

The Amundi Evian Championship

Wednesday, 20 July 2022

Evian-les-Bains, France

Evian Resort Golf Club

Minjee Lee

Jacques Bungert

Franck Riboud

Alain Berry

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, I believe we are back here for our final press conference, pre-championship press conference at the 2022 Amundi Evian Championship.

Again, thank you very much for being here. We are joined by our wonderful hosts for the week, Jacques Bungert and Franck Riboud, as well as Alain Berry on the end, communications director Amundi.

We also have the woman of the hour in the middle, Rolex rankings No. 2, Minjee Lee. Minjee is the defending champion making her eighth appearance here.

Minjee, a year ago right out here you took what was then the biggest win of your career. How much of a breakthrough moment was that when you won here last year?

MINJEE LEE: I mean, it was my first major win and there was quite a lot of pressure put on me to win a major after so many years on tour. It was just a great confidence boost for me after that win. I was able to have a good year last year and then bring it into this year.

So, yeah, hopefully good week this week.

THE MODERATOR: Can you reflect on just how incredibly well you played this week last year? You had four rounds in the 60s, that amazing final round comeback, the playoff win. How did your game come together for this great moment here at Evian?

MINJEE LEE: I feel like leading into the Evian last year I wasn't really in the greatest of forms. I had a really good week with Yuka at Dow the week before and I was just kind of -- I had a really good mindset coming into the week.

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It was just really chill and I just kind of lowered my expectations and just tried to relax and play and I think it paid off.

THE MODERATOR: It absolutely paid off. You mentioned not the best form coming in, but since then you've had 13 top 20 finishes, you won your second major title in June at the U.S. Women's Open, No. 2 in the Rolex Women's World Golf Rankings. Is it safe to say this is some of best golf you've ever played in your career.

MINJEE LEE: Definitely. I feel like I'm in a really good place with my game. Mentally I'm in a good place as well.

I feel like everything is kind of coming together really well. I really worked hard for all of this, so I'm going to keep working hard and hopefully keeps paying off.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. Minjee, you finished your pre-tournament preparation now; pro-am is over. Several days now to see the course. How does it look and how does it match up to what you remember from last year?

MINJEE LEE: It's a little bit more wet this year I think maybe obviously with the rain this morning. I feel like a lot of water has been put into the golf course, even the first two days when I was practicing.

So, I mean, I'm not sure if it'll dry out for the first couple rounds, but hopefully by the weekend it's a little dry and faster.

THE MODERATOR: Questions? I do have one. Is it fair to say that Sunday of this event last year moved you and your game to another level? And how did your mindset and attitude about yourself change after this win?

MINJEE LEE: I don't think the round itself really changed my game or anything. I think maybe the confidence part.

But I feel like I've been working on all aspects of my game for my entire life to bring me to that position. You know, I don't think necessarily that moment, but all the hard work that I put into it.

I think it really shaped sort of, you know, my attitude and

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sort of my mindset going into the other events. So, yeah, definitely helped me in that aspect.

Q. This is just a great moment for Australian golf as well with Cam winning, up to No. 2 in the world. 'So many strong Australian players, and you were really at the front of this charge a year ago. What are your thoughts right now on the state of Australian golf as they're kind of taking over the golf world right now.

MINJEE LEE: I mean, pretty damn cool that Cam won the British Open. You know, I was watching the coverage from France, so that was really cool to see. I know that he's done heaps of hard work.

Like none of us -- I mean, all the rewards come with the hard work you put into the game. Golf is really an honest game in that aspect. So, yeah, no, it's really cool to see where Aussie golf is at the moment.

THE MODERATOR: Absolutely. Franck, Jacques, I'll turn things over to you. With Minjee sitting here, what are your thoughts on what she was able to accomplish last year and to add her name to the trophy at Evian?

JACQUES BUNGERT: Well, it speaks for itself.

FRANCK RIBOUD: High quality winner.

JACQUES BUNGERT: Absolutely, looking at what she did and performed afterwards. I like to hear that there is a tremendous amount of work because sometimes people forget about it. And behind such a performance in any sport, but in golf obviously there is work. And mental work as well as work, so to speak.

Yeah. For us obviously, and I think Franck would agree, it's always great to see that Evian may be a trigger for some champions. Like the first win is always something great. Quite often we've seen the fact that it was a step one into a great season, succeeding.

