

The Chevron Championship

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

The Woodlands, Texas, USA

The Club at Carlton Woods

Lilia Vu

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome everybody here in the press center for The Chevron Championship, and welcome Lilia Vu, our defending champion.

Been a year now since your first major victory. I'm just wondering what your mindset is like coming back to this place where you won a major last year.

LILIA VU: Yeah, I'm going to be honest, I'm not trying to put too much pressure on myself. I think I'm going to look at this tournament as a new opportunity to win and not put too much pressure of trying to defend my title.

I feel like that kind of comes up time and time again, but trying to enjoy myself out here. Played the front nine yesterday. Feel really calm out here, good memories, so looking forward to this week.

Q. As you sort of remember last year, does that help you in your preparation, remembering some of the good shots and moments that you had last year?

LILIA VU: Yeah, absolutely. I know I had a good first two rounds last year. Saturday didn't do much, and then Sunday kind of fought back my way.

It's a tougher golf course this year I think with the new greens and it's firmer, and then some new added bunkers in different areas.

I'm going to see the back nine later today. I'm expecting it to play a little harder.

Q. I was just sitting here talking to Megan earlier about how you sat in the scoring area for maybe 30 minutes last year after you finished your round.

LILIA VU: Yeah.

Q. I was wondering what you thought about or if you remembered what you were thinking in those moments where you sat here just waiting for it to end?

LILIA VU: I think it was cold and I was a little worried about my back. It was actually really clutch last year. My physio was actually out of here on her way to Dallas, and I think after 30 minutes on her drive there she turned around and came back and had enough time to help me on the range and get ready for the playoff.

Q. This was a gritty victory from you last year. What did you learn about yourself in that moment when that putt dropped and when you won your first major?

LILIA VU: That you're never really out of tournament. I think I'm a bit of a perfectionist. If I hit one bad shot or don't birdie a hole that I think needs to be birdied, you're really not out of the tournament.

It took my caddie last year to put me in place. On hole 15 on Sunday I remember just being so upset at my approach shot. I hit it to 40 feet and then I got so upset. I'm like, I'm not out here trying to make pars. This is the last day. I only have a couple holes left. Like why am I making pars?

He told me let it all out before I got to the putting green or he wouldn't give me my putter. So that was good.

Q. Major test for some players just hit different. Winning two last year, what is it about majors that brings out the best in you?

LILIA VU: I think I typically enjoy a really difficult course. I feel like it really challenges the best part of your game. You have to have everything. You can't find an easy way out of it. You have to have everything here.

Q. Just a year on, do you feel any different or the same old Lilia that loves steak, her cat, out here hitting the golf ball?

LILIA VU: I think myself is the problem when I'm not enjoying myself out here. I'm still trying to find my peace out here and not get too upset when I don't achieve what I think I can.

Q. So you won this tournament last year. You also have won the last major played and you're the No. 2



player in the world. Given what's going on with Nelly Korda, given Lydia Ko chasing the Hall of Fame point, do you feel like you're flying under the radar right now?

LILIA VU: I typically like to fly under the radar. They've been playing great. It shows how competitive this sport is. Like women's golf is not something to be taken lightly. There is great golf out here. More people need to watch us.

Watching the Masters was great, but I think people are really going to enjoy watching the Chevron out here.

Q. We've been talking a lot about what's going on in women's basketball and Caitlin Clark. What do you think needs to happen for women's golf to have that kind of same explosion of interest?

LILIA VU: I think it's happening right now with Nelly. She is bringing so much to the table just win after win, just having it, having everything together.

She's done such a good job. So well liked and loved out here. She brings a big following. She's a great person. So just her, and she's kind of our Caitlin Clark out here.

Q. How would you assess your game coming into this major championship?

LILIA VU: Yeah, it's been a rough couple months battling with my injury. It's been a little scary. I've definitely cried a lot on the range sometimes because my back just couldn't hold up.

I definitely feel a lot better than I did at PV and Phoenix. I would say we're basically 95% there. If I stay healthy this week I think I'll be able to do what I need to do.

Q. What's the biggest challenge you've dealt with in the early part of the year?

LILIA VU: It's just been kind of an up and down not being fully physically healthy. On the days that I feel physically healthy then I'll get upset not performing the way I think I should.

It's up and down. For me, I'm just going to try and enjoy myself. I think the reason my body was angry was because I was internally angry, so last week I told myself, not going to be angry anymore. Whatever happens, happens. You're doing your best that day, so focus on that.

Q. Take us through the physical therapy or rehab, how

you get yourself physically ready after a round, what that looks like.

LILIA VU: Yeah, so I've definitely kind of put lifting kind of on the back burner and just let myself recover. Seeing my physical therapist at home almost every single day.

It kind of kills me that I can't go and train like fully the way I like to, because that's something I love to do. I got back into it last week and was fine. I feel like I'm in a good area for this week.

Q. Piggybacking off that, what's your recovery process like, whether it's when you're -- if you have a certain playlist or what it's like.

LILIA VU: Oh, for me, I kind of just definitely do stretching every night. That's something that has been really crucial. I've taken that very seriously recently with how the my body is reacting.

Yeah, but definitely kind of just being nice to myself. Reading more. I love to scroll on TikTok. That's a bad thing of mine. I constantly do that. Just relaxing and enjoying myself and not kind of punishing myself even though I'm not achieving some stuff that I want to achieve currently.

So just being nice to myself. It's all a journey, right?

