

Women's Olympic Golf Competition

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Kasumigaseki Country Club

Lydia Ko

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started. How exciting is it to be back in the Olympics and playing in that group with the other medalists.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously with everything that's happened in the last year and a half I think as athletes we're all grateful for the opportunity to be able to represent our country and be here in Tokyo. I know that this wasn't an easy decision or process for the games to be on itself, so, yeah, I'm super excited. Shanshan, Inbee and I actually played together at the U.S. Women's Open earlier this year and after that I didn't think that we would have the first two day parings as the gold, silver, and bronze medalists all playing together. Which is exciting and hopefully we'll be able to represent the Rio medalists well and kind of start off the games in a solid way.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Given your recent improvement in form, breaking your win drought this year has it been a little bit of a blessing in disguise that the Olympics was delayed?

LYDIA KO: I mean, yes or no. To be honest, during the six months off where we had time off from competitive play obviously the circumstances, it's not ideal, and you know, what the whole world has gone through in the economy and health it's not been good in that sense. But at the same time it was probably the longest time I was able to kind of reflect, take a step back and assess where my game's at, what I need to work on and I think that really helped me during the restart of my season last year and that gave me good momentum coming into this year. But, no, in golf I think we're very fortunate that we have so many pinnacle events during the year on the women's Tour. We have five majors, with our last one coming up in the next couple weeks and so many great events on our calendar. But for some athletes every four years or even for this time it's every in five years, it's their pinnacle event and people work and train so hard for that exact moment and I know that a year being pushed back can make a



huge difference for them in their careers. So in my case, who knows, it could have been better, it could have been worse, but you play with what you get and you just kind of go with the circumstances. Obviously I felt like winning in Hawaii proved to myself that, hey, I can be back in the winner's circle and I had been close but being close is, it helps with the confidence and you feel like you can be there, but actually getting it done is, it's a little bit of a different story. So I think that win definitely helped with my personal confidence and hopefully this season leading up to this one will give me good momentum for a fun week here in Tokyo.

Q. What would you say have been the keys to you regaining your form? What have you worked on or is it simply a confidence thing as you've alluded to?

LYDIA KO: I think at times confidence is the most important club in the bag. It might not literally be a golf club, but it's a big key. There is so much talent out here and I think day-to-day your skill set doesn't change a whole lot, but whether you're confident or have you the belief in yourself it makes a huge difference on how you strategize on the golf course and just your demeanor as well. But when I took those months off I started working with Sean Foley and he was able to help me in the technical standpoint but also clear questions in my head and now every time I talk to him I feel like I get a lot of his great energy and great advice as well. So he's been much more than just a technical like swing coach to me, he's been like a mentor and that has helped a lot. In the training standpoint, when we're on the road and playing lots of events you're doing more of maintaining work and making sure that you have the endurance and you're not tired and fatigued after the stretch of events. But having a few months at home back in Orlando I was able to work hard with my trainers and I feel like I got stronger during those months and that has kind of reflected in my distance and the way I've been able to sometimes play some of these golf courses in a different way to I had before.

Q. You mentioned confidence. I think people who hit the ball like I do can't imagine someone like you losing confidence. But what sort of things can be a blow to confidence for a professional golfer?



LYDIA KO: I have no idea well or not well you hit it.

THE MODERATOR: He's terrible. (Laughing).

LYDIA KO: But, you know what, we all have good days and bad days. I think golf is very momentum based and that happens in a span of a round as well. You're not playing as well but you get a couple birdies and you kind of feed off that momentum and you feel like you're able to make another one. But when things just don't go your way and you feel like you put in the effort but it doesn't happen, you kind of doubt the process and you, I think I was starting to doubt, hey, am I actually able to do this. There was just a lot of questions. But I believe that if you keep doing the right work for you and I'm focusing on the things that I can control, then that's all I can do and go from there.

Sean Foley sometimes tells me, hey, even if you're doing the work that might just, that might not be a reflection of what it is right now, it takes time for you to kind of make that yours and so you have to trust the training and trust the process and he said, hey, sometimes you may, it might not be your time and you just don't deserve it right now. So I think it's kind of hard to hear that at times, because you feel like, man, I put in the work, why is the results not reflecting that. But I think it's patience and we're trying to play golf for a long period of time, it's a sport that we can play for a long period of time as long as you're not injured, so I'm trying to stay as patient as possible and learn from both the ups and downs and I think that's easier and a better way to embrace the journey, because I'm hoping to have a long career.

Q. Do you know where your silver medal is located?

LYDIA KO: I honestly think it's in my dad's wardrobe. I think he's seen it more than me. It's been awhile since I've seen it. But definitely I always say that technically the silver medal, I came second to Inbee, but it's probably the most prestigious and honorable silverware that I got and it was, it meant like a win for me and I think the great thing about being here at the Olympics is no matter if you end up standing on the podium at the end of Saturday or not, just being here and to be able to represent your country and to say that you're an Olympian a select few athletes are able to say that and that's a win itself. So I think we're all champions just being here, so I'm just trying to enjoy and be grateful for my second opportunity at the Olympics.

Q. With the silver medal, Justin Rose took his medal everywhere with him. Xander's now going to be able to do that. Did you do anything fun with the medal? Did you show it off to anybody?

