

The Chevron Championship

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The Woodlands, Texas, USA

The Club at Carlton Woods

Lydia Ko

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back inside the online and in-person media center here at the Chevron Championship. I am pleased to be joined by Lydia Ko here in Texas. As we gear up for the first major of the year, how are you feeling being here in the Woodlands?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, this is only my second time playing in Houston. The first time was when we had the U.S. Women's Open in December at the Champions Club, not too far from here. Yeah, definitely nice to be here, and obviously with Chevron coming along as the main sponsor for this event, I think the first thing is sometimes people get afraid of having change, and especially at a place like at Rancho Mirage where there's been a lot of history, with the Poppies Pond, with Amy Alcott first jumping in there, and I think it is hard to step away from that.

But at the same time when you see how much the KPMG Women's PGA Championship has grown from us playing in New York, New Jersey, and then how we get to go and play these amazing championship golf courses and what they've done, I feel like Chevron is going to do the same and keep elevating this event, and you can see how much hype there is.

I've talked to a few of the people that are from this golf club, and they're super excited to have us here, and it's nice to come to a place where people are excited that the LPGA are here, we're excited that we're here, and it's a good championship golf course, so I'm excited for how this tournament is going to start here in the Woodlands this year and just continue to grow over the next few years.

Q. This championship I know means a lot to you. What does it mean to be able to see kind of the development and growth of this major and continue the legacy, as you said, here in Texas?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, the Chevron Championship was my second major win. I've always just seen people in the past jump into Poppies Pond, and I'm sure I wouldn't have been the only one to jump into a swimming pool thinking that's you in the future hoping to jump into the pond.

The week starts off great. Yesterday we had the Champions Dinner, and I don't think there's any other event that celebrates that, and it's not only past champions that are currently in the field but people like Sandra Palmer, Sandra Post, Dottie Pepper, there's just so many people, and it's just great to see all the different generations that are there, and we're all just celebrating this event and everybody that's hugely involved with our Tour. It's a special event in many different aspects, not just the championship itself.

Yeah, I'm excited. Like I said earlier, it's sometimes weird to have change, but I think it's change for the better, and Chevron just did a great job last year, and I think to be able to also respect the history that we had there and to bring it here into their backyard, I think it's exciting. Hopefully a lot of people will be able to come out and watch us play, and yeah, it's a very cool place for us to be in, and as a Tour I think we're very grateful for these kind of partnerships.

Q. Did you get one of the Bentley courtesy cars?

LYDIA KO: I did, yesterday.

Q. How was it?

LYDIA KO: I did say -- we actually -- I didn't take it yesterday just because I was in a bit of a rush. Not to say anything negatively about the car that I had the day before, but it's much more comfortable driving a Mazda than a Bentley. I'm not the world's greatest driver, and I know if I crash into something, the insurance is going to be a lot higher on the Bentley versus probably most other cars.

Yeah, I think we have Rolls Royce and Bentley there, they're some of the sponsors here, and you can see it on the boards. It's really cool and it's definitely a treat and a Perk of being a past champion. I was talking to J.P., who's the team at IMG, and he said there's going to be a surprise for you on Monday, and I got my courtesy car, again, nothing against Mazda, I think it's a great car, I was like, um, surprise, and then they gave me the real surprise yesterday. Yeah, super cool car. It's definitely above my grade of driving skill.



Yeah, it's really cool, though. I chose the SUV version than like the sports convertible because me in a convertible in like a mint color car doesn't really go very well I don't think.

Q. Let's talk about the golf course for a second. Can you talk to me about the differences between what you're seeing here and what you had in California, and what do you think about this one overall?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, this golf course is a very -- obviously I've only played the Chevron Championship -- well, everybody has, as just the one same golf club at Mission Hills, so it's weird you don't really know what to expect. I haven't played that many tournaments in Texas in general, so I didn't know what it was going to be like.

To be honest, I played a practice round on Saturday, and I had very -- I thought I was going to run out of balls by the end of -- before my round ended. But I finished strong, and I've been playing a lot -- I've been donating less balls to the golf course since then.

Yeah, it has kind of like a U.S. Open/KPMG kind of golf course style, mixed, very different. I do like that I think they have like a second tee option on 18 to kind of bring that tall tree into play, which is kind of what we had to deal with on the 18th at Mission Hills to make it like a reachable par-5.

Yeah, it's different. I think off the back and when it's windy, some of the holes are playing pretty long, but I do think this golf course is fit for a lot of people in the field rather than like one type of player, and that's what I always like to kind of bring more players into contention, and I think it's going to be a great championship golf course.

Q. Before I ask what I was going to ask, I want to go back to driving for a second because I remember there was a whole storyline of you being the No. 1 player in the world before you had your driver's license. When did you get your driver's license?

