

Fortinet Founders Cup

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Menlo Park, California, USA

Sharon Heights Golf & Country Club

Lydia Ko

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the to 2026 Founders Cup. I'm joined here by Lydia. Lydia just got off from the Pro-Am here. Can you just talk about being here this week in San Francisco and what you're looking forward to?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I mean, it's obviously been a few years since the LPGA has been back in the a Bay Area, so it's exciting. You know, personally, now I've been on tour for 13 years now.

So it's nice to come to a new location and a golf course that we have never played at before, and it just makes it a bit more exciting as if I'm a rookie, back to those times again.

So yeah, it's been a great few days. We have got unbelievable weather, almost like borderline too hot right now. I think it's going to be an exciting week ahead.

And Fortinet has really deep dive gone into sports and women's golf and golf in general. So it's been I think a really big step for our tour and then in the partnership with Fortinet.

THE MODERATOR: Can you speak a little bit too, on the course, what you're seeing out there and what stands out in particular?

LYDIA KO: I played here for the first time last week for an unofficial practice round, and it was a lot of -- there was a little bit more moisture then and now, and just with the weather being pretty warm, the golf course has dried out.

It's almost like in a valley, this course reminds me of a couple other golf courses like in the area as well, and I think because of that some greens are a little bit softer. Some are a little firmer when they are higher up.

So, yeah, I think we also just need to adjust with how the weather is going to affect the golf course. The back nine plays a little longer than the front. So I think you really have to take advantage of the shorter side, which is the front side.

THE MODERATOR: And this event, too, has such a prong presence with the founders and what they mean to the LPGA. As a Hall of Fame member, can you just speak to the Founders' legacy and what it kind of means to you in particular?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I was fortunate enough to be able to meet a few of the founders when I first came out on tour. It was always a treat when we played in Arizona and they would be sitting in the chairs, especially on the weekend, and to see them, I felt like there was a bit more of a connection with me and the Tour just through them.

And we know that without their courage, the 13 ladies back then, there would be no "now," and not to the extent it is -- it already is. We just had our 75th year anniversary of the LPGA. And golf started as a men's game. You know it was a men's sport.

So to see how much it has grown and in that ERA for them to come out and pretty much play for nothing and play because they loved the competition and they really laid out the foundations, and we can only thank them for what they have done. And also the pioneers who have -- that are the generations behind them. Because without the start and the people in the middle there would be no "now."

I think years down the road, we are probably going to be the pioneers, 20, 30 years, for the next generation. So I think as players that are competing on tour right now, it's our duty to carry that Founders' spirit and think about not only us to give us this opportunity and to make our dreams come true but for the new generations that are coming up behind us.

THE MODERATOR: Juli and Meg are going to be honored this week as pioneers. What is your relationship to them, and what has it been like to watch them step into this other role they have?

LYDIA KO: They are definitely, like the cool aunt because of age but I would like to say more like cool sisters at the same time. I've gotten to spend a little bit of time with them, and especially Juli. I'm like, man, I wish my mom



was that cool. My mom's cool but Juli is super cool. I just love them.

Every time I play well or don't play well, Meg and Juli have always been there to give me advice, the right advice that was needed at the time. They are always a joy to see, and obviously we don't get to see them very much now.

I'm excited to see them. I'm very grateful that -- I think golf touches a lot of people, not only the people that are playing on tour right now, but the generations that was there before us. And especially someone like a Juli who is still playing on tour when I first came on tour.

So I think golf really connects a lot of people and brings a lot of people together, and this tournament symbolizes that, and you know, without people like Juli and Meg, you know, there wouldn't be me or even the generations behind me, the juniors that have taken up the sport.

Even though I'm not American, I always look up to them and I'm very thankful for all they do for me personally but for the Tour and I'm excited to see them, and no one is more deserving than Meg and Juli for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Last question from me. You referenced the new generation, as well. We have several rookies here this week making their first or second starts on the LPGA Tour. Have you spoke to them or have they approached you, or is there any advice you would give them?

LYDIA KO: I played with Ingrid and Emma yesterday. I was like, man, that's really fun. She hits it far, has a beautiful swing. Being in the practice facilities here, it's a little bit more condensed where the putting green and driving range and really right next to each other. There's been a lot of faces like, Oh, I wonder who she is and there's been a lot of new faces.

So I'm excited throughout this season to get to know a few of them better. The last couple years, we've noticed that rookies are not so rookies. They are very good. A lot of first-time winners and very competitive for the Rookie of the Year. I think it going to be exciting.

