



## FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship

Palos Verdes Golf Club | Palos Verdes Estates, Calif. | March 21-24, 2024

### First-Round Notes

March 21, 2024

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**Course Setup:** 36-35—71; 6,181 yards

**Scoring Average:** R1: 72.209

**Weather:** Morning clouds give way to mostly sunny skies throughout the afternoon with temperatures reaching into the lowers 60s; light and variable westward gusting winds around 18 mph

**Race to CME Globe Points:** 500 (winner)

**Purse:** \$2 million (winner's portion is \$300,00)

**TV/Streaming Times:** [How to Watch](#)

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LEADERBOARD			
	Player	To par	Score
1	Maude-Aimee Leblanc	-7	64
2	Malia Nam	-6	65
T3	Lauren Hartlage	-5	66
T3	Yuka Saso	-5	66
T3	Alison Lee	-5	66
T3	Madelene Sagstrom	-5	66

#### MAUDE-AIMEE LEBLANC TAKES SOLO LEAD AT FIR HILLS SERI PAK CHAMPIONSHIP

After the first round at Palos Verdes Golf Club, Canada's own **Maude-Aimee Leblanc** tied her career-low 18-hole score with a 7-under 64 at the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship to lead by one over 2024 LPGA Tour rookie **Malia Nam**. Leblanc, who finished T13 at the 2023 event at Palos Verdes, is in her third event of the 2024 season, and entered this week with two missed cuts at the LPGA Drive On Championship and Blue Bay LPGA.

Starting off No. 10, Leblanc carded birdies on her first two par-5s (14 and 16) and continued to roll them after the turn. The 35-year-old closed with a 31 on her final nine holes, including three from 7-9. "I felt like I hit ball really well today and whenever I missed the green I was able to make up and down," said Leblanc, who was the only player to go bogey-free on Thursday. "Made some really good saves and just kept the momentum going throughout the round, so, yeah, the putting was good as well. These greens can get really tricky. They're hard to read, but I feel like my caddie and I did a good job reading them today, so I'll take it."

Leblanc ended her 2023 season early, missing the cut at the Mizuho Americas Open and taking time off due to injury. Now, she holds her first-ever lead or co-lead of her career on Tour. She's got her mental coach on the bag this week, French-Canadian Michel Dubord, who is helping her "bring [herself] back to the present" while on the course. "I can feel my mind going in the future a lot when I'm playing, but when I'm over the ball I feel like I can bring myself back to the shot that I need to hit."

Nam, who made her career LPGA Tour debut at the LPGA Drive On Championship, is one of seven University of Southern California alum in the field. Banking off experience at PVGC, she carded a phenomenal front-nine that included four birdies and a hole-out eagle (par-4 5th) in her first seven holes. As the adrenaline dissipated, Nam made her only bogey of the day on No. 13, but rebounded right after with a birdie on 14 to close with a 6-under 65.

"[I've played this course] probably over 100 times. Yeah, it's really nice that we were able to practice here," said Nam. "We had a tournament here every year. I was able to play that when I was in college, so, yeah, it really helped today just knowing exactly what clubs I'm going to have in and how to prepare for this tournament as well."

**Lauren Hartlage**, **Yuka Saso** and **Madelene Sagstrom** join UCLA alum **Alison Lee** in third at -5. [Lee is in her second start of the season](#), after a T51 result at the HSBC Women's World Championship where she went 79-69-77-68. The 29-year-old, who took extra time off in the off-season while recovering from a dog bite on her hand, recorded her fourth opening round in the 60s in her last five events, dating back to the 2023 Buick LPGA Shanghai. After a bogey on 13, she posted three-straight birdies from 14-16, and added three more on her back-nine holes in front of a hometown crowd.

"In the past I always couldn't really quite figure out this golf course, so it felt good to go out there and shoot a low number on the first round. Definitely playing in the morning helped. Not a lot of wind. Greens are a little more smooth, so that definitely helped. But, yeah, feels good," said Lee, who is originally from Los Angeles. "I had a lot of nerves coming into this week for sure. Even though we're kind of well into the season I've only played one tournament so far this season coming off a hand injury, but, yeah, feels good to come back, shoot a low number out there. Giving myself a little bit of confidence, and thankfully all the hard work I put in is paying off."

