

# The Chevron Championship

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The Woodlands, Texas, USA

The Club at Carlton Woods

## So Yeon Ryu

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome everybody to the press center here at The Chevron Championship. Welcome So Yeon Ryu. Thank you so much for being here.

I understand you made a big announcement just a couple weeks ago. I would love to start with that. Can you just take us through your decision and your announcement for us.

SO YEON RYU: I've thought about it for long time and then it's been on mind for long time, and then probably beginning of 2022 I knew 2023 season was going to be my last. Then after I play my last event in Korea last year I just stop playing golf and thought about how I'm going to retire.

I wasn't sure, but I don't want to make a scene and just get away from this tour or do you have to go back and then to just say good-bye to people.

I wasn't really sure about it. I started to look back all of my career. If I only have to pick one word to describe my career that was "grateful."

I'm so grateful for everything, so for that I definitely needed to come back to say thank you to all of my family. Golf has taught me so many great lessons. I actually didn't know I was going to be little emotional but now I feel little emotional.

I'm really glad that I made the decision to retire at this event. It's been really nice few days. I've met so many of my greens, and I would like to say thank you to all people that reached out to me and congratulate and supporting all of my career.

**Q. What made the retirement decision easy to make at The Chevron Championship? Why did you want this to be your last?**

SO YEON RYU: I have a couple reasons. First one is this is my last major win, so I wanted to come back to this tournament to bring out all the good memories.

Second one is the tradition. We do have a really great tradition for this tournament. We have a Champions' dinner every time we play this tournament, and then we had the champion's dinner on Monday and Judy Rankin, Juli Inkster, so many legendary golfers were there.

And then without them I don't think I was able to have what I had for last 12 years on the LPGA, so I want to thank them in person and I want to meet them and say thank you for everything what they've done to make us what we have right now.

Those two is the reason why I wanted to come back to this tournament.

**Q. You said you learned a lot of lessons. What were some of those lessons you've learned about yourself over the last decade almost?**

SO YEON RYU: Definitely being patient. You know, being a professional golfer you definitely need to be patient. You put so many hours to be a better golfer all the time, but it'll be really nice to become -- I mean, to see the result right way after so many dedication but that's not how it work.

Sometime it takes time to see the results, so I really need to be patient for a long time. And then I've met so many great people through this game, so some of them is like 50 years older than me and all the lessons from them was just amazing.

Friendship as well. We were competing each other on the golf course, but at the same time, we're the only one really understand each other. So off the golf course I feel like I have an amazing friendship.

Endurance. So many different cultures for me as well; languages. So I feel like this tour just taught me so many great thing and then I literally grew up with it.

**Q. We always reflect on happy moments. Can you reflect on some of those happy moments and is there anything you really regret in your career?**



SO YEON RYU: Of course I have a lot of regrets moment. What if I hit 7-iron instead of 8-iron? What if I hit like more aggressive instead of being a chicken?

But I know all of the moment I did my best so I don't think I can regret that kind of stuff.

Only one regret is I don't think I really enjoy the moment, like live that moment. Because even after I won a tournament I only thing I could think of is how I'm going to keep this title and how can I win another one.

Even when I became No. 1 in the world I was more to busy thinking how I'm going to keep this position. Just I don't want to be second or third. I want to be No. 1 in the world forever.

Also, after I announce my retirement a lot of people have been reaching out to me and then tell me you've been having a wonderful career.

And then there was a time I genuinely consider my career is a good career, and then first time ever I was very proud of myself. And I wish without people telling me you're good at golf, I wish I was able to talk to myself I'm good at golf and that I was be kind to myself.

So I think those twos are the regrets that I have.

**Q. Any happy memories, moments?**

SO YEON RYU: A lot of happy memories for sure. If somebody going to ask me what's the most memorable tournament ever, I have to pick 2011 U.S. Women's Open. That's not just because I just won. I just really enjoyed every single moments. I grew up playing golf on TV, and then like all of my role models like walking around with me, that was already amazing.

Then we had really bad weather so we had to stop like four or five times and I spend a lot of time in the locker room. And then all of a sudden Cristie Kerr order pizza for everyone. I was like what? Cristie Kerr order pizza for me? It was amazing.

For me it was amazing to see we had a fitness truck on tour, and went to truck to get a treatment and all of a sudden Paula Creamer is sitting right next to me getting treatment.

How cool is that? I literally looked up to her when I was young, and now I'm at the fitness truck with Paula Creamer.

When I made it to a playoff I realized the worse thing I'm

going to get is second place at U.S. Women's Open, so that was already like pretty achievement for me, so I was so happy.

I think I was able to enjoy all the moments. That's why I was able to handle the pressure at the playoff, and then at the end I was able to lift the trophy.

