

Aramco Saudi Ladies International Presented by Public Investment Fund

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King Abdullah Economic City, Saudi Arabia
Royal Greens Golf & Country Club

Lydia Ko

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: This is your first event of the year. How has your preparation been?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I had a long time off since CME and I had a few weeks to get ready for this one. It's the start of a three-week stretch for me, so I'm excited to get my '23 started, and get to be back here where I had a lot of great memories to kind of reflect back from from 2021.

THE MODERATOR: Saudi has been a happy hunting ground for you. You won the title in 2021. What's the aim for this week?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think the level of field and the players are even better this time around than in '21, so I think it's going to be another great week here.

When I played, it was in November, so I remember it being pretty hot when I came, and these last couple days here, the weather has been really beautiful, and it's actually been pretty breezy. I think in ways, it's going to play a little tougher, but I'm excited, this is probably one of the biggest accolade events in Saudi Arabia, so hopefully all of us that came over can put on a good show for the people and inspire more juniors to pick up the game and dream of maybe playing this event in their future.

THE MODERATOR: You finished 2022 with the CME TOUR Championship, and that was the biggest paycheck in women's golf, and for this week the Aramco Saudi Ladies International we have a \$5 million prize purse that matches the men's. What did you make of it when you heard the news, and what will that do for the equality of the game in your opinion?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously very exciting news that the women get treated the same as the men. I know this is a great step forward, not only just here but in the women's game in general. That's what I think we're all shooting for, for that gap to be a little bit less even in some of our other events and some of our major championships and everything. They kind of keep growing in that sense.



It's very exciting, and I think we're very grateful that a lot of partners understand and support and believe in the women's game, and the level of talent that these female golfers have. It's a great momentum that we're on, and hopefully the gap just keeps getting smaller and smaller.

Q. How did you keep your fitness up over the time off, and is there a routine that you go through that changes throughout the season?

LYDIA KO: I think in my time off compared to when I'm in the season, I probably will do a little bit more strength training, and I think it's easier to build your strength when you have a longer period of time off. I think for me at least, it's hard to keep like putting on more and more muscle mass when you're on the road because I'm doing more walking, burning more calories than I would probably in a normal off week. I think in my off time I do try and work with my trainers and maybe lift a little bit heavier, do a little more compound work, and when it's a tournament try to maintain that and try to do good work with the facilities that I have.

Obviously with workout routines it's so much easier when you're at home in your gym and you know what you can do, but on the road you're trying to get things done at a hotel gym or maybe another fitness center around the area.

Yeah, for me I think when I'm at tournaments, I do more mobility and stability work and keeping my endurance up, and during the off weeks try and do a little bit more longer sessions and more compound work.

Q. Is there any more pressure on you this time around being World No. 1?

LYDIA KO: I'm trying to not really think of it. Like I'm out there hitting balls and I don't feel like the World No. 1. Obviously I had a great season last year, and it really couldn't have been any more and better than I could have ever asked for. I won early in my season, and then played really consistently, especially from the middle of the season to the end.

You wish that it could be like that all the time, but all I can do is just be -- just trust my process and just not get too irritated about things that may not go so well at the start because it is a long season, and I can still keep working



on the things that I need to get done and not get too frustrated and just kind of commit to it.

I think the important thing is it's a fresh new start. I can't compare myself to last year or the seasons in the past, just try and have a good year and focus on what's in front of me now.

Q. In terms of the Aramco Saudi Ladies International, what does it mean to you to be part of it, and the strong field year after year, you winning it, and whether this year will be similar to 2021.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, when I came in 2021 they told me that they had a lot of growth in junior golf, and especially in junior girls' golf here in Saudi Arabia, from when they first had the event in 2020, so there was a lot of growth even when I came, and when I came, I met a few of the junior girls out here, so it was really good to see the future generations and them getting a lot of inspiration by us just playing out here.

Unfortunately I wasn't here last year, but I think with so many of the top names and so many great female golfers coming out, I think this is a great step forward from where it was at the start, so it's really cool to be a part of that, and hopefully a lot of the junior golfers will be able to come out this week and watch us, and like I said earlier, just dream that in maybe five, ten years' time that they too can be out here playing at this golf course at this event. I think that's what we're all here for.

Yes, we're trying to compete against the world's best, but we're trying to grow the game wherever we go, and it's really cool to be a part of that.

Q. You're coming this year as World No. 1, and you've won previously in Royal Greens. What would be different in your opinion in this year's competition?

LYDIA KO: This is my first tournament of the season, so I don't really have anything to kind of compare myself going into this event. It's been a couple months since I last competed at CME. Every day feels changes, so I can't really be comparing myself to last year. Hopefully I'll be able to start the season while obviously the best thing that could happen is for me to win, but outside of that, I think this tournament will be a big learning curve for me to understand where my game is at and what are the aspects I need to work on.

It's going to, I think, be very important in many ways.

Yeah, it's always nice to come back to a golf course where you've had a lot of success because you can draw back on those memories and kind of remember that hey, I didn't hit a good shot here but I was able to recover, or I hit a couple good shots and set up myself for an eagle.

It's nice when you can kind of draw back on that, and I think the course is a little different with the rough being a little higher than when I played in '21, and the wind is meant to be pretty breezy on the first couple days, as well.

Those are going to be bigger factors, but everyone is playing pretty much the same course conditions, so I don't think it attracts one play more than another, so I've just got to play the best golf I can and hopefully have a good week.

Q. Currently Jeddah is going through lots of changes in terms of weather. One day you'll see it breezy and the other days sunny and clear. If that is the case during the tournament, what would your strategy be?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, especially the last few holes, we're right by the red sea, so the wind is a bigger factor than maybe some of the holes where it's a little bit more inland. Trying to not fight the wind is I think really important. Like yesterday there were a few shots where I had to club up almost like two clubs. My 6-iron maybe goes 165, but it only went like 145. It is a huge factor around here.

I think you've just got to take in the fact that sometimes you're going to get a luckier side of the draw, and sometimes it's going to be not as ideal, but you just have to play with what you get. In some events you end up being on the luckier side, and sometimes you don't. That's just part of it. The rules officials and everybody are going to make it as equal as possible, but it's not the same two days, so it's never going to be perfectly the same.

I've just got to stay calm out there, and if it's super calm conditions like it was this morning, try and take advantage of that and be a little bit more aggressive with the play, and if it is windy, know that pars are a good score, and when you do have that birdie opportunity, try and grab it.

I think just not getting too frazzled about the conditions and just accepting what's in front of me is going to be really important, especially when it can be really windy out there.

Q. What is the longest time you've ever gone without hitting a golf shot, and how do you feel after this break?

LYDIA KO: I think the longest time I didn't even touch my clubs was for six weeks, which was not this time but somewhere in the middle of my career. I just wanted some time away, and I did studying, and I went on the subway to go to university and come back. It was like a

different speed of life for me.

That was probably the longest time I had away.

This time in the off-season before I started doing like proper practice for the '23 season was probably the longest time I was away, but it was very -- like I would play some golf on my honeymoon or just play some golf here and there, but it wasn't fully practicing, so this was probably the longest from that standpoint.

It's nice when you take some time away, you're able to -- and when you come back you're more excited, more eager to work on things. But at the same time you realize you lose some of the feel really quick, as well.

For me it was great that I got to play some golf on my honeymoon, and the transition to come back to when I was practicing made it a little bit easier, whereas if I hadn't played for like two months, I think it would have been a much longer time for me to get used to like my own routine and get all my feels.

And I made a hole-in-one on my honeymoon. Extra bonus.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Lydia, and all the best for this week.

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