

CME Group Tour Championship

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Tiburón Golf Club

Lydia Ko

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, hello everyone and welcome to the media center at the CME Group Tour Championship. I'm joined by Lydia Ko. First things first, not your first time here at the CME Group Tour Championship. Just what does it mean for you personally to be back here this week?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, you know, having missed the Tour Championship once before in '23, I think I now appreciate it more to be here. Always great to be able to kind of cap off the season here in Naples.

We've been around at this event for a really long time, and it's really thanks to CME and Terry and all they've done to support the LPGA and truly believe in us.

So it's great to represent a company that truly believes in not only myself but women's golf and envisions what's next.

So, yeah, it's an exciting week and I'm excited to kind of cap off the 2025 season on a high.

Q. We had a really cool night last night at the Rolex LPGA Awards. You presented two awards and were honored up there as a Hall of Famer. What did that mean last night to be so integrated in the awards show?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously very honored to present both awards to Lindy and Stacy. When they both asked me I didn't really know or think that they would ask me, so kind of caught me by surprise.

They're both so deserving in their own manner of the awards they received. I'm glad that other Tour members think of that and kind of have given them that recognition.

And the Commissioner's Award with the rest of the Hall of Famers was a bit of a surprise. I think I was walking up on stage and wasn't really sure what was happening. None of us knew. So especially being the last Hall of Famer or last member to be in the Hall of Fame, it felt pretty surreal to be



there on stage and Judy, Betsy, Nancy and Annika. I definitely felt like part of the cool kids club.

Still makes me think I'm not really sure if I deserve that. It's such a special night and Rolex does an unbelievable job celebrating not only the players but our partners and the tournament staff and everyone that's really involved with our Tour year in, year out.

So it's a great night and I think everybody had a fun time celebrating.

Q. Last year there was the fun moment on stage with Kai when you were doing your press conference. Is he here again this week and will he be contained?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, it's been doing a lot of training, service dog training as well. I'm proud to say he's a different dog for the better. I don't have to worry about him running away. If he does make a run for it, his recall is good so he comes.

But, yeah, thank goodness I don't have -- knock on wood -- I don't have to worry about him getting eaten alive by gators. That was definitely one for the memory books.

Q. That was brilliant. Big announcement today about television and the LPGA. Hoping you could speak to the importance of what that FM partnership means with more cameras and TrackMan and live coverage. And then your assessment of Craig's short tenure so far as commissioner.

LYDIA KO: Yes, obviously very exciting announcement for us. It was very new information for all of us, too. But, yeah, I think it's what the players and the Tour deserve. We have had events like the U.S. Women's Open or the KPMG where we do have a bit more data and coverage than our day-to-day events.

So to kind of expand on that and have more coverage going forward is very exciting. I think as a viewer perspective just to know that, okay, even if I can't be there or I can't watch footage live, see with TrackMan and all these data, have a better idea how the players are playing or how the golf course is playing I think just kind of engages a lot more people.



So it's I think a very big step forward for us and the whole -- not only golf, but in like other sports as well and other industries I think technology has become a huge factor. I think it engages especially some of the younger generation that only knows this type of I guesser raw in technology.

It's cool that we're kind of following that trend, and I do believe this will just grab more attention of some people that just have a hard time tracking things before.

I think I've been in that position where I don't play a tournament and I kind of want to watch or see what happened or see some of the data, and it's been an aspect that I felt like we could really improve on.

So to see the growth in that and see how much more coverage we're going to get domestic and overseas, it's a very exciting thing. I think there has been a lot of exciting announcements these past couple months. I think Craig officially been the commissioner since July-ish. In four months I think we've seen a lot of great improvement in things that I feel like we should have been in that position more a long time.

So to see those things with I think Black Desert, with them being the marketing I think, and then with FM, the media coverage, it's just -- I think the last couple months has been a little bit of the fast forward pace, and it's been great to be part of that and to kind of see the growth from that perspective.

I think we're growing as an organization and becoming -- and having a much stronger I guess foundation to the organization outside of just playing for more money and what kind of directly impacts us day-to-day. I think having those kind of things set is really important for us going forward, and Craig has been I think a good leader in that sense in bringing those kind of opportunities for us.

