

BMW Ladies Championship

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LPGA International Busan

Jin Young Ko

Minjee Lee

Jennifer Kupcho

Na Yeon Choi

Hye-Jin Choi

Atthaya Thitikul

Minsol Kim

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the 2022 BMW Ladies Championship. We are joined by Jin Young Ko, Minjee Lee, Atthaya Thitikul, Jennifer Kupcho, Na Yeon Choi, Hye-Jin Choi and Minsol Kim. Welcome, and we'll get started here.

Jin Young, defending in your home country, what are your memories from last year and what's it like defending your title at home?

JIN YOUNG KO: So last year, course conditions was good, and due to various factors I was able to have an unexpected victory. However, as you know, we are on a different course and the weather conditions are slightly different. It's more chilly.

However, I think I will do my best and I really want to do well, and I think if I really concentrate and focus on my play, I'll be able to finish with good results.

Q. What have you been doing your time off and what have you been working on?

JIN YOUNG KO: So after Canada, I came back to Korea and took a six to seven week time and got treatment for my wrist and rehabilitated my wrist. I was not able to practice as much as I thought I would but when I did have the time to practice, I really focused on those sessions.

I'm really into yoga these days and I went to the yoga center learned yoga and that helped me train on my

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mental side. For the last two months, basically I've been kind of doing that, and I'm very happy to be in the competition.

Q. Minjee, what's it like being back in Korea? You got your second major title of the year. What's it like being back?

MINJEE LEE: It's nice to be back out. I was actually back two weeks ago but it was just really nice to play in front of my extended family and all my relatives in Korea. It was much warmer two weeks ago so it's nice that it's sweater weather.

Q. Jennifer, third appearance here but it's your first as an LPGA winner, and you became a Rolex first-time winner this year, and now a three time winner. Does this time feel any different being in Korea as a three-time LPGA Tour winner?

JENNIFER KUPCHO: Yeah, in general, every event I show up to, I have a little more confidence than I did my first three years out here. So for sure, it's so great to be back here in Korea. I love playing here and it's such a great country and golf environment, so I always enjoy being back.

Q. Na Yeon Choi, you recently announced you'll be stepping away from the game. What led to that decision at this point in your career, and how excited are you for the new chapter?

NA YEON CHOI: I had been considering it, so starting this season, I really gave myself to this season, around midseason, and it sort of crystalized into this decision to retire. So there was no one single moment where I decided this was the time to announce my retirement.

I have been playing for a long time and I think on the bright side, I really want to start something new as fast as I can, and what that's going to be, I have no idea. But I have no regrets with my career as a golf player, and I'm sure that I'm probably going to end up doing something related to golf but I'm very excited to start the second chapter.

Q. Hye-Jin Choi, this is the first time you're playing as an LPGA Tour member. How excited are you as a rookie that's had a lot of success this season to be playing in your first LPGA BMW Championship?

HYE-JIN CHOI: Like I said, this is my first time playing

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this championship as an LPGA Tour member, and so I'm very excited, and it's been about a year since I played in Korea. So that also makes me very excited as well. I hope that we'll see a lot of support from the fans and I hope that I can show them great golf.

Q. Atthaya has joined us. Talk about being a two-time winner on the LPGA.

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: It's been a really good season for me so far. I know it's not ending out the season yet but having dreamed of playing in an LPGA Tour event and getting my first win and my second win in my first season is so amazing as well. It has been really good to be on the LPGA, and having a really good year for the first year is so amazing.

Q. Minsol, this is your first time competing on the LPGA Tour, what are your feelings here with all of these great players?

MINSOL KIM: So I feel like I'm really dreaming because I'm really excited and I'm happy and I've always wanted to compete in this competition, and to do it with such respected players, it really feels like a dream.

When the round begins, I will just have to do my best. I'm just really going to focus on having no regrets on the course.

Q. Na Yeon, as you've had a look back at your career, we have two really talented rookies and a really talented amateur player. What advice would you give to them from your experience?

NA YEON CHOI: First of all, I don't really think they need any of my advice.

But now that I'm looking to retire, looking back when I was a rookie, when I was 20 years ago, I think about what was different about me back then. I have to say when I was 20 years old, I had a lot of confidence and I was really fearless.

Although I don't really think they need my advice, I've been on tour for 15 years and at this point I really have no regrets. I gave it my all and I hope that they can do the same, too, and they can also look back later, ten, 15 years later and have no regret as well.

Q. You seem to play that way already, Hye-Jin, nine Top 10s this season and three top threes. What have you learned about yourself and your game in your rookie season?

HYE-JIN CHOI: So my rookie year is now almost over, but looking back, I think when I first joined the LPGA Tour, there's just a flurry of competition. I think coming from Korea, I was a rookie again and I was able to see

parts of my game that had become too lax. So I worked hard and that helped me perform well. This year, it really helped me go back to the basics, and even playing in Korea, there were parts of my game that I was not happy with and I was trying to improve but I didn't really see any improvement.

