

LOTTE Championship presented by Hoakalei

Monday, April 11, 2022

Ewa Beach, Oahu, Hawaii, USA

Hoakalei Country Club

Lydia Ko

Brooke Henderson

Nasa Hataoka

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, hello everyone. Welcome to the 2022 LOTTE Championship at the spectacular Hoakalei Country Club.

I am Christina Lance with LPGA Communications, and it's my honor to be with you, my first time here since 2018. Very happy to be back.

I am of course joined by three LPGA Tour stars we have right here. To my immediate right, we start with defending LOTTE champion and Rolex Rankings No. 3, Lydia Ko.

Next her we have two-time LOTTE champion and Rolex Rankings No. 10, Brooke Henderson.

And we also have five-time LPGA Tour winner and Rolex Rankings No. 11, Nasa Hataoka, who's joined by her translator.

Aloha. Happy to have all three of you back. Start with you, Lydia, as our defending champion. Lyds, your win last year really opened some floodgates. You've won twice internationally since then. You won the bronze medal at the Olympics. You earned 12 Top 10s. How important was your victory at the LOTTE Championship last year to your career and this renaissance we're seeing right now?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think it was more proving to myself that I can be back in the winner's circle. I actually finished my season out pretty well. Started my season well in 2020 and 2021.

To kind of win here was a confidence booster. I missed the cut of week after, so like that confidence didn't last like a really long time.

But, yeah, it was just more to proving myself that I can be



back in contention, and to be able to finish off in a style like that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Brooke, I'll go to you next. You've won here twice. Both time over at Ko Olina and now her at Hoakalei. How special are your visits here to Hawaii and your time on the islands?

BROOKE HENDERSON: You know, I love coming back to Hawaii. It's just beautiful everywhere. The surroundings, the ocean, the mountains, the flowers, people are so kind and nice.

It's just a great atmosphere and I just always enjoy spending time here.

Obviously won here twice, so many great memories. I love that trophy.

So it's just been great to be back here this week. It's a great golf course, and I think the wind will definitely be challenging, but I'm looking forward to playing this new course and hopefully having a good week.

THE MODERATOR: Nasa, we will move over to you. You've been here many times playing at the LOTTE Championship. What is it that keeps you coming back, and how special would it be to get to lift, as Brooke said, this beautiful trophy?

NASA HATAOKA: This is my fifth time visiting Hawaii. I've always loved playing this tournament, especially there are lots of Japanese fans out here, so that's a good motivation for me.

LOTTE is also very famous in Japan, too, so that's something very special.

THE MODERATOR: Lydia, come back to you. This is a new golf course. You've been out there, you've seen Hoakalei. What is your plan of attack as you take on this new venue?

LYDIA KO: We're really close to the water. I mean all of the golf courses we have played have been very close, but I think this one is especially close, so the wind is going to be a pretty big factor.



I played a practice round early in the morning yesterday and everything, like by 9:00 the wind was already picking it up. I think it's going to be pretty steady winds all week, so just being smart with that and keep it on the fairways I think is going to be the easiest way to (indiscernible) some of these greens.

There are some tougher holes where the wind is the opposite way to how the green sits, so that makes the greens a little bit smaller.

So I think having like strategic target style in that kind of holes, and then the holes that are going to be a little bit easier or shorter, to really take advantage of those.

THE MODERATOR: Brooke is this a course where maybe you think some of your length may be an advantage, or how does your game shoot up to this course?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, I think the main challenge will definitely be the wind for sure, but I think if you -- some of the holes are playing pretty long, too, and I guess it really depends on whether it's into or downwind.

I do think length will be a bit of an advantage on some of the longer holes, especially -- I just played No. 6, and it's playing long and a very skinny green, so probably one of the more challenging holes there.

I think if you can get it up off the tee pretty far, then (indiscernible) club some of those greens. With some of those slopes it'll definitely be important. I also feel like this course, the water is in play a lot more than any other course we've played here in Hawaii, so that'll be something different and something we'll have to contend with over the next four days.

Overall, it's a great golf course. It's in really good shape. The rough is really sticky, so like Lyd said, maybe stay out of rough as much as you can.

