

# CME Group Tour Championship

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Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

## Danielle Kang

Press Conference

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THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome everyone inside the virtual interview room at the CME Group Tour Championship.

Welcome back to the season-ending event. Does it feel like the season has flown by for you at all, or what are your feelings as you enter the last event?

DANIELLE KANG: I feel like this year has been two years long. (Laughter.) It's never ending. I've had a really long season. I've been on the road for a lot of weeks right now, so I think I'm getting a little bit tired.

But hitting everything the same distance except my driver, so trying to figure that out. Trying to finish in a high note. I know it has been a winless season, so hopefully I can kind of manipulate my way around the golf course.

**Q. What's it like returning to a place where you feel comfortable? You've had some pretty high results here before, and I feel like it's nice to have those weeks where you don't have to really push yourself all that often on a course that you do feel comfortable at?**

DANIELLE KANG: Oh, I don't feel very comfortable. Normally I do. Well, normally I do, you're correct, but I played it today and I think the golf course is softer than it has ever been, which mean we're not getting much run-offs on the fairway. I long err clubs in but the greens are kind of firmer, and then it's soft and really grainy.

Chips around the greens are quite difficult.

**Q. I was going to say, how important is it to kind of get these greens and figure out these greens during these first couple days as you enter some weird weather ahead of us as well?**

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, I'm a little bit uncertain at this point because the drills that I've done on the practice



facility are not really matching the ones on the golf course. I don't know if that was just a weird day today.

Around the greens are really tough, even last week in Pelican. I know that Florida grass is different than where I normally am used to, but because it's softer it's really grabbing.

I even tried to hit with different shots and clubs, rescues even, which means it's really hard for me to hit a good shot. That's kind of making me nervous.

**Q. I know off the course Naples is such a beautiful community, a beautiful area. I saw you had gone to the beach I believe with So Yeon.**

DANIELLE KANG: Yes, I did.

**Q. Yes. But just to be able to do that at this last event, kind of have that bit of relaxation on the side, is that comforting to you? I know you said you're not as comfortable on the course, but to have those moments outside, does that add comfort?**

DANIELLE KANG: Not necessarily. I think I'm sometimes so obsessed with eating right, sleeping right, working out, living and breathing just to play good golf that even if I do everything correct, my results are not where I want it to be.

But I don't want to miss out sometimes on life because I'm tired. Who isn't tired? Everyone is always tired for some reason. I even went to Tampa game last week and watched couple of my friends play, Tampa Bay Lightning.

I just want to be able to live. So going to the beach, it's literally four miles away, so I just went to watch the sunset.

**Q. Yeah. I know a lot of people have come up here and said there is four more rounds and the countdown is on. Are you ready to put the clubs down at the end of this year? I know you don't like to take the off-season.**

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah.

**Q. In years past you've gotten ready to go, but I didn't know if this year was any different.**



DANIELLE KANG: No. I already have certain things scheduled. I'm playing the Floridian Pro Member with Butch from December 8 through 12; playing golf from 13th through 20th.

No, I don't really put my clubs down. I think more so than anything my off-season is getting my fitness and nutrition back into rhythm, being able to do the techniques that I practice.

So a lot of times I want to wake up as consistently as possible. Feel as consistent as possible. That's something that I have a really hard time doing while I travel on tour.

**Q. You just distracted me. I had a question I wanted to ask you. Oh, scheduling. What have you learned in your years on tour in terms of how much and where and how many adjustments do you think you've made?**

DANIELLE KANG: On scheduling?

**Q. Yeah.**

DANIELLE KANG: To be honest, I want to play everything if I could, but I can't.

I have tried. I've gone even nine weeks in a row.

For how I see it, this year I've gone back and forth on trying to take some time off and being at home versus on tour. I'm trying to find the right balance.

I think next year -- even actually starting this week I'm more focused on trying to figure out how to play as many as I can in the most consistent way.

Because taking time off and going home for me isn't really working out because I deteriorate really fast as soon as I come back out here.

I am a habitual creature. I go home, I have workouts set, I have the gym set, I have the physio. The minute I'm out here it's all haywire. I don't have my set routines. I do, but then it's not as stable as when I'm at home.

So I'm trying to figure out a way if I can make that tour life as stable as possible. I don't think taking time off for me is the answer.

**Q. And the other thing I wanted to ask you, if you were to be asked how much do you love golf, how would you answer that?**

DANIELLE KANG: I really love golf. I used to not, but I have learned to love the game in the last few years and I

am obsessed with it. I'm trying to figure out a way to fail better at this point because I fail every day.

