

The Evian Championship

Wednesday September 14, 2016

Lydia Ko

Franck Riboud

Jacques Bungert

Francois Mordasini

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, everybody, for joining us this afternoon. This is our official opening press conference here at the Evian Championship, and I have three special guests here with me who I don't think need much introduction, but I will anyway. To our far right we have the vice president of the Evian Championship, Jacques Bungert. To his right we have the No. 1 player in the world, Rolex Ranking No. 1 and defending champ Lydia Ko, and to her right, we have the president of the Evian Championship, Franck Riboud. I will open up with some questions and Q & A with Lydia, and then I'll open it up to the gentlemen to talk some more specifics about the championship.

Lydia, very busy week for you. A huge week obviously coming back here to defend your first major, Rolex ambassador, Evian ambassador. What does it feel like?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, it's just great to be back here at this place where I've had so many amazing memories, and just to know that already a year has gone by, a lot of things have happened, and I got to have my second major championship after that. But it really kick-started it for me to give me the confidence that I can play well at these majors, and obviously now I know being an Evian ambassador and being a Rolex ambassador, I just feel like I'm playing in front of family, and when you're at that kind of state, it's always great to do that.

A lot of the girls have said, hey, I haven't seen you, but I've seen you around all over the place. It's great. You know, Evian has just been an amazing sponsor of not just me but I think for our Tour and for this event, so it's great. You know, what Franck and Jacques are doing for this championship, I think we've just got a lot to thank them for.

THE MODERATOR: I know we sat here just a year ago and we talked about that emotional win. On Sunday you came in and you said, I have tears. Looking back on it now, what memories flooded back when you kind



of came back on the grounds specifically? What memories really came back to you?

LYDIA KO: Yeah, when I first played the 18th hole on Sunday, this past Sunday, a lot of memories of really walking down the 18th on that last day. It was so much more than I could have ever imagined it. To know that I had a few-shot lead coming down the last hole so that I could have a little bit of a breathing room I think was great. It just brought a lot of great memories.

To remember all the seats by the green, to be all full of people, for people to cheer our final group on, and the double whammy tears and the New Zealand flag, there's so many great things about this event, and it's a tradition where the parachuter comes down with the flag and the double kiss photo. I feel like I had the best photo out of everyone in the past. But it's just really hard to choose one best one because every moment really stood out to me.

JACQUES BUNGERT: There was a lot of emotion yesterday when you got back the trophy in place, and you could feel that.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, it's hard to return something. You really can't take it back after you're given it, but no, I'm just going to try my best this week and have a lot of fun.

Q. You and Ariya are having quite a battle for all the season-ending awards. I'm curious if you pay attention to where she is, if you look for her name after rounds, if you feel like she's spurring you on at all.

LYDIA KO: I'm not really a big leaderboard looker, watcher, so I don't really -- I like to know what position I am in and what I need to do down the stretch or if I'm around the cut line what I need to do coming home. But no, obviously I don't really pay attention to everything that's going around, but when I do notice it most is probably when someone tags me on social media, hey, you're this close with Ariya.

But no, Ariya has been playing fantastic. We said month of May was Mae's month, but she's just been playing awesome consistently throughout this year, and at one point we said, hey, her first win is coming and coming and coming, and it came, but ever since then I

feel like she's got the confidence where she feels like she can win every week, and that's a great, I think, position to be in. She's definitely got a different game to me. She's a long hitter, and not only does she hit the ball long, I think we can get carried away about how far she hits it, but she's got a great short game, too, and I think that's why she's been playing so well.

I think it's going to be very exciting, but you just never know until the very end. All the winners have a chance at the end of this week for the RAMA Award, but I think at the end of the day, I've just got to focus on trying to play good golf, and that's all I can do in my hands.

Q. Lydia, when you come to a place like Evian and you see all the posters, do you ever look at some of these posters of yourself and think, that's not me, is it?

LYDIA KO: Well, the baby is kind of me, kind of not. But even -- I think the great thing about the photos this year is within the photo there's a few shots of different photos in it, not only me, but when you look down there, there's Suzann, there's a couple of us where you see shots within a shot, and I think that brings a lot of great shots.

Any picture you take here is beautiful, and especially looking out towards the lake here. It's gorgeous.

But to see me around, it's almost a little weird, but I haven't gone downtown yet, so I think that'll be really weird if I'm in a public area and I see me. But it's something that I can never really get used to, but it's great, and I'm proud to be the defending champion of this event and be an ambassador for Evian.

Q. When you walked down and saw the various pictures, did you see the one of Laura winning in the second year and how she apologized to the sponsor for having a television in her bag because she was watching the football?

