RIGHT ON CUE
THE LPGA STORY
Blazing a trail is seldom easy, and oftentimes met with resistance. In the best of times, it can be a very slow and deliberate process, periodically interrupted by those watching from the sidelines, wondering out loud why the “status quo” is no longer good enough.

Nearly 70 years ago, the Founders of the LPGA challenged the status quo. And today, thousands of women and young girls are the beneficiaries of their tremendous personal sacrifice.

This book is dedicated to those 13 amazing and head-strong women who believed in their cause and were willing to do whatever it took to make their dreams and the dreams of future generations come true.

For Our Founders

Alice Bauer • Marlene Bauer Hagge • Patty Berg
Bettye Danoff • Helen Dettweiler • Helen Hicks • Opal Hill
Betty Jameson • Sally Sessions • Marilynn Smith
Shirley Spork • Louise Suggs • Babe Zaharias
You don’t become nearly 70 years strong without talented athletes, trusted partners and a collective culture of doing whatever it takes to succeed. Throughout our history it seemed that just the right people came along at just the right time to help get us where we are today.

Our story began in 1950, when 13 brave and bold women launched the LPGA with a dream of providing a platform for women to play professional golf. Just nine years later, that same bold spirit and focus on women’s opportunities led to the start of the LPGA Teaching and Club Professionals. Since then, so many people have been instrumental in keeping the LPGA soaring to new heights. And while each decade tells its own story, with a cast of characters specific to those moments in time, there is no doubt that the LPGA would not be where it is today without each one of YOU!

While we cannot possibly capture every person in this book, I want you to know that ALL of you have played a unique and important role in the success and sustainability of this great organization. You have all kept the pages turning in this extraordinary LPGA story.

As you take a walk through the decades in this book, I hope you share my pride for what we have all built together!

We’ve come a long way, and despite our current size and strength, we continue to be driven by one single phrase, one single philosophy, that guides everything we do – Act Like a Founder.

I can’t wait to see what the next 70 years will bring and who will be next to step onto the stage – Right on Cue.

Mike Whan
LPGA Commissioner
The Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) wasn’t the first organized attempt at women’s professional golf, but it most certainly was going to be a better, stronger version of its predecessor, the Women’s Professional Golf Association (WPGA). Lessons were learned. New actors were center stage and in 1950 the curtain was raised.

The cast of characters in these early years included a handful of stars like Patty Berg, Babe Zaharias, Louise Suggs, Betsy Rawls and Marilynn Smith. But there were other accomplished professionals like Beverly Hanson, Fay Crocker and Peggy Kirk Bell, along with many amateur female golfers, who filled out the fields in those early days.

By all accounts it was a labor of love for these women, whose pioneering spirit kept them going from town to town. They were setting up the course, making the pairings, scheduling TV and radio promotions, competing, paying out the purse, loading up the cars and heading down the road to the next stop. To do it all over again. One week at a time.

And before they knew it, a second season had started, and a third and a fourth. Tournaments were being added and prize money was slowly increasing, but it was long days and hard work for these pioneers, who were hoping to build a lasting legacy.

In 1956, the LPGA’s all-star line-up was dealt a heavy blow with the death of “the Babe” who, along with Berg and Smith, had largely been the faces of the LPGA Tour. Despite the loss, the LPGA was buoyed by historic performances from other LPGA greats: Marlene Bauer Hagge dominated the 1956 season with 8 victories and would go on to win 26 times over an unparalleled five-decade career; Suggs achieved the Career Grand Slam (1957), Rawls captured her third of four U.S. Women’s Open titles (1957), and Berg won her record 15th major championship title (1958).

As if running the Tour wasn’t hard enough, amazingly, these women took on yet another challenge at that time. In 1959, fellow Founders Marilynn Smith and Shirley Spork, along with Betty Hicks and Barbara Rotvig, set up the first teaching committee which evolved into the modern-day LPGA Teaching and Club Professionals.

In its first 10 years, the LPGA Tour managed to keep its footing. A decade that started with 14 tournaments and $50,000 in total prize money ended with 26 events worth $200,000. And while this growth was impressive, it was no secret that the Tour needed even more stars if it was going to continue building credibility in the sports world.
With the 1950s in the rear-view mirror, the LPGA Tour needed to build on its early success and recognized that sustained growth would require a strong stable of stars and serious competitors.