But joining the LPGA, I was put up against a lot of different environments and I went through a lot of different experience, and I think that helped me grow in my game.

Q. For Jin Young, you talked about how you treated your wrist and you were in rehabilitation as well so I'm curious to know, how is your wrist now? Is it impacting your play and if so, how is it impacting your game? And I have an additional question. You are currently the No. 1 ranked player. Do you have any pressure or do you feel any burden to maintain that title in this championship?

JIN YOUNG KO: So I would be lying if I said that there was absolutely no pressure when it comes to maintaining that ranking, but I have to say I am more interested right now in practicing because I want to be more satisfied with my golf instead of the title, the No. 1 player itself.

And as you know, I'm surrounded by very talented players, though I never thought initially that ranking, that title was forever. The other players will do their best and I will give it my best. It will be nice to keep that title but I do not think it's something that you can keep forever to begin with.

As for my wrist, it is true that I have been practicing more and for any player, if you start practicing more, you're bound to see some areas that ache and for me it happens to be the wrist.

So while I was practicing while I was in Korea, I did everything that I could to help my wrist, so I would take breaks, I did some rehabilitation and I got some acupuncture done. So I know that it is probably better and it is something that will get better, so I'm not that concerned. During the past five to six weeks while I was in Korea, the weather was warm and so it wasn't so painful, but today it got a little colder. The temperature is lower and the grass is firmer, so that may impact my wrist some when. But I will not give up and I will continue to do my best.

Q. Hye-Jin and Atthaya, you are in competition for Rookie of the Year and there are only four competitions left including this one. So it seems for Hye-Jin Choi, it's a lot of time or competition to catch up to Atthaya, and from Atthaya's perspective, it seems that if you do well in one of the remaining four competitions, you can solidify Rookie of the Year. How much is Rookie of the Year factoring into your

game and how you're approaching the game?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Honestly I don't really think that you can control because at the beginning of the year, it's so many rookies coming on the Tour. We are just trying to play as good as possible as we can, and I just know, yeah, just try to do my best. I don't think that I really compete or play against anyone for Rookie of the Year. I just try to get better and getting better every day, not just to get Rookie of the Year because I think we have been playing for a while and everyone wants to play better.

HYE-JIN CHOI: I share the sentiment, when I first joined the Tour, I did want to be Rookie of the Year.

But as the year went on and I played with all the other rookies who are doing very well it just motivated me to want to do my best. I wouldn't say it's really about Rookie of the Year when other rookies win, I think that just really motivated me.

Q. Jin Young, it seems like you have a lot of good memories with this championship, in the first year, with you are Player of the Year and last year you won. Does this championship have a personal meaning to you and what kind of expectations or mood you're in when you join the championships here? And it's been a while since a Korean player has won on the LPGA, so does that also factor in? Do you want to win considering that as well?

JIN YOUNG KO: As you mentioned, I'm always happy to be back at the BMW Ladies Championship. There was a period for three years where the BMW Championship was held by the KLPGA and in 2016 and 2017, I won the championship. Then I won last year. So I have three very similar-looking trophies, so that's always a good memory.

And now, as you mentioned, this is the only LPGA Championship in Korea, so as a Korean player, I feel great pride and affinity to the championships, and of course this motivates me more.

Q. Minjee, you're currently leading -- what would it mean to you and can you assess your year?

MINJEE LEE: I don't think I've been close in the other categories throughout my career. It would be such a great honor to be Player of the Year, but I know that there's a few behind me that are pretty close.

So I think I've got to play really well the next few events that I'm playing in and see what happens at the end of the season.

Q. You've seen the golf course, what are your thoughts?

NA YEON CHOI: Yeah, I think it's a really great golf course. It's really beautiful. It's definitely going to be a really hard test. I think, as well, the walk is pretty hard, up-and-down. But I think it's going to be a really good challenge for the entire field and I'm interested to see how it really plays out there.

Q. Minjee, you've had eight wins on the LPGA and I guess my question is, were you motivated as a non-U.S., non-Korean player to go after a win. You've played in this championship in 2019, 2021 and you finished T-16 and T-10. Do you think it's time for you to win in front of a Korean crowd?

MINJEE LEE: For the first question, I didn't really quite understand, but I think regardless of who I'm playing against, the biggest thing is if I'm playing 100 percent and winning, I'm just playing against myself at the end of the day on the golf course. Having won the U.S. Open this year, it was one of my dreams since I was a little girl. It was one of my greatest achievements so far. Not sure what you were asking about Korean players, but everybody is really a great competitor out on tour and it's getting deeper and deeper.

So I'm always going to do my best regardless of the event. Obviously my parents are Korean and I have deep Korean roots, so it would be a great honor to win in Korea. I'm not sure when it will be but I will try my very best all the time.

