

CME Group Tour Championship

Wednesday, December 16, 2020

Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

Danielle Kang

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right. Welcome inside the virtual media center here at the CME Group Tour Championship. Thank you Danielle Kang for joining us today.

Danielle, thanks for coming out.

DANIELLE KANG: Thank for having me.

THE MODERATOR: So we were just talking about it off camera, but we just finished up the major championship season last week. What was the U.S. Women's Open like for you, especially in this December in those kind of conditions? What were some of the things that you probably never experienced at a major championship like that before?

DANIELLE KANG: I mean, playing two golf courses was pretty tough, being prepared for that by Thursday. Weather wasn't very easy, but the conditions itself I think there is a lot of controversies on what happened last week, but for me, I think feeling utterly powerless over a golf ball when there is a shot and I have got 104 yard shot into a pin and I don't know where it's going.

It just felt very uncontrollable golf that I had to play, and for about -- throughout the week I just didn't know where it was going, how was it going to end up, and on the weekend it was really tough to judge that.

First couple days I think one of the difficulties was getting the green speed between the two golf courses because it changed. Just a lot of three-putt opportunities.

Yeah, it was a bit rough for me.

THE MODERATOR: How many layers were you wearing?

DANIELLE KANG: Four. Four on top, four on bottom. Felt like the Michelin Man.

THE MODERATOR: Did you have a parka?



DANIELLE KANG: No, I didn't. I should have packed one, but there was a girl with a parka in my group and I was super jealous. You still need to be able to swing, so I try layer up with all the adidas under heat layers as possible and then I even wore a beanie. I never wear a beanie. I was too cold.

THE MODERATOR: 2020 has been a year that no one expected, but you still have taken advantage of everything that the season has had to offer: two wins at the tour restart. You had three additional top 10 finishes. When you reflect on this past year, what are some of the things that you're most proud of and what would you say about the state of your game in 2020?

DANIELLE KANG: I think one of the things I'm most proud of with this year is how well I was able to prepare for each event. My game has been up and down, but through it all I know that 2020 year has not been an easy year for a lot of people, but despite what's happening I was able to play golf and work, and I think these a blessing in disguise.

That's the only thing I can be proud of, being prepared for whenever it starts. Winning back to back the first two events was really cool. The work that I did in the off-season and off time was really helpful for me.

But moving on to 2021, I'm just hoping there will be a better tomorrow and everyone can kind of go back to normal lives.

THE MODERATOR: We had Inbee in here earlier and I said, You won back in February. Does it seem like a lifetime ago? She kind of said it kind of does. Even though it was just in July with your back-to-back victories, does it seem like forever ago?

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, that feels like a long time ago. Even the Scottish, the British, and that five-week run that I did feels a long time ago. I know that we played Diamond Resorts and even Boca. I don't you even think that it was this year.

THE MODERATOR: It definitely feels different.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Along with all the accomplishments



you had, you're in contention for Rolex Player of the Year, in contention for the Vare Trophy.

What would it mean for you to be able to close out this year with one or both of those awards, and where do they rank in your career goals?

DANIELLE KANG: I definitely had, whether it was world No 1, Player of the Year, Vare Trophy, everything was a possibility at one point or another. I was world No. 2 at one point. You have goals and dreams in your mind and you set them when you play, and even before I started and while I'm on tour.

Sometimes, I don't know, this year has been a lot of ups and downs for me personally because even playing well comes with consequences, whether it's pressure of wanting to be the Player of the Year or not playing well and losing the Player of the Year and then playing well just in the reach of being world No. 1, yet dropping again.

That's part of it, though, and I think whether I do it or not, I'm okay with having the opportunity to have almost done it. Because I don't think it's just going to be once or twice that you have to have the opportunity. That's what actually Inbee said to me, too. We had a good chat a month ago.

She's a really great mentor of mine, and she said to me that it's not about just getting there once. It's not about doing it. It's more so giving yourself the constant opportunity to be able to reach that goal.

So with that kind of perspective in mind, whatever happenings, honestly, my goal next year is to have another opportunity to be the best or to be the Player of the Year or be world No. 1, and the year after that.