Definitely look forward to the challenge this week.

THE MODERATOR: Nasa, same question for you. You literally walked here straight from the golf course still with the grass on your legs. How do you think this golf course will suit your game and how do you plan to play to this week?

NASA HATAOKA: Compared to tournaments we played and the course we played, I feel like the greens are a lot smaller, fairways are a lot tighter.

So it's really important to read the wind, and hitting the green is one of the most important things for you to play

really good this week.

THE MODERATOR: If you have any questions you can raise your hand and we can ask those questions.

Lydia, this is the 10th year we're celebrating with LOTTE as our title sponsor, a long-standing partner of the LPGA. Can you speak to what it means to have a company like LOTTE, so well-known, to see the value of supporting women's golf and being such a long-time partner of the LPGA?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I actually joined the LPGA board a few years ago, so since being on that board I think I've been able to learn more about the tour and the business side of things. I think it makes you appreciate like what you see is not kind of it.

There is a lot of -- a team, a lot of staff that put in endless hours for these kind of opportunities. I think as a tour to have these kind of long-standing relationships with these partners is great, and it shows that they trust and believe in women's golf and in the LPGA.

So from our standpoint, I think we're trying to showcase our talent and showcase what a great tournament this is. And for them to host it here in Hawaii, I'm sure this is one of the most beautiful and favorite spots for many of the players or tour.

We're excited, and I think it's been a few years since the tournament has been at this event, and so there is a lot of things to celebrate.

On behalf of our tour, I think we are very appreciative of those long partnerships, and hopefully there will be many more years of this great relationship.

THE MODERATOR: Questions? I've got a few more.

Brooke, what are some of your favorites things to do here on the islands other than play golf?

BROOKE HENDERSON: I just love swimming in the ocean. Going to go there right after this, so I'm really excited for that.

But just taking in all the beauty and just the great vibes and the atmosphere that this island has. It's just so special.

I look forward to coming here every year. We're staying over at the Four Seasons so spoiling ourselves a little bit over closer to Ko Olina and just enjoying the views and trying to relax but also work.

THE MODERATOR: And then one more question. I'm going to start with Nasa but then run down the line. Brooke, you're wearing the green and it reminds me we had the Masters last week, the Chevron the week before, lots of majors. We're really getting into go time.

LOTTE is always a moment for us to, as Brooke said, both relax but gear up. Nasa, how do you feel as you head into this week and getting ready for the rest of the season?

NASA HATAOKA: Yes, we just played our first major two weeks ago. Obviously it's really important for you to play really good this week, but there is going to be a lot more majors coming, so I'd like to keep that momentum going.

THE MODERATOR: Brooke, same question for you. Did you watch the Masters at all? How did you spend your week off since Chevron? How do you feel as we head into this week in Hawaii?

BROOKE HENDERSON: Yeah, the Masters is always special to watch. I missed the ending yesterday but was able to watch some highlights and the press conference afterwards.

What an amazing champion and what a year he's had so far. I just really loved a lot of the things he had to say and how he approached the Sunday after feeling not his best in the morning time. I really learned a lot actually, so that was pretty cool.

And Chevron just a couple weeks ago, felt like I got a little bit of momentum. It's always great to play a major championship, and didn't maybe play quite as well as I would've liked, but definitely learned a few things and tried to work on them last week on the week off, and looking forward to competing here where I've had a lot of success and then moving forward.

It's such a full schedule, and really excited to be able to play a lot of events this year with a lot bigger purse money, and just really excited for the rest of the year.

THE MODERATOR: For you, Lydia, how did you spend your week off? How do you feel now as you come into this big title defense?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I had a sponsor outing the day after, at Mission Hills, so got a final look of Mission Hills before we had to say good-bye.

Worked on my game and then also got plenty of rest and kind of getting back into my work out routine. Obviously with the COVID situation I wasn't able to be on top of that, so trying to be a little bit more into what was the routine

before, and hopefully all those things combined lead to a fun week.

THE MODERATOR: Well thank you so much. We appreciate it.

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