So for us it's fantastic and she's a fantastic champion. Actually, we put her on every communication, every poster. It's not by chance. We're so proud of her, so thank you.

MINJEE LEE: Thank you.

FRANCK RIBOUD: Which is a tradition.

MINJEE LEE: Kind of cool. I mean, every restaurant I walk into.

FRANCK RIBOUD: Just to complete with Jacques said, when you have a tournament, all of us know what a golf tournament is, but to have a very special winner with a very special score with a very special four days, it's very important for the image of tournament.

It's true that having the best player of the world you are not afraid by having somebody coming from nowhere nobody knows. But to have the quality of the victory delivered last year is something very important for a tournament like this.

We expect the same. Perhaps somebody else, but we want the same quality.

THE MODERATOR: Minjee, it's got to be kind of surreal to drive into town and see your face everywhere.

MINJEE LEE: Yeah, it was pretty cool. Actually, just when I got out of the airport it was like my big ass poster right there. I was like, that's me. (Smiling.)

FRANCK RIBOUD: Even on that question, it's a business, so the only thing we can offer to the winner is to help to develop the awareness of this winner.

I know a company which is selling watch, one of our big sponsor. You will never seen the brand here. (Indicating his sleeve). Never.

But if you win and being part of the family, they will spread your image all over the world, which is the thing which is the most important for you even to negotiate some other contract. That's the way it works.

JACQUES BUNGERT: And that's part of the identity of the tournament just to finish on this. But we communicate all over the world on this, and Minjee was in a lot of international capitol and she was on the 14th of July on the Champs-Élysées as well.

FRANCK RIBOUD: You come to the Champs-Élysées, everybody knows you.

MINJEE LEE: Oh, everybody knows me.

FRANCK RIBOUD: There are no better place.

Q. You took a break between KPMG and now, so coming in fresh. How do you keep your game in major competition shape? Last time you tee'd it up was a major; you're back in a major. How are you ready?

MINJEE LEE: Right. Yeah, I had three weeks off, but it was so hot in Dallas the two weeks that I practiced I just sweated it out heaps. No, it was really good.

I was in a really good routine for the two weeks and just worked hard on my game, the things that I sort of wanted to get better at.

Yeah, I feel like I'm in a good place.

THE MODERATOR: Do you mind telling us what you want to get better at? Because if you need to get better, you're already playing really well right now.

MINJEE LEE: For me it's my putting and a bit of my wedge game is sort of where I've been putting my focus at.

THE MODERATOR: Anything further for Minjee? Well, I think if that's the case, probably turn things over to Franck and Jacques. Minjee, you're welcome to join. We have some questions for Alain. If you would like to sit here and join us absolutely you may.

MINJEE LEE: Oh.

JACQUES BUNGERT: I think you have some stuff to do.

MINJEE LEE: Yeah. Okay.

THE MODERATOR: We'll let you step away.

MINJEE LEE: Thanks everyone. (Applause.)

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much, Minjee. We always appreciate your time.

Now we're happy to be here with Jacques and Franck and Alain. Gentlemen, I'll turn it over to you. As always, thank you so much for your support, your hospitality this week. We were really excited to announce in May the increased purse for to championship growing \$6.5 million.

For Franck or Jacques, why was it important for you to make that statement in support of these amazing athletes?

FRANCK RIBOUD: Well, it's important. It's important because you have to remember what we explain when we start 27 years ago now. That was not me at this time who was explaining that but my father, Antoine Riboud, saying we have to -- we trust in ladies golf, and our job is to make them very happy making their job and making money.

If you remember, we start with the prize money of something around one million French Franc, which is -- which was \$300,000 euros.

So the game, because very often people think that there is a competition between the big tournament and the other, and the only thing is the prize money.

Not for us. For us, it's just we just trust in what we explain at the beginning: We have to organize this tournament being sure that ladies, the pro, will get enough money to make the job, having fun, being in family ambience with a lot of attention. I don't know if we

say that in English.

Taking care of them. By the way, having a good reward. So it's not a question of egalite, it's a question of respect of what they are doing.

I know it's very fashion now to speak about that, but, again, we start 27 years ago, so we are perhaps the only feminist tournament, even if we are Jacques and myself men.