I love that our field is getting more and more diverse. It's not the same 50 or 100 faces that we usually see and I think it's going to be great for the growth of golf, and yeah, it's very impressive. It's hard to, like, yes, the experience of my 13 years is something that no one can take away from me. It's very valuable.

But the new up-and-coming players that are just graduating high school and going from junior golf straight to pro or

coming from collegiate golf, they are all very good. So the experience is a little different, but I think the skill set, like it's really hard to say that, you know, they are not as good as somebody that's been on tour longer.

Q. You pretty much reside here now. How important is it to you to have an LPGA event here in the Bay Area?

LYDIA KO: Actually, it's almost been three to four months since I've been back in this area. I've been spending more time at home in Florida.

Yeah, it's been good to be back. Obviously see a lot of familiar faces. You know, San Francisco has been a spot where I've come in and out just because of private reasons. I've always loved playing at Lake Merced. A little biased because I won there like three times. So I'm all for playing in the Bay Area.

Obviously here, it's a lot warmer. So I'm excited to be here. I think San Francisco is a city, and the Bay Area as a whole, it's such a great location. You're only a couple hours away from Napa, Monterey, and then a few more, to Tahoe. I think it's a great place for the Tour to come.

And I think that's obviously a lot of things going on here and just with our partners, Fortinet for being here, it all made sense. And hopefully this tournament will be something that will be here to stay for a while and make history here, which I'm sure will impact the growth of golf in northern California. I think Esther is from Northern California, as well.

So hopefully we'll be able to see more and more players like her up-and-coming that will play this event in the future as well.

Q. You have the skill set to really plot it around a golf course. How often do you make strategic mistakes in a round?

LYDIA KO: Hopefully not often. And if I do, not repeat it. That would be the second thing.

I think at the end of the day, everybody makes mistakes. You know, even in Singapore, Thailand, I'll take on a shot that I thought would be an advantage by being a bit more aggressive but then I'll come off thinking, man, if I just laid up, I'd probably have at worse made bogey or something. I still think that we all make mistakes. It's about, I think, if you do playing a mistake don't let that carry on till next one and if you are in a similar circumstance, try to not repeat that mistake and learn from your mistakes.

I think that's what you become slowly better at being on tour a little bit more, but if I told you I didn't make any mistakes anymore, I'd be lying. I wish that was the base. But I also think I learn the most when I am put in those kind of situations.

Unfortunately happens a little bit more frequently than I would like, would be the best way to put that.

Q. How has that changed from the time you came out, stacking up wins and majors to now, a different type of player, over the years, how has your strategy changed?

LYDIA KO: I think there is a very fine line. Because when you first come on tour, you're almost naïve to everything and, and you don't have the scar tissue from golf and playing out there and playing a full schedule. You probably grew up not playing as many -- not having as many lows as you think.

Then you come on tour and you experience this, that, and everything, really. When you are younger, you are a little bit more fearless in the sense of, like, you don't think, oh, that could equal this potentially in the bad outcome. You're just out there free, just trusting yourself, and going out there and be like, that wasn't good, which I think is good because you play with a little bit more freedom and you hit a lot of good shots then.

The experience now, I think I'm able to handle the bad situations a lot better, and like if I am nervous, just kind of take that more in and not think of it as like I'm trying to fight it. I can't fight the wind. I can't fight spectators. I can't fight having nerves but I can handle those things better.

It is different in that sense. I think when you are young, like you have more freedom because you don't know also what's on other side but now having experienced both side of the rainbow, it still sucks when you play bad. If anybody says otherwise, they are lying, because you know, I still want to play well. I want to excel at what I do and I want to compete at a very high level.

Sometimes it just really doesn't go my way and I try and not let that dictate my mood the rest of the day. But you know, it's like a completely different character in a game. But I think all of these fearless moments and some of my scar tissue from golf and overcoming that, that makes me the player I am today, and the player that I am a year from now is going to be a little bit different, too.

So Stacy Lewis once told me that -- I think in like 2017 or 2018, I was struggling, and she was like, don't try to be the person that I was when I was world No. 1 in 2015 or 2016.

I think that was just the perfect way to putt, I'm never going to be that same person, and all I can do is be the best person and best player I am in the present. And I think her saying that to me was like a wake-up call, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Was Kai able to make the trip?

LYDIA KO: Yes, he is here. He is at a doggie day care. Honestly, this guy lives the best life out of all of us. I mean, I made -- after I came back from Singapore, I made him like food, and I had to tell my husband, "The food in that pot is not yours, it's Kai's."

So whether he knows it or not, but he lives a great life. He better know because I invest a lot in him. I have joked that post-retirement, I might go into like dog agency and open up his Instagram. But for now, it's hard to manage mine, so yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your time.

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