

Ford Championship presented by Wild Horse Pass

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Chandler, Arizona, USA

Whirlwind Golf Club

Maria Fassi

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Okay, hello and welcome to the media center at the Ford Championship presented by Wild Horse.

We are joined Maria Fassi, sponsor's exemption this week from Ford. Just kick things off here. First time seeing you on the LPGA Tour this year. Talk about how excited you were to get news that you would be a sponsor's exemption this week.

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I mean, it's awesome. It's obviously been -- or was -- a tough year for me last year. Losing my card was not something I anticipated, not something I wanted or wish on anybody.

So, yeah, just being able to get an opportunity come out here, compete, see what areas of my game are trending in the right direction, what areas of my game are still needing some help and I need to focus on.

So I'm just incredibly blessed that both Ford and everybody involved with the tournament kind of put some faith in me, maybe at times when I didn't really have much in myself. So it's cool to see their support not only with the tournament, but with myself.

Yeah, just super excited to be here I think with a very grateful heart and just a very different approach maybe than the way I've played golf in the past. In a good way. So, yeah, just very happy to be here.

Q. You played here last year. Can you talk about Ford's involvement in this tournament and what it's been like to see them contributing to the growth of the women's game.

MARIA FASSI: It's been awesome. Obviously getting courtesy cars and last year getting to kind of go to the Bronco building over in San Tan Ford, and to see some of the older cars and learn about Ford's history was kind of fun for me.



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Again, to see they are betting on women's golf, that they're not backing down, that they want to make this event bigger and better for us is great to see.

Again, for me as a sponsor invite this week, it's just a huge gift, especially being my birthday today. I told them they definitely outdid themselves with a birthday gift.

Q. Happy birthday.

MARIA FASSI: Thank you.

Q. You just came from the range. Speak about Whirlwind Golf Club and what you've seen out here since you started practicing, what your thoughts are on how to go low this week.

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, the course is getting firm. It's obviously very hot out. It's going to be cooler during the week, but it's still just fairways and greens, especially later in the day, are super firm.

So we're going to see very different golf in the morning than we will in the afternoon, which I think it's kind of cool in a unique way. It makes you think about the golf course in different ways. It makes you really have to plan and plot your way around the golf course. Kind of having the proper angles to different pins is important.

It's in phenomenal shape. They've made us feel super welcomed. Yeah, just very excited. It's a fun golf course. There are holes where you can be a little more aggressive; there are holes where a big number can show up as well.

So I think it's a good combination of both. Hoping for myself for a very good week, but I think in general it's going to be a fun week for people to watch.

Q. You spent some time on the tee box the other day with LPGA USGA girls golfers. Can you just talk about what it's like to be a role model for kids? You do a lot with Fassi's Friends, too. Talk about what it's been like for you, and especially spending that time with young girls like that.



MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I mean, I always try to be a good role model, the best version of myself that I can.

I once was those little girls looking up to whether it was Lorena Ochoa or Annika or Angela Stanford, Stacy Lewis. I would go to the tournaments in Mexico to watch them play, and getting golf ball or signed glove would make my year.

To be able to do that for someone is a huge privilege I enjoy it a lot. I obviously with Fassi's Friends get super involved with kids and just helping them get more involved with golf; helping them maybe overcome some of the barriers that have been set in different aspects of their life; just making golf a welcoming environment for them.

So it's been fun to see what I've been able to do on my side, but too with Girls Golf just seeing those three little girls get excited and shy and laugh and, I don't know, it was just such a treat and something different that I think we want to see more of.

Q. I know you've been playing a little bit on the LET and Epson Tour. Speak to the experiences you had on the LET earlier this season and also playing on the Epson Tour the last few weeks.

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I mean, I think results and score-wise it hasn't shown kind of how I would like, but I think I've improved so much in different areas that I was focusing on this off season, the biggest one being mentally and just kind of course management.

I think I've matured a lot in the last five, six months. So of that I'm extremely proud, and I know the results will come sooner rather than later. It's been awesome to just get to play different golf courses, get to see different games, learn from different players.

I started to be a lot more curious about how people hit different shots and started to watch a lot more golf as well. This is all kind of new for me. I've started to enjoy golf a lot more, whether it's competing or watching.

So I think playing both Epson and LET has been cool because I've been able to see a lot of different things. Even one of the LET events we played the men's TOUR Championship were there, so we even watching some of those older guys just like I was starstruck on the range and stuff.

So it's been very fun to learn more about myself the last few months, and hopefully all of that gives me a good opportunity out here to come out and do my very best.

Q. I know professional golf confidence is always a thing that I think comes and goes for players. How have you kind of kept your confidence up and in check and just reminded yourself who you are when you're out there and it may not be going your way?

MARIA FASSI: I haven't. (Smiling.) I think this is why I'm in need of a sponsor invite. I feel like I lacked that confidence and I think it's slowly getting back.