Seven players sit in a tie for seventh at -3, including two-time major champion **Brooke Henderson** along with LPGA Tour winner and Irvine native **Rose Zhang**. Zhang, [who finished her Stanford finals this week](#) and is making her first Tour start since the season-opening Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions, won the Therese Hession Regional Challenge pres. by Northrop Grumman at PVGC in 2023 as an amateur before her Augusta National Women's Amateur and Mizuho Americas Open victories. After a rocky start through her first 13 holes (two birdies and two bogeys), Zhang closed with three birdies in her last five holes, including a final one on the 18th.

“I do think there is a couple rusty areas where I want to work on, and it's just because I haven't been as consistent with the practice when I was back at school,” said Zhang. “So with that in mind, if I'm able to work a little bit more and keep my head in the more golf mindset, I'm excited to see what I'm able to do coming forward.”

Defending champion **Ruoning Yin** finished day one in a tie for 28th at -1. Danielle Kang, who sits in a tie for 44th (E), became the first Tour player to post an ace in 2024 with a hole-in-one on No. 11. **Nelly Korda**, who is making her first appearance since her LPGA Drive On Championship win, is T61 (+1). She has a chance to reach the top spot in the Rolex Rankings with at least a solo 22nd or better finish at the FHSP Championship. Current Rolex Rankings No. 1 and Fountain Valley native **Lilia Vu** is T80 after a 2-over 73.

#### A LOOK AT THE LEADER

CATEGORY	Maude-Aimee Leblanc
2024 Race to CME Globe Rank	--
2024 LPGA Tour Wins	0
2024 LPGA Tour Top 10s	0
2024 Season Earnings	--
Career LPGA Tour Wins	0
Career LPGA Tour Top 10s	4
Career Money (LPGA)	\$667,375
Career LET Wins	0
Career Epsom Tour Wins	0

#### ABOUT THE LEADER

##### Rolex Rankings No. 353 Maude-Aimee Leblanc

- Leblanc hit nine of 14 fairways, 12 of 18 greens with 24 putts
  - She was the only player to go bogey-free in the opening round
  - She recorded seven birdies including three in a row to finish her day
  - Her seven birdies ranks her second among the field
- Leblanc's opening round 64 ties her career-low 18 holes
  - The last time she shot a 64 was the second round of the 2017 Cognizant Founders Cup
  - Her 64 is also the lowest opening round of her career by three strokes
- This is Leblanc's first time leading after any round on Tour in her career
- This is the first time she has opened an event in the 60s since this event at Palos Verdes Golf Club last season (67)
- This is her third start of the 2024 season
  - She has missed the cut in her previous two starts at the LPGA Drive On Championship and the Blue Bay LPGA
- Leblanc has four career top-10 finishes
  - Her last top-10 finish came at the 2022 Women's Scottish Open where she finished T8
- She played collegiately at Purdue University and helped her team win the 2010 NCAA Team Championship
- As an amateur, she won the 2006 International Junior Orange Bowl and the 2006 Canadian Junior Championship

