



**HSBC Women's World Championship**  
Sentosa Golf Club – The Tanjong Course | Singapore | Feb. 29-March 3, 2024

First-Round Notes  
Feb. 29, 2024

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**Course Setup:** 36-36 – 72; 6,702 yards

**Scoring Average:** R1: 73.333

**Weather:** Partly cloudy skies with temperatures reaching into the low 90s F and northeastern winds gusting near 22 mph

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

**Purse:** \$1.8 million (winner's portion is \$270,000)

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LEADERBOARD			
	Player	To par	Score
1	Sarah Schmelzel	-4	68
T2	Lilia Vu	-3	69
T2	Linn Grant	-3	69
T2	Esther Henseleit	-3	69
T5	Five players	-2	70

**SCHMELZEL IN THE LEAD AFTER FIRST ROUND**

Sarah Schmelzel finds herself in solo first place after a first-round 68 boosts her up the leaderboard at the HSBC Women's World Championship. The 2019 LPGA Tour Rookie is experiencing for the first time what it is like to lead or co-lead after a round of individual play. She previously held a first round lead with her team member, **Maude-Aimee Leblanc** in the 2022 edition of the Dow Championship. She looks to maintain her lead with three players sitting just one shot behind, and five players at two-under par.

Schmelzel kicked off her tournament play in Singapore on the 10th tee, making two pars before making her sole bogey on the par-4, No. 12, which would end up being the hardest hole of the day with an average of 4.333. The American maintained her one-over par positioning throughout the rest of her front nine and amongst a clustered leaderboard of players. The gears would switch for Schmelzel as she made the turn and scored two birdies in her first two holes of her back nine. She made two more pars on holes 3 and 4 to keep at one-under before picking up three birdies in her last five holes to turn in the lowest round across the field. Her two birdies on the par-5 5th and the par-5 8th as well as her birdie on the par-3 7th contributed to her back nine score of 31. Schmelzel's five birdies tied for first in the field alongside **Esther Henseleit**, **Stephanie Kyriacou** and **Aditi Ashok**.

"It was good, a little shaky at the start, the front nine made some good par saves, three of them scattered over the front nine. It was about good, then just got some putts to go in on my back nine on the front," said Schmelzel. "Everything felt good. Working on some stuff so it's nice to see some hard work pay off. Just keep it going."

In a tie for second place is LPGA Tour winner **Linn Grant**, German player Henseleit, and 2023 Rolex Player of the Year **Lilia Vu**. Grant also made just one bogey on Thursday, accompanied with four birdies scattered across her leaderboard on holes 2, 8, 13 and 14. Vu was one of five players to turn in a bogey-free scorecard in the first round, making three birdies on three par-4s, Nos. 3, 6 and 14. Henseleit started off her round two-over par through three holes when a mindset switch led to a streak of four birdies from Nos. 5 to 8. She made one birdie on the par-5 13th hole to jump one spot up.

"It's always great to start off the year, it shows you that you did some good work over the off-season. Yeah, I've been playing well last week. Couldn't really get it going on the weekend," said Henseleit who finished T49 at Honda LPGA Thailand. "But I do have a lot of confidence in my golf became at the moment, and my putter was also really good today."

Five players sit in a tie for fifth place including sponsor invite and four-time LPGA Tour winner **In Gee Chun**, 2023 U.S. Solheim Cup team member **Andrea Lee**, 2021 HSBC Women's World Championship winner **Hyo Joo Kim**, two-time LPGA Tour winner **Leona Maguire** and 2023 Rolex First-Time Winner **Chanettee Wannasaen**. Players return to the course tomorrow to begin the second round of play starting at 8:00 a.m. local time.

**A LOOK AT THE LEADER**

CATEGORY	Sarah Schmelzel
2024 Race to CME Globe Rank	69
2024 LPGA Tour Wins	0
2024 LPGA Tour Top 10s	0
2024 Season Earnings	\$11,388
Career LPGA Tour Wins	0
Career LPGA Tour Top 10s	8
Career Money (LPGA)	\$1,788,180
Career LET Wins	0
Career Epson Tour Wins	0

## ABOUT THE LEADER

### Rolex Rankings No. 107 Sarah Schmelzel

- Schmelzel hit 10 of 14 fairways and 14 of 18 greens with 28 putts
  - She had five birdies and one bogey
  - Each birdie was made on her back nine
  - She birdied both par-5s on her back nine
- This is first time in her career that she has led or co-led after a round of individual play
  - Along with partner **Maude-Aimee Leblanc**, she led after the first round of play at the 2022 Dow Championship
    - The Dow Championship is a team event consisting of two-person teams
- This is her third start of the 2024 LPGA Tour season
  - Last week, she played at the Honda LPGA Thailand where she finished in a tie for 31st
  - Her first event of the season was the LPGA Drive On Championship where she missed the cut at one-over par
- This is her fourth time playing in the HSBC Women's World Championship
  - Her best finish was a T13 result in 2022
  - Her 68 in Thursday's round is her second lowest round in this tournament
    - Her lowest round was the final round in 2022, a 66
- Schmelzel is in her sixth season on the LPGA Tour
  - She has amassed over \$1 million in career earnings
  - In 2023, she played in 27 events, making 16 cuts and having two top-10 finishes
    - She ranked first as playing in the most events in 2023
  - Her rookie year on the LPGA was in 2019
    - She finished 3rd in the inaugural Q-Series to earn her card
  - She was collegiate golfer at the University of South Carolina

