

LOTTE Championship

Saturday, April 17, 2021

Kapolei, Hawaii, USA

Kapolei Golf Club

Lydia Ko

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Get started with Lydia Ko. Lydia, now it's been a half hour since you got off the course.

Let's start with how you're feeling as you entered today. What was the mindset as you refocused yourself heading into the final round?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I said to myself trust my training, and this morning Sean texted me, Hey, just trust and conviction, and I wrote that on my pin sheet today.

It's kind of the mindset I took. I said to myself, Hey, I feel like the winner's already chosen but we obviously don't know, so I'm just going to go out there and play the best golf I can and see where I finish at the end of the day.

Obviously nice coming up the last with six- or seven-shot lead, especially seeing that pin position kind of scared me a little bit. But, yeah, no, nice to be back in the winner's circle. And I felt like I was going to cry but I'm proud of myself for not crying.

Overall I've had an incredibly fun week here in Hawaii and I'm -- I know I need to work on my Hula dance a little bit, but, yeah, no, it's been awesome. So I'm proud of the way I stayed patient leading up to this moment.

I think that's all worked in the end.

Q. I remember hearing you on the green and you said, I'm trying not to cry, I don't want to cry, I don't want to cry. How much does this win in Hawaii mean to you?

LYDIA KO: It means a lot. I think there were times I think it was harder and sometimes when -- it's not about other people's expectations, but when you put expectations on yourself and you feel like you're not reaching it.

And I think I was putting more pressure on myself and doubting myself, and I've been very fortunate to have a very supportive family and team and friends that have just built the confidence in me. Sean I feel like gives me so

many great wisdoms and builds that confidence in myself where at times I didn't feel like I had it.

Just makes me grateful that I just have a loving people around me that are just supporting me no matter what. I think it's more I was proving it to myself than to anybody else.

And I know this feels great, but obviously playing next week, and I think it just says at the back of my mind. It takes away that doubt that I can do it.

And when you stay patient and keep working on the right things, everything naturally follows.

Q. I know on the green they said Lydia Ko is back, but we've seen some impressive play from you already in 2021. As you were going through today and you were making birdie after birdie after birdie, did you realize how you were inching closer and closer to history?

LYDIA KO: There aren't that many leaderboards from like 8 onwards so I didn't really see the leaderboard actually since No. 6.

So I was just trying give myself good looks for birdies. I made a really good up and down on 4.

I was just kind of making pars and making that good momentum birdie on 9.

Then 10.

Then 11.

Then 12.

Kind of builds that confidence. So I was just trying to play the best golf I can at that moment and not think about what position I was going to be.

I saw that I had a six-shot lead when I was on 15 green, so that was kind of the first time I had seen it. On a golf course like this where someone has been shooting very low -- multiple players have been shooting low scores



throughout the week, you just can't take anyone out of it.

I was quite a ways back a few weeks ago at ANA and put myself right into it, so I knew that could be the case today.

So I said to myself, even seeing that I had a six-shot lead, You know what? You just got to focus and do a good job with each shot. You don't want to make careless mistakes.

I think I played smart and felt like I focused until the last putt dropped on the last hole.

Q. How much did you draw back on last week at ANA during the final round, that 10-under round when you are going through a streak that you had today?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think it was more like on the first round this week I got off to a really good start so I felt like I was keeping momentum from a couple weeks ago.

Almost when you have a really low score you don't necessarily want to expect the next day because you already know you made a certain amount of birdies. If you don't do that the next day you're like, Oh, I feel like I'm playing bad.

That was the case yesterday and today. The other days I shot like 4- or 5-under on my front nine, and then when you make the turn and 2-under, that's great, but you're like, Man, I feel like I'm playing so much worse.

So I just tried to not focus on the score and do a good job of being committed to each shot in front of me, and I think that way I was just focused on what was next and not getting too carried away about what else is happening.

I know that sometimes I overthink things and kind of get in the way of myself. Today I think I really did a good job staying patient and figuring out my numbers and decisions with Dave, and when we made that decision just be fully committed to it and just hit the confident shot.

Q. Congratulations.

LYDIA KO: Thank you, Beth Ann.