LYDIA KO: No, I didn't take it anywhere, but I remember I

think I was traveling from Rio to Canada, because the Canadian Open was the week after and I left it in my carry on and I think it beeped because, you know, it was obviously a hefty-size medal and you could see in the X ray it was like a perfect circle with like looks like a lanyard almost. And I was like, yeah, that's the silver medal, which was like a very kind of cool moment, maybe a little douchy, but, yeah, no, I was that was probably one of the cool things. But, no, I didn't take an around. Maybe if the change of the medal comes and I might do what Justin or what Xander is doing.

Q. Is that the best humble brag ever? Yes, that's my silver medal in there?

LYDIA KO: I was like, yeah, obviously clearly it's a perfect circle, that's my silver medal. I'm normally, I think, not the type to say, hey, like this is what I got, but the Olympics is so special, ever since they announced that in 2016 golf was going to be back in the Olympics in over a hundred years, I knew that I wanted to make the team. I'm always proud to represent New Zealand on a daily basis when we're playing on Tour and to be able to do that at the Olympics, alongside the best athletes, it's a pretty surreal experience and I know that it was such an honorable moment. I can clearly remember when my putt lipped in on the last hole I was like a whole array of emotions going through me. I thought I was going to cry, but then I saw like to my right and Inbee was not crying and she was the gold medalist, I was like, I don't know if the silver medalist deserves to cry when the gold medalist is like totally fine. So I think I held back my tears then. But I think it was very meaningful, not for myself only, but for my team and my family and everyone that's kind of walked through this journey with me to be there and make me be the person that I was at that point.

Q. This is kind of a different question, but having played in Rio and then I think before that you played in the 2014 Women's Open at Pinehurst. What advantage, if at all, is there playing the week after the men at a major venue, in a major competition?

LYDIA KO: For me in 2014 when they had the back-to-back U.S. Open, I think it might have been the first time I had actually seen men's golf in person like live. Which was super cool and I think TV does no justice to how strong, powerful and how good these players are. Even on our Tour, like even if you have the best coverage, just being there and watching it is so different. I just enjoyed that whole experience. I remember I was like sitting at the back of the range at Pinehurst and Bill Haas was like, Hey, Lydia. And I was like, oh, my God, he knows my name. So it's just, I always like feel star struck. I was here this week and I saw some of the guys at the

village or at dining and I was like, that's Viktor Hovland, that's Justin Thomas. Like I'm just, I feel like I'm watching TV, but they're right there. So I don't know if it does any advantage in like my game standpoint, but as just a person, I feel like I was seeing celebrities, which is cool.

Q. What about an advantage just for women's golf? From more eyeballs, more scrutiny.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think KPMG has also been a start with our KPMG women's PGA Championship they have taken us to some of these golf courses that historically the women have not played and those are golf courses that the men have played. Like at Hazeltine where they had the men's Ryder Cup there. So many other golf courses, you know, where there's a lot of men's history but the women haven't gone to. I think there's just, you know, so much talent, there's so many good like variety of players on our Tour and for us to be able to experience and get that kind of exposure on some of the golf courses that men play, I think it's great. Women's golf as current players hopefully we're able to grow the game and make it better for the future generations and I think it's a start for us to go to these other world-class golf courses that the men play as well.

Q. You mentioned down being in the village or dining, have you had any other moments running into athletes or that feel truly like Olympic to you?

LYDIA KO: This year is very different obviously because everyone is walking around with masks, so it's really hard to recognize people from eyes up. It took me months to realize who is who on our Tour and I had seen them for eight years. But now I'm good at spotting our LPGA players at the village and I get so excited seeing like, because like it's like one of us. But in Rio I saw Simone Biles and I went to like athletics and saw like Usain Bolt go on the podium to get his medal in 2016. It's just so cool because that's the great thing about the Olympics, it's more than just golf or like a few highlighted sports, there's sports that I had never heard of and I had always seen just on TV and to see just the different countries of athletes here and all the different sports, it's really cool and kind of as a sports fan I think it's such an incredible couple weeks and just to be here live seeing some of them is a cool experience.

Q. You mentioned Simone Biles there. As someone yourself who had so much success so young and was put in the spotlight, can you kind of explain your feelings about what's happening with her this Olympics and what you feel about that?

LYDIA KO: I guess I think the thing is she made that

decision and I'm sure it wasn't an easy decision. She is amazing gymnast and outside of that she might be one of the greatest and best athletes of all time. Her being so successful at Rio and so many other championships that she competes in, I'm sure there's a lot of pressure and a lot of limelight and spotlight to her. But I think some people may say, hey, like is she running away from all that pressure and everything, but I think it's incredibly strong and vulnerable of her to be able to make a decision like that. It's not easy and no matter what decision you make or no matter how she places, it's always going to be media and a lot of attention around her. But I think at the end of the day it was such a powerful statement. I think Naomi Osaka did that at the French Open a few months ago as well and almost I think that's a harder decision than actually going with it all and I don't know exactly what they're going through because every athlete and every player has their own journey, so it's even though it's relate able, it's so different, but I think it's all credits to her to make a decision like that and I think it's all respects to her.

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