

The Chevron Championship

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

The Woodlands, Texas, USA

The Club at Carlton Woods

Lydia Ko

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, I'm joined by Lydia Ko in the media center at The Chevron Championship.

Welcome Lydia; first major the year. Just to kick things off, seventh event of the season. Already have a win under the belt, two additional Top 10s. How is your game feeling going into this week?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I feel like I've by playing a lot more solid, and to be able to win the first tournament of the year was just a bit of a confidence booster.

To play well the week after was also great. I think when you come back from an off-season it's hard to know whether you're actually going to play well or not. I think those first few events are a good gauge on what you need to work on throughout the season.

Luckily I was able to get a couple good results and learn what are the aspects I need to work on and what are the things that are going really. I feel like I'm progressing, and the more chances I give myself I feel like one of those chances are going to happen at the end of the Sunday.

So I'm excited to be here. It's our second time in The Woodlands area, so I'm excited for a great week.

Q. You mentioning this is the second time you've played here, what did you learn about this course maybe last year?

LYDIA KO: That there is a lot of water on the left, which my ball ended up there quite a bit last year. My week was cut short because I just didn't play that well.

But the course, I think they did some changes, put in a couple extra bunkers and did some work around the greens as well.

So I've only played the front nine as of now. I feel more comfortable playing the second time around, and I think sometimes when you go to a golf course that you haven't played before and you don't play well, you don't have a lot

to gauge from.

But it might be a good thing, and I'm hoping to make some more great memories here and hopefully a lot of people can come out and watch us play.

Q. We know winning the first event out of the gate is always a dream start. It's challenging to maintain the momentum. How have you maintained that pace that you set yourself up for so far this year?

LYDIA KO: I think my coach has been a big help in that perspective of never getting me too excited or too above. And even after I won the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions, I think on the Sunday we were like, okay, even though I won, like what are the things I could have done better to like maybe be more comfortable coming down the stretch.

If I have, let's say, a one-shot lead rather than two-, three-, four-shot lead. He always sees the positive in things, but also we're always looking forward to progressing, and I think that's a great mindset to be.

We're both in the same page on even though I won, I think I could have done better in, so that next time if I'm in a similar situation I'll be able to handle that better.

So he's been a really big help to like just keep me grounded and always working to get better.

Q. This course, obviously a lot of people are still unfamiliar with it. Can you speak to the mental test this course provides as a major championship venue?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think there is like no super easy kind of holes. I was saying the front nine are like all very medium, middle range difficult tee holes. And then the back nine, couple more easier ones and also some really more difficult ones as well.

So it's kind of the golf course where you may not necessarily see a ton of birdies, but -- and you may end up seeing a stretch of let's say seven, eight pars, and when you keep making pars, even though you're still playing well



you might run out of the patience and could lose your focus and make a mistake.

So I think it's a golf course that requires a lot of patience, and know that because there are quite a few of those maybe middle to longer range par-4s and those kind of length par-3s as well, you might not get as many birdie opportunities or chances on the scorecard.

But as long as you keep grinding and set up opportunities, then those things are going to get sorted by itself.

Q. You talked about playing on the front nine. It has seen a decent number of changes from last year to this year. Could you walk me through how some of those changes might impact your approach to the front side?

LYDIA KO: I think the two biggest changes are on 8 and 9. The first hole, the green complex looks very similar. But I was playing with a good friend of mine, Lindy, and she has a local caddie this week, and approximate Stephen said they had toned down some of the ridges and all that.

To the naked eye and somebody that's only come here two times -- or this is my second time -- you might not even know there was a difference made.

But on 8, they made the drive a lot more tighter just having the bunker come into play a little bit more. Obviously if you hit a good drive you're going to get rewarded to be able to get home for two.

On 9 I think it was a pretty straightforward tee shot without -- excluding the water. But now having another middle bunker where I think most people are going to run out or carry into there that makes it a lot tighter. I think people that are going to be super aggressive and hit driver and are going to get rewarded hitting wedges into the green.

If you lay back short of that, then you're going to hit middle, long irons. I think it's very strategic based on and definitely dependant on what the player decides to do.