Enter Mickey Wright and Kathy Whitworth.

These two players dominated the LPGA Tour in the 60s. They combined for 121 victories in this decade (Wright - 68, Whitworth - 53) and nine Vare Trophies between 1960 and 1969. Wright set a record for most wins in a season which still stands today with 13 (1963), and Whitworth captured 35 of her 53 victories in just four years (1965-68).

If Wright and Whitworth weren’t winning, Carol Mann and Sandra Haynie were. Mann captured her first title in 1964 and went on to win 28 (of her career total 38) titles in this decade while Haynie collected 17 of her 42 career wins in the 60s.

These future Hall of Famers were leading a roster that was deeper and more talented than ever before. On the course, the LPGA was gaining momentum and more attention for its outstanding competitions and athletes. Off the course, the LPGA was taking a strong stand on the social and civil rights issues of the day.

The color barrier in women’s professional golf was broken in 1963 when two-time Wimbledon champion Althea Gibson became the first African American to join the LPGA Tour. Four years later Renee Powell followed in her footsteps. The LPGA Tour had voted down a “Caucasian only” policy several years earlier and throughout the 60s LPGA players strongly supported the equal rights of these women and fought for their acceptance in the game. If they were not allowed into a clubhouse or faced any kind of discrimination, the LPGA refused to hold the tournament at that facility.

The LPGA not only survived another decade, it flourished, doubling the number of events and tripling its total prize money. Women’s professional golf had made its debut on national TV and was gaining popularity. But for the LPGA Tour to sustain this kind of growth, it was going to need some major corporate support.

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The 1960s

Steady as She Goes

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A more perfect script could not have been written.

Just when the LPGA Tour needed someone from corporate America to take a second look, along came David Foster, a single-digit golfer who was chairman and CEO of the Colgate Palmolive Company. In 1972, Foster offered the LPGA a deal that changed the trajectory of women’s professional golf.

Over the next 10 years, Colgate sponsored several tournaments around the world – but none were more successful or widely regarded as the Colgate-Dinah Shore Winner’s Circle, an event which would later become a major championship. Staged near Palm Springs, California, the hub of Hollywood, and hosted by well-known radio and TV personality Dinah Shore, this quickly became the most popular event on the LPGA Tour. Celebrity invitations to play in “The Dinah” pro-am were highly sought after, as this event grew into a “must attend” for show business A-listers.

With increased corporate support and more televised events, many young women looking to make a name – and a career - for themselves came to the Tour. And they did not disappoint. Emerging stars like Judy Rankin, Amy Alcott, JoAnne Carner, Jane Blalock, Sandra Palmer, Susie Maxwell Berning and Jan Stephenson started to show the world the wide range of talent and personalities on the LPGA Tour.

The 70s marked an era when corporate America started taking a serious look at women’s professional golf as a viable option for entertaining clients and promoting their brands. The LPGA Tour seemed to have broken through - proving that it was a legitimate and talented tour of players who deserved this platform and recognition in the world of sports.

With the LPGA Tour closing in on its 30-year anniversary, there was plenty to celebrate. The schedule was strong. Prize money and tournament opportunities were increasing. And a young player named Nancy Lopez came along and vaulted women’s golf into the spotlight in a way that no player had ever done before.
Everyone just called her Nancy. Her bright smile and ‘girl next door’ personality quickly made Lopez a popular sports figure who transcended women’s golf. She would dominate much of the 80s – bringing increased media exposure, fan awareness and sponsor interest to the sport.

The rising tide of the LPGA Tour benefited everyone, including the crop of future Hall of Famers who came to prominence in the 80s – Pat Bradley, Beth Daniel, Juli Inkster, Betsy King, Patty Sheehan and Hollis Stacy. While these players were laying the foundations for their careers, other players like Kathy Whitworth were putting final touches on theirs. In 1981 Whitworth became the first LPGA player to win $1 million in career earnings and in 1985 she won the 88th and final championship of her storied career.

