

# NW Arkansas Championship

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Rogers, Arkansas, USA

Pinnacle Country Club

## Maria Fassi

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome inside the press room at the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship presented by P&G. Here with Maria Fassi, Razorback. What's it like being back in Razorback country?

MARIA FASSI: I love it. I get to sleep at home this week, so that's extra special. But just love coming back. Love seeing familiar faces, and having the support of the whole community is always awesome.

THE MODERATOR: Any familiar faces you've seen? I've seen Shauna out this week. I'm sure that was fun to catch up with her.

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I've seen some of the girls from the team. I hadn't been home in a minute, so it was nice to catch up with them. Couple just old friends still working around here, and they come out and help out with the event.

Of course Mike and Shauna.

But, yeah, it's just nice. Everybody loves having us here, so it's pretty special to feel welcomed and wanted to be here.

THE MODERATOR: A lot of us know you're really close with that team, but now, the girls that are on the Arkansas team, what's your relationship like with them? Obviously you're probably a mentor.

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I know a few of the girls. I think I helped recruit some of those girls either by hosting them in their visits or just talking about Arkansas to them a few years ago.

So I have good relationships with most of them. Some girls I don't know, but I try to be there. We practice at the same facilities so I try to be around when they're around and be there if they need me and play with them and try to get to know them a little bit better.

I don't know, Stacy did that for me any time she was back

in town, so I hope I can be the same for them.

THE MODERATOR: This late in the season, how nice is it to sleep in your own bed?

MARIA FASSI: Awesome. It's amazing. I love it.

THE MODERATOR: Sixth time teeing up here at Pinnacle as a professional. Just being on this golf course, what are some of your memories of this golf course? I know finished T15 here couple years ago.

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I love the course. I think it's fair. There is holes that are kind of funky, but then there is a lot of great golf holes. It's a little bit of everything. It's fun. Always in great shape. Greens are starting to get a little bit faster, so it's exciting.

It's just the environment. I think that most of my memories have to do with the crowds going crazy or getting announced on the first tee as a former Razorback and people going crazy again for that.

So I think it's just the sense of community and passion that they have for the Razorbacks that makes this tournament even more special for me.

THE MODERATOR: I said six as a professional, but three of those times I think, a couple of them, were as an amateur. There is an amateur that's been playing on a sponsor's exemption as a Razorback. Have you talked to her at all this and given her some advice on how to handle being a little on LPGA event?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I think Kajal played last year as well, and she's a great player. She's fearless. She's a very good putter, which I think in this course you need to be. You need to make a lot of birdies to win out here, to make the cut.

It's always one of our lowest cuts of the year. I think for her, she just needs to have fun, enjoy, learn from the people she's playing with both in practice rounds and at the tournament and have fun.

I mean, I think there is a lot of time for her to worry about results. Right now I think it's just enjoy the experience and the opportunity that the sponsors have given her. I think



she's going to do amazing.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously a big week as well for your foundation, Fassi & Friends. Had a dinner last night; a clinic today. You wear a lot of hats off the golf course being a mentor to the Arkansas team and with the foundation. What's it like to be back here and raise more money for the foundation?

MARIA FASSI: It's awesome. We had a great turnout last night at Top Golf. A lot of fun. Some new faces came and started supporting the foundation, which was awesome. We had a bunch the kids there, a bunch of kids that got to the clinics together and they didn't know that they were going to see each other.

So kind of seeing them walk into Top Golf together and get all excited and surprised, it's just very special. I think that's my main goal with the foundation, is to create friends, and I think we've built a lot of amazing friendships with the kids.

So it was awesome. Today we're hoping to have a lot of people at the first tee here in a few hours. It should be a very fun evening for the kids. It's exciting. I love giving back to the community, seeing both kids and parents smile and make sure everybody is feeling welcomed and included.

**Q. You talk about sleeping in your own bed and how nice this feels, but there is also a downside to a home game, and that's the expectations. All of these fans are going to be out here following you and expecting a lot out of you. How have you handled that over the years, and how is it different now than when you first came out here?**

MARIA FASSI: I think it's both. It's of course a lot of expectations, more from myself I think than from outsiders.

I like to say that the outside expectation is more just support. I've played very poorly here in the past and I've still had amazing crowds follow me and cheer me on. I've done very good here in the past as well and the crowds have also been amazing.

So I think that in itself is a huge advantage. I think sometimes we need an extra push from somebody outside the ropes to get us through a couple bogeys or something. I think all of us Razorbacks have that advantage over some of the players.

And for me, I mean, I like to see it as I've played this golf course a lot more times than most people out here. I try to come and play in my off weeks and just get a little more comfortable around the greens and in some of the tee

shots.