But that was the idea from the beginning. That was really the idea. Being French and being European, more and more and more players are coming from the LPGA; less from the LET, for example, because it's quite difficult for some of the good -- average good quality player in the LET to be qualified to the Evian Championship because it's a master.

This is the reason why we ask to Jabra to start another tournament with us, just an offering a spot to enter the Evian Championship.

Also to, again, respect what we said at the beginning: We are there to help these ladies to develop themselves by doing their sport and finding the way to live with the money.

Because whatever you think, there are tournaments, these ladies are losing money every time they play. It's simple as that. When you have to go to the -- I'm not going to say the name of the country, but you see what I mean on the other side of the earth and you finish top 10 and you make 50,000 euros, you lose money. You lose money.

So our idea, and thanks to Amundi because they start to help us by having an Amundi tournament in Germany now. You have two ways to make money when you are a golf pro. How you make money on the top, how you spend less money. We call that P&L, okay?

If you send somebody to play a tournament in, I don't know, Hong Kong or whatever, the cost is no more under control. You can't go with your caddie. You don't have the money to go with your caddie. Which is not true for the player from the LPGA, but that's the real life of the LET player.

I think that the way we convince Amundi to join us, asking them to help us not only on the prize money, but to help us to be sure that these ladies, especially the young one, can make their job by making money. If you make no money -- you have to be very rich personally.

So that was the idea.

THE MODERATOR: And Franck, thank you for that. You mentioned Amundi, and Alain I was speaking with

you earlier. This is certainly the Amundi Evian Championship, but Amundi also helps out women's golf in so many other ways on the LET and the LET Access Series. Can you talk some about your work with the German Masters and the Czech Ladies Challenge and why Amundi decided this was the time to step up and really support the women's game?

ALAIN BERRY: Thank you. Happy to be with you today, as I was last year for the first edition of the 2022 Amundi Evian Championship. I think Franck, on this question set up the situation in fact. We are here and many sponsors are here help women get, let's say, money or let's say be able to live from their sport.

What it show is that here in Evian I would say we have a top players in the world, so maybe it's easier for them. But it's just we are talking about just 100 players, and our idea and what struck me when you're going to the tournament in the LET is that you see, as Franck said, they are -- except maybe the winner, they are all losing money.

What can be done? You have two possibilities: First thing is to have more tournaments, more tournaments for women in Europe especially. We are talking about Europe, but it's also the case in other region. The idea is to have more sponsors and more tournaments.

So I'm very happy that we have been able to discuss since last year for Germany to take back the women's golf in Germany, which is a huge let's say country for golf with many good German women players.

It took place too weeks ago, and I think it was a huge success. That's the way to have more tournaments in Europe and not being able for all the European players to go to Asia, Australia, and Africa, and keep let's say in Europe enough tournaments to be able to live.

Second idea we had, let's say last year, for those of you who were here last year, we have launch the Amundi Women Young Talent Program, which is a way also to sponsor, let's say, young women. So not already women who are at the top, but young let's say ladies who are going to improve their golf.

Last year I was happy to present the European Amundi team with five players. Since that date, and that's the message we have given last year, we said we wanted to continue this work and this involvement in the woman golf.

We created the U.S. team at the beginning of the year with three players, and as you have received, we give you this morning the press release with the Asian team, which is now composed of seven players from Asia. And so that's a new team.

That means globally speaking, now Amundi has 15 players all around the globe which we sponsor for at least two years.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for your support. We really appreciate it and I know the players do as well is.

Jacques, we are now here at Evian. It's a hot, sunny day, but it's beautiful. Overall, what are you and your team expecting and looking forward to most this week as we start to tee it off tomorrow?

JACQUES BUNGERT: Well, we expect the tournament to be fantastic. Honestly, we are now talking about the key issue of this week and what all the team has been doing. The team are working all year long to make sure that this week is just as amazing as possible.

On the other side obviously the course is at stake, and Alain and his team are also working hard to make sure that we have what I've heard, which is a course in beautiful shape, and probably one the best shape it has ever been.

THE MODERATOR: We do think it's very cool now with Amelie as the tournament director and Donna Mummert from the LPGA and we have an all-female setup crew. It's girl power this week. We like the girl power.

JACQUES BUNGERT: I'm leaving. Yeah, it's great.

