

Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G

Tuesday, August 19, 2025

Maineville, Ohio, USA

TPC River's Bend

Amy Rogers
Kristian Gatewood
Kate Meyer
Casey Ceman
Vidhi Lakhawala
Jeremy Friedman

Press Conference

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for joining us today for the Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G media day. Hope everybody has got full stomachs. I want to thank our friends at Jeff Ruby's for catering lunch today. They are great friends of not only the Cincinnati Open, but they are great friends of the tournament. We will be enjoying their food a little bit more in September.

Thank you, everybody, for being here. The Kroger Queen City Championship by P&G is taking place September 8th through the 14th returning back to TPC Rivers Bend.

I wanted to thank a few more folks. First off, Bob Moran and the Cincinnati Open, I want to thank him and his staff. Pete Holtermann, my tag team partner/media director for helping to coordinate all this.

Also Marina Seuk and her staff for helping to implement this. So awesome, awesome. And naturally to our friends and partners at Kroger and P&G for allowing us to be guests in the house for championship Monday here at the Cincinnati Open.

I last want to thank all of our panelists that are here today. First off, Kristian Gatewood and Kate Meyer with P&G and Kroger. They will be coming up and speaking all about great things about the championship coming up shortly. Casey Ceman, vice president of tournament business affairs with the LPGA Tour, longtime friend of ours. Casey,



thank you for joining us today.

And our woman of the hour, Vidhi Lakhawala. She is one of our sponsor exemptions for the championship. She is a high school senior out of New Jersey. She is a commit to Wake Forest University. She won the Women's Western Junior at Makatewah earlier this year to earn a sponsor exemption. This will be her first LPGA Tour event, so this is going to be a big stage for her, so I know she's super excited to be here. Vidhi, thank you for joining us today, too.

Next to me is my tag team partner today, Amy Rogers with Golf Channel and NBC Sports. She is a Cincinnati resident. She also lives at TPC Rivers Bend, so this literally is a home game for her.

The tournament itself is shaping up to be one of the strongest fields of the LPGA Tour in the entire year. Kate and Kristian will talk a little bit more about it and I'll talk a little bit more about the commitments, but it is shaping up to be an incredible field.

We're going to have a world-class field with top players from the U.S. and all over the world that will be joining us.

Focusing on this tournament, Amy, this is a home game for you. How excited are you for the LPGA Tour because you travel the country on the LPGA Tour. How exciting is it for you to have this event be taking place in your hometown for a fourth consecutive year?

AMY ROGERS: Well, thank you, Jeremy. Being a part of this event and this tournament, coming here to my hometown, born and raised here in Cincinnati, I never got a chance to attend a professional golf tournament here in Cincinnati. The LPGA Championship that used to be just right next door wrapped up when I was still a little girl.

So once the Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G came here to Cincinnati four years ago, I finally got to go to a professional golf tournament here in Cincinnati, and I've gotten to fortunately cover it each year as well in a different capacity.

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It's been a thrill for me just to be able to do that. I can't tell you how surreal it is now that the tournament has moved literally to my backyard at TPC Rivers Bend as Jeremy mentioned. I've traveled the world covering the LPGA from Spain to France, UK, Caribbean, all over, and to be walking over to my gym where I work out to then see players walking down the street has been pretty crazy.

And now I get to bring my son over there as well. He had a field day running around the tournament last year.

It means a lot to me both professionally and personally to be able to have this event here in Cincinnati.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: We're glad you're here to cohost with me. We will get things going. I'd like to introduce first Kristian Gatewood and Kate Meyer with P&G and Kroger. I'd like to turn your attention to the screen for a video message from our defending champion, Lydia Ko.

[Video shown.]

AMY ROGERS: Thank you for joining me up here. I'm so excited to be here with you today, championship Monday here at the Cincinnati Open. Before we get into the Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G, let's first talk about this great championship here today. Both Kroger and P&G are cornerstone partners for the Cincinnati Open, offering some great experiences for fans throughout the championship.

Can you both talk a little bit about your partnerships with the Cincinnati Open?

KRISTIAN GATEWOOD: Yeah, absolutely. I'll start. P&G is a proud sponsor of the Cincinnati Open for the second straight year, and it's great just to be a part of something where we can make sure that we keep world-class tennis in Cincinnati.

