

U.S. Women's Open Championship 2017

Tuesday, July 11, 2017

Danielle Kang

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Welcome again to the 2017 U.S. Open Women's Championship. I am really pleased to welcome this afternoon two-time USGA champion, Danielle Kang. And just two weeks ago she claimed her first professional victory and first major victory at the KPMG Women's Championship at Olympia Fields. Can you talk about the excitement of that and what the last two weeks have been like?

DANIELLE KANG: It's only been two weeks? It's been the most amazing experience. First of all, I would like to thank everyone that has written the most beautiful articles about me last week. I read almost every single one of them.

I've been on cloud 9 and I've been trying to come down from it just so I can focus on this week. It's been incredible.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to this golf course. You played here in the 2009 U.S. Girls' Junior. Talk about what that was like and then coming back and your preparation for this week.

DANIELLE KANG: To be honest, I do not remember the golf course at all. It was back in 2009. All I remember is getting the Donald Trump dolls. We got a -- I remember getting Trump water bottles. I remember that kind of gift. I don't remember the golf course very well.

However, played it twice already. Like I said, at Olympia Fields, it's a stressful golf course. I have got to play again tomorrow. You have to a game plan, and I haven't had a set game plan just yet. It's difficult for sure.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it to questions.

Q. During your first five years, did you get frustrated when you had so much success as an amateur but hadn't been able to breakthrough as a professional? How was that for you and how were you able to persevere to two weeks ago when you were able to win?

DANIELLE KANG: I definitely had some anger and frustrations. Not going to deny that. I just kept trying. I fought hard and worked hard.

Like everyone knows now with the stories, but my dad got ill after 2013. After that I didn't like golf very much. In the last couple of years, I realized you can't let yourself down. If you want success and you want to see the end of what you wanted to do, you have to keep working hard and keep picking at your game and chipping away at what you need to work on. Instead of dwelling on all the negatives, I have to see all the positives and wanting to get that first win was my goal. Getting a first major is my goal, as well.

I know my dad wasn't around to see that success, however, paying off -- all the hard work pays off eventually. He's always said to me, If you work hard, it will work out.

I definitely slacked a little bit after for a couple of years, but just got back into it and just chipped -- kept on going at it. I'm still going to keep doing it. I know the Tour is getting young. I did tell my caddie one time, I'm still peaking, don't worry. You have to keep giving yourself the end of the year, you need to get stronger and better and keep pushing yourself to the next level.

Q. You had some injuries last year and a surgery in December. Was there something this year that was building up to that win or something just clicked right before the tournament, right before KPMG?

DANIELLE KANG: Definitely things were building up. I was down last year when I was out with an injury. I thought didn't want to be out here. Sometimes being depressed and frustrated and all that anger built up. However, when I wasn't able to play, that's when I was angry. I realized I loved playing, I wanted to be out here as soon as possible. When I got the opportunity to make my wrist better and my sight better, I just -- start of this year I didn't play Bahamas because I needed that extra few weeks.

I started the year feeling very healthy good and ready to go. As healthy as you are, I need to put in that extra work. You are right, it did click. I told myself that result isn't everything. However, I just have to keep betting better and better and pushing myself to being better. I think it was an attitude change basically.

Q. How much do you think how well you've played on the final nine holes at Olympia Fields, how

much do you think that will help you going forward?

DANIELLE KANG: A lot of people have mentioned that final nine holes. Definitely in the moment I didn't know how crazy it was. But that whole 72 holes, there wasn't a hole that I played without confidence and I think that that's the most important for me this week. I stepped up to a major. No matter I made bogey or not -- my first bogey was a three-putt, I believe, or something. I think that stepping up to USGA event feeling that confidence from previous major and winning it, I think that I have -- the 72 holes in me with all that confidence and playing my game the best I could play.

Q. Inbee and So Yeon are close, good friends who push each other. In what way has Michelle Wie's friendship been beneficial to you?

DANIELLE KANG: Michelle's friendship has been -- it's been incredible. I was able to find a friend that looks out for me. Not that I didn't have it before, however, she's a great friend to have on Tour. Even at the KPMG, she stuck around just to make sure that everything went well. Not a lot of people will do that. She's won before, she's been there, she knows how media works, what pictures to take. Just making sure that things go smoothly.

You can't find that quality in people. I think that just caring about each other, like she's like a sister to me. We fight definitely and she's like family. I really am blessed to have her as a friend, call her a friend.

Q. How did it feel differently coming on property at a major having won one of these now? Does it feel different mentally?

DANIELLE KANG: Mentally you feel definitely so much confidence. You just walk up, I've won a major. But it quite still hasn't sunk in yet. Everyone keeps coming up and congratulating me. I'm like, Oh, yeah, I won two weeks ago. It's kind of funny, USGA events especially you get this vibe, the major vibe. I feel comfortable. That is the most important at major tournaments.

Q. Obviously there's a lot of excitement from the KPMG win. I'm wondering if you have any trepidation or was there any apprehension you felt playing on a Trump course given some of the comments our President has made about women?

DANIELLE KANG: I teed off yesterday and teed off today mostly what I was thinking about as a golfer that this golf course is very difficult. I don't know, I'm just looking at where to hit it in the fairway and what greens to hit. I haven't thought much about it.

Q. Why do you think there's a sense -- a lot of golfers come up today have been really maybe hesitant isn't the right word, but they have shied

away from making comments on Trump and the allegations of sexual assault. Why do you personally feel that is?

DANIELLE KANG: I don't think I feel that. I believe golfers are just answering questions because we are golfers. We get asked a golf question, we are free to answer any of our opinions and stuff. We're here to play a golf tournament. We're here to play a major championship hosted by the USGA. We're all just really happy to be playing the U.S. Open.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about your special relationship with your brother and whether being brought up in the Korean-American culture had any sort of impact on your brother relationship?

DANIELLE KANG: Can you repeat that last sentence.

Q. So your special relationship that you have with your brother, whether it being brought up as Korean-American with Korean culture have any impact on that special relationship?

DANIELLE KANG: Yeah, I'm very close with my brother. My family I don't know if it's because it's Korean-American or what, but we are a very close family. I rely on my brother a lot. I rely on my parents for a lot of their opinions and thoughts and growing up with my brother, we -- I don't really know if there was a special thing just because we are Korean-American, but the way I was raised was that there always needs to be respect. I think that's most important family dynamic. I respect my brother's game tremendously and he respects mine.

I'm free to ask him whatever his opinions are. I think that's what it is. I respect him as a golfer, as a person.

THE MODERATOR: It's so wonderful to welcome back a two-time USGA champion. Thrilled to welcome you now and look forward to watching you tackle the course this week. Thanks for joining us today and best wishes throughout the week.