## THINGS TO KNOW

- Three players sit in a tie for second place
  - Grant finished at three under with one bogey
    - This is her second start at the HSBC Women's World Championship
      - Previously, she finished in a tie for 14th
      - Her best round at the event was a 67 in her second round last year
    - This is her third event of the 2024 LPGA Tour season
      - Her best finish was T23 at LPGA Drive On Championship
    - The 2022 LPGA Tour Rookie claimed her first victory on the LPGA Tour last year at the Dana Open
    - The Swede also has five wins on the Ladies European Tour
    - She represented the European Team at the 2023 Solheim Cup
  - Henseleit turned in a 31 on the front nine including a streak of four birdies
    - She has had one previous start at the HSBC Women's World Championship, in 2022 (49th)
      - Today's 69 is her lowest round at the event
    - This is her third event of the 2024 season
      - She finished 65th at the LPGA Drive On Championship and T49 at Honda LPGA Thailand
      - Her first-round 69 was her second lowest of the year
        - She had back-to-back 68s in Thailand
    - She was a rookie on the LPGA Tour in 2020, earning eight top-10 finishes over her career
    - The German has two wins on the Ladies European Tour
  - Vu was one of five players to go bogey free on Thursday
    - She is joined by **Chanettee Wannasaen, Alison Lee, Jenny Shin** and **Madelene Sagstrom**
    - This is Vu's second time playing at the HSBC Women's World Championship
      - She finished in a tie for 14th place last year
    - This will be her third start of the 2024 LPGA Tour season
      - Her best finish was at the Honda LPGA Thailand (T7) in her first event as a defending champion
- Defending champion **Jin Young Ko** sits in a tie for 10th place
  - She had three bogeys and four birdies
  - She is the second player to win the event twice, alongside **Inbee Park** who won in 2015 and 2017
  - She is the only player to successfully defend her title at the HSBC Women's World Championship
  - With a win this week, she would become the first player since Park to win the same tournament in consecutive starts
    - Park won the KPMG Women's PGA Championship from 2013 to 2015
- The scoring average on the day was 73.333 with the first four hardest holes on the back nine
  - Hole 12 (1st), hole 18 (2nd), hole 10 (3rd) and hole 17 (4th)

## ROLEX RANKINGS WORLD NO. 1 PROJECTIONS – HSBC WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

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

- **World No. 3 Celine Boutier:** Must win and have Lilia Vu finish solo 26th or worse
  - Boutier would become the first player from France to reach No. 1 in rankings history
  - A total of 18 players from nine different countries have been ranked No. 1 since the Rolex Rankings debuted in February 2006
- **World No. 4 Ruoning Yin:** Must win and have Lilia Vu finish solo 52nd 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

## QUOTABLE

*Sponsor invite and amateur Xington Chen on her nerves on the first tee and advice from Annika Sorenstam*

"Annika was telling me just stick to my process and trust, and also have fun on the course, which I think I managed to do on the last few holes. I was so scared to meet her yesterday, I felt like today wasn't that bad. So like calmed me down a bit more. I managed to focus on my game and stuff just like being so starstruck about everyone around me."

*Andrea Lee on the atmosphere in Singapore*

"I love Singapore. I love being here. The people are so nice and the food is amazing and the shopping is even better. Yeah, I just love coming back here and it's always exciting to play in Asia in front of some of these big crowds. Yeah, it's really exciting and I look forward to the rest of the week."

*Linn Grant on her ball-striking in her first round*

"I was a bit, I would say confused with my ball-striking for the past week. Like this morning, I really tried to take my time on the range and find something that felt, like, good enough, and that I can play with, and I feel -- I was trying to be very focused on every shot and not just take anything for granted. So in my mind, I was just playing very simple, just thinking one shot at a time. Especially with the wind, that's usually a good way of playing."

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#### **TOURNAMENT SCORING RECORDS**

*18 holes* – 62, Sei Young Kim (R4, 2018) at Sentosa Golf Club – Tanjong

*36 holes* – 131, Lorena Ochoa (2008) at Tanah Merah C.C.

*54 holes* – 200, Lorena Ochoa (2008) at Tanah Merah C.C.

*72 holes* – 268, Lorena Ochoa (2008) at Tanah Merah C.C.

#### **TOURNAMENT SCORING RECORDS AT SENTOSA GOLF CLUB – TANJONG**

*18 holes* – 62, Sei Young Kim (R4, 2018)

*36 holes* – 132, Danielle Kang (2018)

*54 holes* – 201, Nelly Korda (2018)

*72 holes* – 269, Inbee Park (2017)

#### **TOURNAMENT HISTORY**

*2017-present* – Played at Sentosa Golf Club (Tanjong Course) in Singapore

*2013-2016* – Played at Sentosa Golf Club (Serapong Course) in Singapore

*2008-2012* – Played at Tanah Merah C.C. (Garden Course) in Singapore