



Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G
Pinnacle Country Club | Rogers, Arkansas | Sept. 27-29, 2024

First-Round Notes
September 27, 2024

Media Contacts: [Megan Santaniello \(McGuire\)](#), +1 (386) 405-1338; [Carly Lyvers](#), +1 (386) 214-9105

Course Setup: 36-35 – 71; 6,199 yards

Scoring Average: R1: 70.195

Weather: Increasing clouds in the morning becoming overcast in the afternoon; N winds, 14-20mph in the afternoon with gusts in the 24-30 range; temperature highs in the mid-70s (F)

Race to CME Globe Points: 500 points (winner)

Purse: \$3 million; winner's portion is \$450,000

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

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LEADERBOARD			
	Player	To par	Score
1	Jasmine Suwannapura	-8	63
T2	Liqi Zeng	-7	64
T2	Carlota Ciganda	-7	64
T2	Ashleigh Buhai	-7	64
T2	Maria Fassi	-7	64

THAILAND'S JASMINE SUWANNAPURA TAKES FIRST-ROUND LEAD AT WALMART NW ARKANSAS CHAMPIONSHIP PRESENTED BY P&G

Following a first-round 63, **Jasmine Suwannapura** jetted into the top spot of the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G leaderboard to hold a one-stroke lead over four players at 8-under. The round is the 31-year-old's lowest since the 2023 Maybank Championship, as she holds her third career 18-hole lead at Pinnacle Country Club.

"Me and my husband been having fun out there. Couple holes I ask him to take a look for me. We make two birdies from that, and he got super excited," said Suwannapura. "We just have fun out there. Keep the momentum going, we literally played with the wind today. Got pretty gusty, too."

Suwannapura, who sits tied for first in greens in regulation hit through 18 holes (17), made eight birdies en route to her bogey-free day in Arkansas. She opened with a one-putt birdie on her first hole of the day, and notched two more on Nos. 5 and 7 before the turn. Her last five birdies came on the back-nine, with four in her last six holes including Nos. 17 and 18. In total, she went 3-under on the four par-5s on Friday, a trait she looks to continue through the weekend.

"I think it's starting from last week I think everything coming, getting better with my irons, have more confidence. It's towards the end of the year and my goal is to be playing CME and get to see my parents in Thailand walking with me [at the Honda LPGA Thailand in 2025]," said Suwannapura, who entered the week ranked No. 75 in the Race to CME Globe.

Liqi Zeng, Carlota Ciganda, Ashleigh Buhai and the former University of Arkansas Razorback **Maria Fassi** are close behind after carding 7-under 64s to sit in a tie for second. Fassi, who is playing in her eighth Walmart NW Arkansas Championship, is coming off a season-best T19 finish last week in Ohio, her first made cut since the KPMG Women's PGA Championship where she finished T60. Her 64 ties her second-lowest round ever on Tour, and is her best score since the 2022 ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican.

"I played very good last week in Cincinnati. We had a bad day on Saturday, but overall I know my game is as good as it's ever been," said Fassi, who recorded nine birdies on the day including three straight on Nos. 10-12. "I think my mind, my heart is also as good as it's been in long time. So I'm just happy we're seeing some of those results that we want."

Zeng carded the best round of the afternoon wave of players. The 18-year-old rookie is not only looking to become a Rolex First-Time Winner, but earn her first top-20 finish on Tour. Her 64 bested her previous career-low score by three shots thanks to seven birdies, with five made between Nos. 14-18.

"I'm feeling really lucky after today," said Zeng. "There were a lot of chances on [my] front nine that I got a hold of. Also a few minor mistakes that happened, but I was able to save them. Bogey-free round is always a reason to be happy."

Dottie Ardina, Yu Liu and sponsor invite **Maria Jose Marin** are tied for sixth at 6-under. Marin, the reigning SEC Freshman of the Year on the Razorback women's golf team, is making her LPGA Tour debut with her dad on the bag. "It felt amazing to play my first LPGA here in Arkansas in front of all the Razorback fans. It means a lot to represent the university and to call the Hogs on 17," said Marin. "I feel really proud of myself and it just felt amazing."

Arkansas alum **Gaby Lopez** and U.S. Solheim Cup stalwart **Megan Khang**, who is making her first Tour start since going undefeated at the Solheim Cup, are among five players tied for ninth at 5-under. Defending champion **Haeran Ryu** sits in a tie for 42nd after a 2-under 69, as well as 2014 Walmart champion and winning Solheim Cup captain **Stacy Lewis**, who is making her 18th appearance in the championship. **Ally Ewing**, who announced her retirement following the 2024 Tour season, opened with a 1-under 70 and is currently tied for 62nd.

