



Championship

Presented by 

Ford Championship presented by KCC
Seville Golf and Country Club | Gilbert, Ariz. | March 28-31, 2024

First-Round Notes
March 28, 2024

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Course Setup: 36-36 – 72; 6,534 yards
Scoring Average: R1: 69.500
Weather: Partly cloudy skies with temperatures peaking in the upper 70s with light and variable winds that will trend southwest between 5-10 mph
Race to CME Globe Points: 500 (winner)
Purse: \$2.25 million (winner’s portion is \$337,500)
TV/Streaming Times: [How to Watch](#)

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LEADERBOARD			
	Player	To par	Score
1	Pajaree Anannarukarn	-9	63
T2	Carlota Ciganda	-8	64
T2	Lilia Vu	-8	64
T2	Isi Gabsa	-8	64
T2	Gabriela Ruffels	-8	64
T2	Azahara Munoz	-8	64

THAILAND’S PAJAREE ANANNARUKARN WITH FIRST-ROUND LEAD AT FORD CHAMPIONSHIP PRES. BY KCC
The inaugural playing of the Ford Championship presented by KCC is underway, and with it, plenty of drama. After 18 holes at Seville Country Club, it was **Pajaree Anannarukarn** with a late-day 9-under 63 that took the first-round lead. The bogey-free 63 ties Anannarukarn’s career-low 18-hole score, which she last recorded in the fourth round of the 2021 Honda LPGA Thailand. After three birdies on her front-nine holes – Nos. 11, 16 and the Aon Risk Reward Challenge Hole, 18 – her highlight of the day were five-straight birdies on Nos. 5-9. It’s the second time she’s done so in her career and first time since that final day in Thailand in 2021, where she also closed out that round with those five-consecutive sub-par holes.

“I think it was a good nine. Bogey-free, came out with 3-under par going into the back nine,” said Anannarukarn. “I played some really good shots today. Hit a lot of good driver off the tee and gave me a lot of benefit just going into the green with short irons. I was able to just hit some good long irons in as well, so that helped.”

It’s Anannarukarn’s second first-round lead of her Tour career, and first since the 2021 Amundi Evian Championship. But a shot back of her lead sits six players in a tie for second at -8: Epson Tour alum **Isi Gabsa**, Spain’s **Carlota Ciganda** and **Azahara Munoz**, major champion **Lilia Vu** and 2024 rookie **Gabriela Ruffels**.

Ruffels, who notched a career-best finish last week at the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship (T3), carded a new career-low 18-hole score on Thursday with her 64. Vu’s 64 is a new season-low, and best 18-hole score on Tour since a third-round 62 in her victory at the 2023 ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican. Munoz was the first to close with a 64 on Thursday after two bogeys, an eagle on the par-5 5th and eight birdies, including three-straight after the turn from Nos. 10-12. The 36-year-old, and one of 10 #LPGAMoms in the field this week in Gilbert, is comfortable in Arizona after participating in eight editions of the Cognizant Founders Cup at Wildfire Golf Club between 2011-2019, even finishing in a tie for second in 2014.

“I actually thought that when I finished up. Yeah, it's been a while. I've had a few 5-, 6-under, but not 8-under, which is really, really nice,” said Munoz, whose 64 is her lowest 18-hole score since The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge in 2023 (R1, R3). “Yeah, makes me happy to know that I can still do it.”

Celine Boutier, whose first of four victories in 2023 came nearby at the LPGA Drive On Championship at Superstition Mountain, is tied for seventh with fellow major champion Hyo Joo Kim. Two-time 2024 champion **Nelly Korda**, looking to be the first since **Ariya Jutanugarn** in 2016 to win three-consecutive times on Tour, leads a group of 11 players in a tie for ninth at -6.

“I took Monday off and then came out here really early on Tuesday and just kind of got off the golf course and got out of here by 11:00 and gave myself the afternoon off,” said Korda of her pre-tournament strategy following her win in Palos Verdes. “Then had an afternoon pro-am on Wednesday. Kept it pretty light at the beginning of the week knowing I needed rest and that was the most important.”

