

The Chevron Championship

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Rancho Mirage, California, USA

Mission Hills Country Club

Danielle Kang

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Here with Danielle Kang at the Chevron Championship. Danielle, you've had a really solid season so far. Had a win at the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions; three other Top 10s. Got to be feeling good coming into the desert this week.

DANIELLE KANG: I always love coming back here. The weather is great and the conditions are always impeccable, so really excited to play some good golf course.

It's a good testament to your entire golf game from tee-to-green, around the greens, so it's fun to have that challenge. It's a major championship, so getting the first one to kick off out in Palm Desert, it's been on our schedule for a long time; excited to be back.

Q. Is this the hottest start you've ever had coming into the year's first major, a win and three top 10s?

DANIELLE KANG: Oh, hottest. I thought you meant the weather.

Q. No, no, like the hottest you've been playing. You seem you have really on the past couple months.

DANIELLE KANG: I don't know. Is it?

Q. I think it's probably one of your best starts ever.

DANIELLE KANG: I been playing pretty solid. I didn't play well -- people were asking me, you're not playing last week. I said, I am playing. You got to scroll. I'm not playing good right now. Like don't be like that.

But sometimes I still don't -- my game is still not exactly where I want it to be, and I was testing a lot of stuff that I wanted to test last week to be ready for this week. Sometimes over-preparing and overdoing some of the things that are already good are tough to balance.

But, yeah, I been playing pretty solid wherever we are, but it's hard. It's tough.

Q. What are some of the emotions being in Mission Hills for the last time for this event?

DANIELLE KANG: I guess I'm one of the lucky players that gets to say that I competed in the last Dinah Shore Tournament when it was held the final time at Mission Hills.

Yeah, this place has lots of memories, a lot of traditions, and I understand that, but sometimes we're so focused on the move right now that we have taken away the fact that the CEO, Michael Wirth I think is his name, he upped our prize fund by 60% and is now a \$5 million purse.

I understand this is one of the most loved events, but we have to elevate this event. It is something -- it's got history, traditions, and it will be an integral part of the championship moving forward, but we need to have bigger prize monies and -- prize money, and for the fact that he made it \$5 million, I really thank him for that.

He elevated it in literally a week. It's instant. We have courtesy cars. At a major championship. We're competing for bigger prizes. It differentiates a major versus other golf tournaments.

Q. There's been a lot of companies that have stepped up like Chevron, but what have you noticed already? You mentioned the courtesy cars this week. How cool is it to have companies but their money where their mouth is and back the LPGA Tour?

DANIELLE KANG: It's refreshing, to be honest. It's because I'm lucky enough to not worry about some of the cash prizes and things like that. I understand sometimes when people look at how much money we make they get thrown off about you're making extra amounts and you're making this much and you're just complaining.

Let's kind of look at it from a broader perspective. I'm one player. How about the average tour players? I made 6,000 last week, made the cut; I didn't break even last week. That's me budgeting. I have to drive, rent a car, get a hotel room.

Luckily enough for me I'm sponsored by BMW that



provides for me the car. That saves like \$500, \$1000, et cetera. You have to -- we have to think about all these things.

So for us, when companies step up and give us an opportunity to make a living, make the tour better and broader and for players to compete and to be an actual job, it's nice to see that.

Major championships, what makes it a major? Bigger purse, better players. Golf courses, difficulty, level of the golf course. U.S. Open is U.S. Open because of what it is.

We play amazing golf tracks. Same thing and KPMG Women's PGA Championship, the Open, British Opens. We have to think about why this tournament is so special. Traditions are tradition, but for me, like there is nothing permanent than change.

I really support whatever it needs to be to make the tour better moving forward for the girls to work to money, make a living, and not worry about making a cut and not breaking even.

Q. What traditions will you miss the most?

DANIELLE KANG: What do you mean? Depending on what?

Q. From this tournament.

DANIELLE KANG: I haven't experienced any of the traditions yet. We all expect people to jump into Poppie's Pond after we win, right? I haven't done that, so I can't say I'll miss that.

