

# HSBC Women's World Championship

Tuesday, 1 March 2022

Republic of Singapore

Sentosa Golf Club

## Lydia Ko

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Joined by Lydia Ko, sitting third in the Rolex women's world golf rankings and already a 2022 winner. You won in your last start in the Gainbridge LPGA at Boca Rio. Your last seven starts across multiple tours, you've finished in the top 10 every time.

What have you found in your game and yourself that really seems to be clicking right now?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously I've been putting myself in contention a lot and I think when you start doing that more often, you just get a little bit more confidence and you know week-in, week-out, the technique and skill things doesn't change that much but when you get in a good rhythm of things, I think sometimes some putts that might have lipped-out, lips-in.

For me when I won Gainbridge I hit a shot that I think most of the time it would have gone out-of-bounds but I got a really lucky kick off the tree and then I was in bounds and I was able to save par from there. Kind of things start falling your way and I've kind of been able to feed off that kind of momentum, just trying to keep it super simple and just being confident and having fun out there.

I think at the end of the day I play my best when I'm enjoying my time out there and being a little bit more relaxed. Keeping that kind of mindset and just focusing on the one shot in front of me and trying to play the best golf I can.

THE MODERATOR: So you're coming here off a month-long break having last played at Boca. How did you spend that time off?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I was actually never playing the event after Boca. So to be able to win and have that long stretch off was really nice. Even though we have an off-season, I think off-season goes by super quick just with Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, the first Hilton Grand Vacations event comes around really quick.

So I felt like I needed a little bit more time before the first couple of event, and that's why I chose to take an extra



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week off before this Asia and West Coast Swing.

And I worked with my coach, did some good work with my trainers. Had some time off with family and friends. So yeah, I've kind of had like two off-seasons which was really nice. Just kind of making sure that the things that I'm working with Sean, like not doing new things but just trying to get like a little bit better and for me to have a little bit better understanding and clarity in just my whole swing and my game.

THE MODERATOR: You're here in Singapore, your eighth straight year coming here. You've never finished worth than 15th, runner-up in 2015 and still trying to get that elusive first win here. How important is this tournament to you? You're always here. You're a fixture here. How important is it for you to play here in Singapore?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think they say this is like Asia's major. HSBC has always done a fantastic job of hosting this event. Obviously the last couple years, it's been a little different circumstances, different environment just with COVID and everything.

Yeah, the golf course is in great shape. I was lucky enough to play both the Serapong and the new Tanjong here at Sentosa. They make it in that pristine shape; that you try to play the best golf you can.

This year, I think they grew out the rough a little bit, so it is a little bit more demanding than other years. Inbee mentioned before, it's fair for everyone. I don't think it suits one specific type of player, and I like that. It just putts a lot more players in contention and hopefully we'll be able to put on a good show case this week.

**Q. We were just speaking before with Hyo Joo Kim, it was ten years ago and you and her had an incredible contest in the Queen Sirikit's Cup at Tanah Merah Country Club. I wonder if you can tell us your recollections of that and as a second part, as an amateur back in those days, how important was the Queen Sirikit's Cup to you as a steppingstone into the pro game?**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, you know, being from New Zealand and to be able to represent my country, it's always special to be kind of in that team environment.



The Queen Sirkit's Cup was one of the few events we could travel with teammates and go and play these golf courses, and the Queen Sirkit's Cup was pretty much the Asia Pacific championship.

We had all those top players from different countries in Asia and from Australia and New Zealand as well. Met a lot of friends, like Minjee and Hyo Joo are all that I kind of met through those kind of times.

I remember with Hyo Joo every time we played the Queen Sirkit's Cup, she would shoot one crazy low score, like 9-under one day, like 8-under, and I was like, oh, my gosh, you can't beat her. I remember us being -- the best Queen Sirkit's Cup we had was back in New Zealand, which was my first Queen Sirkit's Cup, and even that year, I think she played and she shot a really low score on the final day, and then they beat us by miles.

But it just shows the type of player she is. She's a Major Champion. She had a successful amateur career and to kind of have some of those players that I played amateur golf with, and for all of us to be playing on the LPGA, it's great. A lot of familiar faces and I think at that time, especially, we motivated each other to just want to strive to become a better player and yeah, that's why I really enjoyed those times and enjoy playing alongside them now.

**Q. Have you made any plans yet to get back down to New Zealand now that you've heard the news that our borders are finally open for Kiwi, I think as soon as this coming week, and you won't have to isolate when you do come back down under.**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, obviously super exciting times. Also just shows how New Zealand has dealt with the whole situation of everything. I have friend that are excited to go back home as well that haven't been able to in a while.

I haven't made plans as of now to know exactly when I am going to go back. The last time I was back, it was in 2019 during the middle of the year, so hopefully I'll be back soon. Just during the year, it is pretty difficult to go back and especially me living on the East Coast back in the US.

But yeah, hopefully the borders keep staying open and I'll be back home to see my friends and just go back to the area that I grew up from.

