

The LPGA Drive On Championship presented by Volvik

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Ocala, Florida, USA

Golden Ocala

Danielle Kang

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon and welcome to the virtual media center for the LPGA Drive On Championship presented by Volvik at Golden Ocala.

Now joined by 2021 LPGA Drive On Championship at Inverness champion and the current No. 5 in the Rolex women's World Rankings, Danielle Kang. Thanks for joining us, Danielle.

DANIELLE KANG: Thanks for having me.

THE MODERATOR: What do you remember about your win last August in Ohio? How special was it raise that specific trophy, especially after that extended hiatus you had with the pandemic?

DANIELLE KANG: I think being able to come back from the long time off, the biggest time off we've ever had and knowing that I put in the work and being able to win at a prestigious golf course like Inverness, and I played really well out there, coming down to the last hole even. It was cool to see that the time I put in paid off.

But I was ready to go even when the season started up, so it was a good reminder that I need to put the time in. Sometimes you just can't forget about -- you can steer away from our goals and stuff, but no matter what happens, you just got to keep focused on what you need to do and it happens?

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. You also finished runner-up at Reynolds Lake Oconee in late October.

DANIELLE KANG: Yes.

THE MODERATOR: What is it about these LPGA-run Drive On Championship showcases that really brings out best in you?

DANIELLE KANG: Well, I do love the golf courses that



AT GOLDEN OCALA

we're playing at the moment. They're great shot-shaping, shotmaking golf courses and they're newer. Not this week specifically, but it's just I think whoever can get in the most practice and the most description about the golf course in the short amount of time we have is going to play well.

Ocala, we have played here previously before, but I'm not sure. I think it's just being able to come out. It's a new event. I don't know if we're coming back, but just like a -- just kind of a one-time showcase type of deal.

THE MODERATOR: To see how the LPGA Tour DriveOn campaign has blossomed over the last two years so sponsors like Volvik are coming out and wanting to associate with an LPGA Drive On Championship event, what does it mean to see the LPGA brand take off as it has, and what does it mean to you?

DANIELLE KANG: The brand DriveOn, it means different to a lot of people, right? At the end of the day we all have to keep pushing forward and keep driving on. That's the whole motto that I take from it personally.

But for the LPGA brand to be showing that we all come from different places, people from different countries, but we all have the same goal in mind with whatever our goals and reasons may be, we're still working towards and driving on.

So being able to showcase that and having sponsors back us up as a tour and as their companies, it's just great to see how we can inspire people. Whoever is a fan of LPGA, whether they are or they're not, but everyone has stories people can relate to.

So I feel this tour is growing in such a positive way, and I love the companies that are out there that are wanting to help. We are always just taking a step in the right direction, so really great to see.

THE MODERATOR: That leads into the next question: The Aon Risk-Reward Challenge hole this week is the Par-5 12th, which is one of the eight tribute holes. This one in particular to Augusta National's Par-5 13th.

First of all, how awesome has the dedication of Aon been



to the LPGA tour members, especially with the prize at the end of the season, and have you guys maybe, especially after 2019, taken more notice of what's available to you guys?

DANIELLE KANG: I feel, I mean, Aon Risk-Reward, two separate questions for me. I think Aon Risk-Reward, being able to give us a million dollar prize, equal money to what they give out on the PGA Tour is really, really cool. It's big money for us. A million dollars, I mean, I don't think we've any wins that are a million.

THE MODERATOR: CME.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, exactly. So it's like a huge prize for us, and to have that opportunity, to be given an opportunity is really great, especially from a company like Aon.

Second answer to the question that No. 11 and 12 that are dedicated it 12 and 13 at Augusta, it's done absolutely beautifully. I would like to see that we can play it the way it was meant to be played. The green is protected so well by around the greens and everything, and I can't reach 12 here.

Yeah, I think women's golf sometimes we can outlook and see that 490-yard par-5 is not really reachable. It's an opportunity to reach. And holes like that, especially replicating Augusta, I feel that we need to have more comparable clubs into greens and we could protect it with rough and firmer greens. But greens out here are firm, around the green is protected by grain, and the shot shape design itself is what makes the hole so great, no matter if I have a 5-iron or a 4-iron in.

I'm hoping it's not going to play the way the tees are right now, because I'm just going to have to layup. But I don't think that's how was it meant to be played, and I think it'll be more exciting for people to see an eagle and going for the greens, especially to make the tour better, even better than what we're playing right now, to showcase the shotmaking that the girls have.

Even No. 11 I have a 6-iron in right now, and it's just -- even with a wedge in your hand you know you have to be very meticulous on what kind of shot you want to hit with the green falling off the front, left, and the right. It's just I want those things to be in play instead of just hitting to the middle and trying to two-putt and things like that.

