

Ford Championship presented by KCC

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Gilbert, Arizona, USA

Seville Golf and Country Club

Kim Paez

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome to the Ford Championship presented by KCC.

I am joined by Kim Paez, a sponsor's exemption this week. Kim, welcome to the tournament.

KIM PAEZ: Thank you.

Q. Just starting off, talk about how excited you are from this week being a sponsor's exemption. I know several people saw the video of you receiving the exemption, but just talk about how excited you are.

KIM PAEZ: I'm very excited. Words can't describe how blessed I'm to be out here. This is a dream come true. I've always wanted to play on the LPGA. But now that I'm here I'm just soaking in every moment.

Just going to have fun this week.

Q. Talk about that day you received the sponsor's exemption and the emotions that went into it.

KIM PAEZ: Yeah, like I said, it was a surprise. I honestly thought I was there for a women's golf marketing meeting. I had notes prepared. I did my research. There were women in the meeting that I've been in meetings with before so I thought it was nothing really new. And especially it was International Women's Month.

But to know that a whole group of people went through all that effort just to throw a surprise for me, it was really special, something I'll never take for granted. I'm truly blessed to be here and have this opportunity.

Q. Can you talk about your journey specifically with golf and how you got to the point you are now.

KIM PAEZ: Yeah, so I started playing when I was about nine, ten. My dad got me into the game. I did the whole junior golf thing; played in high school; earned a scholarship to play at UC Irvine.



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After I graduated I knew I was going to pursue my dreams of playing on tour. Went to Q-School a couple times; earned some Symetra Tour status but wasn't enough to where I thought financially I would make it there.

So I decided to go a different route but still stay in the golf industry. That's when I started in the golf manufacturing business. Eventually made my way over to Ping, and started out as a customer service rep and worked my way up to my dream job, which is a tour rep.

I worked with specifically elite female amateurs, and also during COVID I entered into the PGA program, got my Class A.

And I teach as well. I teach after work at Ping.

So I've had a bunch of opportunities to be the best tour rep I can be for the girls I work with, the best coach I can be for my students, and then try and be the best golfer I can, just trying to keep my game sharp for when I play my section events.

Because I've had such success playing section events I now have these opportunities to play in this week's championship, the KPMG, so things are looking up. I'm, again, very blessed and grateful for these opportunities.

Q. Are there any players out here who you've been a rep for?

KIM PAEZ: So I have helped our LPGA rep and, yeah, I actually last week I did a fitting with Karis Davidson. Robyn Choi, Ryann O'Toole came in a couple weeks ago to get her specs checked out.

There is a few more. I can't remember off the top of my head. Yeah, it's funny when they see me and I'm like, oh, hi, how are your clubs doing? (Smiling.)

Q. So you go to Q-School more than a decade ago now.

KIM PAEZ: Yeah.



Q. Was there a certain point where you had written off this possibility of playing in a tour event?

KIM PAEZ: Definitely, yes. And it took a while for me to accept because I enjoy competing. I love to compete. But I learned to love -- I just love the game itself, so to be somewhere else at least in the golf industry, I was okay with it.

Q. When you won the Southwest Section qualifier, did that history of being the first woman to do that, how did you register with you?

KIM PAEZ: It was surreal. Honestly, I didn't have a lot of expectations going into that. I just honestly wanted to try and qualify for the PPC.

But since then, since I won, I've had many people, many women that I don't even know reach out to me and tell me how much I've inspired them. It just makes my heart full.

I didn't think ever that I could touch people the way I have. I'm so happy to know that I've inspired women, whether they want to turn pro or not or just to get involved in the game recreationally. It's been very rewarding.

Q. Through coaching and working in the amateur space, how does that pay it forward to the next generation of female golfers who want to get involved?

KIM PAEZ: Yeah, you know, teaching, I have a lot of juniors that are girls, and working with them on their games and then the elite juniors or even the college amateurs that I work with, just being a part of their journey whether they're starting or they're making that decision to turn pro soon.

To be a part of that, their process, their journey, it means a lot. I take pride in the work I do, whether it's working on them with their swing, their game, or just their equipment. Just to be a part of that means a lot to me. And I hope it means a lot to them, too (smiling.)

Q. What are the most important resources required to help those girls get to that professional level?

KIM PAEZ: I think it's just having that someone to look up to, a mentor, and that is one thing that I strive to be in my job as a tour rep, but then also as a coach and a player. I hope to be that example that my junior girls can look up to.

You know, I'm just excited that a lot of them will be here this week to watch me, and I just hope to continue to make them proud. When they see the possibilities of someone

like me -- I'm not an LPGA member -- but the fact that I have these opportunities to play, I hope that really inspires them and pushes and motivates them.

Q. With your first tour event how do you plan to overcome any nerves that might come your way? Do you have a routine or mindset you like to get into?

KIM PAEZ: Well my husband is caddying for me, so he does a great job just keeping the vibe light. He'll crack jokes.

But also just remembering that I'm here to play golf here in my home state, Arizona. So it's nothing new I guess is what I'm trying to tell myself. I'm just here to chase that golf ball around the golf course.

Q. Has that strengthened your relationship between you and your husband, him as your caddie?

KIM PAEZ: Of course. You know, he's the one person I trust most with my game. He knows it better than anyone. Sometimes I feel like he knows my game better than I do.

He's a player as well. He plays overseas. The fact that it's something that we share together, whether we're practicing, we're playing, I'm caddieing for him at Q-School, he's caddieing for me, it's something that we do together.

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