**Q. Just on your golf, seems such a long time ago that you won, yet it was your last tournament only a few weeks ago. What have you specifically been working on and is it harder to get back to work after a win than maybe a normal week if you haven't won?**

LYDIA KO: I had already booked, like organized with Sean to have lessons on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday or something that week right after the Gainbridge, so we were right back into it on Tuesday. I worked out with my trainer on Monday, the day after.

But yeah, I think it was more just me having like more clarity on just my swing, just sometimes a lot of times it's just Derek and I, my caddie and I that are out there.

I think it's just as important for me to have a better understanding of where I'm at and why, what my tendencies are and why I hit some of these questionable shots, and I think the better understanding of that than I am able to kind of get through those kind of times better and even on the golf course try and find ways to just get around it because at the end of the day when I'm playing I'm not trying to have the most perfect swing. I'm trying to shoot the lowest score I can, and sometimes I'm not going to have my A Game, so trying to manage my way around it is just as important.

**Q. Could you maybe elaborate when you talked a bit about personal wins, if you don't win during that week, what exactly would a personal win be like for you? And the second thing is, what are some of the challenges or major differences playing golf during the pandemic and how challenging has that been, is it perhaps lack of crowds, the restrictions, living in a bubble? If you can talk a bit about that as well.**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think for me when I do like goal-setting, I don't really do like, I want to win five times in a year. Of course, I would love to win five times, but you know, sometimes I could play great golf and then somebody plays better than me and I don't win.

It is difficult to win, so I try to and set more like process and progress goals, whether it's increasing my fairways hit percentages, my greens in regulation, and when I do that better, I know that my results will come with that.

So those are kind of the -- some of my big goals for this year. Just being able to kind of embrace the situation and just enjoy the moment a little bit better rather than getting too far ahead of myself or getting too caught up in maybe a possible mistake that I made.

And, too, obviously, we've kind of lived in this situation of COVID now for pretty much two years, and it's flown by if you think about it, but things are different. Like this week we're here and we're not really in a bubble, but I think just with testing and us going and playing in Thailand next week, I think at the end of the day everybody is still being careful.

Like this week, we don't have general spectators, and they are a big part of this event and I know people here

in Singapore really enjoy watching us and having the LPGA in town.

You would think they are small things but in the end they become big. Right now, you know, a lot of things are opening up. Like in the US I think Gainbridge was, I think might have been the first or one in a while where we had a full field, like spectators and everything. So we are kind of moving in the direction of what was normal before.

But it's still around us. I still think we need to be careful and this didn't end like on just us. It affects other people around us, and I think that's why people are being just more cautious with everything. But yeah, you know, hopefully we do come back here and we see the fans and you know we're able to roam the streets here a little bit more freely. It makes you be very thankful, something that you thought was normal may not be so normal anymore. Just kind of be grateful for what we have, and I think that's kind of been my perspective of things.

**Q. You tied for seven last year and you have a pretty good record in this event on the Tanjong Course, and given you're in good form right now, what do you think your chances are? Do you like your chances? What's the key to scoring well on Tanjong?**

LYDIA KO: I hope my chances are good. I mean, it would be a pretty bad start if I went into the week thinking my chances were not so good. But in saying that, you know, we have world No. 1 Jin Young here playing this week. I know it's also Hyo Joo, the defending champion's first week in for this season. Inbee is a multiple-time winner here. So we have a lot of big names here. This is another great field this week.

So it's going to be difficult but I've just got to focus on my game and play the best score I can.

Yeah, the setup of it is pretty similar. I saw the rough is probably a little longer than previous years, where they might have been run-offs and it was just way, but now they have made it into a little bit more rough. I think that just makes it a touch more demanding than the years before.

So just kind of managing my way around it and also the heat is a big part of being over here in this part of the world so just making sure that I'm hydrated and staying cool is also very important.

**Q. As the season restarts, what are your goals for the 2022 season?**

LYDIA KO: Like I said earlier, my goal is to, I think my fairways hit percentage was like 60-something percent last year. So my goal is to hit -- go over 70 percent in my

driving accuracy and for greens in regulation to be over 75 percent. I think both of those aspects were better at the end of my season last year and I think the results were also better.

If those things are better, I think it takes a little less stress -- puts stress off my short game a little bit, and I think I'm just able to be a little more aggressive with my play. Those are probably my biggest keys for this year.

**Q. It was made way through 2019 since you've been back home, but I know you're used to being away from home, but was that hard especially after the Olympics to not get back to New Zealand, has it been hard on you?**

LYDIA KO: To be honest, I didn't go back home after the 2016 Rio Olympics either back home. So like, yeah, I would obviously love to have gone back with the other New Zealand Olympians and go celebrate being at home and especially with the time difference and everything for -- to be able to celebrate with my friends and people that I'm really close with back in New Zealand, but obviously just with circumstances, I know it's not easy. My best friend still lives over there, so even though I don't have family there, I have people that I feel like are family still there. Even just going back to my old school and the neighborhood that I used to live, it draws back so many good memories.

I do miss it. My dad and I sometimes call and then we talk about some of the things that happened and it's like when you're there, you're really able to draw that up in your mind. So I would love to go back home, and it is super exciting to hear that the borders are open, and I can't wait to be back whenever that may be.

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