

# KPMG Women's PGA Championship

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

Chaska, Minnesota, USA

Hazeltine National Golf Club

## Kate Smith-Stroh

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good morning everyone. Kate Smith-Stroh is with us now at the 2026 KPMG Women's PGA Championship. Kate, welcome to Hazeltine. As a Minnesota native how excited are you about the opportunity this week?

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, I'm thrilled to be here. It's definitely special. Like when the plane landed I was like, all right, we're home. This is comfortable.

So I'm honored to be here.

THE MODERATOR: That's great. We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Kate, I know this is probably a dream come true for you to get this call. What was the reaction? What did it mean to get the call to come play this week?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, it was very special. Definitely been circled on my calendar for a while. Played some junior golf here, and, yeah, feels just kind of like a celebration for my family and friends.

You know, it's about performance and playing well, but I feel like this week is more like trying to thank the people that got me here. It took a village, so it's nice to have a lot of support this week and be able to share it with everybody.

**Q. I know you were a rookie on the LPGA last season. What have you learned over the last couple years, not only playing out here on the LPGA full time, but also splitting your time with Epson that will hopefully help you in this big moment?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, I feel like my game has kind of been forged in the fire the last couple years. Yeah, being on the LPGA definitely brings out the best in you and it's a great challenge.



So I think I learned what my deficiencies are and I've been actively working on them to try to be competitive every week out here when I get the opportunity.

**Q. Sounds like you played the property quite a bit growing up. You attend any events that have been held here over the years and what are some of your memories from those events?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, my dad took my best friend and I, we watched Hannah Green -- I don't know if we watched her win, but we spent a long time. I just remember the crowds. I mean, that was how many years ago, and the crowds were really good out here. It was well-supported.

Playing for a much bigger purse now with more TV hours, so I think it's going to be a really great week. Like this is a great championship venue, so to be inside the ropes this time is pretty crazy.

**Q. So we have the Corebridge team this week. We have a few teaching pros. I know you have a personal relationship and family relationship with instruction, and so can you talk a little bit about that?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, my dad has been a PGA member for 30 plus years. He's worked at public and private golf courses and definitely a big reason I'm here today, him being able to teach my brother and I.

Him and my mom, they used to do about like 200 juniors a week in their clinics at our par-3 course, so just seeing their passion for the game and growing the game. I don't think on the professional side we always understand the importance the PGA professionals. They're really building our fan base and they're teaching people to love golf.

So it's pretty special to be at PGA Championship, especially with some of the PGA members in the field. Like you guys have Allie White next. She's one of the best in the sport. So teaching people how to play the game right and how to love the game at an early age is pretty special.



I'm glad my dad was able to instill that in us.

**Q. I understand you get involved in the clinics. You're part of it.**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yes.

**Q. What do you enjoy the most about that?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Man, kids definitely look for the joy in things so quickly. You see them hit a ball and their face lights up. And then how athletic they are. Like they don't get in their own way. They see the target, they hit the target, they make a putt and they're like, oh, it's an easy game.

So seeing the joy and how easy the game is at a young age is pretty cool to watch kids light up when they learn how fun golf can be.

**Q. One last thing. Wondering what's with golf in Minnesota. Was here '16 Ryder Cup. You were talking about '19. A lot of people coming here. There is a passion for golf around here and a short season, no?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Very short.

**Q. So how do those two things go together?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, the golf culture is great here. I think that's been kudos to the public golf in Minnesota. Just so many great courses and access to great courses. And then the youth, I think there is so much just access to tee times and instruction.

We love golf here. I think the short season makes us so excited for it. Like you said, we've had great championships here and so we come out and support and love when sports come our way and we get to experience them in person. It's pretty great.

**Q. How would you describe how last year, like a pretty full season prepared you for a big major championship like this?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, definitely grateful to have the experience. It was a tough rookie year. It was fun, but I learned a lot. Made a lot of mistakes. I got play in the Chevron Championship; missed the cut by one there. Tried to get my full card back in the fall; missed that by one shot. Missed the Open this year by one shot.

I think I handled a lot of hard moments in the last year and this opportunity feels like a good moment, and I hope to

meet the moment. You know, you have to fail a lot to get better at golf and I think I've learned so much from my mistakes the past year.

Yeah, my rookie year was a really great, you know, moment for me to be able to be on the LPGA. It was a great joy and I want to stay out here for a long time.

I was grateful for all the things I learned.

**Q. You mentioned a little bit about how much pride do you take from here and making it onto the LPGA Tour. Not a lot of people do that.**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, it's awesome. When I was here last time I watched Sarah Burnham. I think she was our last LPGA member from Minnesota. That was special to be like, okay, she did it. Yeah, it's really special, and I hope that other girls can see that if you're from the Midwest there are opportunities for you if you work hard and keep your head down and just dream a little bit bigger than you can imagine, too.

**Q. Are you staying with family? Do you expect a whole bunch of people out here following?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, I am not staying with family this week, but I did ask the PGA for some more tickets and they sent some. I'm lucky to have a lot of my sponsors are from the Twin Cities, so, yeah, I kind of -- my mentality this week was like, come one, come all. I just want to share it with everybody I know, and it'll be great.

**Q. I just have one more. How is the graphic design going?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: It's good. Yeah, we're still in business, Shane and I. It's been five years now. So Windsong farm and Wayzata Country Club, which is pretty close, we did design work for them. I might stop by their pro shops this week.

**Q. I'm just curious, when you're here watching Hannah Green win, what were your dreams then and what has been -- what's the ride been like?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, I was in the middle of my college career and I would say I was an average college golfer. I don't think that this was in the cards at that point. I worked pretty hard since then to make the dream a reality.

I would say the similarity between who I was there and who I am now is I just really love golf. I realized the better I got at it the more I could play and the longer I could stay out

here.

Hasn't been a linear journey to the LPGA from Nebraska, but I had a lot of great coaches and support that got me here.

**Q. Welcome home. How much can playing on a course that you're familiar with help you this week?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, a ton. Especially the grass. I think we're always trying to adapt to conditions week to week, so it's nice to come back and be a little more familiar with the thick rough and the fast greens that Hazeltine brings.

So I'll definitely rely on some of the familiarity to help this nose big moments this week.

**Q. What about your game works on this course?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: I really like how it is off the tee. I'm pretty creative so I think each hole calls for some specific shots out there and really paints a picture. I think I'm going to lean on my creativity, especially off the tee, to get in positions to score.

**Q. I know you had a unique childhood growing up here and like you said with the short season. Can you walk us through A, how little Kate got interested in golf and what that process was like? I know you used to hit balls into tarps and things of that nature and your parents had to create a girls' golf program for you. Just what would you tell her about this moment you're about to enjoy this week?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, man, yeah, it was a great upbringing. My parents owned a nine-hole par-3 golf course about four hours north. Our clubhouse was attached to our home, and so, yeah, my dad -- I think one winter he hung a mattress in the maintenance barn and I had a space heater I would hit into.

It was definitely a unique upbringing, which a lot of people around here can relate to with the long winters. I guess I would just tell her that she could do it. I don't think I knew I could do it at that point. Just, you know, so I think that's pretty special, that we made it all the way here. Definitely not alone.

My parents made a lot of sacrifices for me to be here. We would drive down to the Cities three, four times a week. Get up at 4:00, 5:00 a.m. to come to places like these, play, and then we would get back at 11:00 p.m. and my dad would hop on a mower at 6:00 to mow the greens for the first group out.

So I'm really grateful for all the people that helped me get here, especially my family.

**Q. What would you tell those little Minnesota girls watching you compete this week? What would you tell them about how they can do it, too?**

KATE SMITH-STROH: Yeah, it's out there. You know, women's golf is in the best position it's ever been, so go get it. I mean what a great time to be a woman in golf. Just a lifetime of opportunities and joy and travel that is definitely worth a little bit of hard work and patience and all those things.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time Kate, good luck this week.

KATE SMITH-STROH: Thanks. Thank you, guys.

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