A LOOK AT THE LEADER

CATEGORY	Jasmine Suwannapura
2024 Race to CME Globe Rank	75
2024 LPGA Tour Wins	0
2024 LPGA Tour Top 10s	3
2024 Season Earnings	\$237,702
Career LPGA Tour Wins	2
Career LPGA Tour Top 10s	16
Career Money (LPGA)	\$3,604,098
Career Epon Tour Wins	1

ABOUT THE LEADER

Rolex Rankings No. 110 Jasmine Suwannapura

- Suwannapura shot a bogey-free 63 in her opening round
 - She hit 17 of 18 greens, and 12 of 13 fairways with 27 putts
- She was one of 11 players to go bogey-free on Friday
- This is her 17th individual round in the 60s of the 2024 season
- This is her lowest round this season by four shots
 - Her previous low of 2024 was a 67 (R1, Kroger Queen City Championship)
- This is her lowest round since a first-round 63 at the 2023 Maybank Championship
- This is the third time in Suwannapura's career that she has held the first-round lead/co-lead
 - 2018 Blue Bay LPGA, 2023 Maybank Championship
- This is the fifth time she has held a post-round lead/co-lead after any round during her LPGA Tour career
- She is making her sixth start at the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship this week
 - Her previous event-low score was a 65 (R2, 2019)
 - Suwannapura has never missed the cut in this event
 - Her best finish was a T28 in 2020
 - She has twice recorded three rounds in the 60s at this event (2020, 2022)
- Suwannapura is making her 24th start of the 2024 Tour season
 - Last week, she finished T19 at the Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G
 - Her best finish was T5 at the FIR HILLS SERI PAK Championship
 - Prior to last week, she missed five consecutive cuts from the CPKC Women's Open to the FM Championship
 - She is currently ranked No. 75 in the Race to the CME Globe

- She has played every event on the 2024 LPGA Tour schedule except the Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions and U.S. Women's Open presented by Ally
- She has made the most starts of any LPGA Tour player this season (24)
- This is her 13th season on the LPGA Tour
 - She has two career victories (2018 Dana Open and the 2019 Dow Championship)
 - Her best season on Tour was in 2020, where she made 13 of 17 cuts and had two top-10 finishes
 - She earned Membership for 2012 after tying for 29th at Final Qualifying in 2011
- She also has one win on the Ladies European Tour, and one on the Epson Tour
- Her husband, Michael Thomas, is on the bag this week

THINGS TO KNOW

- Former Razorback **Maria Fassi** shot her season-best score, 64, to sit T2 heading into the weekend
 - The 64 is her lowest 18-hole score in any appearance at the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship by three strokes
 - This is her eighth appearance in the event; her event-best result is a tie for 15th (2020)
 - Her 64 ties her second-lowest round ever on Tour
 - It's her best 18-hole score since the 2022 ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican (62, R1), where she ultimately finished T7
 - This is her 18th start of the LPGA Tour season
 - She is coming off T19 finish last week in Ohio, her first made cut since the KPMG Women's PGA Championship
 - She's made six cuts, including a season-best tie for 12th at the ShopRite LPGA Classic
 - This is her sixth season on the LPGA Tour
 - She's recorded eight career top-10 finishes on Tour, including a career-best third-place finish, recorded at the 2022 Kroger Queen City Championship pres. by P&G and 2022 Dow Championship alongside **Stacy Lewis**
- **Liqi Zeng** carded the lowest round of the afternoon wave (64) to join a tie for second at -7
 - The 2024 LPGA Tour rookie is one of six players ranked T9 or better (5-under overall) looking to become the third player to become a Rolex First-Time Winner at the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship
 - Her 64 is a new career-best 18-hole score
 - Her previous best: 67 (R2, 2024 Portland Classic)
 - This is her 15th start of the 2024 Tour season
 - She's made six cuts, including a season-best T20 result at the Dow Championship
 - She finished T14 at the 2023 LPGA Final Qualifying to earn LPGA Tour Membership this season
 - Zeng, through Commissioner Mollie Marcoux Saaman, petitioned for and was granted approval for a waiver of the minimum age requirement for participation in Final Qualifying
 - She won four times on the CLPGA in 2023
- **Carlota Ciganda** and **Ashleigh Buhai** are also tied for second at 7-under
 - Ciganda's 64 ties her lowest round of the year
 - She also recorded a 64 in R1 of the Ford Championship pres. by KCC
 - This is Ciganda's 10th appearance in the event
 - Her best finish in Arkansas is a tie for sixth (2019), one of two top-10 finishes in her event starts
 - She's missed only three cuts, including in her last appearance (2022)
 - Her 64 is one of her lowest scores recorded at the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship (63, R1, 2019)
 - This is her 18th start of the 2024 Tour season
 - She's made 12 cuts and earned three top-10 finishes – T3 (Ford Championship pres. by KCC), 6th (The Chevron Championship) and T10 (FM Championship)
 - This is Ciganda's 13th season on the LPGA Tour
 - She is a two-time LPGA Tour winner; her last win came at the 2016 Citi Banamex Lorena Ochoa Invitational
 - She is a seven-time Solheim Cup Team member (2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2024)
 - She was a member of the winning Team Spain at the 2014 International Crown
 - Buhai closed with four-straight birdies on Nos. 6-9
 - Buhai's 64 is her lowest score on Tour since a R1 62 at the 2023 BMW Ladies Championship
 - This is Buhai's 12th appearance at the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship
 - Her 64 is her lowest 18-hole score in any start at this event
 - Her event-best result is a tie for 33rd (2019)
 - This is her first appearance since 2022
 - This is Buhai's 18th start of the 2024 Tour season
- Sponsor invite and current University of Arkansas women's golfer, **Maria Jose Marin**, shot a 6-under 65 in her LPGA Tour debut (T6)
 - Marin's dad and coach, Jose, is on her bag for the week
 - Marin was the 2024 SEC Freshman of the Year
 - She won the 2023 Blessings Collegiate Invitational, and will return to compete in the event next week
 - She won eight World Amateur Golf Rankings events in 2023, including the Mexican Women's Amateur and the South American Women's Amateur
 - Marin is also a two-time participant in the Augusta National Women's Amateur
 - She was awarded the sponsor's invite through the Road to the #NWACHampionship program that awards the top-ranked member of the Arkansas Razorback women's golf team an exemption
 - **Lilly Russell** (Thomas) and **Shyla Brown**, the other sponsor exemptions this week, finished +6 and +4 after the first round, respectively
- The 2024 U.S. Solheim Cup captain and former Razorback, **Stacy Lewis**, recorded a 2-under 69 in her first Tour start since the U.S. Team's victory
 - Lewis has appeared in every edition of the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship
 - She's missed only two cuts (2022, 2023)
 - Lewis announced in her [pre-tournament press conference](#) that this would be her last event of the 2024 Tour season

