

HSBC Women's World Championship

Tuesday, 27 April 2021

Republic of Singapore

Sentosa Golf Club

Lydia Ko

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the HSBC Women's World Championship.

LYDIA KO: I'm very impressed, I thought you had a script.

Good to be back here in Singapore. Obviously the last time we were here in 2019, so I missed it, and this is the first real stop in the Asian Swing for us since COVID.

Yeah, great to be back. I know with protocols and everything, it's a little bit of a different kind of a setup compared to other years. But looking forward to some good food and hopefully some good golf here, as well.

THE MODERATOR: It's a little different this year, the way you're coming into this tournament, different from 2019. You just had your win in Hawai'i a few weeks back. I know L.A. wasn't the tournament that you wanted, but reflecting on what you were able to do in Hawai'i and L.A., how comfortable are you feeling in your game as you get ready for Singapore.

LYDIA KO: Good and very bad in the span of two weeks, but you know what, even in L.A. I had a really rough first day but I played solid on the second day. I feel like I'm still coming in with good momentum and winning in Hawai'i definitely built the confidence for me to say that, hey, you know, I can be back in the winner's circle. So great to be in that kind of a position again. You know, even though I missed the last couple days in L.A., I think I needed a little bit of rest and recovery leading up to this event, especially with it being pretty warm this week and next.

Yeah, I'm feeling good, and I think overall, all of us players are very grateful for the opportunity to come over here.

THE MODERATOR: I know after winning a tournament, from what I've heard, because of course I'm not out there, but it can be exhausting after a win mentally to regroup and focus on the next week. Do you feel like that might have been having to do with it a little bit or was it just one of those days that's just golf?



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LYDIA KO: We all have good days and bad days. My bad day was just on that Wednesday. Obviously a very quick turnaround that week with us not having access to the golf course on Sunday, and then trying to get in as much work done on Monday and Tuesday with player director duties, we had a board meeting, as well.

Obviously, yes, when you're in contention and in those positions, it can be a little bit more mentally driving range, but I just wasn't clicking. To be honest, I haven't played well at that golf course before, so it is what it is. Some courses you just play well and some courses you don't play as well. Still, I love going to L.A. Love the beach and the vibe and the food.

All in all, I still had a great week outside of that one Wednesday, and that one day is not going to ruin my whole week for me. So, yeah, I still had a great time there.

THE MODERATOR: We now get on a plane after L.A., 17 and a half hours to Singapore. What has it been like adjusting to Singapore time and with the protocols that we have?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I tired myself out with a seven-mile hike with Kristen Gillman before the flight. I actually slept like 13 hours on the flight which is very impressive, 13 hours, a movie and watching Chopped, the TV show; I was here already.

Yeah, good to be here. This is probably one of the longest times I've been on a plane for long time, and obviously having to land here and quarantining until our test results come back, it's a long span of 1 1/2 days.

I think because of all those kind of things that are set up and rules, I think that's why we are able to play here. Obviously if those weren't there, we wouldn't be able to come and play. It is what it is. Everyone's got the same playing field and everyone is going to go through the same process. I think you just have to adjust. Today jet-lag hit me a little bit but hopefully a little better tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: We were talking about your 6:00 AM work out today in your hotel room.

LYDIA KO: Yes, I hope I wasn't loud for the person in the room staying under me. But yeah, it's not often that I wake up early enough to work out at that time.

But I had nothing better to do, so I got my workout done early.

THE MODERATOR: Have you been out at the course yet and what are you most looking forward to as you compete here at Sentosa.

LYDIA KO: I hit some balls and then putt a little bit but yet to go to the golf course.

I know there's been some changes to the front nine to my knowledge, but I think that's the nine I'm going to play and just see how different the course is playing and some of the different tee boxes, as well.

This course is normally in really good conditions. Since we've moved to the New Tanjong Course, it's different to the Serapong, as well. Seeing it from afar it looks like it's in great condition. I love it when you're there and the course is pretty much perfect and hopefully I'll be able to play well in these kind of good conditions.

THE MODERATOR: The conditions, including the heat and the weather we might be having with the rain this week, too. It's a little different than when we are usually here in February. Do you feel as if you can adjust to the heat this week or are you like Inbee, who said, "I am not a heat person"?

LYDIA KO: My face is very, very sweaty outside, so I'm not sure if I'm a heat person.

The best way to explain it is like going to a sauna, but you don't have to pay. It's a complimentary sauna pretty much throughout day. But everyone is playing in the same conditions. The storm is going to hit at the same time, so I don't think it's an advantage to one player or not.

So it's a level playing field, and you've got to expect it's going to be warm when you're coming to this side of the world, anyways. This is what we knew we were going to face, these kind of challenges, but it is what it is. It's very similar to Florida summer, I think. Not that that makes it a lot easier for me but definitely I think the more you play, you do get used to it a little bit more.

Q. Have you changed your goals in terms of the majors and the Olympics this year or do you think you can get one of the big ones?

LYDIA KO: Personally, I don't really set like win goals or number goals. I set goals that pretty much I can control. I believe that I could play the best golf I can. But somebody plays better than me, and you know, I could

come second or third or whatever.