Q. So we've spoken a lot recently about the impact of women's sports. Throughout the weekend we will talk a lot more about that. In the position that you're in right now, what advice would you give to a young girl who wants to get into sports, and what does it mean to you when people say play like a girl?

LILIA VU: I think when you see someone else doing that, for example Caitlin Clark, then you can imagine yourself as a little girl doing that. I definitely had my inspirations going up, like Annika Sorenstam, Lorena Ochoa, Seri Pak.

When you see someone able to achieve that, then you can follow along in their footsteps. People are quick to turn away, like that's not a girls' sport. Every sport is for both men and women. I think anyone can do it. So just follow your dreams, know what you want to do, and then go full force and don't give up.

Q. You mentioned worrying about your back last year at this championship. Angela Stanford was in here saying she had the same physio, trainer since 2004.

LILIA VU: Yeah.

Q. Who is your trainer? How long have you had her? How often is she out here?

LILIA VU: At home I am you have I have Stephanie Hickerson. She is my physical therapist. And then on the road here, my physio Annalise (phonetic.) She's been a crucial part of my career, too.

I actually started working with her in Arkansas in 2022 when my back gave out again there. So this is third time that we've worked through this. Every time it's gotten better.

Yeah, I remember in Arkansas I wasn't sure if I was going to play that tournament. I saw her the first time, got introduced to her by my caddie. I saw her for the first time and I was like, I don't think I can play this week. I don't think that.

It was I think Wednesday, Friday start in Arkansas, and she was like, hey, don't say that yet. Let's go day by day. Played Friday and ended up leading the first day. We just kind of never looked back. She's been on my team ever since.

Q. Was that the first time you started having back issues? When did it first start?

LILIA VU: Yeah, I think that was the first time. I think it was me coming back from Epson Tour, too. I didn't know how to kind of formulate a team. I was just kind of seeing where my golf takes me. I realized, okay, the girls out here really take golf seriously. They have someone for everything, and those people make their lives easier.

I knew that's when I needed to step up and add certain people to my team so I can just play golf and think about that.

Q. Was it a shot in Arkansas that started it all?

LILIA VU: No. I think I was just a little bit sore from the travel from Portland to Arkansas. I don't remember the route. I remember playing nine holes on Tuesday and not feeling the greatest, just knowing I was a little tight.

Then it just got progressively worse. Yeah, couldn't even sit in the car for more than ten minutes.

Q. As you sit here today it feels good?

LILIA VU: Yeah, I'm fine now.

Q. After winning here last year, how special is it returning to the Houston area, The Woodlands? Does

make it more special for you?

LILIA VU: Yeah, absolutely. Instantly when I landed in Houston it felt very calming to me. I felt almost sort of home. I don't know, I just kept thinking about it. Even my parents were talking about it last night. Could be a place to consider to move.

But I love this area. Everyone is super welcoming. The energy here is different. Everybody wants us to be here, is looking forward to it.

Really fun week overall.

Once I hit that first shot on the first hole yesterday I was like, this is home. It just feels so right.

Q. Congratulations on your recovery.

LILIA VU: Oh, thank you.

Q. I wanted to ask since your recovery, how has your patience with yourself grown?

LILIA VU: Yeah, I think it's been a rough ride for me. I feel like recovery is so -- it's such a journey. It's up and down. Some days I'll feel really good and work out really well, feeling so strong and have a good practice session, and the next day it would be cold and I could feel the pain while driving.

I think it kind of got to me one of the days last week. It's scary when you can't do normal everyday activity without pain. When you're kind of like, oh, gosh, if I go play golf, something I love to do and want to do every single day, but I can't even sit in a car and drive 20 minutes, that's a scary feeling, right?

Basically I think it's also your mindset. I think once I decided, okay, I think I'm internally angry. I am not going to let that affect me body. I am just going to let whatever happens, happen. I have the best people around me and they know I'm moving well, so I'm just going to trust what they think.

Q. How has your support system around you encouraged you?

LILIA VU: Yeah, they've been really great. My parents are forever my rock. They believe in me. They know how hard I can get on myself. They can sense when I get quiet. They're like, are you okay? They kind of want me to play this week without pressure. Whatever happens, happens.

Once we landed here on Sunday my dad was saying to

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

me, whatever happens, happens. Let it be. Don't get angry. Don't get too up and down. Just do your thing. You're good enough.

Q. Good luck.

LILIA VU: Thank you.

Q. So did you have any input on the dinner last night, the menu?

LILIA VU: Oh, my God, last night was amazing. There was kind of a communication, like unable to communicate too well. I think when we all decide to get together and have a phone call I was in China and then back stuff started happening, so we kind of just did a group chat.

I told Chef Keller, hey, really love steak. Made it my personality trait. Then I also said that I'm Vietnamese and I kind of want to do some Vietnamese flavors. You can do whatever you want. I know he's so GOAT'ed so like just let him do whatever he wants.

I did not see the menu until I sat down yesterday. I was very impressed because he made that dish called Bò Kho, which is something my mom makes a lot and it's my favorite thing she makes. Every single course that came out, he hit it out of the park. It was so good.

For that Vietnamese dish he brought out, I looked at my whole table, everything was clear. Everyone ate every single piece off that plate. Yeah, it was amazing.

Q. Did you arrive via helicopter?

LILIA VU: No. Kupcho tried to convince me, but I was like, no, you go do it. Send me a video after.

Q. Scared?

LILIA VU: Scared for sure.

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