Q. Amazing performance. My first one is just how does this one feel different than all the rest, Sweet 16?

LYDIA KO: I remember when I was Sweet 16. (Laughter.) Not so long ago actually.

No, I don't -- like it's really hard to compare like one to another. I think every single win is so different. Obviously waited a little while from my last one in San Francisco to this one, and I had waited a while for my 15th win at

Mediheal as well.

So, yeah, definitely nice. I think this week I've just had such a good time going out, going on hikes, just enjoying Hawaii that you golf was kind of a natural thing.

That was also the case on my 15th win, where my friend surprised me because it was my 21st birthday, and I just enjoyed spending time with him. San Francisco is obviously a place where I have a lot of special memories, so I was obviously focused on my golf, but just enjoying everything.

And I think sometimes you just -- like because golf is such a huge factor in my life, that I just looked down one road. This week I've kind of had my blinds open and just enjoying being here. I think that's almost helped me to be a little bit more relaxed, just accept what -- if things go great, that's great. If not, I can't do much about it.

Q. If I could just ask one follow up. How does your game now -- does anything feel like it did when you were 15 again?

LYDIA KO: I don't even remember when I was 15. I can't even remember what I had for dinner last night. Yeah, you know, I think this week I felt like I hit each shot, like my drives or my putts, with confidence.

I feel like when I'm hitting it with confidence and aggressive kind of mindset, that's when I hit it the best and play the best, because it's more free and I'm controlling it less.

I don't know why I did that better this week than others, but I think I was being less tentative just sticking to my game plan. And if it was a tough driving hole, just hit it more aggressively. I felt it was -- felt great hitting a really solid drive down the last.

Yeah, so I guess things just clicked, and I don't mean like it clicked in a technical way, but I think it just clicked I think sometimes between the ears. I think just having my team to kind of always remind me of my keys, key aspects has really been helpful for that.

Q. Congratulations on the win. What were you thinking about before your par putt on the 4th and how did you feel after you made it?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, on the 4th I hit like a bomb drive. Bomb for me. Maybe not for everybody else. I only had a sand wedge and I was just trying to say a little bit off my soft numbers and I hit it too soft. I could see mid-air it had no chance of getting on the green.

I had a pretty tricky chip shot and I didn't really -- it was just not a very well-committed third shot. I was just saying to myself, Man, I'm so lucky that ball didn't roll back down to my feet again, because that could have been six territory.

But put it good stroke and went it in, and Dave, my caddies, said, Oh, that looked good in there, because it was bubbling a little bit up because I was putting it off the fringe.

When that went in I felt like, Oh, this is a good momentum builder, making a birdie on the hole before. I know you're only going back to even par but just want to feed on that. That was definitely nice to kind of calm the nerves a little bit and then just keep moving forward.

Q. To ask a follow up, what was the biggest difference for you in how you carried yourself today versus the final round of the 2020 Marathon?

LYDIA KO: 2020 Marathon I played great up until the last hole, to be honest. Obviously wasn't the finish that I had envisioned, but sometimes it just doesn't go your way.

I know that my finish was not great, but Danielle played great golf. I think my finish overshadowed the great golf that she had played.

But on Saturday night sleeping before the Marathon final round I was pretty nervous. I couldn't really sleep properly. That's when I knew that it had been a while that I been in this position and also means that it means a lot to me.

But tonight -- or last night I slept really well. Didn't wake up through the night. I think I've just been trying to think what's meant to be is going to be. I just got to accept what gets thrown my way and do a good job with the things I can control.

If things go my way, that's great. I know sometimes even if you try your 110% it's not going to be your time. That's what I tried to take from that. Even though Marathon I didn't end up winning, it had been a while since I'd been in that kind of position.

So it was disappointing, but at the same time, gave me a lot confidence to say, Hey, I can be back in contention. I think all those kind of moments become experiences and become super helpful to moments like this.

Q. One last follow up. Who helped you find that mentality?

LYDIA KO: You know, I always thought like even in my past wins, sometimes you just hit a tree, and when it's not

going your way it goes in the worst possible place. And then sometimes you hit a tree and it comes back on the fairway. Like things just happen, and that's where I've kind of naturally thought in my mind.