So I think that's the best way I can put it into perspective.

THE MODERATOR: I think that's an incredible perspective.

What does it mean to you to be able to have friends like Inbee be able to help you put that into that kind of perspective?

DANIELLE KANG: I think you can always learn from your friends and from the people that you surround yourself with and the people that love and -- that love you and you love back.

Having to be able to talk to people that have been in their own positions. We always say no one is ever going to really understand you. No one is really going through what you're going through. We can try. I can put myself in your

shoes, but I will never really know, and that's the truth.

But with that said, I would love to know how they thought when they were going through something. I love the fact that I was able to even this year talk to Annika about how to approach the game better and how to approach three-round tournaments better, because that was the weakest in my link and I won.

It was just learning as much as possible from people that are there that are willing to help and that have gone through their own struggles. No matter how great everything looks, everyone has their own thing. Having people like Inbee, whether it's So Yeon, Amy, all the friends that I have, have to be able to lean on them and be vulnerable and say, I wanted it so bad I didn't know what to do.

Like she goes, okay, this is what I thought and this is how I think it helped me. Maybe try it.

THE MODERATOR: Nothing like advice from the Queen Bee.

DANIELLE KANG: She is the queen.

THE MODERATOR: As we take a look to this week, this is your eighth CME Group Tour Championship. You finished tied for third in a time that you were playing some pretty impressive golf. In 2020 you have continued playing pretty impressive golf.

What is it about Tiburon that brings out your game and what have you thought about the course so far?

DANIELLE KANG: I like this golf courses. I really, really do. I keep telling people if I just don't "beep" around I should be contending pretty well.

I don't know why. I just get really greedy out here. When you get greedy, there is this nice little lost ball waiting for you. I don't know. I just get really excited to play this event, and I even said to people that I took seven weeks off before U.S. Open.

U.S. Open is great, but I wanted it to be kind of a steppingstone for though week. I know the golf course pretty well. I know how the greens break. There are some par-3s that I have made doubles out here with 8-irons because I got so cocky on the tee box and thinking I could hit it to five feet.

Just going to go to the middle of the green now. So I think just going to be smarter and I think I should be able to contend.

THE MODERATOR: With that, before we open up to questions -- no, we'll get to that. Don't worry. Before we open up to additional questions, I would like to introduce someone that you met last year, I believe. Mary Browder is on the call. She's one of the patients that we have honored in the past year here in the CME Group Tour Championship.

So I believe she has a question or two for you. Mary? I see her but...

DANIELLE KANG: Where is Mary?

MARY BROWDER: I'm here.

THE MODERATOR: Nice to see you again, Mary.

MARY BROWDER: Nice to see you, too.

So let's see, last year was pretty cool. Let's see, so question: What advice do you have for me to be in a better mindset to win more tournaments? One of my main goals for the next year and however long is just to continue to improve and to see how good I can be. Part of that goal is to win more tournaments.

So what advice do you have for me with that?

DANIELLE KANG: I love that you asked that question, Mary. A lot of people say, Oh, it's the journey and the patience and all that. I think at the end of the day you want to win, right?

The best advice I got to win more tournaments is to be in position to win more. It's hard to win on any level, but if you keep putting yourself in a position to be able to contend and have the opportunity to win, you will end up winning eventually.

Second, being second sucks; third sucks because you're so close to winning. Sometimes you can go, I had a great week but somebody else won. But then you can sit there and look at yourself and say, I gave myself a really good opportunity to win this week and I'm proud of that.

Then the next week you have to improve on parts of your game so you can contend again. I think that's the mindset of winning that I have. I know some players have won 20 times, 70 times, and my goodness, they're legends for a reason.

I won five and worked really hard for those five that I won. I think I gave myself the most opportunity in the last couple years than I've done previous years.

MARY BROWDER: So I'm going to college next year. I'm still working through the recruiting process. What advice do you have for me to transition into playing college golf?

DANIELLE KANG: I actually really liked college golf. I loved my coach from Pepperdine, Coach Gibbs. And the transition into college golf, if I could go back, I would try to have a better team environment. I know that golf is an individual sport, but now that I'm a pro it's a team sport.