I grew up playing tennis, so a special place in my heart, and I think it's pretty cool that the center court was renamed to P&G Center Court. And then just watching on television has been a great experience. It's been great watching the tunnel experience supported by Gillette and Venus. And then speaking of Venus, they were super excited about ladies day that they did last Tuesday, and I know everybody that attended the event had an absolutely fun time. It's great to be part of it.

KATE MEYER: And we got to be the presenting partner of the Fan Zone, so we've had a lot of unique experiences all week from interactive themes to player appearances. We had live chef demos this week. Really excited related to that that we were able to develop the signature desert in

the Match Point Macaron, which is a private selection product that we have. It's a key lime macaron with cocoa nut vanilla ice cream and you can pick those up at Match Point Market, which we actually expanded this year for a quick grab-and-go for all tournament patrons, and got some of our new state-of-the-art self-checkout technology there.

AMY ROGERS: Let's turn our attention to the Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G returning as we mentioned to TPC Rivers Bend for the second consecutive year. The dates this year are September 8 to the 14th, and as Jeremy touched on, we have a world-class field lined up to return again this year.

Can you give us an overview why it's so important to Kroger and to P&G to be involved in this event that helps to elevate women's sports?

KATE MEYER: Yeah, we're really honored to come together with P&G and really be champions of women's sports, and this is just one of our opportunities to do that.

Now in our fourth year, we continue to bring more global talent and really some iconic names. Particularly this year we'll have 144 of the best players in the world vying for a \$2 million purse; but among the early commits we have seven of the top 10, and actually the top 4 in the world, including two past champions in Minjee Lee and Lydia Ko, so we're really, really excited.

KRISTIAN GATEWOOD: Also last year we welcomed over 50,000 fans and we had a lot of volunteers, 700 volunteers. We had dozens of local and national sponsors that were there supporting the event, and with this event included, the tournament has delivered over \$50 million in economic impact to Cincinnati, which is just tremendous.

So we're super excited to welcome everybody back, so the players, the fans, the volunteers back to TPC Rivers Bend in September. It's going to be great.

AMY ROGERS: That's huge. Can you share some of the amazing onsite experiences that fans can expect this year at the tournament?

KRISTIAN GATEWOOD: Yeah, absolutely. Well, I love that our brands have jumped in, and they're really excited to be back, just like they were last year.

This year we have over 25 brands that are going to be on-site to enhance the overall fans' experience. Some of my favorite are so Charmin is going to be back, so they're sponsoring -- they'll be the official sponsor of hole No. 2 for the event, which will be great.



And then Pampers, which -- so you guys get the pun. And then Pampers is going to have a ton of different activations, so in the fan zone they will be sponsoring a family center that's actually going to have a nursery room in it, which will be great, and then a bunch of different changing stations throughout the grounds. So that will be great.

I'm really excited to actually experience the Olay Body Wash Public Viewing Deck that's going to be on the 7th tee. It could be an awesome time to potentially see a hole-in-one, so I would encourage everybody to get out there and see if they can see a hole-in-one.

AMY ROGERS: That's great. It sounds like there's something literally for fans of all ages, and I can attest to my son, who was five last year running around; he came home with a tee shirt from junior day. He had a goody bag full of things that he found throughout the course. Just loved every moment of being out here.

I hear the fan zone this year is going to be better than ever. Can you tell us about what fans can expect to find there this year?

KATE MEYER: It'll definitely be buzzing again. We'll have our Freshest Putt Challenge, which is people will be able to get a chance to win a \$250 Kroger gift card with the longest putt. That was one that my six year old daughter loved last year, so I had to pull her away.

We'll also have our brand sampling, so probably some of the goody bag that your son had but some Kroger and Private Selection, Simple Truth products. Then a fan favorite last year was our Krojis. They'll be there and have some one-on-one photo opportunities for our fans.

And if it's anything like this week, which is incredibly hot, we will have our cool zone to help fans kind of cool down and beat the heat with some great misting stations.

KRISTIAN GATEWOOD: So I have two kids. I have a 15 year old and a 12 year old, and a couple of their favorites are Secret Autograph Alley. So after players have had a great round, they can go with the fans and try to go spend some time with them and sneak an autograph.