#### THINGS TO KNOW

- 2024 LPGA Tour rookie **Malia Nam** finds herself in solo second making just her second start this season and in her Tour career overall
  - At the LPGA Drive On Championship in January, she finished T57
  - She is one of seven USC alumna in the field this week
    - She graduated in 2023 and recorded nine top-10 finishes in her career; she redshirted as a true 2021-2022 senior while recovering from hip surgery
    - She captured the Pac-12 Freshman of the Year award during the 2018-2019 season
  - She carded one eagle, five birdies and a bogey in her opening round
    - She was the only player to hit all 18 greens in regulation
  - She finished T23 at LPGA Q-Series to earn LPGA Tour Membership for the 2024 season after starting at Stage I of the LPGA and Epsom Tour Qualifying Tournament
- Four players round out the top-five tied for third
  - This is **Lauren Hartlage's** third start of the 2024 season and second domestically
    - She finished T49 at the LPGA Drive On Championship and T61 at the Blue Bay LPGA
    - Hartlage recorded six birdies and a bogey in her opening round
      - Her 66 is a season-low 18-hole score and her lowest since the second round of the 2023 Portland Classic (66)
    - This is her second-lowest opening round score on Tour
      - She shot a 65 in R1 at the 2023 Mizuho Americas Open
  - Japanese player **Yuka Saso** is making her first start in the United States this season
    - She recorded an eagle, five birdies and a double-bogey
    - Her 66 ties a season-low 18-hole score and is her seventh round in the 60s in 2024
      - Last season through her first three events, she had five
    - She recorded a T17 (Honda LPGA Thailand) and tie for 19th (HSBC Women's World Championship)
  - Former UCLA Bruin **Alison Lee** returned home to make her second start of the 2024 season
    - She finished T51 at the HSBC Women's World Championship
    - She carded six birdies and a bogey in her first round at the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship
    - Lee's 66 is her best round at Palos Verdes Golf Club in her professional career and her lowest of the season so far
      - She previously shot a 68 in the second round in 2023 at PVGC
  - **Madelene Sagstrom** recorded eight birdies, the most of anyone in the field
    - Sagstrom's 66 is her lowest 18-hole score of the season
      - It is her lowest 18 holes (63, R4) since the 2023 Buick LPGA Shanghai event
    - Her 66 is her third round in the 60s since the Tour first came to Palos Verdes Golf Club in 2022
- **Lexi Thompson** carded an even-par 71 in a round that included two eagles on Nos. 7 and 18
  - She is the first player in 2024 to record two eagles in a single round
  - She last carded two eagles in one round back in the final round of the 2019 HSBC Women's World Championship
- **Danielle Kang** recorded her fifth hole-in-one in an official LPGA Tour event and her first since the fourth round of the 2022 Honda LPGA Thailand
  - Kang hit her 5-iron from 174 yards
  - She is the first LPGA Tour player to record an ace in competition this season
  - This is the second ace recorded on Tour this year

- Amateur Yijia Ren made a hole-in-one during the fourth round at the 2024 Blue Bay LPGA
  - She finished the day T44 (E)
- Defending champion **Ruoning Yin** finished T28 at 1-under
  - She recorded three birdies and two bogeys
- 11 alums are in the field between UCLA and USC with Lee representing the Bruins at T3 and Nam representing the Trojans in second
  - Other alums include **Ryan O'Toole** (UCLA, T80), **Patty Tavatanakit** (UCLA, T80), **Lilia Vu** (UCLA, T80), **Allisen Corpuz** (USC, T112), **Sophia Popov** (USC, T80), **Gabriela Ruffels** (USC, T61), **Lizette Salas** (USC, T44), **Jennifer Song** (USC, T125) and **Gabriela Then** (USC, T44)

**ROLEX RANKINGS WORLD NO. 1 PROJECTIONS – FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship**

*Note – There may be additional possibilities with tie scenarios and separate projection scenarios would need to be run to check.*

World No. 2 Nelly Korda

- Korda needs a solo 22nd or better finish to have a chance
- If Korda wins, she outright becomes No. 1
  - This would be Korda's sixth time at the top of the Rankings after having spent 37 total career weeks at No. 1 during the last three years
- Korda is currently T61 after the first round at the FHSP Championship

Nelly Korda Finish Solo	Lilia Vu Finish Solo	Ruoning Yin
1	-	-
2	Does not win	-
3	Fourth or worse	-
4	Fifth or worse	-
5	Sixth or worse	Does not win
6	Seventh or worse	Does not win
7	Eighth or worse	Does not win
8	10th or worse	Does not win
9	12th or worse	Does not win
10	13th or worse	Does not win
11	14th or worse	Does not win
12	17th or worse	Does not win
13	20th or worse	Does not win
14	23rd or worse	Does not win
15	27th or worse	Does not win
16	31st or worse	Does not win
17	38th or worse	Does not win
18	45th or worse	Does not win
19	52nd or worse	Does not win
20	59th or worse	Does not win
21	66th or worse	Does not win
22	66th or worse	Does not win

World No. 4 Ruoning Yin

- Yin must win AND have Lilia Vu finish solo fourth or worse AND have Nelly Korda finish solo fifth or worse
- This would be Yin's third time at the top of the Rankings after having spent four total career weeks at No. 1 in the fall of 2023
- She currently sits in a tie for 28th

**QUOTABLE**

*2024 LPGA Tour rookie Malia Nam (2, -6) on how this course plays to her strengths:*

"I definitely think this course is no easy track. I think it really helps if you're hitting the ball well, and that's what I was doing in my first nine. Just placing myself right in the middle of the fairway having wedges in definitely helps. But, yeah, it was kind of a quick rush. I was thinking we'll start off, get a few pars going, and I holed out I forgot on which hole. I did hole out. I was just like, oh, my God, the birdies just kept coming. I was like, this is fun. Then the back nine was a little bit more melodramatic. Missed a few more really good short birdie opportunities. Overall was having a pretty fun day."