I think they've done a great job out here in replicating a couple holes. Even the St. Andrews No. 1 hole. Yeah, it's really cool to see. I see it. I see the wall hole and I go, Oh, wait, I feel like I've been here. I saw the Baltusrol hole.

That back pin is a 5-iron in.

THE MODERATOR: Kind of like going to Epcot at Disney.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah. It's a great track, so I think we get a little sense and taste of all the great designs. I'm just hoping that we can try and capitalize on it.

And for Aon risk-reward, there are going to be people that will risk it, but it's too much of a risk with the 3-wood. (Laughter.) That dispersion is way too big.

THE MODERATOR: We know a lot of the players, especially yourself, listen to music while you practice or warmup for your round. Who are your some of your favorite artists that you're currently listening to, and what role does music play in your golf preparation?

DANIELLE KANG: I been pointed out that I have different music tastes depending on my moods. I guess if I'm in a really sassy mood I'm in the Arianna genre.

Lately I be listening to a lot of country. There is a today's hit country entire playlist, and it's really calming and nice, and I know that from Diamond Resorts that I'm -- you know, talked to Lee Brice or Cole and all those guys and Randy.

But it's just, yeah, I been really into the country mood lately, so just listening to whatever hits there are on there.

THE MODERATOR: You can't go wrong.

DANIELLE KANG: No, and I've always been a Justin Bieber fan, so he's always in my playlist. Yeah, music does play a big role in my life I think. When I'm practicing I always want something calming, but I normally don't listen to music as much as I would like to when I'm practicing because I like to feel -- I want to focus on how it feels without the music.

Music makes me relax, so depending on the timing and what I need to practice, I just turn the music on or off.

THE MODERATOR: Somebody, I don't remember who it was last year, we asked them what they listen to and they said they listen to a metronome.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, people listen to a metronome on the greens a lot for the tempos and stuff.

THE MODERATOR: Is there anything that you've ever listened to out outside of music?

DANIELLE KANG: Not really. I do a lot of meditation stuff



on the phones. LPGA is partnered with Headspace, so do a lot of Headspace talking. That guy's voice is so calming. I don't know if you've ever heard him talk. It's so calming. There are moods where I'm going, Okay, Andy, stop talking.

No, it's just whatever is there. I'm not really into audio books. I'm into physical books. I am going to try and get into audio books maybe.

THE MODERATOR: Nothing like a good book.

DANIELLE KANG: Nothing like a good book. So, yeah, it varies.

THE MODERATOR: Well, everything starts with one in a row. You had an amazing streak snapped unfortunately last week, 17 consecutive cuts made. I told Ben in team sports after a challenging loss analysts always talk about how it sparks the team to great heights later on in the year. Seems they overcome adversity. Did you take anything away from something that you hadn't experienced in almost two years that I think will light the fire for the rest of 2021?

DANIELLE KANG: I needed some me time after last week. I came here on Tuesday at 11:58 I think because I had to test before noon. Had nothing to do with about missing the cut for me. I think I wasn't really ready mentally to play an event and I just tried to shut it down, everything, and just try and focus on golf, and I didn't succeed in that.

So more than anything I just kind of wanted to be in my own state of mind and play this week in the proper state of mind. So it happens. Bad golf happens, right? I just kept making bogeys. Every shot that I picked was a wrong shot. Ever type of -- I mean, I think they showed me struggling on TV. Every shot that I picked was incorrect. Whether it was a chip, a putting line, a shot into the green, it was just incorrect.

So I guess sometimes you just don't have enough focus. But I didn't feel that the game itself was lacking. That's my true honesty. It's not like I didn't know how to hit a shot. I just kept doing the wrong things.

Coming into this week I wanted to regroup and focus on making Danielle happy and being able to play golf and get back into my own rhythm and routine instead of just getting too eager and excited and all that stuff.

But, yeah, I had a really good pro-am today. The guys were so cool. I had four people that are members here and they just raved about the golf course. They were so bummed I couldn't reach 12. They were like, Come on. I

went, I know. I don't know what to tell you.

THE MODERATOR: They probably been looking forward to someone that can help them with that hole.

DANIELLE KANG: I know. He goes, Come on, can you just hit the 3-wood? I go, It's 217 cover. I can't hit the 3-wood. I can lay up. That doesn't help us. We all had to lay up, so that bummed them out.

Yeah, so it'll be all good. People did talk about how long since I missed the cut, but it's not just about making a cut or missing a cut, right? It's about being in the right state, being able to compete, being able to go up the next shot.

Even if I made the cut I probably wasn't prepared to play Saturday, Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: It happens, because I watched the Michigan Wolverines last night in college basketball. They have been dominating teams, and I'm sure one loss is going to spark them to reach even greater heights. I think that is an interesting take that you have on it.

