



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

Tuesday Pre-Tournament Notes  
March 26, 2024

MEDIA AVAILABILITY SCHEDULE

(Zoom link for pre-tournament availability is distributed upon request; All times are local and subject to change)

Wednesday, March 27  
Kim Paez – 10:00 a.m.  
Sarah Schmelzel – 11:30 a.m.  
Lydia Ko – 12:00 p.m.  
Nelly Korda – 1:15 p.m.  
Anna Nordqvist – 1:30 p.m.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE FORD CHAMPIONSHIP PRESENTED BY KCC

- This is the seventh event of the LPGA Tour season, and first edition of the Ford Championship presented by KCC
- This is the first time Seville Golf and Country Club has hosted an LPGA Tour event
  - This is also the first professional sporting event within the city limits of Gilbert, Ariz.
- This is the second-consecutive year that Arizona has hosted an LPGA Tour event
  - Superstition Mountain hosted the LPGA Drive On Championship in 2023, won by **Celine Boutier**
- The LPGA Tour has had a presence in Arizona dating back to 1962
  - The 1962 Phoenix Thunderbird Open at Paradise Valley Country Club was won by **Kathy Whitworth**
  - Arizona has hosted over 70 LPGA Tour events since the Tour’s inception in 1950
- Seville Golf and Country Club is part of the Invited portfolio of golf courses
  - It was originally designed by Gary Panks, and opened in 2000
  - The course boasts their signature hole on No. 17 that includes an island green
- The 144-player field will compete for \$2.25 million
  - The Thunderbirds joined the tournament family as a Founding Partner back in the beginning of March, [dedicating \\$250,000 to the tournament purse](#)
- This field for the inaugural event includes the top five in the Rolex Rankings, and nine of the top-10
  - Nelly Korda** regained the World No. 1 ranking following her 10th career victory last week at the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship for the sixth time in her career and first since August 2023
  - Minjee Lee** (No. 5) makes her United States debut on Tour after finishing in a tie for 29th (HSBC Women’s World Championship) and a tie for fourth (Blue Bay LPGA) in her first two events of 2024
  - Lydia Ko** (No. 8) is in the hunt for the elusive 27th point towards LPGA Hall of Fame induction this week in Arizona
    - Ko is coming off a tie for fourth finish in her last start at the Blue Bay LPGA
    - Ko can earn her 21st win at the Ford Championship
- All five 2024 LPGA Tour champions will tee it up this week, including the Tour’s first Rolex First-Time Winner of the year (**Bailey Tardy**, Blue Bay LPGA)
  - Korda is the only multiple winner of the season, winning in back-to-back starts at the LPGA Drive On Championship and FHSP Championship
- There are 15 rookies in the field this week, including **Gabriela Ruffels**, who is coming off a career-best finish on Tour (T3) in Palos Verdes
  - Ruffels’ finish contributed to a 59-spot jump into the top 100 of the Rolex Rankings to No. 92 for the best ranking of her young professional career
- There are eight collegiate connections from both Arizona State University and University of Arizona represented this week, including past Wildcat **Lindsey Weaver-Wright**
  - Weaver-Wright is making her first start on Tour since becoming an #LPGAMom in December 2023
  - She last appeared in competition at the 2023 Ascendant LPGA benefiting Volunteers of America, finishing T16 at seven months pregnant
- Kim Paez** and **Alena Sharp** are the two sponsor exemptions this week
  - Paez, a PGA Player Development Director for PING and a PGA Coach, won the 2023 Southwest PGA Championship, becoming the first female winner in the event’s 66-year history
  - Paez was [surprised by the Ford and PING teams](#) with the sponsor’s exemption at the beginning of the month
  - Sharp, a two-time Olympian representing Canada, is a 20-year professional who has earned over \$2.9 million in official career earnings and 16 top-10 finishes on Tour
- Muni He** and **Emily Lauterbach** both Monday qualified for the event
  - He missed out successfully Monday qualifying last week in California after losing in a playoff to Alena Sharp
  - Lauterbach, a 2023 Epson Tour rookie, defeated LPGA Tour rookies **Alexandra Forsterling** and **Nataliya Guseva** in a playoff for the final spot in the Ford Championship field

2024 LPGA TOUR STATISTICS

Official Money: Lydia Ko, \$586,716  
Scoring Average: Lydia Ko, 69.438  
Birdies: Ayaka Furue, 97  
Eagles: Mi Hyang Lee, Nelly Korda and Albane Valenzuela, 5  
Greens in Regulation: Haeran Ryu, 77.5%  
Average Driving Distance: Natthakritta Vongtaveelap, 288.083 yards

Rolex Player of the Year		
1	Nelly Korda	60 points
2	Lydia Ko	49 points
3	Patty Tavatanakit	33 points

Louise Suggs Rolex Rookie of the Year		
1	Gabriela Ruffels	115 points
2	Mao Saigo	108 points
3	Mone Inami	93 points

#AonRiskReward Challenge		
1	Rose Zhang	-1.250
2	Auston Kim	-1.167
3	Yu Liu	-1.100

Vare Trophy (Scoring Average)		
1	Lydia Ko	69.438
T2	Nelly Korda	69.500
T2	Natthakritta Vongtaveelap	69.500