The other one is Beauty on the Green is back for a third year in a row, which is great. So our hair care brands, Head & Shoulders, Pantene, Native, Miele, are going to provide free dry hair styling for the fans. So people can come and get their hair done and look great while they're at the tournament.

AMY ROGERS: That sounds like a lot of fun. Are there any other experiences fans should be excited about this year?

KATE MEYER: We are excited to bring back our brands meal deal, our concession stands, to making it easier for fans to get great food right along the course.

KRISTIAN GATEWOOD: And then so Gillette and Venus have declared Saturday the 13th officially as Junior Day, so all children that come in are going to get free admission. They'll have a great giveaway when they get to the entrance, and in the afternoon they're going to close out at 2:30 p.m. with a junior clinic.

So all the kids can participate in that and get a little training, which will be great.

And then Tide and Downy are back and they're going to do the Perfect Shot Challenge, so that's with our pro-am pairing party that night. It's going to be 15 pros, it's going to be 10 First Tee golfers that are local, and they have a chance to get a shot at a hole-in-one on the 7th tee. That will be great. Let's hope one of them can get it, and if they get it, they get \$250,000.

AMY ROGERS: That sounds like a lot of fun. That's an amazing opportunity. 7th hole the place to be, it sounds like, during this tournament.

I know for Kroger and P&G, this is so much more than just a tournament, and in particular there's been a lot of buzz about the Queen City Game Changers Program within the local businesses and entrepreneurial community. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

KATE MEYER: Yeah, I said we are a proud partner, to champion women's sports, but really similarly in support of women in business. So we developed a women in leadership program that is called the Queen City Game Changers, and we've had over 500 local women go through it to date. These program participants get an opportunity to meet with executive coaches and build out personal brand stories and how to really learn how to strategically build a network across the community here.

In the past year alone, a quarter of our Game Changers have accelerated in either their career or in new partnerships or clients from an entrepreneurial standpoint, so it's been a really good opportunity for women to develop and really accelerate in business, too.

KRISTIAN GATEWOOD: Aside from obviously the amazing leadership program that Kate just walked you through, I want to talk a little bit about the Game Changer



Scholarship Program which has been great. This is our fourth year. Over the course of those four years we've awarded over \$150,000 in scholarship money.

The winners this year, 100 percent of them are first-generation college students, which is huge. And it's going to be really cool. We're actually going to award them and announce the winners on the 18th green right before the trophy ceremony to recognize them.

I know that they're going to be super excited, and it's just another way to give back.

AMY ROGERS: That's incredible. Thank you, Kate and Kristian, for spending a little bit of time with us and talking about not just the work that you're doing for this incredible tournament, but for Cincinnati as a whole. Thank you.

[Applause.]

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Kate and Kristian, thank you very much for joining us. Before we introduce our next panel or as they are coming up, as I said, we have a tremendous field. One of our sponsor exemptions, Vidhi Lakhawala, is here. She is going to be coming up next.

Also announcing our second sponsor exemption today, Maria Fassi, LPGA Tour coming up -- longtime LPGA Tour, collegiate rock star at the University of Arkansas, also a P&G ambassador. She's going to be our sponsor exemption. She wasn't able to be here today but she submitted a video to say thank you.

[Video shown.]

Thank you, Maria. Kate and Kristian, thank you very much. I'd now like to introduce to the stage Casey Ceman, vice president of tournament business affairs with the LPGA Tour and Vidhi Lakhawala, our sponsor exemption.

AMY ROGERS: Hello. Thank you, guys, for joining me up here. Casey, we'll start with you. What has Kroger and P&G's involvement in the Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G meant not just to the tournament, but to the LPGA as a whole these past few years?

CASEY CEMAN: Yeah, Kroger and P&G have been incredible partners, not only to this event but the Tour. Just listening to all the different activations and how all their brands are buying into this event and how it's really turned into a community event that everybody has embraced, 50,000 fans last year is incredible.

As many of you know, we're celebrating our 75th

anniversary this year as a Tour, and just kind of looking back at the past of the LPGA and kind of envisioning where the Tour is going over the next 75 years, we can't do it without partners like Kroger and P&G, and just the way that they've invested and been a part of this event is truly incredible.

