

# Women's Olympic Golf Competition

Monday, 5 August 2024

Paris, France

Le Golf National

## Lydia Ko

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: I am pleased to be joined by the two-time Olympic Medalist Lydia Ko competing in her third Olympic Women's Golf Competition.

Welcome to Paris. Just overall what's it like to be back at your third Games.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, you know, I'm obviously super excited to represent New Zealand again for my third Olympics. You know, the Olympics come around every four years, Tokyo being kind of the exception. But yeah, it's amazing that this is going to be my third.

Time has gone by quick. To have been able to medal in the past two Games, I feel very fortunate about that and excited to give it a good run again this week.

THE MODERATOR: Before we open it up, your thoughts so far on Le Golf National.

LYDIA KO: Tricky. I think it's going to be the toughest Olympics as of yet. Rio and Tokyo had a very different feeling. This is a very different golf course to that as well. When I saw the men play and the scores that they were shooting I was very impressed because that wasn't the initial kind of scores that I was expecting.

But you know, it is tricky and I think a lot of the players were saying last week that the first couple -- if you could get through the first couple holes and finish well the last few holes, the middle you can play with and that's what I've seen out there. Even though it is tricky, it's the same playing field for everyone.

So I'm just going to hopefully play strategically but at the same time aggressively because all of us that are competing in a tournament, and it's a slightly different mindset to our usual event on tour.

**Q. What did you do yesterday?**



LYDIA KO: I honestly didn't do much. I flew in on Saturday. So I was a little jet-lagged, and yesterday my whole intention was to go out and watch some of the men's competition. I was so tired. I actually took a nap and I came out to the golf course, like to the course itself quite late, like, at 3.00-something and played my front nine, the first time I came to the course to play a practice round a year ago. Really not much.

**Q. So you're on the front as they were finishing on the back?**

LYDIA KO: We were strictly told to keep it from No. 1 to 12 in case there was a playoff and amazing this wasn't. Most of the time, the leaderboards, we always have a tie second, third and for it to finish 1, 2, 3, very similar to what happened with Rio. I played the front nine with Yuka Sato and it was nice to get acclimated to this kind of time zone and see the golf course.

**Q. What I'm getting at is having been in Brazil, not a huge golfing nature, and the ghost town, as Rory called Ameyoko because of COVID, what did you think of the atmosphere and the noise? Seemed, like, they are really into it.**

LYDIA KO: I think to add to that, obviously because of the four French players, the two women and men, I think as they have been playing well, it's obviously been drawing a lot more attention and especially with one of the players -- is it Victor Perez -- that shot 8- or 9-under, that's drawing the crowd more.

When I was on the first few holes, we had heard these chants and I was, like, what are they saying and later I heard it was Victor which I think is really cool. Like the really cool thing about this place is it's, like, such a big property that you don't realise there is that many people out there.

But then when we stood on 1, we could see the people walking from 14 to 15 and then obviously the men's crowds around the 18th hole, there was just a lot of people there. And it's been really cool to see. I don't think the LPGA gets as big of a crowd normally. Maybe compared to the men,



and to see that kind of a turnout, I'm excited for Wednesday to come and for people to I'm sure cheer Celine and Perrine and all of us on.

It's been great. In Rio we had Zika and in Tokyo we had COVID. So knock-on-wood, we've been I think great here in Paris, and it's been awesome to see them and be excited for the biggest sporting event in the world.

**Q. Are you more proud of your Silver than your Bronze? How do you think about the two of them?**

LYDIA KO: I think I'm proud of both. Very different circumstances. Being in that playoff for either the Silver or the Bronze in Tokyo, and if I go down this road of what I could have done better or should have done better, it's kind of like an endless cat-and-mouse situation there.

I would say both the Silver and Bronze would be up there alongside some of my other wins. We were saying, I think Yuka was saying as well, most of the time, we're playing, everyone only remembers who won that week. Nobody really remembers someone came second or third.

That's the great thing about the Olympics is you're a Gold Medallist, Silver Medalist and Bronze Medalist, and you're not, like, second behind so-and-so and third behind someone. It celebrates each and every Olympian here, and I think for all 120 of us over the past couple weeks that have qualified to be here, I think it's a huge win.