I think little by little I'm starting to relearn that confidence doesn't mean making three birdies in a row, but it means make three good decisions in a row, or it means hitting the target you were going to and not necessarily hitting it three feet from the pin.

So I think I've changed maybe a little bit the definition that I have of what confidence means and how confidence looks in me, and I think it's been a very healthy change.

So I'm excited to just try to continue to learn and not perfect because we're never going to be perfect, but just make it -- make confidence be my own and not the definition that the world has for it.

Q. We just had Gabby Barker in here talking about the importance of representing her Native American community. You and Gaby Lopez are from Mexico. How important is it to you to help grow the game in Mexico with little girls and represent Mexico?

MARIA FASSI: It's a privilege. Not very many of us get to do it. Not very many of us have had the privilege to do it in the past either.

So for me it's a huge responsibility. I don't take it lightly. Whether it's playing in the Olympics or just making sure that the flag is on the range at every LPGA tournament that we go to is a huge privilege for both Gaby and I. I know I can speak for her on that.

And, yeah, I think we're so lucky to have the support of our country. We're very fortunate of course with what Lorena did in the past and what we're being able to do ourselves.

It's been cool to see the growth of the game in Mexico, and obviously for us to be able to have an LPGA tournament again in Mexico this year, it just shows that we're doing our part okay. More people are interested in the game. More people with money are interested in the game and bringing it back to Mexico.

So it's just been fun to see the last few years just how much growth we've had and the support that we always get from our people.

Q. Just a quick follow-up. You've always been known as a very aggressive, fiery golfer. Is that anything you're changing over these years? Becoming more conservative, or still keeping that aggressiveness?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I don't think I'll ever be able to play conservative golf. It's not in my DNA. I think I'm starting to learn how to use length, my aggressiveness, how to use my fiery personality in my favor instead of against me.

I think I just in the past have put a little too much pressure on myself having to hit perfect shots constantly because I was picking very aggressive lines; whereas now I can still be aggressive but just be aggressive three yards right of the pin instead of having to hit a perfect shot at the hole.

So I think I'm still going to be aggressive. It's who I am. I don't want to lose that. It's just with a little more brains behind it. (Smiling.)

Q. I cover a lot of amateur golf and the Augusta National Women's Amateur is next week. Wondering what you remember about the runner-up finish in 2019 and what makes this tournament special.

MARIA FASSI: A lot. It's definitely, probably with getting my Tour card in 2018, probably the most satisfaction I've felt on a golf course, even falling just short to Jennifer Kupcho.

I mean, what we were able to do and what we were able to show to the world of what women's golf is about, amateur women's golf is about, I don't think anybody could have dreamed of a better outcome.

I think we did a great job with representing ourselves, our sport, representing women, female athletes, women in general.

I think for me, being able to have my name be attached to Augusta National for the rest of time, it's something that I take a lot of pride on.

We have a couple girls that I know are going to be playing this next week, and my advice to them is just to take it all in. It goes by super fast.

For me it was the first time that I ever stepped grounds on Augusta National, and it's a dream. Like I feel like I'm not even making sense with what I'm saying, but that's just kind of the feel of what it means to play Augusta National, compete at Augusta National. I think we had 35,000 people on grounds that day.

It was awesome. Yeah, I'm just happy I got to be a part of it.

Q. I know that you joined Girls Golf for Tee Time yesterday. You alluded to this being a special opportunity this week. Can you maybe talk about whether that put into in perspective getting to spend 30 minutes with three six year old girls who were just so excited to be with you?

MARIA FASSI: I think it really just shows what we're here for. I've always said it: Of course winning tournaments is awesome. We're competitors. That's what we want to do at the end of the day.

For me at least my purpose in life is not just to win. I think you make an impact on people by who you are as a person more so that how many tournaments you've won.

So for me, like it's just what all of this is about. Like I think in hard years maybe when things aren't going your way, to be able to be reminded that -- they don't care that I'm an invite, that I lost my card. They're just excited they're meeting a professional golfer and it's maybe something they want to do in the future.

So I think, yeah, it was a very nice reminder just to know that they're just happy that they got to be a part of something great, which was meet five or six of us and get to hang out, and, you know, play like we're drinking tea and be foolish at times.

Just for me, it was just a breath of fresh air truly. Like I think I got more out of it than they did for sure.

Q. I know like you said you're so passionate about growing the game. Looking back, what do you hope the future holds for Girls Golf specifically?

MARIA FASSI: I think we're seeing a lot more people from very different cultural backgrounds come out on Tour. I think that's going to help. People who look all different ways, like, oh, I can do that.

Or, you know, for Gabby Barker, right, she's a Native American. We don't have many Native Americans on Tour. For her community, to see somebody like them be out here, I think it means a lot.

So I just hope to see more of that. I hope to see more brave girls chasing after their dreams, whether it's playing professional golf or being a CEO at a big company or being the best mom in the world. Whatever it is, I just want to see brave girls who then will become brave women.