AMY ROGERS: You just mentioned the 75th anniversary. Such a huge milestone for a women's organization. What has this last year been like for the Tour?

CASEY CEMAN: It's been super fun just kind of seeing everybody celebrating the past 75 years, all of our Founders and Pioneers that came before. Hearing some of these stories from our players who played 20, 30 years ago about how they would carpool with each other from event to event and they're writing each other checks at the end of the event for their prize money; just to see where we've come is really impressive.

Like I said, it's not just about the past 75 but kind of these plans that we have for the future. We're working night and day to make this truly a global sports and entertainment brand that everybody loves to watch.

AMY ROGERS: We have seen a number of different winners so far this season on the LPGA Tour. How would you describe this season and what it's been like so far?

CASEY CEMAN: It's really been a roller coaster. I can't remember exactly how many events we've had so far, but it's around 22, and we've had 23 different winners this year. Our team event had two winners, so we've had no repeat winners this entire season.

So it's really been cool to see some of this international talent. You saw the Awai sisters have both won this year in their rookie year from Japan, so it's very exciting.

AMY ROGERS: We could see another first-time winner here in Cincinnati in just a few weeks, the fourth edition of the Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G getting underway in just a few weeks. What can we expect from the tournament this year?

CASEY CEMAN: Well, we were just talking about the field. It's a really incredible field, four of the top 5 and seven out of the top 10. It's a really crucial time of year for the players, kind of heading in towards the Tour Championship in Naples at the end of the year, and they're kind of jockeying for position to not only make it into that field, but it's going to be really exciting.

AMY ROGERS: We're super excited. One of those players that's going to be in the field joins us now. Vidhi



Lakhawala, as Jeremy introduced a few moments ago, will be making her LPGA Tour debut here in Cincinnati. What are you most looking forward to?

VIDHI LAKHAWALA: Yeah, I'm looking forward to a lot of things. Just the experience of playing an LPGA event and playing alongside professionals who play on the LPGA Tour for a living and just having a really great time and soaking up the experiences from this event.

AMY ROGERS: You're from New Jersey but you were here just a few months ago in Cincinnati winning the Women's Western Junior at Makatewah Country Club, which earned you a spot here in the field. What was your reaction to finding out you were going to get to tee it up in an LPGA Tour event?

VIDHI LAKHAWALA: Yeah, was happily shocked and just really grateful and honored to have the opportunity to play in an LPGA event. So I'm just really excited, and I can't wait to tee it up.

AMY ROGERS: You already got a chance to check out the course, too. Flew in yesterday, already got to play a practice round out at TPC Rivers Bend. What are your impressions of the golf course so far?

VIDHI LAKHAWALA: Yeah, it's a great golf course. It's in great conditions, and it's definitely a challenge, so I'm excited to see how I can do alongside the professionals.

AMY ROGERS: Your sister also plays, Aditi. They have a social media account together that documents their journey in the game of golf. What has it been like to share this golf journey with your sister?

VIDHI LAKHAWALA: Yeah, it's been really good. Not many people who play golf can say they've been able to do it alongside their sibling, so having her -- and we both motivate and push each other along, so having someone to be able to experience all of these things with is really special.

AMY ROGERS: I'm sure she will no doubt be jealous to see her sister tee it up here in an LPGA Tour event in a few weeks at the Kroger Queen City Championship presented by P&G, and that's where we're going to see you both in just a few weeks. Thank you for spending some time with us. Excited to see you both back here in a few weeks.

[Applause.]

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: Casey, Vidhi, thank you very much. Do we have any questions from the audience? I also have

a couple of questions for you guys.

Q. Casey, from an LPGA standpoint, as Amy mentioned, the LPGA Tour travels the globe. Kristian and Kate also mentioned that we had over 50,000 fans at this event last year. It's one of the stronger attended events on the LPGA Tour. What does it say for -- the LPGA Tour goes to big markets and goes to small markets and medium markets but when you have a tournament like this in Cincinnati that has a tremendous fan base to come see the LPGA Tour, what does that mean to you at the LPGA Tour and its players?

CASEY CEMAN: Yeah, this is exactly what we look for is this kind of community engagement, and the way Kroger and P&G have leaned in with their brands, getting out here and activating throughout the week, having the child changing stations and just making it a really cool place for people to come, let kids run around and enjoy themselves throughout the day, it's not just the community, but it's the partners leaning in and making it a really fun experience through the week.

