

Cognizant Founders Cup

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

Clifton, New Jersey, USA

Upper Montclair Country Club

Jin Young Ko

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Jin Young, welcome back to New Jersey. You're coming off of an off week after your second place performance at the Palos Verdes Championship. Take me through what this off week was like for you, and what was it like to relax after that final round on Sunday?

JIN YOUNG KO: I had a great round in Palos Verdes, and I had a week off just at Dallas, and it was really short, and I slept a long time. I had a lot to eat. My mom makes the food.

So I practiced just two days in off week, so when I got here, I forgot how to play golf. It feels weird. I practiced a lot on Monday, Tuesday, and I play pro-am today. It's coming a little bit better for tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: How important was it to put the clubs away and take a breath and relax? How important is something like that to you?

JIN YOUNG KO: Well, I have lots of tournaments this year, so I need to rest before the big coming up, but I need to practice, but I didn't because it was really hot in Dallas, so I didn't want to get the clubs on the range.

I did work out a lot. Every day. I think my weight is a little high, so it's a little fat now. Yeah. (Laughing).

THE MODERATOR: You have some wonderful memories. Not only at the Founders Cup. You are now a two-time champion, but also last year in New Jersey. Take me back to 2021. What do you remember most about your wire-to-wire victory at Mountain Ridge?

JIN YOUNG KO: Last year before the Founders I finished second at the ShopRite. I 3-putt on last hole so I couldn't get in the playoff, so I was a little sad, so I didn't practice on Monday in New Jersey, and I went to New York City, and then I had great food with my family.

In the first round I got seven or eight birdies, so a little help to set emotional, so that's the good memories in New Jersey last year.

THE MODERATOR: Before I open it up, this event is a celebration of the past, present, and the future of the LPGA. Last year Shirley Spork was able to be in your trophy ceremony, and her unfortunate passing. Do you have any memories with Shirley since you've joined the tour? What do you remember most about this event and Shirley and coming back to the Founders Cup?

JIN YOUNG KO: At the champions ceremony last round last year and then she said, "you have great swing, and you are so beautiful," she said. That's a memory that I had memory from her, and she looked really healthy, but I really am surprised.

I'm so sorry to hear she passed away, but she did a lot of things for this tour, so I really want to say I appreciate for all the Founders.

Q. Jin Young, you are a two-time defending champion, since we didn't play in 2020. You are the only non-major defending champion to have now played on three different golf courses. So how does that feel coming back as a two-time defender, but on your third different course?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah, I loved Mountain Ridge Golf Course, but I love this golf course too, but a lot of players are saying it's really tough. I didn't practice on Monday, the course, so I didn't know how the shape of this golf course. I had a headache how to play this golf course, so I practiced yesterday.

Yeah, it's really hard. Fairways are really hard, but it depends on the windy. If downwind maybe I will get sand wedge or 52, but if into the breeze and the pin on the back pin, maybe or 6- or a 5-iron, so it's going to depend on the windy. I love this golf course. It's tough. Greens are fast, and the rough is thicker, and a lot of bunkers green-side, so I practiced a lot of bunkers on the practice area.

I love to play Mountain Ridge. Also, Arizona. We have to play other golf courses this year, so yeah.

Q. Speaking of different courses, you've played well



on all types of courses and all different types of grasses, so coming from California, bumpy Poa annua greens. Here, bent greens. Very fast and smooth. How do you make that transition?

JIN YOUNG KO: I don't know. Well, if I'm playing in Poa annua, it's tough to putt. Especially in the afternoon, but I putted well. I don't know why. I don't know.

I just tried to focus on my putting well on the greens and practiced hard before the tournament, during the tournament. If greens are really good, like this week, everyone does -- putting will be very well, so I will focus more than Poa annua or wherever.

Q. You're the two-time defending champion, and most people would say you are the favorite to win again. How do you approach a tournament where people expect you to win and because, obviously, it's not guaranteed. So your approach?

JIN YOUNG KO: I would say I don't care. I don't care the other people think about Jin Young is going to be winning or if they're expecting for, like, one more win for this week. I don't care. I just care about myself, how to play this golf course, and how to get the wind direction. Just I don't care the other people's, yeah.

Q. My other question is, you describe this course as very tough. Are there keys to playing well on this course? Is it like an open course where you have to keep it in the fairway or you have to hit certain spots?