The LPGA Tour of the 80s was enjoying a boom. The business of women’s professional golf was getting stronger and the popularity of its players and the strength of competition helped build a tournament schedule worth $14 million in prize money. Word of the growing opportunities on the LPGA Tour spread internationally and this piqued the interest of many players outside of the United States, three of whom were about to change the face of women’s professional golf around the globe.

In 1987, England’s Laura Davies “crossed the pond” to compete in the U.S. Women’s Open. The young, long-hitting Davies wound up winning the title and earning a one-year exemption to the LPGA Tour. That same year, Japan’s Ayako Okamoto won four events on the LPGA and became the first international player ever to win the Rolex Player of the Year award. And in 1988, Sweden’s Liselotte Neumann, an LPGA Tour rookie, made it back-to-back U.S. Women’s Open wins for the Europeans.

Through their ground-breaking achievements, these three players helped pave the way for future generations of international players. By the end of the 80s, the LPGA Tour would be known as the place to compete against the best in the world.
Amy Alcott starts the tradition of jumping in Poppie’s Pond (1988)
Patty Sheehan

Juli Inkster

Pat Bradley achieves career Grand Slam (1986)

Betsy King
In 1990 the LPGA Tour celebrated its 40th Anniversary.

Never one to rest on its laurels, in the fall of 1990, the LPGA launched the first ever Solheim Cup in Orlando, Florida. Kathy Whitworth (USA) and Mickey Walker (Europe) captained their eight-player teams in this U.S. vs. Europe biennial competition fashioned after the highly successful Ryder Cup. The staging of the Solheim Cup, just a few short years after Laura Davies and Liselotte Neumann won their respective U.S. Women’s Open titles, spoke to the rapid influx of talented European players competing on the LPGA Tour.

As the decade progressed, a handful of young international players were added to the LPGA’s ever-increasing global roster. Annika Sorenstam (Sweden, 1994), Karrie Webb (Australia, 1996) and Se Ri Pak (South Korea, 1998) quickly made statements that they were players to be reckoned with. Annika had 18 wins in the 90s – more than any other player of that decade. Karrie was close behind with 16 wins and Se Ri posted eight victories in her first two years. But the best was yet to come for all three of these players.

As international stars were starting to rise, the U.S. already had its own growing bullpen of strong players: Dottie Pepper, Michelle McGann, Donna Andrews, Brandie Burton, Meg Mallon, Rosie Jones and Kelly Robbins to name just a few. As the level of competition went up, scores went down with many record-setting performances. Among them, Webb became the first player to cross $1 million in season earnings (1996); Sorenstam was the first to break 70 for a season-scoring average (1998); and Juli Inkster became the fourth player to complete the Career Grand Slam by winning the U.S. Women’s Open and the McDonald’s LPGA Championship in 1999.

The 90s represented one of the most significant periods of advancement and prosperity in the history of the LPGA. It was also during this time that The LPGA Foundation was created, to build a legacy of giving back to the game. One of the signature programs of the Foundation, LPGA-USGA Girls Golf, brings thousands of girls into the game each year.

With 50 years of history under its belt, the LPGA was poised to start its next 50 years as an industry leader that was making significant contributions to the advancement of women in professional sports.

The 1990s

Where the World Comes to Play
Inaugural 1990 Solheim Cup Winners – Team USA: Pat Bradley, Patty Sheehan, Nancy Lopez, Dottie Pepper, Kathy Whitworth (Captain), Cathy Gerring, Betsy King, Rosie Jones, & Beth Daniel
The LPGA rang in the new millennium with a year-long Golden Anniversary celebration; paying tribute to the Founders and pioneers who, for 50 years, created and cultivated opportunities for women professionals within the sport of golf.

As if to reassure everyone that the next 50 years would be in good hands, the players of this decade made some history of their own. And it was Annika Sorenstam who got the ball rolling.

In 2001 she earned the nickname “Miss 59” after becoming the first-ever LPGA player to record that previously untouchable score. In all, Annika would break or tie 30 different records in that season alone. In 2003, she made more history by competing on the PGA Tour and in 2005, she won her eighth Rolex Player of the Year award to break Kathy Whitworth’s long-standing record of seven. Annika amassed 54 wins in this decade and ended her career (in 2008) with a total of 72.