A LOOK AT THE LEADER	
CATEGORY	Pajaree Anannarukarn
2024 Race to CME Globe Rank	59
2024 LPGA Tour Wins	0
2024 LPGA Tour Top 10s	0
2024 Season Earnings	\$45,147

Career LPGA Tour Wins	2
Career LPGA Tour Top 10s	11
Career Money (LPGA)	\$2,269,974
Career LET Wins	1
Career Thai LPGA Tour Wins	4

ABOUT THE LEADER

Rolex Rankings No. 94, Pajaree Anannarukarn

- Anannarukarn carded nine birdies on Thursday, going bogey-free
 - Her scorecard included a streak of five birdies from Nos. 5 to 9
 - She was one of 25 players to card a bogey-free round
- She hit 12 of 14 fairways and 16 of 18 greens, with 25 putts
- This ties her career-low 18-hole score on Tour, previously shot at the 2021 Honda LPGA Thailand in the final round
 - Similar to Honda LPGA Thailand, she closed both of the rounds out with five consecutive birdies coming down the stretch
- This is her lowest first-round score carded on the LPGA Tour
 - Prior, her best first round score was a 65, shot twice in 2021
- This is the second time in her career that she is the first-round leader; 2021 Amundi Evian Championship was the first
- Last time the Tour was in Arizona, Anannarukarn finished T68 at the LPGA Drive On Championship at Superstition Mountain
- This is her sixth start of the 2024 season
 - Her season-best finish came at the HSBC Women’s World Championship (T13)
 - She missed the cut last week at the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship
- This is her sixth season on the LPGA Tour
 - She has had two career victories on the LPGA Tour, including 2023 Bank of Hope LPGA Match-Play presented by MGM Rewards
 - She will return as defending champion next week for that event
 - She finished T39 at the inaugural LPGA Q-Series to first earn Membership for 2019
- Prior to earning Membership, she made one start on the LPGA Tour at the 2017 Honda LPGA Thailand (T64)
- She was a member of the Thailand Team at the 2023 International Crown

THINGS TO KNOW

- This is the inaugural playing of the Ford Championship presented by KCC at Seville Golf and Country Club
- The first-round scoring average of 69.500 is the lowest in an event this season, and lowest on Tour since the final round at the 2023 ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican (69.27)
 - On Sunday at the FHSP Championship, there were only seven rounds in the 60s; on Thursday in Gilbert, there were 75
- The 2024 Ford Championship presented by KCC (734 SOF) is the strongest field in an official LPGA Tour event, not including majors, since the 2021 Kia Classic (756 SOF)
- There are five players tied for second place at eight-under par
 - **Carlota Ciganda** carded a bogey-free round, including five birdies within the first six holes of the front nine
 - She hit 10 of 14 fairways and 17 of 18 greens with 28 putts
 - This is her lowest round of the 2024 season, and lowest since a 63 in the third round of the 2023 CME Group Tour Championship
 - **Lilia Vu** hit 13 of 14 fairways and 14 of 18 greens, with 24 putts
 - She carded just one bogey on No. 8
 - Vu’s 64 is her lowest 18-hole score this season, and best since her third-round 62 at The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican
 - Her previous season-low was a 65, carded in the final round of the Honda LPGA Thailand
 - **Isi Gabsa** hit 12 of 14 fairways and 14 of 18 greens with 24 putts
 - She carded eight birdies in her first round, being one of 25 players to go bogey free
 - Her 64 today ties her career-best 18-hole score on the LPGA Tour, which she has carded three times in her career
 - She most recently shot at the 2022 ANNIKA presented by Gainbridge at Pelican (par 70) also during her first round
 - She has only shot -8 one other time in her career, at the 2019 Portland Classic
 - **Gabriela Ruffels** hit 12 of 14 fairways and 11 of 18 greens, with 21 putts
 - She is ranked 1st in the field in putts after 18 holes
 - Ruffels’ 21 putts also set a new season-low record for first-round putts
 - The previous season record was 23, posted by four different players and last by Liqi Zeng at the FIR HILLS SERI Pak Championship
 - Ruffels’ first-round 64 is a new career-low 18-hole score on Tour
 - Her previous career record was a 65, carded twice and most recently in R3 of the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship
 - This is her fourth round in the 60s through 11 competitive rounds this season
 - **Azahara Munoz** carded an eagle, eight birdies and two bogeys in the first round
 - She hit 13 of 14 fairways, 13 of 18 greens with 24 putts
 - She was one of 17 players to record an eagle on Thursday
 - This is her best round since carding two 64s in the 2023 ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican, finishing T2
 - She is one of 10 #LPGAMoms in the field this week
- Newest LPGA Mom, **Lindsey Weaver Wright** opened with a bogey-free 68
 - She was one of 25 players without a bogey on Thursday
 - She gave birth to her son three months ago
 - This is her first LPGA Tour event since the 2023 Ascendant LPGA benefitting Volunteers of America
 - There, she holed out from the fairway for eagle on the 72nd hole
 - She played collegiately at the University of Arizona
 - [Read more](#) about her journey back to the LPGA Tour
- Two-time 2024 LPGA Tour winner **Nelly Korda** is tied for ninth at six-under par
 - She carded seven birdies and one bogey in the first round
 - Korda hit nine of 14 fairways, 14 of 18 greens with 27 putts
 - She won the LPGA Drive On Championship and FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship
 - She won both events after beating components in playoffs
- 2024 Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions **Lydia Ko** turned in a bogey-free 69
 - Ko is one point away from earning her induction into the LPGA Hall of Fame
 - Winner of the 2024 HSBC Women’s World Championship, **Hannah Green** shot a three-under 69 as well
 - Both players sit in a tie for 52nd