FRANCK RIBOUD: And I was playing with her in the pro-am, and I was watching, too, the television.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, I guess as long as Franck was interested in the TV, too, it's no problem there. We've got to have fun. I think it's great that I guess Laura is a fan of sports in England, and she's a fan of just sports in general. It's great, and you know, I think another cool part of this event is on our cars, the past champions have like a flag on it, on top of the car, so for me I have a New Zealand flag, and it goes back to like Juli who has won here, so it's great that we're able to celebrate even though we may not be defending, just to know that you've got these great memories, and I think that's the great thing about this event.

Q. I was watching you on Tuesday, and you were just enjoying yourself. You were laughing the whole time literally for an hour, and I just wondered, your life has changed a lot in the last 18 months. Is that how you deal with it, just by smiling, or is there more going on there, because the media scrutiny is quite a lot now.

LYDIA KO: Yeah, if I get really tired I almost laugh even more. Yeah, I laugh like a crazy person. But I think during the Tour there are going to be times where I don't play as good as I would like to, and there's going to be times where I'm holding a trophy at the end of the week. But to me I think I need to embrace it all. It's a learning experience, and to me I can't believe that this is already my third year on Tour, and I feel very fortunate that I was able to come on to the Tour at an earlier age than 18 and have so many great opportunities.

I think I play the best when I'm having fun, and if I'm out here for so many hours and I'm not enjoying it, it's not worth it. Trying to put a smile on my face and enjoy it, I think that's important, and that's why -- it's great about our Tour is we are all so friendly with each other so we can make jokes or talk when we're playing, and I think that's a great thing, is that obviously we're trying to do well at a world-class championship, but at the same time we're enjoying ourselves out here.

JACQUES BUNGERT: And I think if I may add, and I think Franck would agree with me, this is part of the special atmosphere here, but also part of Lydia's personality, and it's not by chance that she's an ambassador for Evian, but she's always like this, very true, very natural, and I think fun as a young lady of her age, as well.

THE MODERATOR: I need to ask a follow-up on the baby campaign. Give us a little background how that came up, how you were approached. Is this you? Is this another baby? We need some details on Baby Lydia.

FRANCK RIBOUD: First of all, I would like to thank Lydia because as I'm used to saying, I'm not sure if we choose Lydia or Lydia choose us. For us, we play with the image of Lydia, with the agreement of Lydia to transform Lydia as a baby because the claim of the Evian campaign is Evian Live Young, so we are doing that with Lydia, we are doing that with myself, and we are doing that with all the consumers because all around the world we have animation, people can go in a photo place and they took a picture of you and you have your picture as a baby beside your picture. So it's a general campaign.

Having said that, Lydia is very important for us

because as Jacques said, she's young, and young means nothing with the age. It's the millennium. She's born with Twitter, she's born with Facebook, and she's allowed to do anything she wants with our brands.

LYDIA KO: Are you sure?

FRANCK RIBOUD: We need somebody like this, mostly because for us we have to follow Lydia all over the world. That means even if Evian is already in more than 150 countries, we must know where you are sleeping to send the water, every case, wherever you are, in New Zealand or in China or whatever.

But for us that was exactly the target. Let Lydia speak about our brand as the young people are talking about everything.

On top, just to come back on all the pictures and seeing that, since we started this tournament, we declared that our job is to help these young ladies to make money with their job. So our job is to develop ladies' golf.

Now we go a little bit further because we want to develop golf globally through the young people, and that's the reason why we gave one to Annika for what she is doing with the students in the U.S. The Swiss one we give to amateurs (indiscernible) Venezuela, for example, because we think we have to give the opportunity to these young players to get the right friction. The friction, they wheel up every week when they will turn pro, and better -- the sooner along, better it is.

If I remember well, we invite, because she was Swiss, and we have three Swiss on the Tour. Just before you turn pro, we invite Lydia here in Evian, you finished second, and I remember with your suite on your cap, and it looks like you're just at the (indiscernible), so it's exactly what we want to build.

I can tell you, Lydia, last year you don't remember, but you take a lot of pictures with young French team and here they are going to play the Junior Cup, and you can do on Facebook all of them, the kids' picture of you between all these young people, even if you are just 18, because now golf, they are champions when they are 14. So that's a story. That's a real story.

So that's the thing we want to promote in this tournament on top of having to speak of the improvement of the course, about anything. We are doing our job to develop ladies' golf.

Just to be very serious, look at the money, the European No. 1 lady right now has done €160,000. The No. 23, €36,000. I think there is a problem,

because you can't live with this, minus 20 percent tax, only six tournaments in Europe, the rest in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa. It's impossible. But I think we have to push all the people in charge of ladies' golf to do something. And I will open my mouth, as we say in French.

