

Cognizant Founders Cup

Tuesday, May 7, 2024

Clifton, New Jersey, USA

Upper Montclair Country Club

Jin Young Ko

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, here now with Jin Young Ko, defending champion of the Cognizant Founders Cup. Welcome back to Upper Montclair Country Club. What's it like to be back?

JIN YOUNG KO: I can't believe it was one year ago. I have a lot of good memories out there. I'm so happy to be back here.

Q. What do you remember most about your win? Obviously was a good one in that playoff with Minjee. What do you remember most and what are some of the highlights?

JIN YOUNG KO: I think the highlight was 72nd hole, the last hole, last putt. I made birdie and I was into playoff. So the birdie putt was like big momentum for me.

So, yeah, only the putt is I can only remember. Yeah, but good things.

Q. Why does this golf course set up so well for your particular game?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah, this golf course not easy, but because the fairways are narrow and greens are like slopey. But I think -- I mean, same as last year, but like more softer than last year because I heard a lot of rain last few months.

So, yeah, it's pretty good. Yeah, we can play bit of aggressive, so, yeah, which is good.

Q. How important is this tournament in terms of remembering what the Founders did and today's players remembering the history of their tour?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah, I'm very thankful they made like amazing this tour. If they don't have like in golf lives we couldn't like play really well.

So I feel really thankful and I also feel very incredibly thankful playing on this tour, yes.

Q. Obviously Nelly is on an incredible run right now.

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah.

Q. You were on a run like that in 2019. What does it feel like to be in a zone like that, and have you talked to Nelly about that?

JIN YOUNG KO: I mean, 2019 I played many events and I had five wins, but she played just five tournament and she won five times. So better than me of course.

And I haven't seen her because we tee off really switch, so I haven't seen her much.

But I met her before the Chevron at the dining, so, oh, congrats, what happened? And she said like, blah, blah, blah. I was so happy for her.

And we played many times in 2021, and, yeah, I mean, at the CME last event in 2021. She won Pelican and she was leader of the Player of the Year like few points ahead of me.

So, yeah, it was like good competition with her. I think she's better than me right now because we can see all the result for her. We'll see, yeah. This week is sixth tournament for her. We'll see. (Smiling.)

Q. You haven't been playing too bad yourself this year. T4, T8, T20; Chevron we'll forget about.

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah.

Q. How good does your game feel coming into your title defense this week?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah, after Singapore I went Korea for a month and I took rest. So I didn't play much so I thought it's going to be takes time to going up to like going up, my game is going well.

The Chevron was my first event in U.S. Yeah, I forget about all the memories. Yeah, I think I don't play Chevron.



(Smiling.)

Before the week, two weeks ago in LA I practice hard after Chevron. I shocked a little bit because I wasn't expectation miss the cut because I know I didn't practice much, but the game wasn't like good. I thought.

So I practiced hard after Chevron at the Wilshire, and even during the tournament I practice hard. Even last week, too, in Dallas.

I think my game is going well. Like I think I found good direction to going. So, yeah, we'll see. I think it takes more time to get better and better, but I'm happy to like be back here.

Q. What did you find maybe at Wilshire? If you want to share; you don't have to. But what did you find that you really dialed in on?

JIN YOUNG KO: My swing was a little change since last year, so I lose the balance and I lose the ball control. I think my mind was like wherever, like I couldn't bring my mind from outside to my inside.

After Singapore and the Chevron I found something. I think so. So, yeah, I practice hard still.

Q. You were talking about forgetting the Chevron. Moving on from a tournament that doesn't go the way you want it to.

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah.

Q. How do you do that? That can be really difficult.

JIN YOUNG KO: I thought I practice just two more days, like Thursday and Friday, and then missed the cut. Was happen to all the pro golfers.

So, yeah, I thought it was good practice in the pressure. That's how I thought. Yeah, that's it.

Q. When you are in the zone like you've been a few times, do you want to keep playing as much as possible or do you get tired from constantly being in contention? How exhausted is that to always be in contention trying to win?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah, I mean, like Nelly, she won five times already. She play just five tournament. I think she's so tired because she use a lot of energy. Like in the final group on Sunday it's going to be like really, really hard to do like focus and consistency and it's really hard to get in the zone.

But in my case, if I'm swinging it well I really want to play more like aggressive, but sometimes it makes me more injury. But sometimes I want to get more trophy. I want to be better and better, because I love to play golf. It's always doing great.

Q. Considering how many talented players are on tour right now, are you surprised that Nelly has been able to be on this run?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah, because, yeah, I mean, she is always good and then like in 2018, 2019 I guess she has experience, but not many. Right now at this time, 2024, it took over five years so she had a lot of experience to how to get win.

That's why she's good right now. Yeah, but Nelly is human also. So, yeah, anyone can be like Nelly; anyone can be like Tiger.

I think practice makes us perfect, so that's still only the answer.

Q. Hi, Jin Young.

JIN YOUNG KO: Hi.

Q. Hi. I just wanted clarify something after Singapore. Were you suffering from an injury? My understanding is you had a shoulder injury. Is that accurate, and how did that happen?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah, I mean, I had a lot of pain since Thailand. When I'm sleeping I couldn't move my body on my bed in the sleeping, because I woke up because shoulder is pain.

I thought just like muscle like tightness, but it tooks over two weeks, so I had medicine in Singapore. So I decided, okay, let's take a rest after Singapore. I went to hospital and something could like -- I did something I can do like to my shoulder.

But, yeah, I rest two weeks off. And after two weeks, it's much better and then I could play. Yeah. And then I back to U.S.

Q. So is it completely gone now? You're pain-free?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah.

Q. What have you found you have to do well on this golf course at Upper Montclair to do so well?

JIN YOUNG KO: I don't know. Just positive energy.
(Laughter.)

When I'm look back later I don't want to regret I did my best at the moment. So I realized I really love to play golf and I really love to playing incredibly like all the players on this tour.

So I feel very thankful, and yeah, that's why I practice hard at the moment and also I want to be better person little by little.

Yeah, that's I found it I think.

Q. What holes have you found to be the most challenging on this golf course?

JIN YOUNG KO: Everything. Every shot. (Laughter.)

Not only one answer.

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