Q. Two from me. First of all, one of the things in the broadcast is you guys are going to be expected to do more walk-and-talks on the course. I know you guys are doing those sometimes. What is your take on doing more of those mid-round interviews?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously kind of depends on what routine the certain player wants. I think it's sometimes hard honestly to do it because you don't know what -- how you're going to play that hole. They might say you're going to do it on 12 and I might have hit it on the water on 12, and the last thing you want to do is talk about what's been going on with your round.

But I think our analysts and everybody have been around for a long time where they I understand and kind of read

the room and say, okay, maybe we shouldn't talk to her right now and get another opportunity.

Yeah, I think it's cool in the perspective of fans to hear what the players are really thinking. Even though the mic is there you don't catch all the conversations with the caddie and the interactions. It's kind of like an inside-the-ropes experience. I think it's definitely a valuable part.

But definitely as a player, it kind of goes by case by case just because sometimes you're not really in the position to talk and you are just trying to focus on what's next.

Q. Now that Kai is well trained, what's the craziest thing that Kai did?

LYDIA KO: I mean, he's still -- I think his genetics is crazy. His genetics is crazy. I have learned that dog training is very expensive, so I can only imagine what it is for kids. They do say that dogs are a good steppingstone for having kids, so I'm definitely learning in the monetary standpoint.

But, yeah, he's honestly really great. He's still young. He's like around two, just under two, so he has his moments. But his training has been great and I think it gives us the flexibility to be together more and for him to be there and support me.

So, yeah, it's been good, and I'm just glad I don't have to like worry about chasing him. But he did run away after last year, too. He ran away at HGV this year and Minjee, Megan, and I were trying to chase him down. Minjee brought him one of his favorite toys and a snack and Megan and I were trying to corner him.

Luckily it was within the gates of where we live so it's easy. Yeah, he's -- the training, he's just been doing a lot of training and it really has helped. So we can all learn and get better, yeah.

Q. (No microphone.)

LYDIA KO: No, but Megan -- safe to say Megan was very sweaty after we caught Kai. So I felt really bad because it was the day before the event.

Q. When you talk about Craig hitting the ground running and putting things on fast forward and growing the exposure of the LPGA Tour, when you look at this season with 29 unique winners, only two repeat champions, does the LPGA need one or two stars to be dominant to grab the eyeballs that you guys are deserving of and want, or is the depth and talent it's shown beneficial?



LYDIA KO: I think it's both ways. As a tour and even from a fan perspective, yes, it's great to have somebody like a Nelly that was so dominant last year. Catches a lot of attention, especially with her -- in Nelly's case being an American player. That catches a lot of different attention. In the case of even if you don't play golf, you know who Tiger Woods is.

Like having that kind of a figure is, yes, very important, but at the same time just a level of play between the No. 1 ranked player on the CME rankings to 100, I think the talent is not that far different.

You know, obviously there is a bit of luck, how you're feeling health-wise. There is just a lot of variables to that. So the depth of talent is just so much stronger than before so it is that much more difficult to win.

And, you know, golf is that crazy game where -- I mean, I saw Nelly's press conference. She has better stats than last year but she hasn't won and won seven, eight times last year. Sometimes stats isn't it. Like if you did that you would think, okay, you would win X amount of times.

There so many variables and you're playing against 143 other players. It's just a lot of things. But I think as a Tour having better talent and more talent throughout the leaderboard is just as important as having one superstar.

We market ourselves to be a very global tour, and I think that's what we see and that's what we see especially having 12 first-time winners this year, bunch last year and the year before. So I think that just shows rookies they aren't really rookies. They're very good and really hard to count anybody out.

So it is a double-edged sword in that sense that you want the depth and the talent because you just want to see the whole game grow, but at the same time, if I was to market someone it's much easier to market one person than 30 people.

So I understand both perspectives.

I think just the way that our Tour is now, I think there is just so much and so much storytelling that can be made that we don't necessarily need to just bank on having this one person.