You have to have a good team around you, good support system that support you, and you have to be able to support them back. Have the good friends and the good role models.

So in college golf, try and learn from your peers, learn from your teammates, and ask your coach as many questions as you can, whoever she or he may be. They've seen a lot of players come and go in their time and they've got a lot of knowledge.

Take advantage of that and try and learn from each and every player on their strengths and weaknesses and try and make each other better. I think it will prepare you for the pros when you come out here.

MARY BROWDER: Sounds good. So what do I and others like me need to do between now and next August to prepare?

DANIELLE KANG: What do I think you needed to do?

MARY BROWDER: Uh-huh.

DANIELLE KANG: Well, Mary, only you will know that. If you feel that you're a really good ball-striker, then I would always say you can never practice too much short game. So I would always try to get more feel around the greens. Different types of grass, bermuda, bent, Zoysia, whatever you can get your feel on and learn different shots, that can help you. You can never stop learning with short game.

MARY BROWDER: All right.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, Mary. Thank you so much for those questions.

Mary is a St. Jude patient. She is part of this program that CME Group and LPGA have done, Score One for St. Jude. I know you do a lot charity.

DANIELLE KANG: How many hole in ones have there been this year?



THE MODERATOR: That is a really good question that I should have off the top my head. I think almost 15. I know there was --

DANIELLE KANG: 15 hole in ones this year?

THE MODERATOR: I know over \$200,000 raised this year. So I know you do a lot with charity. What does it mean to have a program like in this place and what did does, even if you're just making -- I mean, not just making a hole-in-one -- but a hole-in-one can do so much for some patients at St. Jude?

DANIELLE KANG: I think Mary would be able to answer that better than I can. But from my perspective, I think being able to play and make a difference somehow would encourage me and motivate me to do better.

Hole in ones are a lot of luck. I made five in one year. I wish that we had this few years ago. But, I mean, Mary, would you like to explain on how helpful it is and how much it's changed your life?

MARY BROWDER: Well, sure. St. Jude has been incredible to me, as they are to all their patients. But the Score One For St. Jude is just such a cool program. It's really cool. I think it would be pretty cool to be able to just go play a normal round of golf, and if you hit a really good shot you donate a bunch of money.

Yeah, really does mean a lot that CME has partnered with St. Jude and the LPGA to help raise money and awareness for St. Jude. It really does make a difference to all of our lives. St. Jude is an amazing institution. I have said before it's the most wonderful place on earth, and I really do mean that.

DANIELLE KANG: Awesome. That's so beautiful. Thank you, Mary for sharing. So I can't guarantee you that I would make a hole-in-one this week, but I can guarantee you that I can make a birdie.

So tell me about St. Jude, because I don't know that much about them personally, but if you tell me that this has changed your life and makes that much of a difference, she inspired me to want to make a difference. I can guarantee you I'll make a birdie, so I'll pledge to donate \$1000 per birdie that I make this week for you, in honor of you.

MARY BROWDER: That's awesome.

DANIELLE KANG: Because I can't guarantee a hole-in-one, but I can guarantee a birdie.

MARY BROWDER: Okay. Got to make a bunch of birdies

then.

DANIELLE KANG: 20 so I can get to \$20,000 then. That would be cool. I got you, Mary.

THE MODERATOR: Incredible. Oh, my gosh. As we close up here and we wrap up and think about this week in general, your plan is to go out there and now make as many birdies as possible.

What would it mean for you, knowing this golf course so well, to end 2020 with a win at the CME Group Tour Championship?

DANIELLE KANG: Honestly to win a Tour Championship is one of my goals and my dreams. It's just the season finale and I think it'll be a really great way in any way to wrap up a season.

This golf course for some reason has a special place in my heart and I feel that I can do really well. Just pressing the restart button from last week. I didn't make a lot of birdies last week. Hopefully the putts will drop this week and I can make a difference with Mary, so I'm excited.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Danielle, for joining us, and thank you everyone. Thank you and Mary for those incredible questions, and we will see you again soon.

DANIELLE KANG: Cool. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

