

Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions

Friday, January 19, 2024

Orlando, Florida, USA

Lake Nona Golf & Country Club

Lydia Ko

Quick Quotes

Q. Here now with Lydia Ko after her second round at the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions. Just what went into this bogey-free round today, especially the eagle on 9?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I played really solid. I think straight from the get-go I hit a really good shot into No. 1, and yesterday I feel like I drove it pretty solid but my irons weren't as sharp.

So to kind of go on the first hole and hit it down your target was a good start. Just tried to keep it simple and give myself a lot of good opportunities, and I was giving myself a lot of birdie chances, so I feel like I left a few out there.

It wasn't easy, especially the wind picking up after nine holes. So that's going to be the mindset for the next couple days, but definitely glad that I'm done and it's still raining outside.

But a good start to the season.

Q. Just going to say, seems like as you played your round you went through every kind of weather you could have. Did that change your game plan at all and how were you able to react to the different elements being thrown at you?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think on the front nine it was a lot calmer than I thought it was going to be. When I saw the weather forecast I knew it was going to be windier than yesterday, but there was almost like barely any wind, like half a club winds.

We got to 10 and then I was about to hit my second shot and you could definitely feel that it picked up a lot. 18 is probably not an easy hole to start off with, but when it's rainy and windy, those are two pretty tough conditions to play in.

But in my head before my second shot I don't know if I



should wait a little and see if the rain was going to die, calm down a little bit. But I was like, you know what? I got to get this shot over and done with and need to hit the shot anyway, so just committed to it and set myself a good birdie opportunity.

Always nice to finish any round with a birdie on the last.

Q. What were your clubs into 9 and 18? How close did you hit it?

LYDIA KO: I hit a 3-wood into 9 and then a 4-hybrid into 18.

Q. How close?

LYDIA KO: I think it was like around nine feet on 9 and then 15 on 18.

Q. The swing work you've done, new coach, do you feel a boost in your confidence?

LYDIA KO: I think Grant Thornton helped a lot. We did a lot of good work the week before with my coach flying over and spending some time here at Lake Nona.

I think even though you do good work, at the end of the day you got to pull it off and make that work when you're playing and playing competitive rounds.

Even though it was a unique format at Grant Thornton, I think it just was really beneficial week for me to kind of be in positions where I was uncomfortable and still be able to commit to my shots.

You know, how I finished and some of the shots that I hit coming down the stretch kind of gave me like a sigh of relief, hey, what I'm working on is good.

Just got to keep doing those things and flush out some of the bad every day. If I can improve like minimal amounts day by day or by week or by month, I'm moving in the right direction.

Just got to keep it simple and sometimes I just over-complicate things. So make sure that I'm not my worst enemy when I'm out there, yeah.



Q. What's the advantage to playing in your backyard and maybe what's the disadvantage to having a tournament right here?

LYDIA KO: The advantage is I hit it in a lot of the spots. Hit it in some questionable areas, some good spots. I don't think I've ever hit it as close as I did on No. 9, so that was something new.

I know some areas are like tougher to read greens-wise and even today I was still like, I don't know if this putt is breaking left or right. Imagine other people.

So it's just I think there are advantages because you know some areas might be a little bit more difficult so you just pay a little bit more attention to it.

But I think like for 99% it's always nice to be able to play somewhere you're comfortable. Luckily we have had the Gainbridge here, Tournament of Champions here the past few years. I'm sure some of the girls feel like they know the golf course well enough just like me.

Disadvantages is like I have forgotten to set my alarm once and I turned up to the golf course later than I normally do because I was so used to being at home, sleeping in my own bed.

So I'm trying to not make that mistake this year.

Q. Some touring pros that have events at their home course have said that maybe one of the other things is that you see the course for 11 months and there is no setup, no grandstands, no York bleachers. Nobody sets it up for a tournament on a recreational day. Does that affect you at all?

LYDIA KO: I think we as members here are very lucky that the superintendent and the team here do an unbelievable job all year around to keep the golf course in as good a shape as possible considering sometimes we could get really stormy and rainy days.

Those things they can't control. For the most part they're very thoughtful of us and our preparation, and even not only just this week, like if we're heading into majors they'll cut greens a lot faster so that we're preparing ourselves for top conditions.

I think we don't get that like at every golf course, so for the team out here to do that it's very considerate of them to do that for us.

You know, it is sometimes weird seeing like this -- the biggest I guess bleachers. You're not going to miss one.

But it just puts maybe a little bit more character to the hole in ways, but because we know what tee boxes we play and they have a certain tee boxes that they move up or keep. Like when we practiced I think for like maybe Leona, Nasa, and I or some of the other girls will most of the time play off the tee boxes we play in the tournament.

So it's not the same, but I think the team out here make it as close as possible for us so that we're always in good shape, not only for this event, but for other ones as well.

Q. With the downturn in temperatures that is coming and wind and everything else, what's going to be the key to the weekend?

LYDIA KO: You know, pretty much going to be like the pro-am. That was very cold and my irons -- my ball was not flying very far.

So I think just keeping myself loose and warm is going to be key. Obviously when it's that cold you end up not drinking that much. You're just trying to -- your only focus is, oh, my God, I got to stay warm.

So I think just being mentally prepared. This week always seems to be the coldest week in Orlando, so in ways I think all of us that have been out here, celebrities and pros, have kind of experienced the cold by now.

We've been lucky with the weather the last couple days, so just have to play with what we get.

Q. Just I think one of my favorite things last year, everyone wanted to talk about what was going on. The way you handled it was so cool to me. Got on your Instagram a couple times and were like, guys, it's fine. How have you learned to do that and be -- kind of give yourself some grace publically and use it for fuel for this season?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think if -- I think there were a lot of rounds I came off last year and I was crying because I was like, I don't know what's going on. I feel like I'm not playing that bad but why kept I even break par?

I think my round at like Evian was like the first under-par -- or like at the U.S. Open was like the first under-par round I had had in a few rounds. Obviously don't want to be in that position even when you're practicing, let alone when you are competitively playing in the middle of the season.

It was frustrating and I think I was lost, but I had a good team and family members that were able to kind of say, hey, it's okay. You're progressing. Sometimes I think when they said that I was like, no, I'm not. It's good to

have people that have belief in you and sometimes like you can't see the changes when you're doing it, like all the time, but over time you're able to see the big picture.

I think the Asia swing I started playing a lot better and that was I believe all the work that I had done during the season to then. But it would be a lie to say, hey, all thumbs up. Life is good. I'm good missing the cut. That's not true for anyone.

But I think I've been very lucky with the people that have surrounded me to help me say, hey, you know what? Even though you missed a cut, these bits were better. Let's focus on these areas. I think that's what I've always been fortunate about.

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