Q. With Craig you mentioned the TV deal, Aramco Championship, Black Desert. What do you think he should focus on next as you guys look toward 2026?

LYDIA KO: He's honestly been in this kind of executive

role not only here but obviously at the PGA of America. So for somebody that is experienced like him it's hard for me to say I think you needed to this. He's obviously got so much experience.

I do love the fact that he's a people person. I've spent some time with him. We had a two-hour lunch meeting where we talked about this and that. So it's nice that commissioner is somebody that we can approach and say, hey, I do think these are aspects that we need to be better at as a Tour, an organization, or for a certain event.

But then at the same time he brings that charisma which I think you do need as a commissioner and being in this kind of role. Yeah, I think there has been some sensitive topics over the last couple years in golf in general and I feel like we're slowly ticking these boxes away.

And there will be new topics that will come for us in the future, but I think having a good leader like him that truly understands and knows how to run a big organization like this, I think the Tour has a lot of trust and I think the members have a lot of the trust in him. I'm excited to see more new exciting announcements in the future.

Yeah, I believe that as a Tour we're really getting stronger with our relationships with our partners and the kind of bond we have between the members and the staff as well, so I'm excited for what's next.

And, yeah, I truly believe that Craig is going to take our Tour to that next step and I'm excited to be part of that.

Q. Two unrelated questions. You knew the Hall of Fame was coming. When it happened, what was the moment like? Was it surreal?

LYDIA KO: I mean, I'm not complaining the way that it happened, but the gold medal was such a big deal that I think at the moment I was just over the moon about winning the gold medal and kind of finishing that medal set that being in in the Hall of Fame was -- yeah, it was nice to get both of them out of the way, but I wish in ways -- but in saying that, if I did it at the British Open I would've been so excited anyway.

So you can't chose because every win is special in its own way. I think just at the Olympics it was just a surreal feeling coming down the last, having the opportunity to win the gold, and I think that was kind of the biggest thing that was on my mind.

Like being in the Hall of Fame didn't even cross my mind at that point. Yeah, I felt like there was a lot of pressure. Obviously losing in in the playoff against Nelly in Bradenton



earlier that year, you know, it was -- I think it kind of like took me a step back, and I was like am I actually going to do it? How long do I have to wait for it? Is it going to keep testing and teasing me until it really happens?

I feel like it was God's way of telling me to wait for the right moment. That summer that I had in Europe was the craziest stretch of golf that I personally played and experienced. To now be in in the Hall of Fame, it still doesn't feel real.

I think the biggest takeaway I have from that is I think before I was in the Hall of Fame, before I had won the gold medal, I felt like my life was going to be like substantially different. I think when you don't have that and you -- and it feels like it's in reach but you still haven't grasped it, you feel like, okay, if I do that I'm going to be that different person.

Truly I'm the same person I was even before I won that and even before going to the Hall of Fame, so in that sense I think it's good. But when you're so close you do wonder and think that it's going to be that different, but I'm still the same person. I'm still out here playing and still trying to win this event.

Obviously it's a much better mindset to be at. Before you're there it's just a lot of the mixed emotions. So I'm just glad all of that is over and now I can focus on playing the best golf I can and really focus on what's in front of me rather than all these titles that come with playing.

Q. And secondly, Lottie Woad being in this field having turned professional in July, so four months, is that impressive to you that she's played that much and here she is?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, she earned her way into becoming a member through the LEAP program. It hasn't been around for a long time, so it really rewards players like her.

I heard that if that was around back in the day there would've only been like a handful of players that would've made it through that way, so she has proven herself that she can play well at a high collegiate level and on multiple tours.

She came out with a bang finishing Top 5, I think almost winning Evian, and then winning the Scottish Open. That's been impressive to see. I've played a practice round with her today. She's so good at everything. I'm not surprised she has been playing consistently well.

Also seems like she has very good work ethic and sometimes you just see a player and go oh, she's just so

talented. They're born with it. I'm sure she's talented and born with it to some extent but seems like she works her butt off to be here and be this good. I'm not surprised she's playing at this level.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Lydia.

LYDIA KO: Thank you.

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