I think this is kind of a golf course where if you draw or fade it, it's not like for one certain flight shape which I think is great, where it just doesn't eliminate a certain part of the field, you know.

Q. How receptive have the greens been this year compared to last year?

LYDIA KO: I think last year the greens were pretty firm, too. Even though they had a lot of rain and I think we had a storm even during the week. I remember the fairways being quite soft.

By tournament, the greens were like -- like they weren't super soft, as much as maybe the fairways were playing. But when you do come to courses where they've done work on the greens, you've got to expect it to be firmer than maybe this golf course in five, ten years' time, because the ground and grass, everything has more time it settle.

But I don't think it's outrageously firm where you can't hold greens with irons, so it is going to be difficult, and that's why I think being on the fairway is going to be crucial. Especially on bermuda, you could get any sort of the lie in the rough.

So I think being accurate off the tee is going to be a huge help and to be able to attack some of these pin positions.

Q. What's it been like to watch Nelly's run of four in a row, and where does that run rank for you in runs of performances since you've been on tour?

LYDIA KO: This is definitely one of the best stretches I think a player has played in my 11 years on tour. I saw that was it like May and Annika were maybe the last two that had won three, four events in a row.

The max I've done is two and I was like, this is pretty cool to be able to win back to back weeks.

For her to win the second event of the year and have eight weeks off and win the next three, I was like, man, I shouldn't have played, all playing for second place.

But I was lucky enough to play alongside Nelly in Phoenix and she played great and she putted great. She's obviously coming in with a lot of confidence. And even on the he men's side I think Scottie Scheffler is having a great stretch of his own as well.

It's pretty impressive, and sometimes people are like, it must be that much easier to win. It's showing and saying something about the player if they're winning four weeks straight. I think it's great for women's golf, and I think with her playing well, it's inspiring and motivating the rest of us to keep doing what we're working on.

We all know that golf is a difficult game, so we're just trying to do our best. And it's a new week, so who knows what's going to happen.

Q. What differences do you see in her game to elevate herself to this level?

LYDIA KO: I think she's always been a world-class player. Like I said earlier, I think I played with her 50% of Thursday

and Friday tee times we get paired up. I call it the Ko-Orda pairing. She says, yeah, I'm playing with you or Jin Young, so she can't get away from the Ko's.

She's long off the tee and very accurate, especially for how far she hits it. I think she has great control of her distances and irons and has been putting well on top of that. And she chips in every now and then.

So it sounds like a very accomplished combination, and I think even when she is maybe not at the top of her game for the week, I think she's always so consistent and that's why she's always put thing herself there.

Q. This is regarding preparation for major championships specifically. You're becoming very accustomed to the calendar having been on tour for a while. How has your preparation for major championships evolved over your time on tour, and what did it look like getting ready for The Chevron Championship this week?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think it's been very circumstantial in the sense that before when we were playing in Palm Springs I would play those couple events leading up to this tournament.

Now, I think everybody had a week off before coming into this week, so it's been -- I think it's like very dependant on the major. Normally I would like to get to the tournament site on a Saturday or a Sunday and maybe just to get adjusted to the time and do some prep work.

Last year I came here like on Friday and then I could practice here the weekend prior, especially being a new golf course. But it's changed and it's never been like super consistent. Every major has different days where we play pro-ams or U.S. Women's Open where we don't have a pro-am and it's longer practice rounds because we're playing in four balls.

At the end of the day, you just have to get adjusted to what that major championship is like, what comes with playing those events. I think you end up finding what's right just for that week, and sometimes it might be playing 18 holes on Monday just because I would rather spend more time on the golf course than hitting balls for an hour on the range.

I think I try and listen to my mind or by body and say, what are the things I need to work on and what would be beneficial for me. I think that's what I learnt the most throughout the years, is just to listen to what the voice is saying my head.

I think it's normally a pretty good gauge of what I actually

need to do that week.

Q. Is there any adjusting that you have to do going into this week as far as ball flight and trajectory is concerned?

LYDIA KO: I don't think so. I haven't done a whole lot of work on like my TrackMan to see how much further or less the ball is traveling.

