

The Chevron Championship

Tuesday, March 29, 2022

Rancho Mirage, California, USA

Mission Hills Country Club

Lydia Ko

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Here with Lydia Ko, who finished second last year; our winner here in the desert in 2016. Lydia, before we look to this year, wanted to talk to you about that awesome round of 62 you had last round here last year to tie the tournament scoring record. What got into your head that day? You were just playing lights out.

LYDIA KO: I obviously started well with birdie and then eagling the second, and then holed a really long putt on 4.

So I just kind of got into a good momentum. Made a string of birdies at the end of my front nine that kind of led to the back nine as well.

I think when I was out of position I was able to make a pretty -- make my way around it, and every time I had a birdie opportunity it was almost as if I couldn't miss.

Those days are very seldom, so to have it on the last day here at the first major was definitely one of the best rounds I've played.

Q. You made the jump here into Poppie's Pond. You have great memories; we're here; we're happy to be here with Chevron and what they're bringing to the championship, but certainly bittersweet to be here for the last week. What are some of your best memories -- taking away the jump -- of being here in the desert and the time here at Mission Hills?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously there is so much history here with Amy Alcott being the first one to jump into Poppie's Pond. That kind of started I think a lot of dreams for many girls out there to want to jump in Poppie's Pond.

I've seen so many different shots, so many different finishes that led to players jumping in there.

This is kind of the end of the first part of the west coast swing for us and it's never a bad place to be, so just great memories on the golf course. Got to know some of the members around here as well.

So I just like it here. And I think the people here, even when I use the gym they're excited that LPGA is here. That's always nice, to come back to a place where the members and people of the area are excited as much as we are.

Q. So now moving to this week, you already have a win under your belt at the Gainbridge a couple weeks ago, tie for 12th this past week in Carlsbad. What have you been working on with your game that makes you feel confident coming into this week at Rancho Mirage?

LYDIA KO: My ball striking was pretty solid over the first two days at Aviara, and then I was struggling a little bit on the weekend, but kind of salvaged my way around on Sunday.

But I feel like at the start of the year I wasn't really sure where my game was at because I didn't really have a lot of time to prepare. The first two weeks having top 10 at Nona and then winning at Gainbridge was kind of a surprise and a bit of a bonus. Then had quite a bit of a break before Asia. That trip kind of got cut short unfortunately.

But, yeah, just trying to make sure that things that I'm working on just to be a little bit more consistent with the ball striking and then being on top of the short game, so trying to cover all the basics of things.

Q. Why did you call the win at Gainbridge a surprise?

LYDIA KO: I actually only had like two and a half weeks -- well, I normally take four weeks off and then practice four weeks and then get back into the first event.

This year I kind of had a week off, practiced for a couple weeks, and then had like another ten days off. Then ended up only having two, two and a half weeks. I was meant to have three but I got sick a little bit, so my time was getting shorter and shorter.

You know, the week before Nona I didn't really think my ball striking was there, and for most parts it wasn't that bad. So that kind of gave me good momentum and a little bit of



confidence going into Gainbridge, where I think at points I wasn't sure I should play that second event just to give myself more time for the next few that was coming up.

So ended up being a good decision, and I think it was a good leadup. It's always nice to play a couple events to get your momentum and see where your game is and go from there.

Q. I know COVID kept you out of Saudi Arabia. How did that affect you physically?

LYDIA KO: I didn't have a lot of symptoms. It came more during when I was in quarantine.

But it was very mild. When I did test negative I had a little bit of breathing issues and I felt like I had never seen the gym before. I was walking 30 minutes and my mask was completely drenched. It was really weird.

I normally run and try and stay on top of my workouts, and I felt like I had not done any of that, which was weird. So just doing my laundry and totally out of breath, which is not what should happen normally.

Yeah, I hadn't had COVID before -- not that I know of -- so I didn't know like how it would affect me. I think I got off pretty mildly. I just felt like physically I needed time to kind of slowly get back into -- get ready for the swing of events.

Q. When did you start to feel your energy level get back to normal?

LYDIA KO: I think like a week or so after. You know, I pretty much tried to do little workouts, but then not get too crazy, just to make sure I'm not fatiguing myself more, just having enough rest.

I think in about a week or so it was a lot better.

Q. Were you quarantined in Orlando?

LYDIA KO: No, in Singapore.

Q. Oh.

LYDIA KO: I tested positive in my exit test going to Thailand.

Q. Got you. And so switching gears, the traditions of this event, are there any that you really hope carry over into Texas next year?

LYDIA KO: I mean, the biggest thing about this event is Poppie's Pond, I think. Obviously we've had multiple

different sponsors that have sponsored this event, and I'm sure -- I'm going to miss the tradition of that and every year hoping to be the one that gets to make that leap.

At the same time, I referenced it earlier, when KPMG took over the LPGA Championship everybody was sad because there is so much tradition and history at that event, but what KPMG has done to that event, they've upgraded it on every level to the golf courses we play, the hospitality.

And I think sometimes it is hard to like take that step, but hopefully -- and I'm sure Chevron will do that, and we'll make it an even better tournament for the future generations and for us playing.

It will be a tournament that we're excited to play, and so there is pros and cons to everything I think. Yeah.

Q. You've won here; hold the course record here now for a single round. What is it about the golf course that works for your game so well?

LYDIA KO: I think my game like last year was very different to when I won here. I'm hitting it a lot longer off the tee last couple years than when I played and won in 2016, and the course has changed, too.

I think in the last couple years they brought the fairways in, grown the rough a lot more, so I think the course and just how I play is a little bit different. So it's kind of hard to compare it in that aspect.