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QUICK LINKS

[Interview Transcripts](#)  
[LPGA Tour Online Media Center](#) (OMC): includes links to daily tournament notes, statistics and photo/video assets  
[LPGA Statistical Database](#): Request access to LPGA Tour data from 1980 to present  
[Stats Box](#): Includes all-time records, major records, purse breakdowns, stats documents, scoring files, points structures, and tournament histories  
[Media Assets](#): For access to tournament photos and videos, please contact the on-site LPGA Communications team  
[Tournament Website](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

**LPGA Tour:** @LPGA, @LPGAMedia (X), @lpga\_tour (Instagram, TikTok)

TV/STREAMING TIMES (All times EST)

**Thursday, March 28:** 6-9 p.m. (Peacock); 7-9 p.m. (Golf Channel)  
**Friday, March 29:** 6-9 p.m. (Peacock); 7-9 p.m. (Golf Channel)  
**Saturday, March 30:** 6-9 p.m. (Golf Channel/Peacock)  
**Sunday, March 31:** 6-9 p.m. (Golf Channel/Peacock)

Race to the CME Globe Points		
1	Nelly Korda	1,052.000 points
2	Lydia Ko	987.333 points
3	Ayaka Furue	674.933 points

**Aon Risk Reward Challenge:** No. 18, par 5

The par-5 18th at Seville Golf and Country Club this week at the Ford Championship pres. by KCC will provide players with one closing scoring opportunity should they make the better decision. At 475 yards on the scorecard, shot-by-shot projections expect players to go for this green in two 77% of the time from the fairway, and a little under 50% from the rough. With water protecting the green short and left, that decision could sway the entire outcome of a player’s round – or even tournament.

Following the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship, **Rose Zhang** is first on the ARRC Leaderboard with an -1.250 average, who recorded two birdies in four competitive rounds on last week’s Challenge hole at Palos Verdes Golf Club (No. 16). LPGA Tour rookie **Auston Kim** is in solo second (-1.167), with **Yu Liu** in third at -1.100.

The Aon Risk Reward Challenge is a season-long competition across the LPGA Tour that highlights the game’s best players as they navigate some of the most strategically challenging holes on Tour. Players will take their best two scores from each Challenge hole, with the winners having the best average score to par at the end of the regular season. The winning woman will take home the Aon trophy and \$1 million prize.

**Race to CME Globe Update:**

The Race to CME Globe continues through the first edition of the Ford Championship pres. by KCC, as players vie for points in the season’s seventh event. After her second playoff victory of 2024, **Nelly Korda** moved from fourth into first in the Points List (1,052.000 points), knocking **Lydia Ko**, who held the top spot since her win at the season-opening Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions, into second (987.333 points). **Ayaka Furue**, with four top-10 finishes in six tournaments, is third with 674.933 points, while **Patty Tavatanakit** (4th, 623.429 points) and **Brooke Henderson** (5th, 542.350 points) round out the top five.

Other moves heading into the week at Seville:

- With her third top-10 finish in her last three events, **Sarah Schmelzel** is now seventh in the Race to CME Globe with 550.500 points
  - Following a missed cut at the LPGA Drive On Championship, Schmelzel debuted on the 2024 Points List at No. 69 following her T31 finish at the Honda LPGA Thailand
- After her first playoff performance of her LPGA Tour career at Palos Verdes against Korda, **Ryann O’Toole’s** runner-up result landed her 15th on the Race to CME Globe with 320 points
  - She missed the cut in her first event of the year at the LPGA Drive On Championship
- LPGA Tour rookie and former University of Southern California Trojan **Gabriela Ruffels** moved from 70th to 21st in the Race, with 255 total points
  - Ruffels recorded a career-best finish at the FHSP Championship (T3)
- **Jasmine Suwannapura** posted her second top-10 finish of 2024 last week to go from 50th to 27th on the Points List (215.967 points)
- **Alison Lee**, who held the 54-hole co-lead at the FHSP Championship, made one of the biggest jumps overall in the Race to CME Globe, going from 109th to 28th with 211.750 points

The Race to the CME Globe is a season-long points competition with LPGA Tour Members accumulating points in every official LPGA event to qualify for the season-ending tournament, the CME Group Tour Championship. The player who wins the CME Group Tour Championship is named the “Race to the CME Globe Champion.” The top 60 points earners and ties earn a spot into the season finale with the entire field competing for a \$11 million purse, increased from \$7 million last season, and is highlighted by a \$4 million winner’s check, which is the largest single prize in the history of women’s golf.

**CME Group Cares Challenge – Score 1 for St. Jude Update:**

The CME Group Cares Challenge is a season-long charitable giving program that turns aces into donations. CME Group donates \$20,000 for each hole-in-one made on the LPGA Tour in 2024, with a minimum guaranteed donation of \$500,000 to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which is leading the way in how the world understands, treats and defeats childhood cancer and life-threatening diseases. After the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship, the 2024 donation total jumped to \$40,000 after **Danielle Kang** made an ace in the first round for her fifth ace in Tour competition and first since the 2022 Honda LPGA Thailand. Last season, there were 20 aces on Tour, including two from **In Gee Chun**, the most of any player on Tour in 2023.