So I want to pick the U.S. Women's Open as the most memorable event in my career.

Also, the moment I was very proud of myself was I met people in Australia three years ago and I think he told me I was the reason why he started to watch LPGA. He always thought PGA was way better than LPGA and right now he thinks -- he able to relate more with the LPGA so he also respect all the LPGA players.

So that was a moment that I was kind of proud of myself that I did something for LPGA. (Laughter.)

**Q. I know that you play the violin and enjoy music. Is there any set playlist you play before you start on the course?**

SO YEON RYU: When I'm really stressed out I'm playing piano actually. Violin is very sensitive instrument so if you don't practice like you're really bad at it. I'm a perfectionist and when I'm not good at it I cannot handle it. Nowadays I'm play piano more than violin.

Music helps me to enjoy the life even more.

**Q. With having made the decision to retire, what are you hoping for this upcoming season of transition?**

SO YEON RYU: I have a couple things in my mind. I'm really interested in golf course architecture, so if I have a chance to design the golf course it will be really amazing.

Second one is I want to do something to elevate the game. I don't know how, but some of the retirement golfer has already been doing amazing job, so I would like to talk to Michelle Wie, Karrie Webb, how are they doing it.

I can see they definitely helping a lot of junior golfers out to be a better golfer all the time. I want to be the person that makes something better for this sport.

**Q. And with all your success, how has your faith influenced your decisions in your career?**

SO YEON RYU: Well, I always pray and then I'm really thankful to have this talent as my talent. I believe that God gives me as a gift for me.



And it's not really easy opportunity to represent yourself on TV and then giving your opinion on TV, but I'm really thankful to have all the opportunity.

And then I'm really thankful to have all the support from people then I was able to having a faith to achieve my dream and then keep following my dream.

**Q. Beyond golf, what do you want your legacy to be in your life?**

SO YEON RYU: Oh. Good question. I got to think about it. (Laughter.)

But even as a golfer, when people ask me what's your goal and then people often say I want to be a Hall of Famer, of course I wanted to be a Hall of Famer. I wanted to be a major champion and win a gold medal. The biggest goal I always had was I wanted to do something for this sport.

And then like I said before, I feel like I did something for LPGA, so that one I'm really proud of.

And then other than golf, I don't know. I really genuinely want to thank to this life. These days so easy to compare to other people's life, so I really want to please and then appreciate what I have and then just continuing to enjoy this life. Yeah.

**Q. And throughout your career, even if it's something new, what is the main thing you do to support your own mental health?**

SO YEON RYU: I still talk to my therapist, and then I try to figure it out what I want instead of what other people want. And then nowadays I talk to my therapist quite a lot to find out what my passions are.

I've been professional golfer for 16 years. I started to play golf when I was 8 and I'm 33 years old. Really my whole life was about golf, so I cannot imagine myself without golf.

But I believe that I'm -- I can do more than just being professional golfer, so I'm still journey to find out what I truly want.

**Q. A lot of athletes take a long time trying to figure out when is the right time to start a new chapter. What made you know this was the right time?**

SO YEON RYU: First one was travel aspect. I was just so tired of traveling and then I feel so grounded at home. And then I started think about like when is the happiest moment in my life. Literally right after I wake up from my own bed

and go to the kitchen to make coffee, that's my happiest moment.

To be honest, the hotel room is not easy to do.

Second one people might going to think this is really funny, but I was never good with the competition. I don't think I born with the competitiveness. You know, like some players just naturally really enjoy the competition.

Of course when I'm in contention and I have to compete I did my best, and then of course maybe people were able to see the laser in my eyes to make the putt or something.

But every time after I compete I was so exhausted and then I started to feel like competing is just not my thing. I guess because I loved golf so much I was able to tough it out. I remember feel like I have no energy to compete with anybody.

**Q. You obviously mastered the English language. You left a lot back home to come move to America and spend a lot of time a long way from home. How much does that play into your decision of just wanting to spend quality time in your homeland?**

SO YEON RYU: To be honest, I think COVID really got me thinking about wanting to being home for long time. I never even realize the difference between my life in Korea and being in the U.S. or like when I'm traveling.

During COVID I stayed in Korea for nine month and I realize I feel like this is a real life. I never knew it. I never knew I could have that kind of stable life.

I'm not saying my life was bad. I really enjoyed the travel for a while, but when you travel for like 20 years you just can get exhausted. I always feel so happy that I don't need to pack or worry about what time is my flight, how I'm going to get a rental car kind of stuff.

So, yeah, I think in 2020 I realized I am really wanting to have a stable life, yeah.