But it's so important to be on the fairways here, because the greens are pretty firm as well and the rough are quite juicy. So to kind of be on the fairways is going to be a huge advantage, and I'm sure that the days that I played well I did that well, and then was able to putt and take advantage of the times that I put myself in good position.

Q. When you won here you laid up on Sunday on 18 and hit that wedge into, what, a foot? The last couple years, not many people have tried for that green because the backstop is gone. Is there a situation where you would say, I'm going for that green in two as opposed to laying up?

LYDIA KO: I mean, I went for it a couple years ago when we played in the fall, and I hit a hybrid to like 15 feet. But I think you do need to have a perfect number, and even if it's a perfect 3-wood, obviously that wouldn't be a club that I would try to go for on this green.

Probably be at least 5-wood and under just so that I know that it's got some sort of receptive motion when it hits the green.

Yeah, I think it's going to be very dependant on the lie. I could have gone for it that year that I won, but Jason, who I was working with then said, Hey, I think you just need to layup and let's just make a birdie and see where we end up.

So it's a good thing I listened to him then. It's circumstantial and very dependant on the wind as well.

Q. What have you been working on in your game coming into this event?

LYDIA KO: Just trying to make sure that my ball striking is a bit more consistent, and I know that my confidence rides a lot alongside that. My driving accuracy and fairways and then greens in regulation were both aspects that I wanted to take as big goals going into this year.

Yeah, those were probably it. And just making sure that I'm not getting technical and just being free and aggressive when I'm out there playing.

Q. How hard is it to not be technical out there when you're working through that ball striking change?

LYDIA KO: I don't -- we haven't really done anything new, so I don't think I've been very technical. I think sometimes when you're not hitting it well then you could go more that way.

Sometimes it is good to have technical thoughts because that kind of keeps you on top of it. Sometimes you just need to let it go. So it really depends on the situation and where you are at the time.

I don't think I've been very technical at all, to be honest.

Q. After the final round 62 you went on to win for the first time in three years and obviously had quite a bit of success since then. How are you different from when you came here last year?

LYDIA KO: You know, I was playing really well leading up to this week and I started off the week well, and then just kind of had okay days on Friday, Saturday, and then obviously a really good day.

I think I fed off the momentum from this week into Hawaii. And it was also a golf course where there were going to be some more birdies, so it's good to see that after the week you had. You just don't want that 62 to be a one-off thing and you're never going to see that again.

I think one of the I think positives of my season last year

was I had a lot of like low score finishes on the last day, and I think it was kind of proof that, Hey, you never know until the very end.

I think Hawaii itself gave me the confidence to say, Hey, I can be back in the winner's circle. When you're there once you feel like that's within reach again and again. At the end of the day, all I can do is put the myself in contention and put myself there as many times, and then whatever happens, it happens.

I can't really control like every little thing. Just trying to do a good job of the things I can control and let the other things settle the way it's going to be.

Q. Last year when you were here you talked about how some of Sean Foley's messages and texts had really helped you having more commitment and conviction over commitment to your game. How has his messages and advice evolved to you over the last year as you achieved so much?

LYDIA KO: I think one of the big things he said is just because I win one event it doesn't make me a better person. Like it doesn't, in that split second, change who I am.

Yeah, I'm sure at that moment I'm excited and super happy about it, but like I think that's why he has helped me to never get too up or too down.

Yeah, when do you play well it is something to celebrate, but at the same time, you got to keep working on the things that need to be good. You're not just playing for that one event. There is also another one.

When he came out to Pelican after I won in Saudi last year people were like, she just won. What are you guys working on?

We're not just trying to like win or do well at this event. We are just trying to see the big picture, and that's something he said this morning as well. I'm trying to get better incrementally and hopefully to be more of a consistent player like down the road as much as I want to play good golf now.

Q. How much confidence do you have in your game coming into this week?

LYDIA KO: What confidence do I have?

Q. How much confidence.

LYDIA KO: Oh, how much confidence. I guess confident.

I think there were some good and some bad from last week, but trying to take the positives. I didn't hole many birdie putts last week, so hopefully a few more will drop here.

The course is in such good shape that I feel like as long as I play solid golf, you know, you're kind of going to play like -- what you're going to get is going to be a pretty true testament of like how you're playing.

So, yeah, hopefully confident, but when you tee it up on Thursday it always feels a little different. You got some adrenaline, some excitement going through you.

Yeah, just trying to stay positive, and I know that like I don't need to play perfect golf. I just got to play the best golf in this the situations I put myself in.

Q. This year we now have the KPMG Insights program. How helpful has it been for you to assess your game and prepare for tournaments and events?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think it's a super cool technology and information that we can have and rely on. To be honest, I've never really been a huge stats person, so it's not something that I have drawn to.

I think it's great, and it's not only great like for us, but like more accurate data for people that are fans as well, to kind of see, like, Oh, this person is doing this. Like I saw Minjee's stats of her strokes gained from like something like 100 yards to 225 and she was first in everything, so pretty impressive.

So seeing those things I think is really great for fan interaction as much as it is important and like good information for us as players to kind of look back at.

Q. Any insights you can give us from the champion's dinner last night?

LYDIA KO: I wasn't there.

Q. Apparently they had short ribs.

LYDIA KO: I did see that it was Chef Thomas Keller. I was very jealous actually, after, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Again, last week in the desert. What are your - I hate to use the word expectations - but goals as you come into this last week hear at Mission Hills?

LYDIA KO: At any event I think a top 10 would be nice, especially this one being the first major of the year.

I think the more times you put yourself in contention, especially at these big events, you're able to feed off that and feel like you keep doing it and doing it, and then that door will open and that time will come.

So, yeah, top 10 would be great. Just enjoying my time out here. I love playing on the west coast, so just another good reason to be out.

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