- 2024 Blue Bay LPGA **Bailey Tardy** shot an even-par after five birdies and five bogeys
- Sponsor exemption and Seville Golf and Country Club member **Alena Sharp** shot a five-under 67 with six birdies and one bogey

ROLEX RANKINGS WORLD NO. 1 PROJECTIONS – FORD CHAMPIONSHIP PRESENTED BY KCC

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

- **World No. 2 Lilia Vu:** Must win and have Nelly Korda finish solo 60th or worse
 - This would be Vu’s fourth time at the top of the rankings after having spent 28 total career weeks at No. 1 since August 2023

QUOTABLE

Lindsey Weaver-Wright (T32,-4) after her first competitive round back as an #LPGAMom on Tour since 2023:

“It's kind of a whirlwind honestly. Like I said, I didn't really know what to expect, so I just went into the whole week with very little expectation. Yeah, got a lot going on in my mind right now. Yeah, Crew was just -- it's so funny just getting his texts from daycare, updates after the round. I just love it. My husband is updating me and he gets all the notifications too. It was nice having him there for my first round as well. So he walked with me for the back nine and worked this morning. Yeah, nice to have him here and have his support too.”

Alison Lee (T9, -6) on quickly turning the page after a self-described “disappointing” day on Sunday at the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship:

“Feel like a lot of that comes from motivation, you know, with how I ended the season last year and where my mind and head has been at over the last few years. Last year probably in the middle of the season I was just trying to cruise through, you know, place at the top when I can, didn't really expect too much out of my game. I'm only 29, but I definitely feel like a little bit older out here. Like I'm definitely one of the veterans out here. This is my tenth year on tour. But, yeah just getting that little bit of a taste being in contention and close to winning at the end of last season, and especially last week, too, I think that's really motivated me to try and win out here. That's what I want. I've been talking to my coach about this a little bit. He spoke to me after Sunday last week. He told me to just try not to have too much of like tunnel vision and just try and win once. Like I want to win at least once so badly. Try and look at the bigger picture. There is a full season ahead left, and so instead of thinking about just winning one and being done, try and think, okay, I want to put myself in a position where I can win more than once.”

Carlota Ciganda (T2, -8) on playing as a former Arizona State University graduate and a local resident:

“Spain is home, but Phoenix it's home away from home. I love being here. I feel the support. Yeah, it just feels very comfortable. I'm staying at home so that's really nice this week. Sleeping in my own bed. Yeah, eating my own dinners and doing my thing. So that's always very comfortable. Yeah, I love Phoenix. It's always a place that I'm going to come in the future. Yeah, I always feel great when I'm here.”

Sponsor Invite and local PGA Professional Kim Paez (T132, +2) on teeing it up in the first round of her debut LPGA Tour event:

“Definitely had the first tee jitters. Even carried it on to the fairway. But it was almost as if, okay, I got to the bogey out of the way, let's just play golf. Got into a rhythm front nine. Driver still felt off all day today, but I started to feel a lot more comfortable as the round went on. Back nine wasn't as strong as my front nine, but was happy to finish strong. It was nice to see I had some myself students out here today and family and friends, so it was a good day.”

ON LPGA.COM

[Epson Tour POY Gabriela Ruffels Routes Seville Golf and CC, Records 64 on Day One in Gilbert](#)

[Lindsey Weaver-Wright Making First Start in Arizona Since Maternity Leave, Running Half Marathon](#)

[Emily Lauterbach Grabs a Spot in the Ford Championship after Monday Qualifier](#)

[Mariajo Uribe Sets Sights on Olympics](#)

SOCIAL SNAPSHOT

[Five Things to Know About the Ford Championship](#)

[Emma Talley Follows Angela Stanford’s Morning Routine](#)

[Views From Azahara Munoz’s Hot Start in the Desert](#)

[Hope Barnett Catches Up with #LPGAMom Azahara Munoz](#)

[Pajaree Breaks Through in Arizona](#)

TOURNAMENT SCORING RECORDS

18 holes – 63, Pajaree Anannarukarn (R1)

36 holes – TBD

54 holes – TBD

72 holes – TBD