While Annika seemingly dominated the 2000s, there were plenty of other players making their mark. Lorena Ochoa joined the Tour in 2003 and before the decade was over, she earned four consecutive Rolex Player of the Year honors, overtook Annika for the top spot in the Rolex Rankings and accumulated 27 career victories, including the 2007 Ricoh Women’s British Open on the Old Course at St. Andrews where the women played for the first time.

Youth was well-served in this decade with players like Paula Creamer and Morgan Pressel winning tournaments at the age of 18 and 19-year-old Julieta Granada earning the first-ever $1 million payout in 2006 at the Tour’s season-ending event. Grace Park, Suzann Pettersen, Mi Hyun Kim, Na Yeon Choi and Cristie Kerr were among others who made this decade of competition one of the most memorable ever.

While players were setting records on the course, the business of women’s professional golf continued to make some history of its own. The LPGA Tour led the formation and introduction of the Rolex Rankings in 2006, the first worldwide player ranking system for professional women golfers. The following year, the LPGA acquired the Symetra Tour, which serves as the Official Qualifying Tour of the LPGA.

Just 10 years into “the next 50” and much history had already been made. But the winds of change were coming. Two golf legends who had each left their mark in this decade, Annika Sorenstam and Lorena Ochoa, were both leaving the Tour, making way for a new wave of players, dreaming to become the world’s next #1.
Lorena Ochoa wins the Ricoh Women’s British Open (2007)

Cristie Kerr

Grace Park

Mi Hyun Kim

Na Yeon Choi
To say there were some big shoes to fill would be an understatement. With two of the games’ most renowned and beloved players exiting stage left, there was no immediate heir apparent to the World #1 title. While many pundits questioned what was next for the LPGA, the players themselves didn’t miss a beat and the cadence was about to pick up significantly.

In 2010, the #1 spot changed hands eight times between Jiyai Shin, Ai Miyazato and Cristie Kerr. Yani Tseng snagged the top spot in 2011 and held it throughout 2012 until Stacy Lewis and Inbee Park traded turns at the top throughout 2013 and 2014. Lydia Ko entered the mix in October of 2015 and held the #1 title for about a year and a half. From mid-June 2017 through 2018 Ariya Jutanugarn, Shanshan Feng, So Yeon Ryu, Sung Hyun Park and Inbee Park all held the #1 spot at various times.

Golf’s Global Tour was becoming the LPGA’s moniker. A fifth major championship was added in Évian-les-Bains, France, and more international players were competing than at any other time in the Tour’s history. This boded well for the launch of the UL International Crown in 2014 and for golf’s return to the Olympics in 2016. An international trio of top LPGA players swept the podium in Rio – Inbee Park (Gold), Lydia Ko (Silver) and Shanshan Feng (Bronze). Spain captured the inaugural UL International Crown in 2014. The United States won in 2016 and host nation Republic of Korea took home the Crown in 2018.

At the same time, a youth movement was gaining momentum, with players like Ko winning at the age of 15, Lexi Thompson winning at 16, and Brooke Henderson claiming her first LPGA Tour title at the age of 17. Add in players such as Brittany Lincicome, Michelle Wie, In Kyung Kim and Anna Nordqvist, and the LPGA was cooking up a recipe for a hugely successful global tour.

With the Tour continuing to soar with a strong stable of talent, the LPGA also set its sights on attracting more girls and women into the game. Girls Golf continued to increase in participation, making girls under 18 the fastest growing segment in golf. In 2017, the LPGA launched the LPGA Women’s Network, an online community for women to learn, grow and share with others through golf, and in 2018, the LPGA Amateur Golf Association (formerly the EWGA) officially became a part of the LPGA family.

Although the future is unknown and the script remains unwritten, history has taught us what lies ahead. When the time is right, the current cast of characters and stars will take a bow, and pass the baton to the next generation, and the next.