DANIELLE KANG: People forget. Every tournament there is about 144 people, 146, to 152. I mean, depends. And only one winner. So you still lost.

THE MODERATOR: Yeah.

DANIELLE KANG: So I sometimes tell people, Don't get so caught up in cuts. You still lost. But at the end of the day, yes, we do need to make payments and we have to make money, but sometimes it happens. If you get so caught up in missing a cut and think, Why did this happen, I go, It really wasn't my game. Just going to be honest. Just wasn't all there. I don't think I was there to play the weekend. Happens.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. This is a Solheim Cup and Olympics year. You competed on team USA for the last two Solheim Cups. How high on the priority list are those events for you this year?

DANIELLE KANG: Starting with the Solheim Cup, I would love -- I mean, there is nothing like the first tee at the Solheim Cup. There is nothing similar to the Solheim Cup in LPGA events. It's just a USA versus Europe, but you have your teammates and you get to play for USA, your country.

It's been two different scenarios for me, an away game and a home game, and I just really look forward to that event. I've heard some things about not happening if we don't have fans and things like that. I just think -- I would love to

see it being hosted regardless. It's just so much is riding on Solheim Cup. Like the players worked so hard to earn that spot.

Not only that, people get to watch and they get encouraged, whether it's a one-on-one match or USA versus Europe. I know people want to come out, but it's televised. With the gambling going on, I mean, gamble on one-on-one matches, whatever it may be. It's just so exciting to see and people want to root for you. Not just for you, your team. Solheim Cup is unexplainable, and I hope it happens this year. Fingers crossed.

And the Olympics has been my dream ever since I was a toddler. A different dream on how I wanted to get there. I wanted to get there with martial arts, but golf wasn't available for years and for some reason, starting in Rio, became attainable. So Olympics has been something that I wanted to do all my life, wanted to compete in all my life.

So it is really high on my priority list. People have said, Don't make it too exciting or too important. What happens if you fail? But that's how it is important to me. I want to be an Olympian and contend in the Olympics. That's something that been on my calendar for a long time, so really excited.

Yeah, I even cried last year when it got delayed, and I don't cry very often on those things. I automatically cried when the qualifying extended, because should've been cut off in June but then extended to whenever we restarted until this year.

I just cried. I actually cried for one minute and I stopped and I said, Okay, we're going to be okay. Just keep playing good golf. It'll take care of everything. That's how much I wanted to go, you know.

THE MODERATOR: If you guys have any questions for Danielle, please comment in the chat. If not, we'll let you out of here on this one.

DANIELLE KANG: I'm a chatterbox today.

THE MODERATOR: I liked your description of the par-5 12th. You painted a really good picture. Its placement on the course is very similar to where Augusta's is, and over the years we've seen a lot of drama unfold on that corner. Do you envision something similar?

DANIELLE KANG: Not if it's not reachable. There won't be that much drama. It's just -- that's something that I want to -- I don't know, I think -- it's perception, right? I think average tour players on our tour don't hit it as far as people perceive us to hit.

I want us to be able to play it the way it's designed. Sometimes I think golf gets caught up too much in length of the hole or the distance of golf and that's how they protect golf courses. Actually firmer greens, thicker rough, narrower fairways, shot shaping. Our tour, the girls are so unbelievable on how well they can shape their shots, especially with their woods to long irons, even short irons.

Wedge games are impeccable, but it's has to be played. I want them to be able to have more opportunities than now to showcase what they have.

But on No. 12 this week, which would be 13 on Augusta, it would be hard to hit a wedge close on a side slope. I don't know. I want to say if they hit it around the green it will be a nice chip. The long hitters, if they hit a great drive and second shot they have a great opportunity for eagle.

I want people to know girls can make eagles, too if we have good opportunities and good clubs in their hands. There is nothing that people can do that we can't do. But I just want us to have the yardage opportunities sometimes to be able to showcase that.

THE MODERATOR: For sure.

DANIELLE KANG: I think -- never know, but some days I think one out of four days we can do something.

Yeah, it's not just 12. Even 11. You make that a wedge hole, that's a tough hole. Even 9-irons. It's good control. These girls have amazing control of their irons.

THE MODERATOR: Yeah, that's what the fans like to see.

DANIELLE KANG: I think it will be exciting. It'll bring in more excitement for people to watch. It will be more exciting for players and they can choose a different shot and they know how to hit all the shots. Sometimes it narrows down the shot choices if it's played so long for us.

So, I mean, I'm just speaking for the average tour hitter. (Laughter.) Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time, Danielle.

DANIELLE KANG: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Good luck this week.

DANIELLE KANG: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports