

CME Group Tour Championship

Friday, November 17, 2023

Naples, Florida, USA

Tiburón Golf Club

Alison Lee

Flash Interview

Q. All right, here with Alison Lee after her second round at the CME Group Tour Championship. Really great round. Looking at stat here, your scoring average over the last 13 rounds, includes your win on the LET, is 65.615. Does that seem real or right or what is your reaction to that?

ALISON LEE: It's pretty fricking good. (Laughter.)

Yeah, I mean, I don't even know what to say. I've just been trying my best to keep it one shot at a time, trying to play some good golf out there, and hopefully let the putts fall and let the birdies write themselves.

It's been really cool to play some good golf. Been a lot of fun. Yeah, that's a really good stat. (Laughter.)

Q. I know you had some really good finishes lately. That win and two I think top two finishes on the LPGA. What parts of your game do you feel like have come together recently?

ALISON LEE: Honestly, I feel like it's a little bit of everything. Obviously every week depending on the conditions we have, it tests different parts of your game. This week I feel like the biggest test has kind of been trying to hit fairways, hitting good tee shots off the tee, and just trying to hit your approach shots close.

I feel like I've been doing that really well. I feel like for my whole career I've had difficulty with one part of my game. I feel like everything is good, but I'm hitting my driver off line a little bit. Everything is good, but I am missing a few putts here and there and I don't feel comfortable.

I feel like the last month everything has falling into place, which has been really nice. It's not every day where your entire game is perfect or good, so, yeah, it's honestly been so much fun.

Q. How happy does it make you that your game is trending well coming into this CME Group Tour



Championship, big purse, big event? How happy are you that that moment is now?

ALISON LEE: Yeah, I mean, it's better late than never. I definitely feel like over the last five, six years, I did not play to my full expectations. I struggled a little bit here and there. I definitely got into a mental headspace where -- I mean, I told my coach a couple years ago, I broke down and I said, I don't think I'll ever win on tour ever again. I don't think I have what it takes to win out here.

But, yeah, over the last few weeks, putting myself in contention, playing four rounds of really good golf, and almost winning a few times, it's definitely ignited a fire in me. Definitely given me a lot more motivation to work hard, and it's shown me that I do still have what it takes to win out here.

That's definitely the goal for this week. I mean, my last through finishes were second, first, second, and I really want that win really bad. I feel like I've been waiting so long. I've been working so hard for that. Yeah, still a lot of golf left. Hopefully I can keep my head down and keep grinding through to the weekend.

Q. Can you, just talking about all the struggles you did go through mentally for a long time, can you just put into perspective this year as a whole for you? What has it meant to just dig yourself out of that trench and get to this point?

ALISON LEE: It's been tough. I mean, it's so weird to even think now that I'm playing this good. I mean, just three, four months ago I would joke around how I'm only going to play for a few more years and retire. This win isn't coming.

That's all I've ever wanted. I've set so many goals for myself since I was a little kid, and, I mean, I feel like coming on tour was a reality check for me. The years I struggled was a reality check. I feel like my game was always so good. I always strived at every level.

Coming out here, these girls are so good. I feel like it just got to my head a little bit and I just kind of went into a mental spiral.

Yeah, I thought over and over again, like, yeah, I don't



think I'll ever win. I don't think I'll be a top player anymore. That's just not me. But I have a great team around me who always has believed in me and was always sending me positive messages telling me I have what it takes.

Because I didn't believe it. To see them see my game and believe in me, I kind of tried to hold onto that and push my way through. It's been really -- I mean, for lack of a better word, it's been so much fun to be on the leaderboard and see my name again and be in contention.

Yeah, just be out here and play under pressure. I mean, that's what we live for. Now it's a different pressure. It's I'm actually nervous to make a birdie putt because I might win, it might put you in a better spot to win, versus being nervous and having pressure because I might miss the cut or I might not any money or might lose my card.

So it's definitely a lot more fun place to be with my game.

Q. Alison, if you had asked yourself, the you you in 2021, conditional status, playing on Epson and tell her this is where you are now and playing this well, what would she say?

ALISON LEE: Yeah, I probably wouldn't have believed it. Those weeks where I had to play a couple -- I think I played in two or three Symetra events. I was like, what am I doing with my life? I felt like I fell so far and I wasn't going to be able to come back.

And, yeah, like I said, there were moments where I thought maybe I -- this isn't for me anymore. I'm just not good enough. Sometimes, I mean, you can work so hard -- with golf you can practice so hard. You can practice for hours and hours. That doesn't magically make you a better golfer. That doesn't magically improve your game.

It takes more than those hours of practice. It almost takes a little bit of a mental switch in your brain to be like, hey, I'm fricking good. I can win. I can make that putt. I can be No. 1 in the world. I didn't have that for a long time.

