

CME Group Tour Championship

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Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

Lydia Ko

Flash Interview

Q. All right, Lydia, I'll start off with today. What a nice way to finish off the season. Take me through your final day of 2021.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, you know, going into today I think I was a little frustrated over yesterday. I had been hitting the ball so well the last few weeks, and I was like, Man, I hit some of these shots that I was like maybe even a 20-handicapper wouldn't even hit.

So I wasn't happy with just how I had set up myself for the last day of the season. You know, I hit the ball really well today, again and then I just couldn't get putts to fall.

But I got a few to fall over my back nine, and obviously making the birdie, the eagle on 17 was extra nice. But, yeah, nice to finish the season on a high. This has been probably one of my best seasons in consistency, so to finish like this with my family and friends here, you know, it's a good way to top off 2021.

Q. I was going to say, how satisfied do you feel being able to end on a high note after the consistency that you've shown all season?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, you know, I just -- like yesterday in the evening I was like, I just really, really, really want to play well tomorrow.

My mom is like, Why do you want to play like really well tomorrow? I was like, I don't know. I just want to finish the season off on a high. You want to finish every tournament on a high, but this being the last one, there is no redemption. There is no next event.

So, yeah, I just wanted to play well, and I think that's why over this weekend I got a little bit more frustrated over mistakes that maybe at times I would just normally go, Oh, it's okay.

But especially with the Vare Trophy I think being at the back of my mind I think I just really wanted to top it off, and



to be able to have done that I think is -- there is no better way to finish this year.

Q. Talking about the Vare Trophy for a second, early in your career you won a lot of awards and events. How special is this given where you have been now throughout the trajectory of your career?

LYDIA KO: It's really special because obviously it sums up the whole season. All the other things do, too, but at the end of the day golf is about how consistently well you can play and what kind of low score you can shoot.

And the Vare Trophy obviously exemplifies that. I think I've only been close that one year that I just missed out on the trophy.

I didn't even know that I was close this year until news came out and I realized a couple months ago. Last week wasn't really on my schedule, but ended up being worth it because finishing off tied second and to have won it feels special. Just makes a good year like even better.

Q. You say a good year even better. You played so well as a teenager and then early on and then you had a little down period. A lot of people never come back from that. How satisfying is it to see you back on this upward trajectory in your career?

LYDIA KO: I mean, it's great. I think last year when we had that six months off it was probably some of the most important time in my career. You know, we always say off-season is short and it really is. It's only a couple months and then the first event is around the corner.

So having that six months I think I was able to really assess where I was at, and that was not only in the technical standpoint, but where I was mentally as well. You know, just to kind of see the time that I put in the gym or the time that I put with Sean or other things like that, to kind of pay off.

When you do all those things and it doesn't work, even though you try to be patient, sometimes it's hard to be patient when things just don't go your way. But to have kind of have that momentum shifted, I think it just helped a lot with the confidence.



I think Hawaii was really a huge turnaround for me. I think just where I started believing in myself, and obviously that's such an important aspect when you're out there playing.

Q. So you're not necessary see pro-pandemic but you were pro-break; is that right?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, pro-break. I normally take a whole month off. This year I'm going to plan my off-season a little bit differently, but I think no matter how well you're playing or how -- even if you don't have a good year, I think it is good to have that time, because just to relax and not think about, do I have to wake up at 7:00 in the morning and make sure I putt for 50 minutes and do all that, I think it all piles up.

I think sometimes those breaks are just good to get that -- like you mentally prepared. You know, go back to zero and just kind of start new. Every season is a new chapter in a book, and I think the break was a whole new chapter itself for me.

Q. At 24 you're still painfully young. You've been out here for nine years now.

LYDIA KO: Eight. This is my eighth.

Q. So start of your ninth year. That's the point at which is starts to be a grind. Do you feel at times that golf is a grind for you?

LYDIA KO: I think a couple years ago I really needed to take some time off, so I took a longer off-season than I normally did.

And that's where I went to winter -- like I went to the college that I go to, Korea University, and then I took winter classes so that I was going to -- my mind was set on something else and focused on something else, and I think that really helped, because I was just excited to come and practice again.

You know, this is work but at the same time you don't want it to feel like work. I think, you know, yeah, it would be a lie to say no, no, it's a great day at the office every day. Sometimes, yeah, me, too, I don't want come out and practice. But I think all those hours add up, and that necessarily might not mean like right there and now, but, you know, I feel like they're going to pay off.

I think that's why being patient and having the right team around you to help you work through all those processes is super important.

Q. Do you still love golf?

LYDIA KO: I love golf, yeah. I love golf. Sometimes I'm like, Do you love me back? You know, Derek sings this song, I think it's a very famous line, I want to kiss you all over, again and again.

And then sometimes when I'm not like making putts he'll like get my putter and go, I want to kiss you all over, again and again. And I'm like, Please work. Please. I'm singing to you. (Laughter.)

But, no, I think the beauty about golf is that day-to-day you feel the same, but the results may not be the same or you feel different and the results may be the same. Who knows?

I love the challenge of it, and I think that's why no matter what ranked player you are, you're just striving to become better and better. Because the level of play out here on the LPGA and just in women's golf is we impressive.

So I think you're just trying to follow the trend and just enjoy it. If you're spending six, seven hours on the golf course, you might as well have fun while you're at it.

Q. Speaking of the off-season, you have historically gone to Korea right after this event. You told me earlier in this the week you're going to stay in Florida this year. How long will you shut it down, completely shut golf out?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, this year is going to be a little bit different. I normally take a whole month or four weeks off where don't touch the clubs. They stay in the closet. This year I'm going to take a week off during Thanksgiving and then practice for a couple weeks, and then have another holiday for ten days and then come back and practice for another three weeks.

You know, you think, Oh, man, January 17th, that seems like a long way out. But soon it's Christmas and then it's New Year's and then we're starting again out at Nona.

So I'm going to do a little bit differently. I haven't played the Tournament of Champions in a while, so I just planned my off-season a little bit differently this year.

Q. And speaking of Thanksgiving, rolls right into my question, what are you most thankful for?

LYDIA KO: I am thankful for my family and friends. You know, a lot of them are here this week. My mom and sister, my boyfriend and friends, and my brother-in-law was here as well.

I know that I wouldn't be in this position without them, and when I make a bogey and I get frustrated, they're in it with me. My dad also from afar in Korea is like not going bed and watching TV at 2:00 in the morning and going, I hope she plays well.

I feel like they're invested in it as much as I am, and because of that life on tour is easier and more fun. It's always nice when you have a good day or a bad day, you're able to kind of have them be there to support you and celebrate with you and I think I am most grateful and thankful for my loved ones in my life.

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