I feel like there is already a chosen winner and we don't know. For us, our job is just to do a good job of what you have in front of you and do a good job with what you can control.

Whatever happens, it just happens. There are so many aspects we just can't control. So I've just kind of thought that, and I think the more times I played and put myself in these kind of positions that you're able to realize that sometimes it's just -- it's going to go your way and sometimes it's not.

I know when the times it doesn't it's going to hurt, but those moments make me my stronger. I've had so much support from any family and I know that they -- no matter if I shoot 81 or 61 they don't love me more or less. I think having -- Sean has always been helpful where he says, Even if you win it doesn't make me a better person, it doesn't make me -- yes, it's going to make me a little happier at that moment, but it doesn't change anything else.

I think he's been a huge help to clear out questions in my mind and really embrace myself for who I am and just accept and be grateful for everything.

Q. Been a long time. Congratulations. Yeah, huge congratulations. In the interview you did on the green you said that some doubts had started to come into your mind about whether you would ever win again. Did you fall out of love with golf during this time?

LYDIA KO: I don't think I ever felt like I didn't love the game anymore. I think there were times where you keep trying and you -- things just don't go your way. You doubt yourself and don't know if what you're working on is the right things.

That's where when I go back it what Sean said. We've been doing the same thing so I know that even if I'm not hitting it well or doing things, we're just going back to the same solutions. I think that's really been like a lot more simple for me.

And, yeah, when you just have a stretch where you aren't performing to the level that you feel like you should be, of course there is going to be doubt. I know that I doubted myself at times, but I think my team really helped me to kind of clear those out and make sure that I'm working on the correct things.

When you're doing that, that's it, like that's all you can do. I think I'm trying to be a little less result oriented and just do a good job of the things in my swing or putting or in the mental side that I'm working on, and that's it.

I think that this puts a little less pressure on me. There are aspects of my game that needs to improve, but we're going to keep working at it and see where it goes.

Q. And just as a follow up, on the contrary to that, it looked today and throughout this tournament and even past tournaments in the last few months that you have been having so much fun. How much fun are you having and when you are having fun, how much does that help you play better golf?

LYDIA KO: I think when I'm having fun and being happy that's when I play the best golf. I think that's because there is less things that is going through my mind. I know sometimes I overcomplicate things and go, Oh, maybe I need to do this or that. I just get in the way of myself.

When that happens I think I like ask Sean and go, Hey, just to clear those doubts. He puts all the rubbish thoughts that come in and just swoops it to the side for me.

I think when -- I think it's not just myself, but I think in generally when people are having fun you're able to perform at your best. It's kind of having that balance between having fun and being focused. I've just been trying to enjoy it. I think especially with COVID I think we're very grateful that we can come out and play and compete.

I know that we had a span for six months where we couldn't, and I know a lot of people have been struggling, have lost loved ones, and are in that tough situation even now.

As golfers we're very lucky that we're in this kind of atmosphere and we can come back to our job and spend time with the people that we love and compete. I think that's kind of been the mindset of just being grateful. I think that way you just kind of see the world in the better way rather than feeling like, Okay, what are the bad things going on in my life? I think all of us here are very lucky about everything that is happening.

With that kind of mindset you end up enjoying it and want to embrace the whole journey ahead.

Q. Lastly from me, if I can. Around COVID, the Olympics, New Zealand is naming the team. You're keen to go to Tokyo I take it?

LYDIA KO: Yes. I have -- Oh, I saw them this morning.

It's a black and white ladybug. How cute are they?

Sorry. Yes, I am super excited. You know, unfortunately 2020 Tokyo Olympics got postponed to '21. I had one of my best, all-time best times of my life at the 2016 Rio Olympics. To represent my country and to medal for New Zealand was a huge honor, so I would love to be there to represent New Zealand again at the Olympics.

I know this year is different as we don't have general spectators, but I would love to be there to represent New Zealand and fly our flag with pride.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think everybody has ups and downs. Those moments make you the person I am right now. I'm sure there are going to be times in my career where I have doubts again. Maybe in certain aspects in my game or in myself in general.