LYDIA KO: I got my driver's license during COVID. I even went to driving school. I got the proper way on how to forward park and all that.

Still not a good parallel parker. If I have my destination and there's like a parallel parking spot right there I'll park a mile away so I can get out of that spot.

But yeah, I got it during 2020, I guess, and I've been driving a little bit more, but yeah, always -- I'm trying to not get too cocky when it comes to driving. Two hands on the steering wheel. I'm a very boring, your standard textbook driver I would say.

Q. The 18th, obviously an iconic hole at Mission Hills. What was your first impression when you came here and you saw the buildout, you saw the dock and what it looks like here?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I think it's really cool. I guess it's really hard to compare something to like a completely different hole, but I think that was kind of one of the big considerations, I think, when they were choosing a golf course when we were coming over here, like trying to have that kind of feel or a potential to grow that hole that way.

I think it's a really beautiful hole. I love a par-5 finishing hole. I think it can really put everybody that's only like a couple shots away coming down the stretch, put them all in play, whereas if it's like a tricky par-4 or something, it might not necessarily work out that way. Obviously at Mission Hills we had Brittany Lincicome hitting on the green for two and making eagle, Lorena Ochoa -- no, was it Webby that holed her third shot out of the fairway.

I think there's been a lot of drama on that hole. I had to birdie that hole to win in the end.

I think this hole is going to be like that. Obviously with the wind and everything and potential rain, I don't know how that hole is going to play for sure until we are actually playing it, but I do love a dramatic finish.

I hit a shot a couple days ago and I was able to reach the green for two. I think it's going to be fun, and I think it doesn't matter what length player you are, you can pretty much get on the green, especially from the front tees.

Yeah, I think it's really cool, and there's a lot of aspects to it, and just because it is a par-5 doesn't mean it is an automatic birdie anyway, so I think it's going to be really exciting.

Yeah, the last few stretch of holes on the par-3 on the 17th as well is going to be a good buildup to the 72nd.

Q. Are you going to jump if you win?

LYDIA KO: Are you meant to jump? I've seen people hit shots on to the green, so I wasn't sure if it was like a hitting bay or you're a little bored to jump. I thought it was a little deck to jump, but my caddie Dave and my mom was like, surely not, because it's too small to fit everyone. But if that happens, it's definitely a good worry to see if you all can fit on the deck.

But no, I think in Chevron's perspective, I think they're very respectful and understanding of all the history that we've

had, and for somebody new to come in, I feel like sometimes they want to like build their image and like make their statement, but for them to be understanding of how people remember this championship and having the jump to Poppies Pond and for them to kind of bring that back and give players opportunities and their team opportunity to do that I think is really cool.

The water is natural, so it's a little dirtier than Poppies Pond that got cleaned out before we came along, but it might be cleaner than when Amy Alcott first jumped into Poppies Pond because I think it was literally like a natural pond at that point.

Yeah, it's good worries, but I feel like people would jump in it because that is a tradition of this championship, and Chevron made that possible for us.

Q. If you have the opportunity to jump into the pond, you'll also jump into the Tour's Hall of Fame. How much is that on your mind going into this week?

LYDIA KO: Honestly, I just want to have a good week this week. Hall of Fame and everything, yeah, I'm two points away, and I'm like one tournament away technically to being able to do that, but I could also be -- like who knows. It is definitely a big goal of mine to be in the Hall of Fame, but I don't think that's like my end goal or something that I'm just going to keep chasing towards because I'm just trying to play the best golf I can, and if I put myself in contention and just keep giving myself opportunities, I feel like they're all going to come naturally.

I'm sure as much as I want it, the rest of the 131 other players also want the win as much as I do, so it's like even though people -- there might be like different things at stake for each player, I think it's meaningful for every single one of them in their own different ways.

Yeah, I mean, it would be pretty cool to get it done in the first major of the year and be in the Hall of Fame, but that's not what's important to me. For me I just want to have a good week and put myself in position, and if I have a chance at it and be the one that's holding the trophy at the end of the week, that's pretty awesome. But I don't think that's going to be like my driving force going to any of these events this year.

Q. What was your process to prepare for this week?

LYDIA KO: I had two weeks off after PV, so just worked on my game and took some good time off, as well. Like I came here, I was overseas a little bit, so I actually got here a little early, so got here on Saturday, so I feel like when you come to a new golf course it's nice to kind of play the

golf course a little bit more just to get familiar with the holes and just get familiar with the golf course itself.

I said I probably broke the course record in sneezing on Sunday or Saturday. I was sneezing so much. I told that to my husband, I was like, I broke the course record in sneezing, but he only heard the course record, and he was like, you must have played great, and I was like, no, I meant in sneezing because there's a lot of pine trees here and I have allergies.