*UCLA alumna Alison Lee (T3, -5) on what it is like playing in a Seri Pak namesake event and what she means to her:*

"Yeah, for sure. Seri Pak and Annika have been huge movers of the game of women's golf. I grew up when I was young playing with both -- or I'm sorry, grew up watching both as a young girl. Definitely Seri Pak had a huge impact on me playing golf. You know, my parents are both born in South Korea, so I mean, she was huge. When she was playing really well, especially my dad, he saw that on TV and saw a little bit of me in her, too. That's why he introduced me to the game. Actually played with Seri when I was 14 when I qualified for the U.S. Open. I played in a practice round with her. This is more towards the end of her career, but I just remember like being so starstruck and that was the coolest experience. Same with Annika. You know, giving back to junior golf, I played in her golf tournament when I was young, AJGA, too. So, yeah, I think it's cool to still see their names out there. I think for me, too, it's cool to see all the these younger girls know who they are. Because they were probably too young to watch them on TV, so to see their name recognized and, I mean, I think that's the biggest thing. Hopefully we have more people like Seri and Annika moving forward who become big names in women's golf and super recognizable, giving back, and, you know, more girls like that little girls can look up to like myself."

*Danielle Kang (E, T44) on recording her fifth hole-in-one on Tour:*

"Hole-in-one. It's sometimes luck, but I absolutely purred it. It was 170 yards I believe. I was trying to play 160, 65 and let it run up to the hole. I just hit my 5-iron exactly where I wanted to hit it and we all just kind of stared it down, and Andrea just reacted so cute. She was just like, oh, my God, oh, my God. She screamed."

*Seri Pak (tournament host) on playing in the pro-am of her own event:*

"Well, it's been a long time play. It's a full field actually. First time in a long time. I was excited, and at the same time, was feel kind of weird because during the day I was a pro, I played the pro-am. But this year I was a host. I don't have that much pressure on it to play well, but it was really fun. It's great thing is see the Yani. She played really good. I really happy to see she play back again in tour, that's really special day."

## **ON LPGA.COM**

[Alison Lee Finding Her Footing at FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship](#)  
[Danielle Kang Records First Ace Of 2024 LPGA Tour Season](#)  
[Rose Zhang Returns to LPGA Tour After Breaking for Stanford Studies](#)  
[Will History Repeat Itself at Palos Verdes Golf Club?](#)  
[So Yeon Ryu Announces Plans To Retire at The Chevron Championship](#)  
[Beth Daniel Named 2024 US PING Junior Solheim Cup Captain](#)  
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[Rose Zhang FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship First Round Highlights](#)  
[Ally Ewing Walking with Tom Abbott on Golf Channel](#)  
[Seri Pak Golf Channel Booth Interview](#)

## **SOCIAL SNAPSHOT**

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[Ally Ewing Joins the Golf Channel Broadcast](#)  
[Malia Nam Highlights from her Front Nine](#)  
[Yuka Saso Highlights](#)  
[Rose Zhang and Andrea Lee NorCal-SoCal Challenge](#)

## **TOURNAMENT SCORING RECORDS AT PALOS VERDES:**

*18 holes* – 62, Georgia Hall (R3, 2023)  
*36 holes* – 132, Ruoning Yin (2023) and Hyo Joo Kim (2023)  
*54 holes* – 199, Ruoning Yin (2023)  
*72 holes* – 269, Ruoning Yin (2023)

## **TOURNAMENT HISTORY:**

Beginning in 2024, the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship will take on all records and past champions associated with Palos Verdes Golf Club; with the elimination of the LA Open, the JM Eagle LA Championship will take on all past champions associated with Wilshire Country Club  
*2022 – Palos Verdes Championship pres. by Bank of America*  
*2023 – DIO Implant LA Open*  
*2024 – FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship*