

NW Arkansas Championship

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Rogers, Arkansas, USA

Pinnacle Country Club

Maria Fassi

Press Conference



Walmart
NW ARKANSAS
CHAMPIONSHIP
PRESENTED BY **P&G**

MATT JESUS: All right, joined by Maria Fassi here at the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship. Maria, this tournament experiences its 20th year. I think your name in recent years has become synonymous with this event. How cool is it to be part of this event with Fassi's Friends and all the love Coach Shauna gives you guys?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, it's awesome to see how much it's grown, how much the community continues to get involved and new events continue to, you know, come up every year.

Yeah, just very excited to be here. Very happy to be celebrating 20 years of this amazing event, and honestly just really, really thankful that I got the sponsor invite and I get to compete in my home state, you know, in front of the Razorback fans against the best players in the world.

So, yeah, just extremely grateful and excited to be here.

MATT JESUS: And then obviously with Fassi's Friends this week, what can fans expect this week?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, we had an awesome two days both Tuesday and Wednesday with Fassi's Friends Festival and a fundraiser over at Top Golf last night.

It was a lot of fun there was lots of kids. On Tuesday we had almost 200 kids come to the festival and everybody is asking, hey, when are you going to be walking off 17 so we can call the Hogs with you?

It's just such a treat to see the joy and the excitement that the event means for them as well, so it's really cool for me obviously to play, but that I get to share it with all the kids and the community.

MATT JESUS: Then bringing it back to golf, obviously no stranger to this course. What are some of the intricacies of this course, and how are you able to take advantage of some of those?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, it's always a birdiefest out here.

Scores get lower and lower every year for some reason. I guess we get better every year.

But, I mean, I think it's nice just being able to maybe have a few rounds throughout the year out here and see a break or two on the greens that maybe does something different than what you think it might do.

The guy caddieing for me this week is the club champion, so he's already came in clutch at the pro-am today and through the practice rounds with a couple of good reads on the greens. So I know I'm going to be using him a lot and it's going to be fun.

But I think most of it it's just the comfort of being home and the comfort of knowing that on a good day or bad day I'm still loved for who I am, and proud to represent the Razorbacks and the people around me support me in that regard.

MATT JESUS: Coming off a top 20 finish at last week's Epon Tour event. How does the game feel coming into this week?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, Mystic Creek was a true test of golf. Really showed me some of the areas that I needed to work on, and it also showed me the areas that were really good in my game.

So it was kind of a cool test leading up to this week, so it was nice being able to work on a few of those things early in the week, and continue to get the good feels with the irons and with putting.

So, yeah, I mean, the game has been trending. I've felt that my scores haven't necessarily shown it as much, but the second round for sure at Mystic Creek last week maybe gave me the umph that I needed to continue to believe in myself and continue to work on the things that I'm working on.

I'm excited for the challenge that the next few days will be out here.

Q. You talked about just being back here, being comfortable, and just around so many familiar faces.

... when all is said, we're done.®



In 2019 you won a national championship at The Blessings in Fayetteville. How has that experience really help you next week being at a familiar course that you know for an LPGA event?

MARIA FASSI: Well, I'll tell you, one of my favorite things about winning the national championship here was calling the Hogs walking up the 18th hole.

I feel like being able to do that out here would be a pretty epic one. Maybe I get to do that on Sunday. (Smiling.)

But, yeah, it's just -- like I said earlier, it's just comfortable. I get to be and sleep in my own bed, be at home. My parents flew in for the week. I have two of my best friends also here this week. It's just a big family affair.

And the community makes me feel that way as well, so it's just awesome to play in front of awesome people and awesome fans. I hope that my game gives them something to cheer and get excited about as well.

Q. I bet it's pretty cool to see Fassi's Friends continue to keep growing and growing, like what Matt talked about.

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, it's been awesome to see. This is year six of the foundation, and we've been able to impact so many different people and so many lives. There is not a day that I'm not grateful that I started the foundation, and when we do these events it's awesome to meet some of the kids that I'm able to impact, some of the families, lives that we're able to change.

So it's extremely encouraging for me to continue to do that and to grow Fassi's Friends.

Q. Shauna Taylor was in here earlier with Maria Jose Marin talking about the 20th anniversary of the event. She calls herself a proud mama bear. Gaby came in here too. She talked about how Shauna just recruited her out of Mexico and then you followed in her footsteps. How much has Shauna meant to you on the course and off the course?

MARIA FASSI: Yeah, I mean, I think obviously what she's been able to do with recruiting and with developing players, you know, the records don't lie and the stats are there, but I think for me it was just more the help that she always gave me to develop and to grow as a human being.

I think in times where I had no confidence in myself or no self-belief, she was really encouraging and helpful in making golf feel less important in my life in a way, which in turn just kind of like helped me loosen up and play better.

But just always focusing on the person first. I'm forever grateful that I got to play for her for four seasons and that I still practice with the girls from time to time. I call myself an honorary member of the Arkansas women's golf team for the rest of time. I'll be doing the drills and listening to her like I did many moons ago.

But it's awesome just to see the passion that she has and the love that she has for the game and for us. I mean, she was a coach now she's a friend, and I'm really lucky to have her in my corner.

Q. When you graduated in 2019, when you turned pro, you moved to Florida and then moved back here. Over the past several years this community has grown by leaps and bounds, along with the tournament. How much have you seen this community and this tournament grow since you turned pro?

MARIA FASSI: Oh, so much. I mean, I think -- I remember leaving the gates over here at Pinnacle and there was really not a whole lot until you reached the highway. Now there are shopping centers and restaurants and hotels and apartment complexes. It's just so much over there.

But I think mainly just like I said, each year there is something else and there is something more for the community to get involved in. I think that's what makes this tournament so special. Even through the ups and downs we've seen through the years of this event with weather and whatnot, the community has always rallied behind.

I think that's the essence of this event, and I think that's why it means so much to us Razorbacks, but it also means so much for all the girls that always like to come back and goat share a week with their awesome host families and get to share a little southern hospitality.

Yeah, it's amazing. I'm really proud of the last 20 years that this event has had, and I'm really excited to see where the next 20 are going to be.

Q. I'm just curious, what has been the significance of this tournament for you personally and with your career just throughout the years?

MARIA FASSI: Hi, Amy. I think for me it all started as a goal. When I was in school it was the No. 1 player on the team would get the exemption into the event, so it started as a dream, as a goal of wanting to play here and learn from the best in the world.

With the years, obviously now being this is year seven on



the LPGA, it's changed a little bit, but there is still the dream of wanting to win this tournament one time.

Obviously we have now a tournament in Mexico, but until couple years ago this was the closest thing to winning at home that I could ever have.

So that's now the goal and the dream of hopefully being able to hoist the trophy on a Sunday afternoon in front of our people, in front of my community, and in front of all the awesome Razorback fans.

It's just kind of changed every year obviously with the foundation and with how much we do throughout the week. That has a huge piece of my heart.

Just every day of the week there is something awesome happening and something that I'm grateful for and something that we're being able to impact people and kids.

So, yeah, it's just an amazing week and I'm happy I get to be a part of it. The last ten years I've played in it have been awesome.

Q. Thank you. Have a good week.

MARIA FASSI: Thank you.

MATT JESUS: Okay, now we're done.

MARIA FASSI: Thanks, Maria.

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