

# CME Group Tour Championship

Friday, December 18, 2020

Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

## Lydia Ko

### Flash Interview

THE MODERATOR: All right, here with Lydia Ko with the low round of the day so far. You made a comment with Golf Channel right before we went on camera that at the beginning of the day you took extra to warmup, that you were coming into this day +2 and now you're ending it at 5-under.

Just talk me through what this day was like for you.

LYDIA KO: Yesterday I had enough of my game and my golf and I told Les and my mom, I'm going to get out of here, and I just left and I ordered like five people's worth of food and just was like having so much.

Like today just came in saying, I'm going to try and play the best I can with a lot of confidence, and I was -- my irons and the shots going into the greens were really good, so set up a lot of birdie opportunities. I was able to make a few of them, so, yeah, much better position going into the weekend.

**Q. This is a very gettable course for a lot players out here. Usually the scores are pretty high. Today you were able to find it when others maybe couldn't. What was different for you today as opposed to yesterday?**

LYDIA KO: I think it was I was a lot more on the fairways and I was on a much better start. Yesterday I was 4-over through 7, and at that point you are just trying to get birdies to have a comeback.

I was able to do that somewhat, but I got off to a good start. You know, having lots of birdie opportunities I think that was really key. Even though it was getting a little breezy at the start of the day, I set up a lot of good chances for birdies, so makes it a lot less stressful, I think.

Whereas if you're trying to make up and down it wears on you pretty quick.

**Q. How much does the wind change this golf course and the way you attack every hole?**



LYDIA KO: I think it's more the holes that are faced this way or that way are the huge -- I guess they would make the biggest difference.

Today and yesterday they were both -- if you were hitting this way it was all into the wind, but it was more was it coming off the left or the right. But I think sometimes between is it a southerly or a northerly wind, I think that's where it makes the biggest difference.

I'm sure throughout the weekend the greens will get firmer, so it makes it important to be on the fairways and just to be pretty smart with the holes you're trying to attack.

But if it seems like the course is playing pretty low, you're also trying to make as many birdies as you can.

**Q. You hold the 18-hole scoring record here, as well as being a past champion. When you have a round like today, what does that do for your confidence, and do you feel extra special as you're walking through these fairways?**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I was reminiscing that, my low round -- I think it was maybe in 2016.

**Q. Yeah, 2016.**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, and I shot, what was it?

**Q. 62.**

LYDIA KO: Oh, nice. So I was talking about that yesterday and I was like, Man, I'm like 3-over right now; that's like 13 shots worse.

But always when you come back to a course you know you played well at, and usually I feel like every day there is always one player or a few players that ends up going pretty low, so it kind of gives you a little bit hope at the back of your mind.

But today really when I was going out there I just wanted to play the best golf I can and not really think about my position and all that. I think that definitely helped, and I was able to do that pretty well.



**Q. It's the Tour Championship, the final event of the year, and usually when a lot of people come here, especially after the exhausting U.S. Women's Open, they're a little tired, a little exhausted. How are you feeling as you gone about this last event here?**

LYDIA KO: I've never come to a tournament only playing the pro-am, and luckily it was an 18 hole pro-am on Wednesday, so I was able to check out the golf course.

After yesterday I was like, Oh, maybe I shouldn't do that tactic again. But it was a really long week at the U.S. Women's Open, and I think for the girls that even played Dallas the week before, it's a long couple of weeks, especially in that kind of temperature.

Obviously you would like to finish with a good, strong result at the last event, but coming into the week I just wanted to be free out there and just accept what's coming my way, and I think that was a much easier mindset to be in.

Whereas I think I've come into this event in other years feeling like, Okay, this is the last event. I want to play really well. Just because you want to play really well doesn't necessarily like reflect that in your golf.

So I'm trying to play with less of that pressure and just going out there, hitting one -- hopefully one quality shot at a time.

**Q. We woke up this morning and put on parkas, and the first thing I thought was, This is going to a shot, maybe two shots harder today. Clearly it wasn't. Why wasn't it?**

LYDIA KO: I don't know. Maybe because I started on the back nine. I was able to get on to a good run of things, and I really hit a lot of good quality iron shots. I missed a few that were really makable.

So in that way you know you're making stress-free pars, but at the same time, feeling like you could be doing better. But I think the string of birdies, 16, 17, 18, was definitely nice momentum going into the front nine.

And when you get off to a good start you just feel like your riding that kind of flow, and hopefully continue that throughout the day.

But I think it's really all credits to the approach shots coming in, and those set up more opportunities. And sometimes, especially when it's so cold, par is not a bad score. Jen Song gave me like a heat pack thing for my back, so maybe that was the deal that helped me.

**Q. Did you need it? Your back wasn't hurting, was it?**

LYDIA KO: No, it was just like a hand warmer. Those sticky like warmer things. She put one -- I put one for her on her back and then she game me one of her spares and I was like, man, this is Houston all over again, wearing a lot of layers.

But I think I'm becoming -- I lived in Florida for seven years. It will be like 50s or 60s and I'll be like, This is freezing. Whereas people from New York or Boston are like, This is a lovely day out.

So, no, it was a lot chillier, but throughout the day as we got walking as well the temperature went up, which made it a lot nicer and more feeling in the hands for sure.

**Q. You spoke about momentum. Your ball striking has been progressively on an upswing. You got much longer. Are you to the point now where you don't have to think about it anymore, you can go out and play golf and not worry about the mechanics of your golf swing?**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think when I'm out there I'm really thinking about the technical standpoint. I think sometimes to be honest the thing that gets in my way is myself, of me feeling like, Okay, is this going to go straight, left, right, you know, all those weird thoughts that go through your head.

That's why Sean has been helpful in that kind of standpoint as well, trying to build me confidence. He sends me some songs randomly throughout the week and he gets me to listen to them as well.

I think obviously the more I see it doing what I think it should be doing, the confidence kind of builds and the negative, I guess experiences, before are kind of slowly going away.

I think it's like a building process, but I'm definitely out there not thinking too much about the technical thing. I think it's more about being out there just believing in had myself and hitting it as confidently as I could.

**Q. Since you've played in golf course so many times, is there a shot where you hit it and you say, Wow, I didn't have this four or five years ago?**

LYDIA KO: I hit pitching wedge into 18 today; obviously the tee was in the forward tee and not the back tee, but I hit a really good drive and I actually gripped it just for my self-confidence of saying, Okay, I'm not going to hit it in that 280, 285 bunkers.

I hit it and I was walking and I was like, I know that's Mel's ball because like she hit a great drive there. And then I was like, Oh, no, where is my ball, and it had gone in the bunker. I was like to Les, Hey, at least I've never been in here before.

It was a pitching wedge, so I was like -- I broke two records, my own records. But definitely I've noticed at ANA it was playing pretty long and I was hitting a lot shorter clubs than I had before, so it's -- I think it's about bringing it all together.

Obviously that's the hardest thing at times. Definitely nice when you're hitting it a little bit longer and hopefully straight, and it just makes one club less makes a huge difference, I think.

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