So I don't really set, okay, hey, I want to finish this or have this amount of wins. Obviously if I set it and I do it, that's great. I just try to take it one day at a time and just keep working on the things that I've been working on in my game.

But no, yes, goals-wise I would love to be able to contend and put myself up there for the majors and at the Olympics, as well. But I think the outcome goals have not changed because I have not really set any.

Q. Have you been working on your hula?

LYDIA KO: It looks like I should have done a lot of work for my hula. I thought they would give me a minute to practice it but there was zero practice going into that. But maybe if I get to win that tournament again, maybe I'll be a little bit used to it. But this body and dancing and hula, I don't think is in perfect symmetry there.

Q. You would be the Silver Medal at the Rio Olympics five years ago. I want to get your thoughts on the situation for Tokyo Olympics, given all the concerns happening right now?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously right now there's a lot of things going on around the world but at the end of the day, I believe the IOC and everybody involved alongside Japan are going to make the right decisions to lead up to it. I know that if healthy and safety was going to be in jeopardy, I'm sure they won't follow through with it. But I think at the end of the day, like there's nothing we can do. I'm sure all athletes are going to prepare for that, but whatever happens, happens, and we just have to have 100 percent trust in the people organizing it.

Yeah, hopefully, it will go through because the 2016 Rio Olympics was one of the best memories I've had on and off the golf course. And to represent your country at a stage like this, it's a huge honour. So, yes, I would love to be there. But at the end of the day, I believe that the people involved will make the right decisions for all athletes.

Q. Can I just check, you won in Hawai'i. What about your game are you most pleased about coming into this year, and what is one area, I guess, you know, you feel that needs a bit of work?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, in Hawai'i, I felt like my wedge game was really good, so I was setting up myself a lot of good birdie opportunities. I think overall, I was driving it well, so everything was clicking, and sometimes it's very rare to have moments where everything you feel like is going the right way. But I think that's why you keep training and I think all week, I thought, okay, just trust my training and that's it.

So, yeah, I think no matter how well you're playing or no matter what ranked player you are, you can always improve. It's a constant work to get a little better little by little. But yeah, I think even with my coach, we are not working on new things. We are just trying to do a better job of the things that we are working on and kind of go from there.

Q. With the Rolex Rankings updating this week, Jin Young Ko has tied you for the fourth-most weeks all-time atop the rankings at 104. What is the most difficult part being atop the world for that long?

LYDIA KO: Clearly she has not found it that difficult. Jin Young has been playing so consistently well, and I think her game itself is so consistent that I think that's why she's able to hold that position for so long. But you know, with the World Rankings, there's so many great players that's playing consistently well. You can just even see by Nelly's crazy stats from this year that I saw this morning.

You know, that makes it hard, and I feel like that's why they are all at those rankings. They have done the hard work and they have definitely shown all the results there be there. Yeah, it makes it hard, once you're 1, there's no 1 before you. I think in some sense, you can't keep getting better, but I think if you don't look at the rankings, you can always improve within yourself, and Jin Young has just been playing incredibly well.

So, yeah, I'm not surprised that she's held it for a long time.

Q. Was that the most difficult part for you when you were atop the world for that long?

LYDIA KO: I think it was a little harder for me the first time around than the second time I was No. 1, it was a little easier. I think to me, no matter what rank -- what ranking I am, I'm just constantly, you know, trying to get better and do a good job of the things I can control, and rankings are very secondary. I personally don't even know what my ranking is right now.

Like for me, yes, that's important, but that's not really the main importance of it. If I am happy and playing confident golf out there on the golf course, that's it, and that's all I can do. You know, then the results come and then the rankings come.

So yeah, it is hard in the sense that there's a lot of pressure on you being No. 1 and people thinking you should always be at the top of the leaderboard. But it's more about somebody that's very consistent and putting themselves in contention quite frequently.

Q. How did you feel that pressure affected you when

you were atop the world?

LYDIA KO: I was actually very young and it feels like it was a very long time ago. I think just the pressure of feeling like I should be at the top or my name should be somewhere around the top of the leaderboard, you know, that put a lot of pressure on myself. So I think I was more harder on myself, but I think if I was back in that position again, I would be able to handle it a lot better.

THE MODERATOR: One of the themes this week is game-changers. What moment of your career do you think was the most game-changing moment while you've been out on Tour? Big question, I know.

LYDIA KO: Yes, very big question. I mean, I'm sure there's been many moments. But I mean, life-changing was probably winning the Canadian Open the first time in 2012 in Vancouver, something that I never expected and I don't think you can expect, really. And I was there just for the great experience to be able to play with some of the best LPGA golfers.

So to win there was definitely -- turned my life around, and you know, I think being at the Olympics and being part of the history of where golf had not been played in the Olympics for over a hundred years, to be part of that kind of history was great. But yeah, you know, I think every moment is life-changing, every experience.

That's why when things happen, you can never be the same person as you were before. So I think those moments make you stronger and you're able to learn more about yourself.

So, yeah, lots of life-changing and game-changing moments.

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