JIN YOUNG KO: Practice hard. (Laughing). Hit straight from the tees and hit straight from the second shot. Even 3-wood or 5-wood or even sand wedge, hit straight, it's easier wherever to play golf course.

THE MODERATOR: I've heard this course you have to be very accurate off the tee. How much do you think about that at this course as you have gone through the pro-am and your practice?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yes, I played on the front nine today. It's more tough than back nine, so I don't want to hit, like, 250 meters, 260 meters. I want to keep the fairway. Even 200 meters is fine. Better than right side rough or left side rough. If the 3-wood is fine, just 10 or 20 meters behind them. It's fairways that's more important for this golf course.

THE MODERATOR: Why would you say the front nine is more challenging than the back nine?

JIN YOUNG KO: Well, the front nine has more water

hazards. (Laughing). Yeah, that's it.

Q. So, of course, this week, but then moving forward into the thick of major season, how would you assess your game right now, and is there any part of your game in particular that you've been focusing on as we -- like I said this week, and then, of course, moving forward into the summer?

JIN YOUNG KO: Well, U.S. Open is coming up. The course is going to be a little longer -- long, and fairways are wide, I heard, but golf is always important thing is your game under 100 meters. Even this golf course too. So I will prepare to majors or the other into the summer, the tournament. I will practice more under 100 meters. Even putting or green-side bunkers. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: You talked a little bit about the mentality when people might expect something of you or expect a good round. I remember back in 2019 one of your biggest things was you wanted to be the happiest golfer on the course. I remember it after your Chevron Championship win and your Evian Championship win. What do you think of that as you have had a spring of great play over the past few years. How much do you still think about being that happiest golfer on the golf course?

JIN YOUNG KO: I think I am really the happiest golfer right now. I didn't expect I would get back ranking number one after the CME in last year. One thing I remember, I was practicing in Palm Springs, and my coach said, "You're back to ranked number one."

I said, "Really?" I was really happy. I said: "How? Why?" Because Nelly is doing well. Did well last year, so I couldn't be expecting of that.

I started well, and I'm happiest golfer on the golf course, and outside golf course I'm still happiest golfer and human with my family. My families are here, so my mom makes a lot of things to me, so I'm happiest daughter from my parents. I'm happiest golfer on the golf course with my fans.

THE MODERATOR: So on and off the course?

JIN YOUNG KO: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: That's good to hear. You also talked about what you are specifically working on heading into this. We talked about how challenging this course can be. Do you like a course like this that kind of presents those tougher obstacles that we might not see at other courses throughout the year?

JIN YOUNG KO: I like to play easiest golf course, of course. (Laughing).

THE MODERATOR: Some people like the challenge.

JIN YOUNG KO: Well, I don't like challenge, but I have to play this golf course, and I have to accept this golf course. My caddie loves this golf course, but I would love to.

THE MODERATOR: David has caddied here before, hasn't he?

JIN YOUNG KO: He told me.

THE MODERATOR: He did back in the early 2000s. Did he give you any insight heading into this week?

JIN YOUNG KO: He said, I won this golf course, but I don't have memories, nothing, anything from this golf course. So he didn't.

THE MODERATOR: So he is no help? Just kidding.

JIN YOUNG KO: Maybe. (Laughing).

THE MODERATOR: As you look ahead to the week and to what is to come with the Founders Cup, how important is it to conserve the energy that you have as you go into the rest of these events? Max talked about the U.S. Women's Open and the majors upcoming this summer, but as someone who does play a lot, how important is conserving that momentum while also preserving the energy that you have?

JIN YOUNG KO: Well, depends on the players, but as me I don't care if I'm playing good from this week or bad from this week. I don't care about what's coming up in this summer.

Some people that play bad from this week, then they think next tournament will be sad or will be bad, but not for me. I'm trying to hold by best this week, and I think I might take some good positive things from this week, of course, so I don't think about if playing good or bad, don't think about next event, what will be like the future. It's too difficult to say in English.

THE MODERATOR: One week at a time? You take one week at a time?

JIN YOUNG KO: I need a translator. (Speaking Korean).

Probably other players might affect if they do bad in this week, it might affect next week's tournament, but for Jin Young, no matter how -- she tries not to care about next

tournament. She tries to focus every single day, every single tournament, and she has energy.

THE MODERATOR: So preserving energy for one week at a time.

JIN YOUNG KO: Thank you.

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