And it all will happen…Right on Cue.
Lydia Ko (Silver Medal), Inbee Park (Gold Medal), & Shanshan Feng (Bronze Medal) at the 2016 Rio Olympics

First Ever Rolex Player of the Year Co-Winners So Yeon Ryu & Sung Hyun Park (2017)

Ai Miyazato’s Retirement (2017)
Outside the Ropes

Danielle Kang
Lexi Thompson
Gerina Piller
Brittany Lincicome
Sung Hyun Park
We’re MORE than the TOUR
LPGA Teaching and Club Professionals

Experience the Difference

The LPGA Teaching and Club Professional (T&CP) Membership was established in 1959 as an outgrowth of the LPGA Tour membership. Shirley Spork, Barbara Rotvig, Betty Hicks and Marilynn Smith are the division’s founding members and served on the first Teaching Committee, playing pivotal roles in creating guidelines and strategies for the LPGA Teaching membership’s future growth.

T&CP has enjoyed an unprecedented rate of growth and expansion in recent years and boasts the largest membership of women golf professionals in the world, totaling more than 1,700. Nearly 200 of those are international members who represent 25 different countries. In addition, the T&CP’s first office outside of the U.S. was recently opened in Korea.

The LPGA has earned a reputation as the leader in research-based golf education. It provides its members with section, regional and national programs that further the LPGA’s commitment to offering state-of-the-art education in golf teaching methods and techniques.

LPGA T&CP members teach and support the LPGA’s various grassroots programs that increase the involvement of women and youth in golf, as well as contribute to the overall growth of the sport, including LPGA-USGA Girls Golf, LPGA Tour Junior Clinics, the LPGA Lesson Zone and much more.
The Symetra Tour is the Official Qualifying Tour of the LPGA and is also known as the “Road to the LPGA.” Since 1999, the mission of the Symetra Tour has been to prepare the world’s best young women professional golfers for a successful career on the LPGA Tour. A schedule of 20+ events worth more than $3 million in prize money provides the backdrop for developing these players into the LPGA Tour’s next generation of stars. And you need only look at the numbers and the names to see the success.

More than 435 LPGA titles have been won by former Symetra Tour players, and 10 of those are major championships captured since 2013. Nearly 150 players have earned LPGA Tour membership since the start of awarding Tour cards in 1999.

The list of Symetra Tour alums includes some very accomplished LPGA Tour stars, such as 27-time winner Lorena Ochoa and LPGA Tour Hall of Famer and Olympic gold medalist Inbee Park. U.S. Solheim Cup standout Gerina Piller, major champions Mo Martin and Brooke Henderson, and up and comers Nelly Korda and Madelene Sagstrom highlight just a few others who came through the Symetra Tour.

Players from around the world are coming to the Symetra Tour to prepare themselves for a career on the LPGA Tour. The 2017 graduating class in the Volvik Race for the Card program included players from seven different countries, the most ever in Symetra Tour history.

Symetra became the Tour’s umbrella sponsor in 2012 and since that time the number of events has increased by 37% and prize money has nearly doubled, from $1.7 million.
The LPGA Foundation

Established in 1991, The LPGA Foundation’s mission is to empower, inspire and transform the lives of girls and women through the game of golf.

This is accomplished through four main initiatives: LPGA-USGA Girls Golf; LPGA Leadership Academies; Scholarship Programs; and the Dolores Hope LPGA Financial Assistance Initiative.

The success of the Foundation’s junior golf programs in recent years has helped to change the face of the game. In 1995, girls made up only 17% of all junior golfers. Today they total 33%, with girls under the age of 18 becoming the fastest growing segment of the golf population. You need look no further than to the Foundation’s Girls Golf program to help explain that increase. The program is on track to bring more than 80,000 girls to the game in 2018, with a goal of reaching 100,000 per year by 2020.

In 2015, The LPGA Foundation deepened its commitment to the personal growth of young women through LPGA Leadership Academies. These two-day events are designed to keep teenage girls engaged in golf and prepare them for leadership opportunities. The LPGA Leadership Academy uses golf as a vehicle to provide a framework for young women to develop their confidence along with communication and leadership skills. Group exercises, expert-led discussions, journaling, and interaction with female executives and mentors help girls discover their unique strengths and leadership style.

