

The Chevron Championship

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The Woodlands, Texas, USA

The Club at Carlton Woods

Lilia Vu

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Here joined by 2023 champion, Lilia Vu. Lilia, let's just go back to your win here a couple years ago. What's it like to be back and what do you remember most from your win here?

LILIA VU: Yeah, I mean, I would say what I remember the most is Cole's belly flop into the pond. Yeah, I had so much fun during that tournament. I remember just having so much anxiety on the last day because I wasn't playing really well on the back nine.

It was twosomes; couldn't see any leaderboards; didn't know where I stood in the field.

I think I was getting agitated I wasn't making any birdies, just pars. I remember on 15 just being really angry that I hit to like 40 feet and Cole, my caddie, said to me, hey, it's hard for everyone out here. You need to get all of that complaining out of the way unless I'm not going to give you your putter.

I remember just being like, oh, okay, whatever.

Then we par'd 15.

Par'd 16.

Somehow ended up making a pretty long birdie putt on 17.

Birdied 18.

At that point I thought people were going to keep on making birdies. I just didn't really know where the field was at.

So, yeah, I did what I could. By the end of it I was happy how I played. Ended up being clubhouse leader and in a playoff with Angel. Yeah, what's that I remember from that year.

Q. What's it like to be back? You attended the champion's dinner last night. What's it like to be back here this year?

LILIA VU: It was so much fun last night. It was really good banter between the past champions, legends, and the newer ones.

So I thought it was a great dinner done by Chef Keller and Nelly. He knocked it out the park. They did such a good job with the menu. It was just a really nice, intimate dinner and something to kick start the week.

That's basically our Masters dinner, so really enjoyed that and spending time with every one.

I played nine yesterday and the greens are looking beautiful. I'm really happy to be back here.

Q. Thinking back to the injury you had, how much of a motivation was it to get back to this tournament specifically?

LILIA VU: I would definitely say that it was a motivation, but I think last year I was so much in panic with would I ever play a golf round again, let alone tournament round.

Definitely took two months off, and that was probably the hardest two months of my life because I love competing and seeing everybody go to the U.S. Open and all the majors after that, and I was able to be back by KPMG, but it was a lot of just reevaluating what I had to do with my body and how to get back out here.

I would say I'm in a much better place than I was last year.

Q. I know it's challenging mentally to get yourself out of your head dealing with those challenging times. How have you managed to keep things in perspective when things like that challenge you?

LILIA VU: I think it teaches you a lot of lessons that I feel like sometimes you need balance in your life a little bit. Like I think I got caught up with golf being my identity, and during that two months I saw a lot of family, a lot of friends.

I couldn't hit for a couple weeks so I was just doing other things. Read a lot. Listened to audio books. Just tried my



best to become a better person. That's all I could improve at that point. Physically I was trying my best with PT and learning how to breathe correctly and fixing my posture, the way I sit.

Just a whole kind of life change I would say. I think everything happens for a reason, and I think that needed to happen so that I could have more body awareness. I think I was just kind of playing golf mindlessly. That does help sometimes when you're playing well, not thinking about too much, but it kind of shows that I never really reflected how when I was playing well just mindlessly, how to get there again.

Now I definitely have more body awareness and more swing awareness.

Q. I think if you could speak to the course as well. Obviously '23, didn't play here in tournament rounds in '24, but it's pretty soft with all the rain. How would you evaluate the golf course?

LILIA VU: Yeah, I played earlier yesterday morning after the rain and it was playing long out there. I think it'll have time it dry out. Definitely today I'll play again at 4:00 later today so see how the conditions are.

It should play a little bit on the longer side I think.

Q. When you're preparing for a major championship and scoping out a course that you didn't get to play last year, what are you looking for? What are taking into account?

LILIA VU: I'm not really too much into course management. That's what I have my caddie for, and I fully trust him and he knows how to guide me around.

I think we've done pretty well here before, so I just trust him on that front. Kind of just try to relax and stay in my line.

I know a lot of people get in like a lot of anticipation that it's major week, but I've said this before: I kind of try to think of it as a regular tournament so it puts the pressure off.