But my caddie, Paul, checked, the altitude is only like 100 something feet, so we're not like playing in like Mexico City where the ball is traveling super long way.

For most parts, I think it's just like any standard week. In Florida I think we get that kind of bermudagrass so it's not too unfamiliar.

It's more trying to get used to the conditions here and sending my swings to my coach as usual and doing some good work with my putting coach as well. Just getting adjusted more to the conditions rather than how far my ball is traveling.

Q. And what have your thoughts been The Woodlands over the last two years?

LYDIA KO: It's been nice. I've been staying at a hotel in The Woodlands area. I think the area that I'm in has a lot of good food options concluding a True Food Kitchen. So it's such a like modern, new area, and I saw on the sign coming in that it's I think been like 50 years since The Woodlands, I don't know, like --

Q. (Indiscernible.)

LYDIA KO: Yeah, so it is definitely like very new and you can see that by the buildings and everything.

The only other time I played in Houston was for the U.S. Women's Open when we played in December a few years ago. It feels like a completely different area. Obviously Texas is big and I hear a lot of great things about this area.

I don't know if it's because it's like a local biasness but it's really beautiful and quiet area and very easy to get around. So as a player, like it's not that difficult for us because people have a lot of great housing and hotel and we're not having to go 30-plus minutes to go to the grocery store or come to the golf course.

So logistically it's super easy. Chevron has gone above and beyond to keep elevating this event. I'm lucky enough to go to the champions' dinner yesterday and everything they've done, whether it's things on course, on the

tournament site, to things like that, they've just been putting so much, investing so much in that.

I think as players, we're very grateful to be able to play these championships where the partners are super supportive of women's golf, and just growing it and even supporting the junior ams that are also competing this week.

Q. We are about 100 days left until the 2024 Paris Olympics. As a two-time Olympic medalist, how much is that on your mind? How much are you hoping and looking forward to going to the Olympics again and performing well there?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I'm super excited. I think there is definitely a star next to the 2024 Paris Olympics. It's weird, I can't believe it's been three years already since the Tokyo Olympics, having that played a year later than its original date.

But last two Olympics has been great. It was always a dream of mine to be able to play in the Olympics. To be there at Rio and medal was an unbelievable experience. Due to the circumstances, Tokyo was a little different, but hopefully -- knock on wood -- Paris is almost going to be back to normal and it's literally celebrating the best athletes all around the world.

I'm excited and hopeful to be part of that. You know, I'm pretty much playing in France and then I have a break and then come back and play in France again. It will be chance for me to improve my French. Don't know a lot of words in French.

So I'm excited, and I think Paris and Le National especially has hosted huge sporting events like the Ryder Cup, and I'm excited to be able to play on a championship golf course like that. I think it's going to be extremely difficult, but when you have the best of the best there to compete in the Olympics, I think it's pretty much the perfect golf venue for that.

The countdown begins and I'm sure there is an internal countdown in my head too.

Q. Is there a different mindset when you're there and only 60 players? Like you said, it's best of the world. Is there a different mindset from your experience preparing and heading to the Olympics?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think at the end of the day it's just a win to even be at the Olympics. You know, I thought being an Olympian was something that I would see through on the TV and somebody else was an Olympian. I joke that

I'm not an athlete but I'm an Olympian.

It's to be amongst that group of athletes that they call themselves an Olympian and they're proud to be one. It's very cool feeling. I think -- and that's why even if you don't medal, you're a winner. Just to be there and be able to represent your country at the biggest sporting event ever.

When you're playing, in some ways you may -- I remember in the last two I was a little bit more aggressive in my second and third round, because at the end of the day you do want to medal. If you're tied third or second, like I was in '21, you have to go in the playoff. Potentially you may be the one that falls out of that.

So it's I guess maybe like the playoff for the T Mobile match play where you were playing for a certain amount the spots and this is three medals. So I think sometimes you do have to maybe be more aggressive and say that fourth is a -- there is a huge difference between fourth and third, whereas some other weeks coming fourth here is such a great accomplishment as well.

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