Q. Kristian and Kate, from you guys and your family and all that, just to see the number of fans that are out watching the players, watching the world's best players, from you guys, this being in your town, what does that mean to you two?

KATE MEYER: It's been awesome. Just personally being able to bring my family, and I now have a six year old that has taken golf lessons and wants to learn to play, so I think it's sparked something in her that's made it super special.

So I'm grateful to have this opportunity to bring everyone there and see all the kids running around too as part of it. It's just a different event.

KRISTIAN GATEWOOD: Yeah, I agree. It's just a great experience, and I think it's wonderful for the city. Between the tennis tournament, between our LPGA tournament, to get people involved, to have them come out, have fun, experience all the different activations, meet the players in a relatively intimate environment, it's a great experience and a great venue to do it.

CASEY CEMAN: And I would just add, having the opportunity to walk around this tennis center for the first time was just incredible. I had never been here before, and kudos to Kroger and P&G for really embracing this event and building it into what it is. I think it's just another example of a wonderful community event and a really cool intersection that we have here today for two of Cincinnati's biggest sporting events.

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JEREMY FRIEDMAN: I echo that, from all of us we are just honored to be guests in the house today of the Cincinnati Open.

Vidhi, quick one for you, when you play the Women's Western Junior -- you have family here, and you're staying with family for the next couple of days. What was it like to play alongside and have family and friends watch you and then -- are you going to have a big family entourage when you play here on the LPGA Tour in a few weeks?

VIDHI LAKHAWALA: I think I will. Just coming and watching me play and cheering me on, not many people in my family play sports, so I'm one of the few, so this is a very prideful moment for my family, to be able to come watch me on the biggest stage that I could play at. It's a very exciting time for everyone in my family.

Q. Vidhi, you are also committed to Wake Forest University next year. How looking forward are you to playing at Wake Forest? As Amy and Casey know, it is a decorated collegiate program with a lot of alums that are playing on the LPGA Tour and a rock star coach. How excited are you to join the Demon Deacons?

VIDHI LAKHAWALA: Yeah, I'm very, very excited to be joining the Wake Forest women's golf family. A lot of history that surrounds the program and a lot of very successful players that have been produced through that program, so I'm excited for my next four years at Wake Forest.

Q. Casey, I'm curious if there are any significant changes or what they might be with the new operating company coming in new this year here.

CASEY CEMAN: Yeah, I think the biggest changes you're going to see is what we've really talked about already with a lot of new brands coming in and supporting the event, some of the new fan activations that are on-site. From a golf perspective, it's a very similar event, but I think it's going to be that fan-friendly experience that you'll see really elevated this year.

Q. Speaking of fans, you got to play yesterday your first practice round on the course. You mentioned it was challenging. To the fans, what can they look forward to watching in terms of the challenges that you're going to face?

VIDHI LAKHAWALA: I think a lot of good golf. There's a lot of holes where you can be really aggressive and a lot of holes where you have to play a little bit more conservative. Just a lot of good golf and a lot of low scores as well.

Q. Amy, I have one last one for you. You touched on this. What is your son Jack looking forward to the most?

AMY ROGERS: As I was prepping to come out here this morning he wanted to make sure that there would be popcorn, so if we can just make sure that's at the golf course, he'll be a happy camper.

JEREMY FRIEDMAN: I want to do a couple more introductions. Say hi to Kevin Wyman, tournament director for the Kroger Queen City Championship; Mike Taft, executive director for the Kroger Queen City Championship. I'm Jeremy Friedman, media director for the Kroger Queen City Championship. We're all with Outlyr. We are honored and excited to be working this event this year.

Amy, Vidhi, Casey, Kristian, Kate, everybody here, thank you for joining us. Jeff Ruby's, thank you for the wonderful lunch. Any additional media queries, come up to me. Tennis starts in about a half hour, 40 minutes, so we have a great championship Monday here.

Thank everybody for joining us, and we will see you in -- also, media credentialing is now open as of today. Also the early commitments news release that we talked about earlier, that also will be coming to your inboxes. Everybody, thank you, and have a great day. We'll see you in a few weeks.

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