Even when I've defended a tournament in the past, like when I just -- not narrow it down and make it smaller, but kind of takes the pressure off. Here is another tournament. Here is a place you can showcase for another chance to win a tournament.

That's kind of how I look at it.

Q. What happened this past year when you had to withdraw from this tournament that made you feel like

you could never possibly play again? What was so severe or extreme that went through your mind?

LILIA VU: I mean, I was on the range and I couldn't hit the ball past 40 yards. If I'm not doing that, how would I ever finish a round, you know, let alone tee off.

At that point that was -- you think about different things. Not even defending that tournament; I can't even play one hole, so that was kind of going through my mind.

It was a good time to reevaluate everything.

Q. How did that affect you having to withdraw from this tournament last year?

LILIA VU: Yeah, affected me deeply. I think not being able to compete, which is something I love so much, I think that's why I do it. I love golf. When you love your job and you love competing and you're not able to do that and your body is letting you down, it's kind of hard. You feel handicapped.

And then after that, too, was another battle coming back. I feel like I a lot a lot strength and it almost felt like I had to make up for my game in other parts. Like I relied heavily on putting or short game because now I'm hitting maybe one club more than everyone else across the field.

So that was also something that affected me a little bit. Still working through that. (Smiling.)

Q. Was there something -- you talk about like reading books, Podcast. Was there any phrase or book that you go back to now that you put into practice?

LILIA VU: I mean, I've read so many books. I think my most favorite one that I'm trying to be better at and listen to it was Be Water, My Friend, by Shannon Lee, Bruce Lee's daughter. Talks about how water, when you hit water it hits you back. It's very adaptable. It can be so beautiful and serene; at the same time there could be a storm coming and you could see how destructive it is.

What my takeaway from that book is to be adaptable. That's what I try to be every single day.

Q. Two rookies have already won on Tour this year. If you can go back to your rookie season, I know it didn't come easy to you and you didn't get your first win until later, but what do you remember about playing on this Tour as a rookie and trying to gain confidence and make sure you're playing your best golf?

LILIA VU: I think I came into my rookie year with the wrong



lens. I definitely put so much pressure on myself. Every shot I was over was life or death. I just mulled over that shot, if it was bad or good or whatever. If it was bad I'd discredit myself. I shouldn't be here. If it was good, oh, it's just one shot that was good out of all the bad shots.

I think my rookie year was so hard on me. I was so beat down. I came from college and amateur golf pretty good. I had a good career there. Then to not perform at the professional level I think was really hard.

You know, lasted over another two years also on Epson Tour. I was ready to not play golf anymore and do something else.

The pandemic hit and that gave me a lot of time to read books. I met somebody at the course that became my mentor. He gave me books and that started everything. We kind of went on this journey to become the best version of myself rather than the best golfer.

I think that really changed everything. It was the 1% better every day. I tried to achieve little small goals that would lead to the bigger goals, and as I stuck to that, I started to win on Epson and everything just kind of fell into place.

I started to have fun again. I reflect back to my college career and I had so much fun. I was always around a team and I was playing good golf because of it. I wasn't having fun because I was playing golf. I was just doing what I was doing, hanging around with my teams and coaches and traveling across the nation and just having a good time.

I knew as I was starting to win more tournaments on Epson and made my way back to the LPGA, it was my goal to build that team around me. I really didn't have anything situated.

I would say, yeah, I have the best people around me now.

Q. What do you think about this year's rookie class? They seem to have a lot talent and a lot of confidence, too.

LILIA VU: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, it's amazing to see because sometimes rookies kind of struggle in their rookie year. Definitely like I did.

To see them coming out here guns blazing, Rose did that, too. Just won her first LPGA. I thought that was amazing and she's had a great career so far.

Yeah, it's been cool to see rookies just come out here and kind of just ready to go.

I definitely didn't have that in me so it's really cool to see.

Q. You had kind of an extended offseason in that you didn't start until Thailand. What did you do during that time to get yourself ready physically?

LILIA VU: Yeah, I think the previous offseason I just felt like I didn't have time. I just had maybe three or four weeks and then it was time to go again.

I hadn't won at that point and Tournament of Champions wasn't in the cards for me at that point. So I think just with the way the schedule is laid out I wanted to give myself extra time.

