



INAUGURAL WOMEN'S PGA CUP | OCTOBER 22-26, 2019 | OMNI BARTON CREEK | AUSTIN, TX

## Back-Nine Charge gives United States a slim lead after opening round of the Inaugural Women's PGA Cup

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By Bob Denney  
PGA Historian

**AUSTIN, Texas (October 24, 2019)** - Competing for one's country commonly generates a flock of butterflies in one's stomach. Brittany Kelly of Indianapolis found wearing red, white and blue only elevated her focus in Thursday's opening round of the inaugural Women's PGA Cup.

The 31-year-old PGA Assistant Professional at Woodland Country Club in Carmel, Indiana, found her rhythm - especially on the Fazio Foothills' demanding final three holes - to post a 3-under-par 69. It was the spark the United States needed to surge past Canada, 219 to 221, in the first international team competition for women PGA Professionals.

The 54-hole event, featuring a quintet of five-player teams, concludes Saturday at the Omni Barton Creek Resort & Spa. Australia was in third place at 234, followed by Great Britain & Ireland (237) and Sweden (239).

The U.S. and Canada separated themselves from the field midway through the round, but the Americans trailed twice by five strokes and were behind by two through 16 holes. Then, a series of events on the uphill, 470-yard par-5 18<sup>th</sup> hole resulted in a four-stroke swing in favor of the U.S.

Canada's Christine Wong, a member of her country's Women's National Golf Team, marched to a steady 1-under-par 71 to set the pace. But, the elation was short-lived as teammate Rebecca Lee-Bentham struggled to clear her ball from the hazard in front of the 18<sup>th</sup> green and closed with a triple bogey 8.

That opened the door for the U.S., with Ashley Grier of Springfield, Pennsylvania, knocking home a 12-foot birdie putt at 18. That brought a wry smile after overcoming a triple bogey 7 on No. 16.

Next, it was up to teammate Alison Curdt of Reseda, California, who had a 73, and just missed a birdie attempt on the low side of the 18<sup>th</sup> hole.

The stage was left to Kelly, who safely hit her second shot on 18 left of the fairway and with a clear view of the uphill green. She pitched to 20 feet past the flagstick, and two-putted for par.

Standing behind the 18<sup>th</sup> green, U.S. Captain Suzy Whaley, the president of the PGA of America, was beaming.

“I am so proud of them. They hung in there after getting off to a rocky start,” said Whaley, the PGA Director of Instruction at the Country Club of Mirasol in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. “Each of them had a bad hole, but they bounced back. I was super proud of our final two players on the course - Alison and Brittany. They played wonderful golf today.”

Earlier in the week, Whaley said her team needed to improve its play on the back nine. Curdt and Kelly got their captain’s “memo.” Curdt parred the final three holes, while Kelly rolled home a five-foot birdie putt on the par-4 16<sup>th</sup> hole, then finished with a pair of pars.

The reigning Indiana Women’s Open Champion and Section Assistants Champion, Kelly made a pact with herself prior to facing the Fazio Foothills’ gauntlet of Holes 16-18.

“I have not played them very well in practice,” said Kelly. “I said to myself that I am going to hit every fairway and every green. I was able to accomplish that.” She also didn’t shy away from looking at the scoreboard.

“I do like to keep up with what is happening on the scoreboard,” she said. “I want to know where we stand. I like the pressure and kind of thrive on it. Today, I did draw upon my Indiana Open and Assistant Championships experience. I felt it helped me.”

Curdt is a PGA/LPGA Master Professional and Director of Instruction at Alison Curdt Golf at Wood Ranch Golf Club in Simi Valley, California. She also is the national Vice President of the LPGA Teaching & Club Professionals Division and the only woman PGA Master Professional trained in Clinical Psychology.

With that résumé, there is no guarantee all will go smoothly in golf and to have that extra dose of patience competing in fivesomes.

“I didn’t look at the scoreboard until the back nine,” said Curdt. “I saw that Canada was ahead of us and when I got up to 18, was pleasantly surprised that the lead had switched. Slow play in golf sucks, but the pace of play in a fivesome was not an issue. We didn’t wait; we just had the pacing of a fivesome. The only thing that I had need for patience was waiting for birdies to drop.”

Canada's Wong, an Apprentice Professional at Langara College in Vancouver, British Columbia, said that the talent on her team is ever-changing due to familiarity.

"We have played against each other in junior golf, and I played with Emma (De Groot, the Canadian Playing Captain) in Symetra Tour events," said Wong. "There really isn't a 'core' group, because it changes each day."

Whaley said the Women's PGA Cup is a study in how to get the most out of all five players. Though there are three best scores of a five-member team used daily, a dependable trio isn't guaranteed.

"Tomorrow, it could be two or three other players who step up," said Whaley. "That's team golf. I felt that we settled down a bit as the day went from a bit chilly to a little warmer. The nerves were out, but they all realized that golf is golf whether you are competing for your country or yourself."

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