

# Kia Classic

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Carlsbad, California, USA

Park Hyatt Aviara Golf Club

## Jennifer Chang

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon everyone, welcome to Aviara in the virtual media center at the Kia Classic.

We are joined now by second year LPGA Tour rookie, interesting title, and University of Southern California alumna, Jennifer Chang.

Thanks so much for joining us today, Jennifer.

JENNIFER CHANG: Thank you for having me.

**Q. The LPGA Tour returns this week to Aviara Golf Club for the 11th annual Kia Classic after the event was postponed in 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic. You mentioned you played here actually before everything went crazy about a year ago now.**

And what is the feeling to finally play in this event for the first time now two years in the making?

JENNIFER CHANG: Yeah, I actually came out here my very first semester in school and became a spectator, so I got to see it behind the ropes. We watched a couple of the alumni from S.C., so I got a sneak peek not knowing that I would get a chance to play here three years later.

So it's really exciting. Obviously last year after being postponed was unfortunate, but I got a chance to play it last year and get a sneak peek of the course, and obviously this week getting some practice rounds in.

**Q. Anybody in particular that you remember watching when you came with the team?**

JENNIFER CHANG: Yeah, we watched Lizette Salas because she graduated from USC, and a couple others I don't remember exactly. But I remember watching her and I think Lydia coming home on the last stretch, couple holes. Got to see her, yeah.

**Q. That's pretty fun.**

JENNIFER CHANG: Yeah, it's exciting. I mean, thinking

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about it now I just can't believe I'm out here playing this event three years later, so it's pretty cool.

**Q. Since this is your first time seeing Aviara from a competitive standpoint and the practice rounds, what have you noticed about this course that makes it stand out from others?**

JENNIFER CHANG: Yeah, it's pretty tricky. There is a lot of undulation compared to what we had in Florida and the rough is way thicker. Obviously different grass. We're not playing bermuda.

So, I mean, I know last year when I played here the rough was like -- I think it's way thicker last year than it is now. But, I mean, the key I think this week is just hitting fairways. Really important to set yourself up in a good spot, especially on approach shots to the green; just giving yourself as many opportunities as possible.

I watched some highlights and looked at the scores from the previous couple years and I think last year's winning score was 18 or 17-under by Nasa, so definitely some birdie opportunities out here. A lot of scoring you can do.

Just making sure you give yourself the right opportunity.

**Q. Do you do that a lot, go back and look at scores and watch highlights?**

JENNIFER CHANG: I feel like sometimes -- I know like this year in particular because it was such a big gap, two years since the last time we played, so I just wanted to kind of give myself some background knowledge on this course just to see what kind of scoring opportunities are out there and just looking back on the highlights.

**Q. What's the excitement level to be able to play this event and then just some of the buzz from the players you've heard having Kia back on the tournament schedule and them coming back and being part of the LPGA family still after the year hiatus?**

JENNIFER CHANG: Right. This is I think a big tournament that everyone looks forward to playing because it's the start of the whole west coast swing. This course sets up so beautifully. You know, it's just very green so it's a great course to be able to play.

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But, yeah, I mean, I just think this is something that a lot of players look forward to playing. I think being able to see the course prior, I mean, gives me a lot of knowledge.

**Q. Have you heard any keys to success from anybody? Talked to anybody about what the key to success is to score here?**

JENNIFER CHANG: Yeah, I haven't had anyone tell me, but, I mean, based on what I've seen so far, same thing I've said before: Just making sure I hit a lot of fairways and greens and missing it in the right places when I can.

You know, if you miss the green it's hard to get up and down in certain places, especially with how undulated the greens are. So if I get lucky with some lies and give myself a good look, if it's for saving par our birdie, that's what you got to do to score out here.

**Q. You're coming off of a career-best finish of tied for 8th at the LPGA Drive On Championship presented by Volvik at Golden Ocala. Still early in the season of course, but where do you think your game is right now coming off such an impressive performance?**

JENNIFER CHANG: It helps a ton, first top 10 finish, best career finish. So I think that kind of gave me a lot of confidence coming into this week and moving forward.