QUOTABLES

Ashleigh Buhai (T2, -7) on what it's like to come back to the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship:

"My first year was 2008 I played here, so one of the oldies. But obviously it's a great event, how the community gets around it.

As players a lot of the stay in host housing on the golf course so we're coming back to the same families. It's my tenth year with the same family. We're so comfortable here and obviously the crowd is always good and cheering us on, which is a lot of fun."

2024 rookie Liqi Zeng (T2, -7) on building momentum after shooting her lowest round on the LPGA Tour:

"I was in a good mental state today. I wasn't too worried about the results. Focused on each and every shot which is something I've been working on. Today it showed up in my score. So hopefully as the weekend comes, I can maintain this poise."

Sponsor invite and current Razorback Maria Jose Marin (T5, -6) on teeing it up in her LPGA Tour debut:

"I'm not going to lie, I was super nervous on the first tee and while hitting on the last four holes. If you're not nervous it means it doesn't matter to you and this means a lot to me. I just tried to stay calm, breathe through it, and just trust my ability to do great shots.

Yu Liu (T5,-6) on returning to her professional routines following eye surgery that took her off the Tour for almost three months:

"Around two weeks ago [I picked up clubs again]. I actually felt really fresh at first, but then everything went downwards after that. I felt like I took a little -- I tried to force things a little too much, so my body wasn't really taking it as well, so I was feeling some stiffness here and there. I was not striking the ball as well as I would've liked. I felt like today I just managed my game really well and I'm really happy to be able to turn in a score like this today.

Gaby Lopez (T9, -5) on battling the tough conditions this afternoon:

"I mean, it gets really windy sideways. Yeah, just trying to be patient. Hit the shots that I think it kind of reminded me a little bit of Scotland, British Open, those strong winds. Kind of 30 mile per hour gusts. But still, it's fun. I'm really, really thankful that I have evolved my game. My team and I have done a good job having more shots in the bag that makes it a little bit easier the round."

ON LPGA.COM

[Former University of Arkansas Razorback Maria Fassi Fires 64 on Day One in Rogers](#)

[What It Will Take to Contend at Pinnacle Country Club?](#)

[Featured Groups: 2024 Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G](#)

[A trio of Latina Caddies Looping at the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship](#)

LPGA VIDEOS

- Yu Liu First-Round Interview
- Maria Jose Marin (a) First-Round Interview
- Dottie Ardina First-Round Interview
- Carlota Ciganda First-Round Interview
- Ashleigh Buhai First-Round Interview
- Maria Fassi First-Round Interview

SOCIAL SNAPSHOT

[Good morning from Arkansas](#)

[Gaby Lopez sticks one close to get to 5-under](#)

[A quick flashback to this morning to take a look at a sweet birdie from Maria Fassi](#)

[Jeeno Thitikul caps off Round 1 with four birdies in her final five holes courtesy of a sweet putting streak](#)

[Defending champ Haeran Ryu is using the course to her advantage](#)

[Emma Talley and Hope Barnett catch up with Stacy Lewis](#)

TOURNAMENT SCORING RECORDS

18 holes – 61, Jeeno Thitikul (R2, 2022) and So Yeon Ryu (R2, 2017)

36 holes – 126, Anna Nordqvist (2020) and So Yeon Ryu (2017)

54 holes – 192, Nasa Hataoka (2018)