I really didn't believe in myself anymore because I would see rounds where I couldn't shoot under par. I would miss cuts. I would make stupid mistakes.

But now looking back at it, it was all a great learning experience and I'm really thankful for all that.

Yeah, looking back now, now that I'm playing good, it's almost like you forget all the hard times. But I definitely still remember those times and definitely motivates me more, especially now that I'm in a good place and my game is in a good place.

So, yeah, I'm not going to lie, last couple years I thought, okay, I only have a couple more years left in me where I feel like I can play. It's not fun just making the cut and getting 30th place every week. I don't play golf just to make a paycheck. I don't play golf just to make payments and live a decent life.

I want to come out here and win, and I haven't done that on the LPGA Tour yet. Hopefully can come soon. Now I truly believe it's possible and I can.

Q. I know you credited your team for supporting you. Still a lot of players out here who make a turnaround from season seven to nine. You still had to do it. What about yourself allowed you to make this turnaround?

ALISON LEE: Yeah, so about a couple months ago now, I played golf with Freddy Couples in a pro-am. It was my first time meeting him. We played 18 holes. Afterwards he got my number and we have been texting back and forth the last couple months.

Every single day, you're so good at golf. You need to believe it. I was like, oh, Freddy, it's fine. I'm okay. I don't know what you're talking about.

He's honestly been like the biggest supporter and my No. 1 fan over the last couple months, starting kind of in Arkansas, China. Like he just was hammering into me like you need to believe. You're a good player. You need to go out there and believe you're the shit and you can do it.

I mean, it was a lot of messages every day from Freddy, not going to lie. Oh, another message from Freddy. But hammering that into me really resonated with me.

Finally in Korea, like I slowly started to believe it. I have read the messages and I'm like going to get emotional because he's been so supportive. I mean, to see someone like that, like a legend like that watch me play golf and tell me how good I am, like it's surreal to think that he's telling me how good am. For the longest time, like I said, I didn't believe it myself. So, yeah.

Q. Any messages he sent you this week?

ALISON LEE: He's been texting me every day after the round, good job. You're so good. I knew it. He always calls me Mrs. Monster. That's what he says. Hey, Mrs. Monster, you made all those birdies today. He's been amazing. He's been, yeah, my biggest fan over the last month.

It's been really, really cool. I just look at my phone and says Freddy Couples and I'm like, that's weird. Yeah. (Smiling.)

Q. What was it that made you two click? Did you open up to him a little bit about something of your past?

ALISON LEE: Not really. We just played 18 holes. It was a pro-am event in New York, and I didn't give him my number. He reached out to someone to ask for my number. He said, hey, I didn't get to tell you during the round, but you are fricking good.

I was like, oh, I'm okay. And then he would ask me a lot of questions and I would ask him questions back, and I slowly started to open up to him over the last month or so bit by bit, kind of telling my personal experience, what I went through, why I'm in this place, why I didn't believe in myself.

He's been playing golf for so long. He's still playing golf now. He's been everywhere. He's won so many times on tour. He's been like a really great mentor to me over the last month and hammering a lot of positive energy and confidence.

Q. What do you think you might do if you did walk away from the tour in a few years?

ALISON LEE: What would I do? I don't know. I tell my boyfriend I want to spend two years and do absolutely nothing. I said, you need to give me two years where I can just do nothing.

I mean, it's tough out here. This is my 27th week on the road now playing in tournaments. That doesn't include visiting my parents or a few weeks where I kind of go visit friends or play in pro-ams, stuff like that.

It's a tough life. It's a grind. I've been doing this since I was basically seven years old. Give me two years. Two years I'm doing absolutely nothing, and then we'll figure it out from there.

Q. Win \$2 million this week, might take three years off.

ALISON LEE: Yeah, definitely. Maybe never work ever again.

Q. Over the last few weeks the results have been great. How would you describe what it feels like to play on the course right now?

ALISON LEE: Just feels good. I feel so in tune with myself and my game. I haven't felt like this in a really long time,

so it's been really fun to be out there and aim at my target, able to hit my target, read the greens properly, being able to start my putts online, looking down the middle of the fairway and knowing I can hit the fairway, it's just this extra confidence I guess and being able to see really good shots and being able to truly trust myself and play confident golf.

That's the key. I think like I said, you can practice all day long. That doesn't really make a better player.

You need that extra mental side to kick in where you can really enjoy and embrace the pressure, enjoy your time out there even though you have a really tough putt or really important chip or important tee shot or iron shot.

It's being able to live in those moments. For me, I want those shots. I want it to come down to the last hole. Like I want to be in those pressure situations because that's what we live for, what we practice.

Q. What was the name of that pro-am?

ALISON LEE: The Berenberg Invitational.

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