I'm trying to figure it out and I can't figure out this game. I don't know who has, but -- actually I think Nelly has. Just the consistency of her strike and just sometimes like even Inbee when I watch her putt, the consistency of it is incredible.

And trying to strive to that is -- you have to keep failing. For me, I think my new goal to fail better every time I fail. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: That's definitely one way to look at it.

**Q. In terms of just enjoying the game, do you ever find yourself or have you ever gone to play courses that are not tournament related just to go play them? Are you that type of like a Brad Faxon type?**

DANIELLE KANG: To be quite frank, I don't enjoy playing recreationally. I don't really like to play for fun. I love competition. I like being able to score what I did, didn't do well, and be better and try and work towards a goal.

Golf is stressful enough that I really don't want to play for fun. It is really not fun when I make bogeys.

So me trying to stress and try and birdie when I'm playing at a random golf course doesn't -- it stresses me out.

I like mini golf.

**Q. That doesn't count.**

DANIELLE KANG: Well -- it does count. I even putted in the water and I have to lay -- it's just --

**Q. Have you ever thrown a club in miniature golf?**

DANIELLE KANG: No, because it's not mine and I feel bad if I did. I don't want the miniature golf people to say that Danielle Kang came by and broke a club. That's the last thing I need. (Laughter.)

**Q. The 2020 season that saw back-to-back wins for you, it was a pretty solid year even though it was shortened by the pandemic. Get into 2021, I'm sure you had big, lofty goals for yourself, but what's been your most meaningful moment from your 2021 season?**

DANIELLE KANG: That is actually a tough question. Meaningful moment?

**Q. Like I know you've had a lot of accomplishments, but what has meant the most to you personally?**

DANIELLE KANG: Oh, okay. My most meaningful this entire year -- this entire year has been very stale for me. I feel like a hamster on a wheel. I've been running really fast getting nowhere. That's how I have felt, what my results show or not.

But making it to the Olympics was probably the highlight of my career, because when it got delayed and the qualifications got delayed I cried, because that's been my life goal and dream.

So for me to be able to perform still at the top level going, through that mentality, feeling like I was going to fail but then pushing through that, I was actually very proud of myself making that happen.

**Q. With four rounds left in the season, we have to wonder, such a creature of habit what do you do in the off-season to get yourself ready for 2022?**

DANIELLE KANG: I'm going to change some things up this year. Already in the process to change things up. I have some new members on team trying to figure out how to approach the next season.

Kind of made it into a long-term goal, and I think I have to try and gamble next year for -- try and figure out -- whether it's to figure out the body composition, the fitness, I need to make things a little bit more consistent. It's just a little bit too sporadic no matter how many times I've seen my results.

It's good, but not solid. So I think the off-season, that's my goal. I have to figure some things out.

**Q. When did you notice that you lost the pop with the driver? Was there like a time?**

DANIELLE KANG: Couple months ago.

**Q. How many? Sorry.**

DANIELLE KANG: Couple months ago.

**Q. Do you have any guess as to why?**

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, I have quite a few guesses. I've lost weight, muscle weight. I've been trying to put on muscle mass but I haven't been able to. I've been on the road for nine weeks, and in between gone to my best friend's wedding. Hasn't been bad, just haven't had time, yet do have time, and yet it's just not doing it.

But my 3-wood is only going five yards further than my driver, so we even thought of let's just hit a 3-wood off the tee just to make myself feel better.

But just has to figure out spin rate and the way I'm contacting, even if it's -- whether it's the equipment -- Titleist has been so helpful in trying to figure out why I'm hitting it the way I do.

I don't really think it's the equipment. It's me mostly for me, so I think that's going to take time to pan out and why.

**Q. How many yards would you say you've lost?**

DANIELLE KANG: Probably 20.

**Q. Wow.**

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, it's a lot. I'm pretty far back right now.

**Q. You just said you went to your best friend's wedding. Were you the maid of honor?**

DANIELLE KANG: No, her sister was.

**Q. Didn't have a speech?**

DANIELLE KANG: I did have to make a speech. I winged it, like I normally do. It was fine. I didn't say anything absurd.

**Q. Where was the wedding?**

DANIELLE KANG: Sherwood Country Club, my home course. So I pretended it was -- we had an In-n-Out truck, so that was my wedding gift to her. And I told her don't ask me for anything else. (Laughter.)

**Q. What long-term goals are you planning to gamble next season on?**

DANIELLE KANG: I'm going to have to try and focus a bit more on everything outside of golf than technique. I really focus on technique and mechanics, but there is so much I can do, and after that, it becomes whether it's sleep, nutrition, health, those things have -- my body -- I have to wake up in the morning and be able to do what I practiced.