I'm pretty sure that David Foster and Dinah Shore created this event in 1972. Am I correct? Amy Alcott jumped in in 1988. It took 16 years for the tradition to kick in, so you never know what the future is going to bring.

Traditions, this golf tournament will be an integral part of this event no matter what.

With that said, what we expect -- same thing with Evian Championship. I'm sure when we win they jump out and do parachute with the country flag. I mean, that is cool.

I'm really excited to see what Chevron Championship has to bring when we move to Houston.

Q. You mentioned at CME last year you're going to change up your team. You're going to gamble this year. What led you to you adapt to those changes so quickly?

DANIELLE KANG: I haven't adapted yet. I seem like I have, but it's still really difficult to work on the things that I'm working on off the golf course. Physically, mentally, there are so many things that I don't feel that comfortable yet, and I have said I feel uncomfortable for a while.

I know you're laughing. I know I'm finishing top 10s and winning and finishing second, but it's more than that, right? It's about how I feel when I approach a shot, about how I want it execute it and the way -- I understand if it goes to two feet it goes to two feet, but it's how I got there, how the golf ball leaves the face.

All that is something I want to narrow down and compact and feel better about for the longevity of the game and my career. I'm still not that comfortable.

Q. How do you work on that process?

DANIELLE KANG: It takes time, repetition, and practicing the routines and practicing what I'm working on. Finding the time to workout and working on the body parts we have to work on getting us stronger.

Same thing with the golf game. Butch wants me to work on certain parts around the greens that I'm not quite expert at yet but I have to work on it. When the season starts you have to keep competing, which means sometimes I have to take a hit and just try it even if I don't feel comfortable.

It might work out; might not. It might cost me a bogey; it might not. But I have the luxury a little bit to work with that. I'm not so focused that I have to make a cut or make money this week. It's 11 years on the road for me, so I have a little bit of a leeway for me to work with.

I think that's helping me work on things.

Q. If you didn't have to balance playing tournaments, how long do you think it would take to get used to the changes?

DANIELLE KANG: Probably months I would think; half a year. But even then you have to apply it to a competition game, which is different. So on and off -- ideally I would probably play few events and then take couple months to myself, few events, couple months, but that's now how it works. We just have to adapt to what's going on.

Q. How do you give yourself grace? Last week you said you didn't play as well with still trying to get comfortable with those changes. How do you give yourself Grace trying to iron out the details and get things where you want them?



DANIELLE KANG: I'm just constantly being told that I have to be kinder to myself, and it's hard to be. I'm just kind of a perfectionist and I want things to be done exactly the way I wanted, the way I see it.

It's not in my control. The only thing I can control is how I process things and doing the best that I can.

Q. One of my favorites things I think I've ever heard a player say is want to fail better.

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah.

Q. How is that going for you? Are you failing better?

DANIELLE KANG: I believe I am. I've been chipping kind of weird so I missed couple greens on purpose last week, and I was talking about it with my coach and they thought it was the most absurd thing they had ever heard. My friend David Lipsky was like, You did what? I said, You've never done that? No, nobody does that.

But I have to figure it out eventually, so I have to keep chipping in a tournament scenario when I have to make an up and down. And you can't really recreate what you feel in a competition unless you're in competition. I've tried. Like people can use gambling or putting money or whatever it may be, but for me, in that moment there is nothing I want more than to make par from a specific place.

I can't recreate that unless it's at an event. I'm just trying to mishit and fail and see if I can recover the best that I can. It's an internal feeling that I'm working on. So technique is just part of it. It's not most of it.

Q. Now I'm curious, what did Butch have to say about that for last week, again, trying to do something on purpose to put yourself in that situation?

DANIELLE KANG: He said, Did you make up and down? I said, No. I missed two. I made the third one. I only did it three times. I did try it on the third one and he supports what I do. He is always going to say like, D, I trust the work that you put in.

However you're going to have to get it done, just get it done. You have a job to do. He'll always say that, I have a job to do.