Growing up, I didn't think I would be able to call my off-season an Olympian, and to say I'm a three-time Olympian, it's definitely something I'm proud of.

**Q. Where do you keep your medals?**

LYDIA KO: Somebody asked me this, and it's really weird because I haven't seen the medals since I won both of the medals.

But I'm pretty sure the Tokyo medal is somewhere in my sister's apartment, and the Rio Silver is in my dad's closet. So they are in very treasured places, just not with me.

**Q. Xander, his parents have his. Is there a reason why you feel comfortable just letting other people old honest to yours?**

LYDIA KO: I'm not very careful to start off with, any ways, so I trust them, than my memory.

Tokyo, because of circumstances, I was only there with my sister and my performance manager and my grandmother had unfortunately passed the day I was leaving for Tokyo,

and I asked my sister who was going to Korea from Japan to take it back and show it to my parents and also hopefully take it to grandma's grave. That was kind of the meaning on why it went to her place.

My dad normally likes to keep stuff. So I find a lot of cool things in there when I hope it from whiskey bottles to memorabilia. That's why he kept the Rio one.

**Q. This is probably a very typical question but in regards to the Hall of Fame, people play the Olympics and they have different things that they are playing for. Victor is playing for his home country; Tom Kim had something he was playing for last week, and Hall of Fame is something you're on the doorstep of that. How hard is it to not think about that constantly?**

LYDIA KO: I honestly don't think about that much. It was more on my mind last year because of the year that I had in 2022. There was a lot more expectation of me hopefully backing up a great year.

Being one win away is definitely a much better feeling than two. Yes, you're closer but at the same time, it's, like, I only need to win one rather than two.

So honestly it has to the been stressing me out that much but at the same time I haven't really been in contention that much to have that lingering in my mind all the time.

But I haven't been playing as consistently as I would have liked kind of during the middle of the season but played pretty well in Canada, so that's obviously a good stepping stone for this week.

But I'm just trying to play the best I can and try and shoot an under par score every round I'm out there and if I work on the right things, which I feel I'm doing that with my coaches, then if it's going to happen, I feel, like, it's going to happen. So I'm not trying to push it, and if I win Gold, I know I can get in the Hall of Fame that way, as well. So it would be a hell of a way to do it.

I'm playing alongside the best golfers week-in, week-out so it's not easy to win period. I feel a lot better about my game and just going to trust in that process. If it's going to happen at one point, I'm sure it will.

**Q. If your sister has the Silver and your dad has the bronze, who gets the Gold?**

LYDIA KO: If I win the Gold, I'm definitely taking all of them back and I'm going to find a way to kind of present all three.

Yeah, but I don't really have, like, a good place to store it right now. Like, my trophy room in Orlando also has a golf net and, like, my workout stuff. Because it used to be a trophy room but then COVID made me use it into, like, a home gym. It's very crowded in there and getting musty in there. I think if I do win the Gold, I might actually have to maybe get a new home or get a proper thing to kind of, like, honour it.

But it's a long way from now but it's definitely a good dream and something that I can think of.

**Q. On the nine that you played, how much different was the course from last year when you played it, and is the rough a concern? It looked pretty juicy in spots.**

LYDIA KO: Yeah, last year when I played here, it was right after the Evian Championship, and I think at that time it was kind of, like, a time that the whole country was facing, we had rain even at Evian.

It was raining, and wind was coming from sideways where, like, our hotel room was howling. That's just how strong the wind was. I can't remember some of the holes because I just remember hearing horns and want to go get off the golf course as quickly as possible.

Right now the beautiful sunny weather we are having is a lot more playable than July of '23. I think they have cut the rough a little bit overnight. The rough seemed a little shorter on the back nine this morning than the front nine yesterday. But it is still really juicy.

I think Foxy put it as it's "very smelly," and that is definitely a nice way of putting it when your ball goes in the rough especially when you're around the greens. I think being on with your ball-striking is going to be really important this week.

**Q. As it relates to Nelly and that great run she was on, you've been on some remarkable stretches yourself. From experience, how hard is it to continue that, and when it ends, is it hard to get back on that?**

LYDIA KO: I think people have to remember that the six out of seven wins that she had is unheard of. Like, what Scottie Scheffler is also doing; what we think of golf and what happens on a daily basis at golf tournaments, like, they broke all the odds.

