

LYDIA KO: I mean, I'm South Korean born that grew up outside of the country that I was born in. I feel like I was very fortunate to be involved with two amazing cultures, and now three cultures being here in the U.S., but I think outside of all that, as a teenage girl or in your young teens, you all feel insecure about a few things. Like, man, I don't belong at times or I wish I had this and I don't. Other people just look bigger and better than you.

Yes, I've definitely been in that position before. I think the more time that went by and the more time I kind of got to spend on tour with the other ladies, I think I was just able to embrace -- I'm still in the learning process -- but be able to kind of understand and embrace myself. No one is perfect. All you can do is be the best version of yourself and that's it, and have fun during that process.

I think sometimes you feel like it's just uphill all the way. Somebody said, Hey, as you get older you feel -- you go through those bumps more often and you realize how I guess often those bad times you feel like comes more than the good ones.

But I think you just got to keep your head high and just be you. I think that's something that I'm truly trying to believe in and say to myself. I just got to be the best version of myself and that's it. I'm not doing anything to make myself look better for other people. I think that's a big advice I would say to anyone out there.

Q. I just have one more. You're typically heading off to Asia at this time of year. I know you're missing that. Can you talk about what having this tournament means to the tour? It's kind of all by itself with weeks off on either side of it, but what it means to have

another opportunity.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously the whole tour the players, staff, I'm sure we would have all loved to have been in Asia at this time of the year. I personally have not been in the U.S. in October before, so I had just realized how hot Orlando is still in October. Yeah, no, even though right now obviously the best option for all of us was to stay within the U.S., I think it was great, and all credit to the commissioner and everyone involved with the LPGA and out here at Reynolds to be able to host our second DriveOn event.

I know even though we would love to be playing more tournaments consecutively, I think it's nice that we still get another playing opportunity to play for CME at the end of the year as well. I think we actually had a pretty full-on season after the restart, so it might be nice just to have a few weeks extra off before our next stretch of events. I think we're very lucky that commissioner has brought us out here. The golf course is beautiful and the views are great. It's going to be good golf and this is a pretty -- 2020 has been a pretty tough year for a lot of people all around the world, and I think for us to have another playing opportunity is something that we're very grateful and thankful for.

Q. Thank you Lydia and Claire.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, Beth Ann. Marvin?

Q. I was wondering if you could talk about where you think you've made the most progress since working under Sean, and also just how much of a challenge that has been for you, that process?

LYDIA KO: What was the second bit?

Q. How challenging a process that has been for you?

LYDIA KO: It's actually been a pretty easy transition for me. I felt like my game was heading in the right direction during the quarantine, and obviously working with Sean we really simplified it. We don't get into too many technical things. Even the last few sessions we been doing quite a bit of short game stuff outside of the long game.

I think Sean has been able to kind of clear some of the questions in my mind and make it more simpler between the ears. Sometimes that's the more important thing. Every lesson I have with him I feel like we're working on the same things. He said we're not trying to find new solutions to problems. We are just trying to work on the same things.

I think that's why even though I am on the road and he might not be here, I'm still able to kind of have a better idea of what I need to do and just keep it pretty simple.

Q. When it comes to getting back to your best form and winning tournaments, do you feel a breakthrough or do you have to remind yourself to stay patient?

LYDIA KO: I think for me the first little while where I wasn't competing at the level when I was playing at my best, I think I compared myself a lot to then. I guess like I was referring earlier, I think you just got to be -- I just got to try my 100% when I'm out there, grind my butt out there, and just do the best that I can and the results happen. Those things come. A lot of those things are out of my control, so hopefully I'll be able to keep playing consistently well and put myself more in contention and in those positions.

That way you just get more comfortable being in that position before again and again, and I think the more time you do that, the more opportunities you're going to be the one holding the trophy at the end of the week. We have an incredible field this week and we're playing against the best female golfers and maybe the best golfers in the world. It's definitely not easy to win, and for some players to be dominant every week just shows how great they're playing.

I just got to, in my off weeks, just try my best, keep working on the areas that I feel like need to be worked on, and at a tournament just being focused and hopefully have a good week.

Q. Just lastly for me. I'm down here in New Zealand where we've handled the pandemic reasonably well. With so many uncertainties in the world, would you consider returning to New Zealand and spending time here for a while?

LYDIA KO: (No sound.) I think it got down to like zero at one point, which is pretty incredible considering what was happening elsewhere. But I did think about maybe going home, but at that time it was also a little bit of a risk for me to get on a long haul flight, especially as I'm not on the west coast. Makes it a little bit tougher to go home. So even though I would've loved to have been home, luckily the golf courses and all that in our community back in Orlando was very safe.

So I just opted for that option. Hopefully I'll be back home in New Zealand very soon.

THE MODERATOR: As we wrap up here today, especially in regard to Claire's spot, this week and this tournament the LPGA is highlighting some of our nontour areas like



Girls Golf and also scholarships raised by the LPGA Foundation.

How important are organizations like Girls Golf for young people looking to get into the game?

LYDIA KO: I think it is very important, and obviously the LPGA has done an incredible job with the foundation of supporting these up and coming junior golfers. I know that the percentage of girls, juniors taking membership and taking up golf has been an incredible I guess, a higher percentage than when they first got on board with this. I think it's just great to see so many young girls wanting to take up the game of golf. At times it's a very challenging game, but I think there are so many amazing attributes about the sport itself. Even though right now we don't have any fans out, all the players, we love seeing these up and coming future stars come in to watch us play.

We know that one day when we're all gone or maybe when we're still around they're going to be also on tour and be the ones to be sitting in this chair, not me. So it's great that the LPGA is really supporting that, and I think hopefully through this and through scholarships more girls and just more juniors will want to take up the game of golf.

I think sometimes it looks a little bit like you're unsure what it's going to be like, but I think it's an amazing sport and brings a lot of people together. The LPGA is a great reflection of so many different countries all here today. Hopefully more girls will be a part of this big family.

THE MODERATOR: Excellent. Beth Ann, for Claire, Claire, if you wouldn't mind, Beth Ann has a few questions she would like to ask you. Claire, is that all right?

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: Yes, ma'am.

Q. Just a couple easy ones. Where do you go to school and what grade are you in?

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: I go to St. Benedict of Auburndale, and I'm in the 9th grade.

Q. And how old are you?

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: 14.

Q. My last question is what city was the orphanage in?

LYDIA KO: Hunan province.

Q. Got it. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: Thank you.

Q. Best of luck to you.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you. And once again, I want to give a huge thank you to Claire Hollingsworth. Claire, we heard you have a test possibly you need to study for, so we all hope you do super well on that today. And also, just thank you for being able to come on today and help tell your story. I think I speak for all of us when I say it was quite emotional and we are all rooting for you.

We want to give another big thank you for Lydia coming on too. Thank you, Lydia, for joining us.

LYDIA KO: Good luck Claire.

CLAIRE HOLLINGSWORTH: Good luck.

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