Some players don't go to the first part of Asia. Their offseason is after DriveOn until the West Coast Swing. People kind of plan their offseason a little different.

I like going to Asia. I've done well in Thailand and Singapore, so I usually like to include that in my schedule.

Yeah, I did a lot of the same things. Just PT, working on my body, nutrition, and, yeah, also went to Cole's wedding. It was on the weekend of Tournament of Champions so that was super fun, yeah.

Q. Mentioning Cole earlier and you mention him quite often and how integral he is for you. How can you put into perspective what he's meant to get you where you are now?

LILIA VU: Yeah, I mean, we're so close. He's like an older brother to me almost. He sees all of it. He saw me struggle, saw me win. He knows how my brain works. Even when I'm freaking out on the course he just knows what to say.

I think I was freaking out at the Ford Championship on Friday on the range. I just didn't feel like I was hitting it well on the range. I remember him saying, all you need to do is hit your start lines. I'll take care of everything.

I think that just kind of took the weight off my shoulders and knew that I'm just going to hit where he tells me to. That's all I can do and that's all he ever wants from me. Just hit our start lines and he'll take care of everything.

Once we're in contention on the weekends, that's kind of when we shine brightest.

Q. What do you think about when you -- you said you think about with your posture.

LILIA VU: Yeah.



Q. What's your --

LILIA VU: Kind of like my spine kind of like tall, tall through your head, back of your neck, all the way down. Not slouched. Back is not arched. In more of a stability standpoint. I don't know.

Q. You think about that when you walk, too?

LILIA VU: Oh, yeah, 100%. I have a movement guy, John Yamada. He comes down and he'll watch and say, you were out of posture on that shot, and it was the worst shot I hit that day. It's kind of funny when he can see that.

He can keep me in check after that, and after the round he'll be like, your posture was really good when you walked.

It all starts from that. You start walking sloppy and the left side of your back hurts and leads to other things. Very diligent. It also helps me keep my mind off golf a little bit, because I don't like to think about a whole lot of golf when I'm out there. Just when I get to the ball.

Q. How long has he been with you? How often does he come out?

LILIA VU: We started working together right after I withdraw from this last year, so the whole entire two months that I took off I was working with him.

Yeah changed my whole perspective on everything on that end. Yeah.

Q. Just looking back on 2023 memories, is there a specific shot or moment that you might recall or you have recalled getting back here that reminds you you can get back to this stage and be a major champion again in 2025?

LILIA VU: You mean that I played this week?

Q. Yeah.

LILIA VU: Yeah, I hit the putt that I made during the playoff yesterday and I remember being like oh, I know this putt. And so that was a good reminder that I really enjoy this golf course.

And I love the greens. It's so beautiful, and all the people that come out to support. It just feels like a major championship. When you're kind of in that environment you kind of appreciate your job more, you want to do better and perform your best.

Yeah.

Q. I just want to go back to what you were saying about some of the rookies. Obviously Ingrid won last week and she's a rookie, some other young players. Do you feel like there is more and more rookies coming to the forefront, and would it greatly surprise you this week if a rookie was to win this tournament?

LILIA VU: I think seeing that all the rookies are so good this year has been a testament to how strong golf is now. And not only in junior golf, college golf, amateur golf; they come out just guns blazing and ready to play.

I feel like that's been a newer thing. I think it's great to see that. It pushes our Tour and women's golf further.

You know, this is a long week, and sometimes when you're kind of fearless like that it helps when they compete in a major. Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised if one of them were in contention.

Q. One other question: I know you were out a lot of last year, but you're around the Tour a lot. What Nelly did last year was really generational, win five in a row. You know, hadn't been done in 20 years. Just really amazing stuff. Now this year she hasn't won but she gets questions every week about why is this year not like last year. Does that strike you as, I don't know if the word is unfair? Does that strike you as people are expecting what someone did one year, five in a row, to happen every year?

LILIA VU: I mean, I would say it's kind of unfair to Nelly to say that. She's won so many times out here. Had a great run last year and it's also like me, I did really well the previous year and kind of hit a little bump in the road with my back injury.

I mean, people go through stuff. I think obviously she's still playing really well this year. She's still the best in the world. I don't think that -- I think it's a little unfair to discredit her this year.

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