



Bell Micro LPGA Classic in Mobile to feature the world's top eight players

By Tommy Hicks

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WONG MAYE-E/Associated Press

Loreno Ochoa chips to the green during the third round of the HSBC Women's Champions tournament on Feb. 27 in Singapore.

The top eight women's golfers in the world have committed to play in the Bell Micro LPGA Classic at Magnolia Grove's renovated Crossings Course May 13-16.

The tournament, which was moved from its original October date last year to its new date this spring, has a full field of 144 players and 28 alternates.

Lorena Ochoa, a past champion of The Mitchell Company Tournament of Champions limited-field event that preceded the Bell Micro, is the world's top-ranked player and heads the list of early commitments.

She is joined, in order, by the next seven in the rankings: Jiyai Shin, Ai Miyazato, Suzann Pettersen, Cristie Kerr, Yani Tseng, Anna Nordqvist and Karrie Webb.

"I think the biggest thing that this shows is the job that has been done in prior events in Mobile," tournament director Jonathan Romeo said. "The players like Mobile and enjoy playing there. That's evident by the field. ... Having the top eight players in the world is pretty darn good, but we're hoping to have all of the top 100 players in the world."

Defending Bell Micro champion Angela Stanford is ranked No. 11 in the world and will return to defend her crown.

Other popular players who have committed to the Mobile tournament include Juli Inkster, Morgan Pressel, Natalie Gulbis, Se Ri Pak, Stacy Lewis, Anna Rawson, Christina Kim, Brittany Lincicome, Brittany Lang, Laura Diaz, Katherine Hull, Jennifer Rosales, Meg Mallon, Wendy Ward and Maria Hjorth.

No. 9 Michelle Wie and No. 10 Paula Creamer have not committed but still have time. Wie has not played here, but Creamer won the Tournament of Champions and an American Junior Golf Association tournament on the Crossings Course. Creamer is struggling with a wrist injury.

Also in the field is Bernadette Luse, who earned her sponsor's exemption by winning the Golf Channel's "Big Break Michigan" with playing partner Haymes Snedeker of Fairhope.

The LPGA schedule also has contributed to the early commitment list, Romeo said. The Bell Micro LPGA Classic is one of only 13 tournaments in the United States this season, and its spot on the calendar comes after a two-week break on tour. And the next full-field event after the Bell Micro isn't until the LPGA State Farm Classic in Springfield, Ill., June 10-13.

For more information on the tournament, visit www.bellmicrolpgaclassic.com.

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