I think prior to that week in Lake Nona I got a lot of feedback on what I needed to work on, and that gave me -- I kind of fine tuned what I needed to do that week, which is more consistency off the tee and making more putts.

And that's the same goal this week. I mean, I came out here to California a week early to see my coach because I hadn't seen him in over a year. Yeah, just to finally get to see him, get my swing dialed in before this week was a huge thing for me.

**Q. You kind of answered my next question. What you do during the two weeks off since your showing in central Florida to prepare for this event and the west coast swing?**

JENNIFER CHANG: Yeah, like I said before, just the same game plan I have every week. Obviously seeing my coach helped a ton, and then I got to play Wilshire, so kind of prior to L.A. so that little sneak peek to everything.

Yeah, just the same game plan.

**Q. Getting familiar with all the courses.**

JENNIFER CHANG: Yeah, well because at USC we used to be able to play out at Wilshire. We don't have that membership anymore but I've seen the course after they redid it.

**Q. Who is the swing coach?**

JENNIFER CHANG: Ted Oh.

**Q. How long have you worked with him?**

JENNIFER CHANG: I started working him I think my sophomore year of college, so it's been three years now I think, almost four.

**Q. So a nice relationship.**

JENNIFER CHANG: Yeah, I'm really close with my coach.

**Q. Obviously what a crazy year 2020 was for all of us, and challenging for so many more out there. You played the weekend five times in 13 starts. How did you approach last year and perhaps use it as a true learning curve for the foundation to hopefully a long lasting career on the LPGA?**

JENNIFER CHANG: They say your rookie year is your hardest year and they weren't kidding. We were fortunate enough to get a preview into our season now. It's pretty much a freebie what we had, having all the experience we can get from it and not having it affect our status. So that was really nice.

I think it was a blessing and a curse to have coronavirus, at least from my point of view. I didn't play that well last year and I think my whole focus was just making the cut. After my experience from last year and the past two weeks I know that I'm more than capable of being out here.

Just got to stick to what I can do best and not what other people -- at least not focusing on what other people do.

**Q. The Aon Risk Reward Challenge is a year long series on the PGA and LPGA, and Aon provides matching million dollar prizes to the male and female that comes out on top. This week it's the par-4, 16. What makes that hole worthy of being the Aon Risk Reward Challenge and what do you think is the strategy?**

JENNIFER CHANG: Usually it would be on a par-5, but this week with the tees up it's a reachable par-4, especially for the longer hitters.

Today we hit it up at the front and I got a driver like front



middle-issue part of the green. Yeah, I mean, I don't have to really think about taking a 3-wood or hybrid from that spot, but I've got to -- I think it's a great way to set up the Aon Risk Reward on a par-4. It's different from what we usually have and so it's not an easy hole though. If you set yourself up too far right then you've got the whole rough that you have to take into account, and then obviously the water on the left.

But I think it's a great hole and I'm looking forward to playing it.

**Q. Is that something the more you learn about the Aon Risk Reward Challenge and the million dollar prize, is that something that becomes more at the forefront of your mind in a tournament?**

JENNIFER CHANG: Yeah, I think it's always in everyone's mind, you know, having the opportunity to have the same purse as the men with one million. We don't get that kind of opportunity that often, so to be able to have that, I mean, take it to our advantage is a huge bonus.

**Q. Last one I have for you: You've qualified for two U.S. Women's Open championships in your amateur career; played in the AIG Women's Open and KPMG last year. With the ANA Inspiration coming up next week, what are some the major goals that you have that you hope to accomplish this year?**

JENNIFER CHANG: Yeah, I'm not in ANA yet so hopefully, if this week goes my way, then I'll be in. That's something -- an event that I look forward to playing as a pro because I played it in Q-School two years ago, so I know what Dinah Shore is like.

So if I get the chance to, I mean, I don't switch anything as far as the game plan. Only difference is it's a major. Obviously like bigger purse, it's a title everyone hopes to have.

So I just think once I can get there first, then from there on we'll see.

**Q. For sure. Thank you for your time today. Good luck this week.**

JENNIFER CHANG: Thank you for having me.

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