THE MODERATOR: Do we have any questions for the three gentlemen up here or anything further the three of you you wish to talk about while you're here? Any questions in the room? Franck, Jacques, Alain, anything you wish to add?

FRANCK RIBOUD: No, just on the same question you just asked to Jacques, the world of tomorrow, because of the climate change and things like this, which are totally different from the U.S., you can trust me, it's tougher and tougher and tougher to deliver a golf course of this quality.

Because in our country more and more you have no chemical. You can't use chemical products. For example, this week normally we are not allowed to put water. We are just allowed to put water on the green. So we have to work with the local let's say government to get an authorization to put the water -- the amount water we need.

It's a big investment, because you have to save this water, so you're not the using the same amount of water on the green and on the fairway and on the tee, and so on and so on.

Behind that there are there are a lot of investment. For

example, I will give a scoop. We are working now on a subject which is the quality of the grass on the greens. If that kind of weather is going to be the weather of the next ten years, you can't have the same grass than when we have an average temperature around 25.

Yesterday we got somewhere 42. So if you live in Florida or whatever, the grass is not the same. Normally in the alps you don't expect 42 degrees as a temperature.

So do we have the change the 18 greens? Perhaps no, perhaps yes. If yes, when? When are you going to close the golf course to do that? Between September and May. No further in the year because this will -- the grass we need will not grow during the winter. Winter here means something. Can be minus ten, minus eight.

So behind all this quality we can't just say -- deliver a beautiful golf course. I think rules will change. We will have to discuss with the LPGA because we are not in the United States, we are in Europe, France. The legislation is tougher than in the U.S.

So I think everybody is going to adapt themselves to the situation, because nobody in our team will discuss about the fact that we have to change our mind, that we have to respect this, save water, use less chemical, and so on and so on.

I think it's going to be a big, big discussion, much more than whatever the world of golf is talking about by the time being.

But it's going to be a real discussion, a real choice between players, organizations, and people like us driving a tournament. Jacques and myself, we really want to perhaps a pioneer of that discussion.

We do what we want and we explain what we do, and negotiation is very tiny.

THE MODERATOR: We have a question.

Q. (Question in French.)

THE MODERATOR: I believe Jacques has a few final words.

JACQUES BUNGERT: Sure. Actually I know it's not the use of such a press conference, but I would like to underline the fact that we had this year the greatest coverage from the media we ever had in the past internationally and in France.

I really wanted to stress that and to thank you, because you don't realize it, but for us having so many accreditation this year is very important. The media coverage and the media support we get is important for

everyone and for the ecosystem of this tournament.

Of course we have our own channel of communication, we invest in communication, but without the media we wouldn't be who we are today, this major on continental Europe in an Anglo-Saxon world. Thank you for that. We need you for that as well, and that's important to notice it.

Thanks to that, also our sponsors get the what they need as well, and that's key.

FRANCK RIBOUD: As usual, I'm going to be much more direct than Jacques. I think because of my English.

But don't speak too much about equality between men and women. Help us. Stop to speak. Help us. Because without -- the equation is very easy. If everybody in this room wants, we improve, we increase the prize money for ladies, whatever the sport is. Could be tennis, golf, whatever. Without you, we can't.

Because the same people asking for equality, if I discuss with Alain, his boss will say, what the return is? The only agreement is, well, the agreement is equality between men and women. Except that you can play the role. You are the people who are going to help us to get the return.

That's not the only reason we need you. We need you because we love you. Loosely. But it's true that without this number of accreditation, without this number of people all over the world, we will not achieve the target. So we need you. We need your support. But for us, for ladies golf, more than for ladies sport.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Alain?

ALAIN BERRY: Yes. Maybe last word. We have a lot of journalists. If you want to follow all what we do in Amundi follow our new Instagram account Amundi Golf. You will have all the information all the year long, so we will be happy to see you.

And, yes, we invite you in the few seconds, minutes, at the cocktail just outside. So really happy to discuss with you and give you more information.

FRANCK RIBOUD: Beer is free.

ALAIN BERRY: Always.

JACQUES BUNGERT: And champagne.

THE MODERATOR: Champagne is always free.

Alain, Jacques, Franck, thank you very much. Thank you all.

FRANCK RIBOUD: Thank you.

JACQUES BUNGERT: And thank you in Zoom. Our friends in Zoom, thank you also.

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