Q. Minsol, as far as your role models, do you have a role model specifically that you look up to, and if you do, who is it and why do you look up to them?

MINSOL KIM: So I have to say of course I respect almost all the players that are playing on tour but personally, if I had to pick one player, it would have to be Jin Young Ko, and it's because I think she has shown us many times success at really critical moments.

So I think that's really awesome, so that's why I would pick her as my role model.

Q. For all you are players, if you can give brief responses if you wish. With the BMW Championship going forward, the venue will change every year. What is the first thing that you really look at or are interested in or look out for when it comes to going to a course that you haven't played before? What is most important for you going to a new course?

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: The main keys for the course is really important, different type of grass as well, and you have to find what you're going to get used to as quick as possible because you have to get used to the course and know the course pretty well. You have to figure out how hard or soft or firm it is.

JENNIFER KUPCHO: When I come to a new golf course, it's just really important to learn the same thing, learn the firmness or softness of the golf course and how much it's going to roll out.

I think, also, learning where you need to hit on the greens, that's really important. That's probably one of the most important things to learn about the golf course.

MINJEE LEE: Pretty much what the girls said already. I like to see what type of grass it is. That's what I do first.

MINSOL KIM: As the girls already said, the grass, the shape of the course, the firmness, the softness of the course, and also getting a feel for the green speed is also important.

JIN YOUNG KO: So all the things that the girls mentioned earlier. But when I come to the courses, maybe because I was on the Korean tour before, but when I come to these courses, I check on the mountain range in my view, and of course when you go to a seaside course, you have to look towards the water to look at the view line as well.

NA YEON CHOI: As the other girls mentioned, of course the grass is important and the green speed is important. Personally, I also try to take a look at the undulations on and around the greens, and so when I'm out there, I try to imagine the pin locations and I try to manage the course by trying to keep a mental note of which side of the green I don't want to miss or things like that.

HYE-JIN CHOI: I'm an amateur, so I don't have that much experience yet, but I think looking at the course and looking at the ways you can attack the green prior is also important.

Q. You talked about getting into yoga. Can you elaborate more what you were thinking taking that break? And for Na Yeon, you wrote a message or a letter about your retirement and a lot of fans really were moved by it. So can you speak a little bit more about that letter?

JIN YOUNG KO: So like I mentioned, I did yoga and I tried this and that, and I have to say that this year, I started off okay. But towards the mid part and towards the latter part of the year, I wasn't playing that well, and I thought that there were just a lot of thoughts in my head, plus I had the wrist injury. I thought if I just played and just passed the time, I would experience burnout.

So I came to the decision that I needed a break. So for two months, I did yoga, like I mentioned earlier. Although yoga seems easy, sometimes you really need to focus. In the beginning when I did a head stand, I would just topple over but now not so much. So I think that mentally or physically, I've gained the strength to just endure.

So I think a healthy mind will help me here as well, especially next year.

NA YEON CHOI: So I actually saw an article -- I haven't played with her on tour in the last five years. We meet personally, we have a little gathering where we go do volunteer work at the end of the day but it occurred to me that we never played together professionally. I don't know when I'm going to retire but I don't know if I'll be able to do it as gracefully and calmly as she has. I'm sure she has thought it through many, many times and it was not an easy decision.

She mentioned she was on tour for 15 years and I've been playing golf for 18, so I think what she's done is a really great achievement, and I hope that she knows that I really, really support her in opening the second chapter of her life.

Q. When it comes to your wrist, there is some pain. So what percentage do you think that your wrist is? How much of it is back and how is that going to help you maintain your game? And what are your plans for the rest of the season? Are you going to close out the season in the States or what are your plans? And Atthaya, this is your rookie year, and Player of the Year, the No. 1 ranking player, Rookie of the Year is all within reach. So it's been an exceptional year. What hopes do you have in closing out the season?

JIN YOUNG KO: Actually I'm a little bit uncomfortable that the wrist continues to come up. It's really difficult, I don't know how to explain what my wrist is like at the moment. It's not fully okay but I'm not in a lot of pain. It's really difficult to explain the state of my wrist.

But I have to say it's not at its worst and I don't think it's impacting my game that much and if I don't do well, I don't think I can blame it on my wrist. I'm just going to do my best out there.

As for the rest of the season, I will not be taking part in the championships in Japan. I will, however, take part in the remaining two in Florida.

ATTHAYA THITIKUL: Like I said before, I had a really good season this year so far. I'm not really thinking about all the awards that much, as I want to do for now on to the end of the season is trying to adjust as much as possible. Because I think when I go out and just have fun, all the result has come in pretty good. I'm the kind of person that goes out and smiles as much as possible. We work really hard this year already and it's coming pretty close to the end of the season, so what I have to do is just relax and enjoy.

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