Q. Who are you intending to speak to?

FRANCK RIBOUD: I don't know, because it's difficult, because as you know, Tour belongs to players, so I think we have to, because of our position -- first of all, we have to take some action, as we do with Jabra (phon). It's a small tournament because we want to demonstrate that we can create €100,000 prize money tournament but in Europe, like week after week, like this you can play, because on top of more money, they are not playing, and if you are not playing golf, you can't be a good pro. You are not a bad player, you are just a good player without any tournaments, which is not really helpful to become a champion.

So I think we have to reinvent the model. We have to discuss, I think, with the LPGA, because you know, we don't have to forget that 20 years ago European ladies were dominant in this sport, as you said, with Laura, with Annika Sorenstam, with many up there, so on and so on. So I think we have to work together to see how we can rebuild a global ladies' world tour. But it's my opinion; I just give you this because I hope you will repeat.

And to conclude, I would like just to know that we have a new partner, and François will take the lead after, called TPT. I'm sure Lydia knows what I'm talking about because I think you were playing the Olympic Games with the shaft, black shaft, and I discussed with them -- I asked them to come here.

We asked them for no money because we just want to be a technical platform, so we don't want to speak about material or whatever, but I'm totally convinced it can really revolutionize the shaft business. So I proposed to them to come and to leverage Evian as a platform to really launch their technical innovation.

But just after this press conference if you can stay a few minutes, François will explain where is the innovation in their shaft, because it's really impressive.

Q. This is the end of a really long stretch of big events for the LPGA; how are you feeling stamina-wise, and what did you do last week to prepare with some time off? Did you spend any time with --

LYDIA KO: I went clubbing, I went (laughing) -- no, I just took a few days off, and then I went back to Orlando after playing in Waterloo, and yeah, you're right, the past three weeks before the week off was a long three weeks, probably longer than just the number

itself because of the Olympics. You know, just the big buildup going towards it, and ever since '09, since they first announced that golf would be in the Olympics, I wanted to make sure that I was there in Rio, and just to know that that dream was coming true and then obviously coming off with a silver medal, it almost felt like a few years' worth of stuff in that one week.

You know, it's been a great couple-week stretch, but I knew that I needed to physically have a few days off, so that's why I did that. And then also spent some time with my coaches back in Orlando and then came here, and actually on Saturday I went to the Evian factory, so I got to know all -- I got to learn more about the brand. It was great. Especially as an ambassador, I want to know what I'm talking about. I said, hey -- I didn't know until I was there how they actually make the bottles themselves, how they get PET and melt that down and how they do nothing towards it, it's just rainwater from 15 years ago, and for the process to come down to the source takes 15 years. So who would have known that we're actually drinking rainwater from 2000-2001.

Those are kind of the cool things I got to learn about the brand and how the brand itself has developed, but it's been really fun.

I think -- I feel a lot of adrenaline this week just because of everyone here, and I don't feel physically tired, which is obviously a good state to go into a big week.

FRANCK RIBOUD: Just to give you a figure, because you are talking about all the pictures of Lydia, there is something more, because here you have -- she's promoting Evian very well, but we are promoting her incredibly strongly because this small Lydia Ko, it's seven million bottles per day during two months going all over the world.

LYDIA KO: I claim her. I've never met her, but I still claim her. I say, have you seen my baby?

Q. Did you do it with other sports figures?

FRANCK RIBOUD: We did it with Sharapova.

LYDIA KO: Stan Wawrinka, I saw.

FRANCK RIBOUD: And we are still supporting Sharapova, just to be clear.

THE MODERATOR: Lydia, were you this cute when you were a baby?

LYDIA KO: Unfortunately not. But you know, yeah, even my coach David said -- they said, hey, how come you don't use your photo on here, and then David said, oh, it's probably because she wasn't this cute. But no, I

definitely agree she's cute. But it's great, and it almost just really goes well with the "Live Young." Definitely it's not only about the physical aspect of it but spiritually how you can be that way no matter if you're 10 or if you're 60, and I think that's the great thing about it.

THE MODERATOR: My last question, you've been racking up accolades ever since you've really come on to the Tour, but Rolex Annika Major Award to be decided this week, one you haven't won yet, you'd like to join Michelle and Inbee as the winners. What would that award mean to you for outstanding performance in majors?

LYDIA KO: And another Rolex. But it would mean so much, especially having Annika's name, and what she's done for the women's game, what she's still doing for our Tour and for the LPGA. I think without players like her, there might not be a Tour like it is today.