But it's just good to get used to the golf course and just see like which areas are not bad places to miss, and I think with major championships and especially golf courses like this, sometimes a bogey is not the end of the world, and when you do have an opportunity you can make birdie, and just being really patient out here, and I think the more you get used to it, the better I'm able to understand that.

Q. You talked about the success of the change, Of The Chevron Championship and Chevron coming in. How do you measure that?

LYDIA KO: I think obviously just with the hype that's around the event, there's a lot of like signs, buildup around the Woodlands area, on the way coming here. You can just see how people are excited and how people just talk about it.

I think sometimes we might not be the hottest topic or hottest thing in town, but I talked to the head pro here, and I think they had a junior championship last weekend for over a couple days, and they seemed excited. They had come out with flags. I met two girls that both made hole-in-ones over the span of the tournament, so hopefully they gave me their good hole-in-one energies.

Yeah, I think it's just word of mouth, right, that goes around people, and people are just excited. I think sometimes it's like, oh, it's come around again, it's not that. It's just the Chevron Championship is here in the Woodlands, Texas, and people are excited.

I think this is Stacy's hometown, as well, which with her being a past champion, I think it's also really exciting.

Yeah, I think there's a lot of excitement, and up until Thursday it's just hard to gauge everything because fans aren't here yet, but we had pretty good crowds in Texas when we played at the Champions even though it was really cold. I think with some decent weather, hopefully a lot of people come out and watch.

Yeah, I think this tournament is going to continue to grow. Just this being the first year isn't going to be like at the top.



I think it's just going to keep developing, and I know they have like a Leaders Summit today, and it's exciting.

I think Chevron are interested in what can they do to make the championship better for the players and the hospitality, the volunteers and everybody that's involved, and I think that's great when you're talking to people like that that are just excited to see where this tournament is going to go as much as players are.

Q. You've been known for your consistency and accuracy on the golf course. What is your approach to staying focused and maintaining your level of play over a tournament?

LYDIA KO: I think I try and not get too excited and not get too down. I try and stay in that medium level of emotions. I don't think I'm like that off the golf course, so I think that's pretty -- it's pretty reflective of when I'm on the golf course, as well.

Because of that, I try and not get too irritated as much, but sometimes when I keep making the same mistakes, yeah, it's easier said than done. But it's hard, and I think over time I've gotten to realize and embrace the fact that it is tricky, and sometimes I'm going to make mistakes, even though I think they're silly.

Every time you look back at something that shouldn't have happened or you wish it shouldn't have happened, it's kind of like an endless thing, so all I can do is just work on the things that I've got to work on and stay positive, and I think the good thing with golf is that if I make a mistake on the first hole, then there's always a second hole. It's not like it's one race and it's done.

It's not this tournament that is going to reflect my career. There's always next week or the week after or another major championship. Sometimes I think we do get carried away about that present moment because it is so important to you, but I'm trying to do a better job of just kind of taking everything in and know that sometimes -- like for me, I didn't play, I didn't have a great result in LA, but there were so many positives from that that I could take, and that's all I can focus on and try and not dwell on the negatives.

Q. Since being a champion at the age of 14, how have you been able to maintain your mental health?

LYDIA KO: I think I've had my ups and downs. Sometimes I've been -- some things came a lot easier than -- it was never easy, but it seemed easier looking from outside in.

But then some days it's like I feel like I'm doing all the right

things and it's not happening. But golf, I feel like there is no perfect score. It's not like bowling where you have a max like 300 points, I think, whereas in golf if I was to hit a perfect score I'd make a hole-in-one on every par-3, eagle on every par-5 and albatross on every reachable par-5. That's just silly. There's no perfect. Even players who shot like 59, they know they maybe could have shot a 58.

I think that's the continuous challenge of it, and sometimes I think to myself like why am I continuing to play this crazy game and trying to be good at it.

But I think because of its challenges, it makes me be more motivated and just keep wanting to do better, and I think that's why no matter what ranked player you are, every player is out there trying to improve, and you can see people working with their coaches or their team or their club reps to just keep improving because if you are trying to stay at the same position, like people are going to keep surpassing you. You're just trying to grow as a player and just keep improving, and I think that's the tough thing about golf but a huge motivating aspect.

Q. I just had a quick follow-up about your course sneezing record. Is there medication or things you can do? How are you going to be able to counteract that when you're actually in the tournament?

LYDIA KO: I've been taking Zyrtec, and it's been working its magic the last 24 hours, which has been good. One of the players who also struggles with allergies, she said, if you take the gel form it absorbs into your body better.

I don't know if it's actually true or not, but I've been taking gel form, and it has been working better than normal pill. It's a fun fact that I don't know if that fact is true or not, but it works for me.

Yeah, I've been taking that, which is what I normally have to take, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Lydia, and best of luck.

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