That hasn't been the case. So I don't know how to fix that yet, but I'm sure people -- there are experts, so I'm going to have to ask for their help.

**Q. What changes have you made to your team to try**

and find those answers?

DANIELLE KANG: Physio, nutritionists, physiology, trainer. Those are the things that I have to tap into. At home it's great, but I needed something that -- I'm not home very often so it's kind of -- doesn't really matter, right?

(Laughter.) If it's great at home, I mean, I play a fantastic at home, but I need to figure out how to apply it when I'm traveling. I don't want to go home every other week. I do want to compete. That's the fun of it for me.

**Q. You mentioned not playing golf recreationally. It stresses you out.**

DANIELLE KANG: Yes.

**Q. In that you're trying to work on getting away from the course, focus on things outside of golf. How hard is it to have something be so stressful be your entire career, most of what you do?**

DANIELLE KANG: Golf being stressful? But I like the stress, right? It's weird. I like the stress. I like it because it's my job and something I do and love to do, but at the same time, when I'm at home I don't want to be even more stressed out and apply more stress onto myself when I don't have to.

I think that's why I say I don't really like to play recreationally. If I have other things to do, whether it's to go to a game or go watch my friends play a game, anything like that that I don't have to be involved in in my work, I try to opt out of it.

Rather do anything else than go and play golf for fun. (Smiling.)

**Q. The announcement of this tournament, the purse going up to \$7 million next year. Maybe was a couple years ago I guess when the USGA for the Women's Open was 5 and this was 5 and it was starting to get your attention. What do you think of this going to 7 and some of the other increases we're starting to see?**

DANIELLE KANG: I think so far the LPGA has progressed so well that I'm just very thankful for all the sponsors putting up more money and our purses getting bigger.

Players are getting better. It's just LPGA is growing in the right direction. It takes a village to help; we can't just do it alone. People like CME Tour Championship and CME Tour just backing that up and being able to provide and set the stage up for us, at the end of the day I'm very thankful

for that.

Our new commissioner, Mollie, has an amazing vision, and I think she has -- I've really appreciated the time that she's taken to talk to me personally, et cetera. I'm really excited for where the LPGA is headed. I've been on tour for over ten years now, over ten years, so how far it's come in the last ten is pretty incredible to see the team that is has, built, whether it's the media team, the communications, to staff, everybody, it's getting bigger and better.

So doesn't happen overnight. Even the purse increase to \$7 million, AIG making the purse increase, to Aon Risk Reward. I mean, Hannah Green just won a \$1 million prize. That's amazing.

Even last week, how fun was it that there was a Lamborghini sitting on the tee box and we have hole-in-ones left and right? What are the chances of that?

THE MODERATOR: This week there is a Porsche.

DANIELLE KANG: See. Everything is elevated. I think that itself elevates the game, elevates the players, elevates the field, and I can only see just positive from it.

So just thankful.

**Q. This might be a tricky question, and the last thing I want to do is put any stress on you whatsoever, but it seems like there is a lot -- or do you feel like there is a lot of momentum for the LPGA right now? If so, why is that? Where is that momentum coming from, do you think? You can just say forget it and I'll answer it next case year.**

DANIELLE KANG: Oh, I'm just trying to understand the question. If I understand it correctly I think there has been momentum since I've been out here, I guess, because every year it's just been getting better. I've been a member since 2012 and only the thing I can say for myself is my experience.

I used to play for one \$1 million purses to 1.3 to 1.4 to 1.5 to 4, to 5, to now 7. There was never \$1 million prize five, six years ago.

The Tour Championship now it was -- everything is shifting, and that's why I always thought the LPGA is heading towards better. However the staff has been built, whatever Mike Whan did, whatever Mollie is doing, is correct.

Because as a player standpoint, it's just getting better place to work. It's a better place to show up to work and represent. At the end of the day I'm proud to represent as

a LPGA player.

So whatever part that I do to make it better, is all I can do is be the best golfer I can be and represent the tour the best I can do being myself.

So in that momentum for that following year, all I can see is it's just going to grow. For me, I don't expect it to jump 30 steps. As long as I see it -- as long as I want be a part of it, as long as I it's becoming a family, it's growth.

There has been little shifts here and there, and it takes sponsors like CME to stand up, Aon Risk Reward to be able to provide those things.

So at the end of the day I've always said thank you for setting the stage, because without the stage we can't perform. I think at one point that might have been the case with LPGA, so...

**Q. Thank you.**

DANIELLE KANG: No problem.

THE MODERATOR: I think I will wrap it there. Thank you for joining us and good luck this week.

DANIELLE KANG: Thank you.

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