The LPGA Foundation also administers several scholarship programs for young women who enjoy the game of golf and plan to attend college in the fall. Additional grants and financial assistance funds for those in the golf industry are also supported through The LPGA Foundation.
For 30 years, LPGA-USGA Girls Golf has been the only national program of its kind that specializes in providing a “girl-friendly,” girls-only environment for juniors to learn and play the game of golf.

Founded in 1989 by LPGA T&CP member Sandy LaBauve, who dreamed of sharing her love for the game of golf with her two daughters, the program has become the industry leader in bringing young girls to the game. With more than 500 sites in communities across the country, nearly 80,000 girls participated in the program in 2018. This kind of success has helped to change the face of the game in recent years. In 1995, just 17% of junior golfers were female. Today that number is 33%, the highest percentage in history.

Golf is a transformative sport that inherently teaches valuable life skills like honesty and perseverance. It is one of the few sports that can be enjoyed for a lifetime. Girls Golf has specialized in creating experiences that help girls fall in love with the game while making sure their skills are progressing so they can play with confidence.

Girls Golf sites provide girls with quality golf instruction led by LPGA and PGA teaching professionals or certified coaches from The First Tee. These teachers host golf clinics and special themed events for girls in communities across the U.S. and even beyond our borders in countries like Canada, Italy, France and Korea.

Girls Golf members learn important life skills while building lasting friendships and experiencing competition in a fun, supportive environment, preparing them for a lifetime of enjoyment with the game. Teaching leadership skills to inspire healthy living, the Five E’s of Girls Golf are used to Empower, Enrich, Engage, Exercise, and Energize girls through the game of golf.
Subscribe to Win
A trip to the Dominican Republic with Nancy Lopez

A Special Edition of Women’s Golf Fashion

She’s a Golfer, Lindy York Inspires

From the Fairway to the Fairway, Brands Showcase Their Unique Lines

Golfers in action on the course.
Launched in 2017, the LPGA Women’s Network was created to serve as an online space for women to connect with one another, ignite their passion for golf, and inspire them for the game of life.

LPGAWomensNetwork.com offers practical advice and guidance to help women feel comfortable on (and off) the golf course by delivering simplified golf instruction crafted for women by women. Visitors will also find captivating articles and videos which offer unique perspectives and thoughtful insight from the voices of the women within our network. The stories draw attention to the powerful intersections between golf and life, and offer women inspiration for living more mindful and purposeful lives.

What’s unique to the LPGA Women’s Network is the inside look at the women on the LPGA Tour and their lives outside the ropes. LPGA players contribute stories of their own which showcase their unique interests and perspectives on and off the course.

Visitors to LPGAWomensNetwork.com can explore the blog for thoughtful insight, inspiration, and even a few laughs here and there, and subscribers receive the very best stories from the site delivered to their inbox twice a month. Membership within the LPGA Women’s Network is free and includes access to exclusive Member Perks, which offer discounts on golf and lifestyle products from companies who want to support women in their journey with the game.

No matter where you are in your journey with golf, there’s a place for you here.
The LPGA Amateur Golf Association is the largest women's amateur golf association in the world. Formerly known as the Executive Women’s Golf Association (EWGA), the organization maintains nearly 12,000 members in more than 100 chapters in the United States, Canada and Bermuda.

It also hosts more than 7,500 local and national activities every year, including social outings, league play, networking opportunities and competitive amateur events such as the LPGA Amateur Golf Association Championship and LPGA Amateur Golf Association Cup.

The mission is to provide women with as many opportunities to participate in organized learning, playing, and competitive events as possible; from beginners to experienced lifelong golfers.

For nearly 30 years, the EWGA connected thousands of women across the U.S. and beyond to learn, play, and enjoy golf for business and fun. By joining forces with the LPGA, the LPGA Amateurs are now able to broaden the reach of the EWGA’s amateur women golfers and grow the women’s game through access to the LPGA’s global brand and extensive resources.

Through The LPGA Foundation and LPGA Women’s Network, the LPGA Amateur Golf Association creates a seamless transition for women looking to go from aspiring player to recreational golfer and serve as an advocate for positive change within the game.
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