Just to know that there's something out there, something as legendary as her, an award named after her, and my goal going into every year is be a bit more consistent playing in majors, and this award is exactly that. It's about -- obviously you need to win a major to be, I guess, capable of winning the award but also showing how consistent you are, and I think the girls are playing consistently, you see those names that were at the top of the leaderboard again and again, and I think that's the great thing about this award. It would be great to be the one holding it at the end of the week, but at the same time, this championship and the award is great, but there's still four long days of golf to be played. We've got the world-class players here, so it's going to be a battle to the end, and I think that's going to make it most exciting for the fans, the media, and for all of us players.

FRANCOIS MORDASINI: First of all, I would like to thank Evian and Franck for inviting us and to give us the possibility to promote our technology, our product. TPT stands for Thin Ply Technology, and TPT, the technology was developed back in 2007 for the America Cup team Alinghi, the Swiss team.

After the sale-making project, North TPT became Narandy (ph) Company, so we are working for different sports and different applications. Golf is one, but we don't know about golf, we know a lot about space or military, or we know about resin formulation, we know about fiber spinning, and when my friend J.J. Rivet, the biomechanist, came to me and said to me, okay, golf needs a push, golf shaft needs a new technology, it's the same technology for 25 years, we need companies like your company to develop further. I listened to him, and I started the development that is now lasting for

four years.

We've spent a lot of energy, a lot of money to apply the Thin Ply technology to golf shafts, and because we are multiplying the number of layers to make a shaft, we had to find a way to automatize the process, and we discovered that the automation of the process is making the process repeatable, and finally we achieved already a goal that is a very important goal in the golf industry.

Our shafts are repeatable. It's always the same shaft that we are producing.

Then we had to replace technologies that are labor intensive, and doing that, we had to find a way to place the fiber around a conical shape in a balanced way, and I think the biggest difference of our technology is the new way of placing the fiber around a conical mandrel that makes the shaft very consistent and very, very -- the shaft is getting very good feedback.

Yesterday I was talking to David Leadbetter, who is behind our project since the very beginning. He is very supporting, and he's endorsing the product, and he asked me to describe in one sentence what is the difference between your technology and the actual technology, and I said, I think the biggest difference is that we are not golfers, we are composite specialists. We started to make shafts with a white sheet of paper, and we decided to address the problematic of the golf shaft as composite specialists, and we have no background or no history in the golf industry. My partner Gérard Gautier and myself, we are able to think out of the box and to make a new technology.

So our patenting process allows us to design a shaft with an engineering software, and if I want to simplify, I would say we put the right fiber at the right place in the right quantity in order to address the stiffness, the torque, the kick point position of the shaft, and the weight repetition, which is very important for a shaft.

And at every segment of the shaft, we are not forced to put the same amount of fiber in every -- all around the shaft.

So we make shafts that have no spine, so we are placing the fiber in a fully balanced way, and this is the reason why we can increase the performance of the shaft.

So according to all players that have tested the shaft, it gives a very stunning feeling of consistency, and it leads to, in most of the cases, to an increase of performance.

I think the techno is a toolbox. If we look at the

technology or braiding of fiber, we have much more possibility to design shafts in a very precise way, and for me, we are increasing the toolbox for this technology.

Now J.J. Rivet, the biomechanist, he followed the development, and he saw very quickly that we are able now to design a shaft with a computer and to address the requirement of a specific player. So he pushed us, and he's still pushing us to have a unique-to-me attitude. So make a shaft according to the morphology and the swing type of people. This is our flag. This is our USP I would say. We are able to make a custom-fit shaft, but we are also able to make shafts for everybody, and at the moment we are developing a product that has 60 shafts, and this will be shown at the PGA show.

And the distribution -- we'll have two types of distribution. Thanks to Franck, I think we will try to have a presence on the Evian to make unique-to-me shafts, so custom-fit shafts, and as soon as possible, and we will go through the best fitter or the most skilled fitter in the world to distribute our product. We will teach the fitter to think the way we are thinking for the fitting.

We start with the speed of the -- swing speed. We start with the swing speed. Then we define the kick point, where we want to put the kick point. Then we think about the torque. We define the torque that is the best for the player, and the last point is the weight. So we have sort of agreed that it allows us to find at least the right shaft for the right player.

FRANCK RIBOUD: Maybe you have some questions to François on TPT or some comments?

Q. If one wants to try on the academy?

LYDIA KO: On the other side of --

FRANCK RIBOUD: You have to go there because it's very amazing. It's a real innovation.

FRANCOIS MORDASINI: Sure, you are welcome to the academy, and also if you want to let me your business card, you can also visit our lab. It's 15 kilometers from here. We can cross with the boat, and you will see how we start with the raw materials, resin, fiber, up to the shaft.

Thank you so much, and have a great tournament.