**Q. Do you feel like you achieved everything you set out to out here in the professional golf world?**

SO YEON RYU: Yes and no. Well, I think my biggest accomplishment was become No. 1 in the world word, but I always want to play Olympic but never made it. I know I have won six times and I'm very grateful for that.

Like I said, sometimes I just think if I have -- if I really truly enjoy the competition maybe I was able to win more than six, because I have finished second or third quite a lot.

And then I definitely had a lot of anxiety when I was in contention, so, yeah, the answer is yes and no.

**Q. Do you think not having that competitive fire kept you from winning more or achieving more out here?**

SO YEON RYU: Yeah. I would think so, because even I still remember when I was rookie and when I was not comfortable to speak in English, sometimes like the first and second round when I was leading a tournament I always wanting somebody to make the putt to be a clubhouse leader because I don't want to speak in English and have an interview with people.

I was just so scared of it.

And then I think I'm not really good with getting attention I guess, so all that things maybe made me little backed off. So I think if I was naturally having that competitiveness maybe I was able to win one more. (Laughter.)

**Q. How do you hope that your time out here on the LPGA Tour will be remembered?**

SO YEON RYU: Well, even though my home is Korea, I think this tour was my home. Maybe I didn't have a parents out here. I was able to rely on a lot of the peoples, and then like I said I just learned so much.

You know, a lot of the -- it's to be honest I don't have many greens anymore out here because a lot of them have retired. A lot of the caddies are here and they're like my uncle. They might not want to hear I'm calling them as an uncle, but they were like an uncle.

They were the one taught me good sense of humor, and then when we were travel worldwide we just all looked after each other. So I want to remember this tour as my family, and even after I leave this tour, this tour continuing remember as a family for me.

**Q. You mentioned wanting to influence the next generation and helping them. What advice would you give them about life out here on tour from your career?**

SO YEON RYU: First of all, if you want to be the best you definitely need to put 100%. You know, when you're young, I don't think it's really makes sense to have a good -- a lot of the people talk about it's really important to have a balance.

I think when we are young we have to put 100% in. I don't think it's -- we don't have enough time to having a balance between the real life and then as a golfer.

So my first advice is put everything what you have, and then after you achieve something, after you achieve your goal, you better to be proud of yourself and be kind to yourself even after you failed it. I don't want to use the word of "fail," but even when you're not able to achieve your goal, just be kind to yourself and thinking about how can you be the better golfer instead of like doubting about your talent.

**Q. You fielded a lot of questions over the years about South Korean players in general. You've been very gracious in telling us and talking about other players. Why was it so important to you to not only master this language, but be that voice I guess for a lot of players?**

SO YEON RYU: Well, I want to say our culture is very different than American culture. I grew up -- I mean, when I grew up a lot of people taught me you better not just speak up your voice. Even though you want to say something, you better to be quiet. You don't want to make any hassle.

Being out here obviously it's not a problem to talk about what you want to talk about as long as you're not mean. You're not bad. For me I felt like Korean players little underestimated because we don't really talk much.

I definitely want to be a voice of Korean players.

And then also like is really thankful to Seri Pak, Grace Park, Hee-Won Han, all the older generation for me. Because of what they've done I was able to have what I have.

So I wanted to make better environment for other Korean players to enjoy this game more and then shine more on tour, yeah.

**Q. I wanted to follow-up on two of the earlier questions. Architecture. When did you make that decision? Who have been some of your influences in deciding to look into that?**

SO YEON RYU: Michael Clayton. I call him as my Aussie uncle. To be honest, when I first came out on tour I didn't really understand about the golf course architecture. I didn't really appreciate it, the great golf course design.

It's really embarrassing to say this, but when I play 2013 AIG Women's Open I didn't really appreciate to play St Andrews, which is stupid because I didn't really know about the golf course architecture at all.

Now I look back, it's amazing golf course. Depending on



what kind of wind direction you have it's totally different golf course.

And then Michael started to told me the story all about the history of golf and the history of golf course architecture. That one really got me thinking about, okay, if architecture want to design this way, like how did he want me to play this hole? That kind of thinking process made me enjoy this game even more.

That was the moment that I started to interested in golf course architecture.

**Q. That's great. The other follow-up is you mentioned your faith earlier. That's not only made you a great player, it's made you beloved out here by everyone. How big of an impact was your prayer life in making this decision to retire?**

SO YEON RYU: You know, to be honest, I was a little afraid to announce my retirement because I was afraid what if are people going to tell me I made a wrong decision.

So I had to thinking about it quite a lot to make sure I really want to. And then now I know it's time, and then now I know myself better than before, and then right now the first priority for me is just having a stable life and then having a little bit more peaceful mindset as well.

So those were the all the thing that really helpful to make a decision.

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