So I think what they did was unbelievable, and, like, who knows, nobody might ever not have that kind of records, like, they are setting right now. I don't really, like, Google and look into all the articles and everything that's being said maybe about Nelly after the stretch. But no matter if

she missed a couple cuts after that or whatever, no one is going to take away the fact that she had that kind of incredible run.

Yet it difficult to continue that because there's so much expectation. But in golf, you're not meant to win, like, five out of six times. Even if you win one out of six events you play in, your odds and probability is higher than most.

I think what she did over that period of time was unbelievable and I think she's dealt with the pressure and expectation so well, as she usually does. It's almost, like, whatever she does now, it's, like, an extra bonus and Lego block that's getting built, and nothing is going to take that away from her.

As a competitor and friend, it's been really impressive to watch, and I'm sure she's probably going to take a lot of inspiration from what Scottie Scheffler did yesterday winning the Gold, and I'm sure she's going to put on a good show herself.

Yeah, that's not meant to happen. That's not golf. They broke all the odds. I think it's been great for golf in general and cool to be a part of that kind of generation where this is happening.

**Q. As a two-time medalist in this field, how have you evolved from Silver in '16 to Bronze in 2020 to here you are now chasing what you're chasing?**

LYDIA KO: I think I'm at three very different points in my career, and even where I was ranked. I think in Rio, I played with a lot of pressure just being the No. 1 ranked player in the women's side, and I had been so eager and excited to play in the Olympics that that first day, I remember the first tee shot, I barely made contact on my driver. That's how nervous I was.

But I had a really good second and third round to put myself in position in that final group and obviously played well again on the fourth day.

In Tokyo, I think knowing that I medaled in the previous Games, it put a little less pressure thinking I have one medal to my country and I think I was just more focused and enjoying the Games.

Obviously even though it wasn't in the most ideal situation, and I think that's kind of the same case now. I mean, as of now, I've got the most medals both in the women's and men's side in golf. So that's a pretty cool thing to have.

And if I can leave Paris with another medal, that will be very special to me because you just never know what's

going to happen in the future. I don't know if this is, like, maybe potentially my last opportunity to medal, like, just because I don't know what's ahead. I really want to enjoy it and give myself a good run at it.

I've had experience in this game where I feel, like, I put everything and gave my all, and I think that's all you can do. You know, rest kind of follows.

But yeah, I'm at three different points in my career, and I think it's been really cool to come to these Games at different points in my career, and I've had my fair share of ups-and-downs in those eight years. Time has gone by really quick and I feel like I've grown up as a golfer and a person, and I'm just grateful to have this opportunity here to represent New Zealand.

**Q. You were talking about how your relationship with the Olympics has changed over time. How about your perspective on golf's relationship with the Olympics over that time? There was certainly a lot of -- we don't know what this is, is it big, is it small. Where do you think it is now?**

LYDIA KO: I think it's obviously grown a lot and with anything, I think there always is going to be that time period where it kind of gets incorporated smoothly. I think it's quite hard because both in Rio and Tokyo we had external factors that were affecting maybe players' choice in attending the Games even though they qualified.

I feel like this is the first one back and it's been, like, boom, this past week, and I think that's great. I know there has been potential talks about team format for maybe L.A. or Brisbane, and I think everybody involved, they are trying to get a good idea of what's the best way to do this and what's the best way to dial down these three medalists. To see that has been awesome.

When I was in my teens, it was my goal to represent New Zealand at the Olympics, and I'm sure there are many other junior golfers that either watched yesterday's round from all over the world that are going to get inspiration of them competing in the Olympics themselves in five or ten years' time.

When I first started golf, I didn't think I would be able to say I'm an Olympian. I thought that's something that I turn on the TV during the Olympic Games and I see, like, Usain Bolt or a Simone Biles and go, wow, they are Olympians, but I'm just a golfer.

But now I can say I'm an Olympian just like them, and that's something I'm very proud of. I know for a fact that many junior golfers are going to dream and work towards

them representing their countries at the Olympics in the future Games.

THE MODERATOR: `all right. I think that will do it for us here. Thank you, Lydia.

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