Q. You so well explained all the changes you're trying to make. How hard is it to try and impact and put all the changes in while going through competition?

DANIELLE KANG: It's hard. Simply, it's pretty difficult.

For me at the least. It's always a work in progress. That's the beauty of golf.

Sometimes you just get so carried away about playing well and what the results may be and what we should be doing or shouldn't be doing. Just kind of have to see the broader picture. This is just part of life and who you are momentarily, and being in the present and working on what you need to work on now is the best way to approach something.

Q. So you played last week at the JTBC Classic. Are you typically a player that plays the week before a major or do you like to take some time off before majors?

DANIELLE KANG: I don't think -- I don't necessarily have an answer for that. I just always played in Carlsbad and here. I have a lot of friends down there so I go down there and it's one of the most beautiful places.

But I think the conditions really threw me off, so I played and drove here on Sunday night and practiced here and played. I just needed to get that kind of conditions out of my head. For me, the ball didn't bounce the way I wanted to, didn't react the way I saw it, so I didn't want that kind of imagery in my head. I have to practice and grind it out this week.

I think it's different. I'm not a player that goes to the major golf courses early and practices and then go back. I just don't do that. I've tried; it didn't work.

Q. Like you said, last week's conditions I think people assume California golf is one way, and last obviously last week it's definitely different. You said you were out there practicing on Sunday night. How do you really make your brain switch, Okay, I'm playing on poana, I'm playing where it's kind of wet, things aren't going to roll out, to Mission Hills where I can putt a six-footer straight at the hole and be confident it's not going to a bounce off line, and the golf course is really firm and fast?

DANIELLE KANG: I think it's calibrating to the golf course conditions of the week and practicing what the speed of the greens will be, how the ball releases and bounces out. You just got to put the time and the practice in.

The greens are I don't think as rolling as fast as it will be yet, so I'm a little bit nervous about that, because I don't really -- I'm not a fan of the green speed changing the days of the competition.

You just show up and all of a sudden it's three feet faster,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

because we're doing practice drills every day to calibrate to them.

But I think so far around the greens and how the greens are reacting it's going to be a pretty consistent weather. It's not going to be raining all of a sudden randomly. The balls are going to release the way it is.

Around the greens are really protected around here. Rough is kind of thick. You get really different lies. Going to see some really bad chips and weird chips and good chips, so it's going to be interesting.

Yeah, 18, I mean, people ask me how I'm going to play that. I can't hold the green. There is a misconception of how far we hit the ball and I don't hit it 220, so I will not be going for that unless I have 170, and even then I don't even know if my ball flight can hold the green with a 5-iron.

It's like just we have to understand how hot it gets, how firm the greens get, and how we're going to play.

Q. Are you a firm and fast kind of player?

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, I like it, but everyone is really focused on 18. Specifically that one. It's not going to be playable the way we want it to. We have to have a mid-iron to be able to hold that green for that flight. You got to have speed to have the ball flight.

I'm not DJ so I don't hit it that high and that soft with a 5, so it's -- it's play it as it lies, and I'm kind of excited to see how this golf course plays.

Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Last question from me: We talk about small changes, the details for you. What are some goals this week besides the obvious one on Sunday?

DANIELLE KANG: To be frank, goals are -- I have my own goals that I want to set and the way I want to play. Obviously I don't compete in the tournament to not win.

But I think my goal is for people -- when they watch me on TV this week -- to understand there is more going on in the world. There is a war going on in Ukraine. I want people to understand it's not about whether I'm playing well or bad. I think I just want to use the platform for them to see that, hey, you can help, and UNICEF has gone out of their way to provide medical supplies to these people. There is a BlueDot Hub that they're trying to open up for migrating and refugees.

I want people to know that's going on and we have to be

kinder and bigger and try to see how we can make a difference, and if there is any way that they can do, I hope that me playing golf, they'll just be reminded of that and know that they can help.

UNICEF has done really great work and I just want to play the best golf that I can play this week, ignorantly as said. For me, all I'm worrying about is how well I'm going to play this week, but there are other things going on.

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