



PGA WINTER CHAMPIONSHIPS | JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2023 | PGA GOLF CLUB | PORT ST. LUCIE, FL

## Sandra Changkija Rallies to Win Third Consecutive PGA Women's Stroke Play Championship

### *Lisa Grimes Defends Title in Senior Division*

By CRAIG DOLCH

Special to PGA of America

**PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (Feb. 21, 2023)** - Sandra Changkija of Kissimmee, Florida, won her third consecutive PGA Women's Stroke Play Championship on Tuesday at PGA Golf Club.

But the finish was not expected.

Changkija finished eagle-birdie-birdie to overcome a three-shot deficit with three holes to play for a one-stroke victory over Stephanie Connelly-Eiswerth of Fleming Island, Florida. Changkija shot 6-under-66 on the Wanamaker Course to finish at 6-under-209.

Changkija's hopes appeared to end when she three-putted the 15th hole to fall three behind Connelly-Eiswerth. But Changkija eagled the 16th with a 6-iron from 165 yards to 2 feet, rolled in a 60-foot birdie putt at No. 17 and then birdied the 18th to win when Connelly-Eiswerth bogeyed the final hole.

"It feels amazing to win three in a row," said Changkija, a PGA Assistant Professional at ChampionsGate near Orlando. "I don't really know what to say other than I hit really good golf shots."

"A five-shot deficit (to start the round) to Stephanie, who's a really good player, seemed kind of hard. I didn't have any expectations, I just wanted to make birdies."

Connelly-Eiswerth responded to Changkija's brilliant second shot at No. 16 by hitting her third shot to 5 feet and made the putt to keep her lead at two. Then Changkija made her long putt at No. 17 to make it a one-shot deficit heading to the final hole.

"I three-putted two holes, but sure enough I made 60-footers on two par-3s, so that helped," Changkija said. "After 17, I just knew I had to play 18 well."

Connelly-Eiswerth (72-210) started the final round with a three-shot lead over Allie Knight and maintained that advantage through 15 holes. But she was in between clubs at the 18th and failed to get up-and-down from behind the green.

"That's not an easy pin to get to," Connelly-Eiswerth said. "I played really well this week; just didn't do enough today. Sandra had it going today and she finished it off."

Loretta Giovannettone of Jupiter, Florida, finished tied for third with Allie Knight to earn a spot in the KPMG Women's PGA Championship June 21-25 at Baltusrol Golf Club in New Jersey. Giovannettone shot 1-under-71 to finish at 216 and edge Meaghan Francella (70-217). Giovannettone made a 6-foot par putt at the 18th hole after her drive almost went into the water.

"It feels really good," said Giovannettone, a 31-year-old PGA Assistant Professional at the Country Club of Florida. "That's my goal when I play in this tournament every year. From the tee, I couldn't tell if I was in the water or not. It was closer than I wanted it to be. I was proud to make that 6-foot putt."

Changkija, Connelly-Eisworth, Knight, Joanna Coe and Samantha Morrell already had qualified for the KPMG through their finishes in the LPGA Teaching and Club Professional Championship.

Lisa Grimes from Arizona defended her title in the Senior Division, shooting 1-over-73 Tuesday to win by 12 shots at 4-under-211.

"I was lucky to get off to a strong start because I haven't played in a tournament in three months," said Grimes, who won the overall title twice (2018 and 2020). "It's nice to win any tournament at my age. We don't get many opportunities to play, so I appreciate the PGA for letting us play."

The PGA Winter Championships are presented by GolfPass, On Location.

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