So I just try to kind of see it as that, that I've prepared myself for a lot of the situations that I could potentially be in. Now I think instead of feeling stressed or overwhelmed, I feel like during this week I can relax a little more almost and know that I'll be okay because I've prepared pretty much the whole year for this week.

**Q. Speaking of preparation and expectations, you've been in the final group twice this year, Dow and Cincinnati. How have those experiences happened you perhaps take it to the next level?**

MARIA FASSI: It feels good to be there. To be quite frankly, I really liked it. Cincinnati of course was a little bit different. I was alone and struggled a little bit at the beginning. But I think it was probably what I needed just to keep learning and growing and work on some of the things that didn't go as planned the first few holes.

But it's good. I mean, I've been knocking on the door last few weeks, and I just got to keep giving myself opportunities. I hope I can be in the last group again this week. And if not, we'll keep trying again.

**Q. Refresh my memory, when did you move back to Arkansas as your home base, and how important has this been for like your overall psyche?**

MARIA FASSI: I moved back January of last year. It's been awesome. I don't even know why I left in the first place. I'm just so happy to be back. I think when I get to be home I actually get to relax and recharge and get ready for longer stretches that sometimes I have to go on on the road.

I love it. Again, I think the sense of community and family that I feel here, I hadn't felt elsewhere in the U.S., So I'm happy to be back home and that I can have at least one stop on tour where I can like I said before, just sleep at home and enjoy and have my people be around.

**Q. One follow up. You mentioned that maybe it was good for you that you kind of had a slow-ish start in the final round. When you went back and dissected that Sunday, what did you come away with?**

MARIA FASSI: I think of course in the moment I wasn't so happy about the slow start, but I think the last couple holes, Gary, my caddie and I were just kind of talking about the round. It was of course very clear that unless something insane happened I was of course not going to win.

But it was just like, Hey, we came back. We still gave



ourselves a chance. We realized maybe at the beginning we might have played a little too aggressively and it kind of backfired.

It just goes to show that whenever I do stick to my own game and not really looking at what's happening in my surroundings, I was able to put together three beautiful golf rounds. At Dow, a lot of birdies for the team and a lot of opportunities when we played alternate shot.

So just goes to say that what we're doing, it truly works. Just encouraging me to continue to do that and not get kind of the chase after results get in the way of my process.

THE MODERATOR: Talking to you at Cincinnati, it's been a challenging year. Seems like the switch has flipped in a more positive direction with that week in Cincinnati and also your recent play. What's changed for you?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I mean, I think at the beginning of the year I did a lot of changes with my team and the way I was playing the game. I think it was a matter of time for it to start working.

Of course Dow, playing with Stacy and kind of talking through more of what my process has to be and kind of perfecting our plan for the rest of the year was pretty special, especially seeing that those results were showing like right there.

And then, again, Cincinnati, and even Marathon the week before, results-wise it doesn't show that it was a great week, but it was stupid close. Like I just had a bad finish on Friday on the last two holes and just kind of transferred to the weekend.

But I have been playing very, very good golf, and I'm excited to be in a position where I feel comfortable and very committed to what we're doing with my whole team.

So I'm excited for the next couple weeks and the end of the season.

THE MODERATOR: What does it mean to have that mentorship in Stacy?

MARIA FASSI: It's everything. I mean, I joke with her that she saved my butt twice, so maybe it's about time that maybe next year she needs some saving and I can come through.

THE MODERATOR: As we look ahead not only to this week but the rest of the season, not a lot of events left, what are some goals for your game? You're trending in a

great direction. At your hometown event. Really what are you looking for from yourself for the rest of this year?

MARIA FASSI: I think from where I started to now, like the goals have definitely shifted tremendously. It's just getting back to enjoying the game, which I have the last six -- five, six, seven events.

And just having fun.

I mean, I know it's kind of cheesy, but the more I have fun and the more I enjoy it, the better the results end up coming.

So for me, it's just doing that and really truly sticking to my process. I could say I want to win and that I want to do all these things, which of course they're always there, but not winning or winning isn't going to really determine success on like my team and I's standards.

So that's what I'm looking for. Just enjoying it. This week is special. I get to have of course a home crowd, but also share with a lot of kids from the clinic. So just try to be a good example for them and inspiration for people. Just enjoy it and having fun.

THE MODERATOR: One more fun question. Football game on Saturday.

MARIA FASSI: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: How locked in will you be to that the Arkansas-Texas A&M game?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, very excited about my morning tee time on Saturday, so I'll be -- I have a nice back porch at home. I'll definitely be just laying on the coach or just outside enjoying it. Maybe couple friends.

But it'll a lot of fun. Hopefully we both -- Razorbacks and I -- have a very happy day.

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