But I think when you kind of go through a phase like that you're able to learn from your mistakes in those moments. Okay, what do I need to do from here?

For me, when I know what I need to work on and focus on that, I think less on the results and just try and do a good job of, Hey, what are the things I can control? What are the things that I can do to do a better job in my game?

And if -- as long as I'm hitting it with 100% conviction, that's it. The result, if I hit it left, right, center, that's secondary. So I think when I -- I'm trying to have a better understanding of myself and my game, and I think when I have that kind of mindset it just becomes easier on me.

I'm out there just playing golf and I'm not trying to make it to perfection.

Q. You didn't have a whole lot of time to prepare for this course. Just kind of fit your eye?

LYDIA KO: I love this golf course. Came out here on Friday, played 18 on Friday and 18 on Saturday and nine in the pro-am, and then the nine, and I thought the course was beautiful.

I met a few of the superintendants and just the team here. I know they had very short notice for us to come here. Considering all that the golf course was had great shape. Fairways are very nice and the greens were rolling great, too.

So I think just on behalf of the tour, we're lucky that Kapolei was able to host us for the LOTTE Championship. You



know, I enjoyed it. It's a great mix of holes. I know the wind direction plays a factor around here and yesterday there was a span of nine holes where the wind direction was different so it made the course feel a lot different.

Everybody of is playing pretty much similar conditions, so you just play with what you get. I really enjoyed it, and I think when you're sometimes used to seeing one sort of golf course it feels like routine like.

But like this week, it was nice to just see something different, kind of plan out my strategy with Dave, and stick to that you throughout the week.

Q. You smashed your personal record for a tournament. After you went on that run looked like you may have a shot at 31. I get the feeling that wasn't at the top your head at all. You stayed aggressive but under control with the goal of each shot being as good as it could.

LYDIA KO: Yes, making the birdie span from 9 to 12 I was obviously in a good momentum within myself. Even at ANA somebody said, Hey, did you think -- did 59 ever come through your mind? I said, No, because I think when you're in that people of playing you just get -- I was getting so focused on the shot in front of me that I wasn't thinking about, Okay, am I going to shoot this under or that under.

I shot 5-under and then -- what did I shoot the second day, 9?

Q. At ANA?

LYDIA KO: Here. 9-under, yeah. So, okay, yesterday was 7-under. So I want to shoot like a 6 or 8. You just try and put patterns in your mind.

I was just trying to do a good job with the shot in front of me. I know there a couple times I needed to make up and down and I was able to do that. I was just feeding on momentum and making sure that I have a shot in front of me just being fully committed to it.

And with my putts I felt like the greens were getting a little shinier, so just making sure that my speed was dialed in. I feel like that's when I putt the best, just kind of having a mix of like everything in that way. When I did see the leaderboard and I was kind of a few shots ahead and with Inbee being finished I just wanted to make sure I wasn't going to make careless mistakes coming in. You just never know until the ball goes until the hole on the last.

So making sure that every shot in front of me I was fully focused on and discussing and communicating well with

Dave, just doing a good job of those things. I think that -- it made a lot more simpler, and hitting a great drive an 18 kind of pushed down the nerves as well.

Q. Just real quick, what made you choose Sean Foley?

LYDIA KO: Oh, I had actually seen Sean a couple times the year prior to when I first worked with him. So I worked with him in June or something starting last year and I had seen him a couple times in April the year before. Got a little bit of his insight. With Sean being based in Orlando, you know, it's convenient with the weeks he's not traveling I can see him a couple times a week.

To be honest, I didn't know what to expect because people may say, Oh, he's too technical, he's too this or too that. But like I -- he has really been helpful for me. Like every relationship between player and coach is different, and he's been great to just simplify everything for me.

I'm very grateful for his advice both on and off the golf course. So, yeah, no, I think one factor was that it was going to be super convenient because he only lived like 30 minutes away.

THE MODERATOR: All right, with that, we'll wrap it up from us here in Hawaii. I know I'm very sad to go. With that, thank you everyone for joining us and thank you Lydia for everything and congratulations.

LYDIA KO: Mahalo, thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports /#