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Ladies Professional Golf Association

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Ladies Professional Golf Association

Golf was one of the first sports to welcome women athletes; in the United States, the inaugural women's amateur championship was held in 1895. While golf flourished among women as an amateur endeavor, the acceptance into professional competition eventually was realized. Legally formed in 1950, the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) is one of the oldest organizations of professional women athletes. The LPGA is headquartered in Daytona Beach, Florida, and consists of two branches that touch just about every aspect of golf—the playing tour and the teaching and club professionals division.

The LPGA came to fruition in May 1949, replacing a failed earlier effort to associate. Players agreed to form the LPGA at the Eastern Open in Essex Falls, New Jersey, and immediately hired Fred Cororan, also employed by Wilson Sporting Goods, as tournament manager. The official Articles of Incorporation as a nonprofit entity were reviewed at a tournament in Wichita, Kansas, and then formally signed on October 9, 1950, in New York by players Patty Berg, Helen Dettweiler, Sally Sessions, Betty Jameson, and Helen Hicks. Also credited as charter members were Alice Bauer, Marlene Bauer Hagge, Bettye Mims Danoff, Opal Hill, Marilyn Smith, Shirley Spork, Louise Suggs, and Babe Zaharias, a multiple-sport standout and Olympic Gold-medalist. Berg served as the first LPGA president. From

its beginning, the LPGA took a nondiscriminatory stance, opening membership to players of all races while scrutinizing courses for segregation policies. Althea Gibson became the first African American player on the tour in 1963. Gibson, before taking up golf, was a star tennis player winning Wimbledon twice and the U.S. Open.

Starting with 13 members, the LPGA reached 350 touring pros by its 50th anniversary in 2000, and in 2014, the LPGA comprised more than 460 players representing 27 countries. The LPGA Tour has more than 30 tournaments highlighted by five majors: U.S. Women's Open (started in 1950), Wegmans LPGA Championship (1955), Kraft-Nabisco Championship (1983), RICOH Women's British Open (2001), and the Evian Championship (2013). Marquee players through the decades such as Berg, Zaharias, Mickey Wright, Kathy Whitworth, Jan Stephensen, Nancy Lopez, Annika Sorenstam, Karrie Webb, Se Ri Pak, Michelle Wie, and many others helped drive the LPGA's popularity growth. Besides the tour events, the LPGA initiated the Solheim Cup in 1990, in which the top U.S. players take on Europe's best every two years as the women's equivalent of the Ryder Cup.

LPGA tournament prize money has grown from \$50,000 in its first year to \$56 million in 2014. The first televised women's golf event was the 1963 U.S. Women's Open. In 1982, the first four rounds of a tournament—celebrity Dinah Shore's tournament—were broadcast live for the first time. By 2014, more than 350 hours of women's golf tournaments were televised.

Attesting to its growth, in 2007 the LPGA acquired the Symetra Tour, which is the official developmental tour. More than 300 players compete annually from March through September with the top-10 money earners gaining membership in the LPGA for the following year. This tour is in addition to LPGA's annual qualifying school.

While many associate the LPGA with its playing tour, the teaching and club professionals division (T&CP) has more than 1,500 members—the largest organization of women golf professionals in the world—as well as its own staff. LPGA charter members Marilyn Smith and Shirley Spork started the teaching division in 1959 to promote the game as well as increase women's participation. LPGA T&CP certification is earned through a comprehensive curriculum designed for golf instructors, business managers, and coaches. The division is known for its research-based golf education. Among the many T&CP initiatives are programs to teach golf to those with physical limitations, introducing golf to urban boys and girls ages 7 to 17, junior development programs with more than 2,500 girl participants, junior clinics, and clinics for women in business. The T&CP division has its own championship golf tournament.

Since its beginning, the LPGA has advocated for its members' welfare. Early on, the association offered an insurance program, and in 1981 started a retirement benefit—the first ever deferred compensation plan for nonteam professional sports. For its first 25 years, tour players administered all facets of the LPGA. In the 1970s, tour member Jane Blalock sued the LPGA over accusations of rule infringement. The result of the settlement was the significant reorganization of the governance structure. In 1975, Ray Volpe was hired as the LPGA's first commissioner along with formation of a board of directors, relieving tour players of administrative responsibilities. The new structure led to dramatic financial expansion. Today, the LPGA board of directors consists of the commissioner, six independent directors, seven tour players (Player Executive Committee), and the president of the LPGA Teaching and Club Professionals. The board oversees a sizeable staff.

Through both LPGA divisions, charitable support has been a significant component for decades. The playing tours benefit local charities and many

outreach programs serve the economically disadvantaged. The LPGA Foundation was formed in 1991 to develop and maintain junior programs, establish scholarship programs for junior golfers, provide financial assistance to those in the golf industry, and conduct research and develop educational activities related to golf instruction. The LPGA Foundation is a separately incorporated nonprofit organization but works closely with the LPGA.

The LPGA Tournament Owners Association also is a separate nonprofit that consists of the individual tour events.

Paul M. McInerney

See Also: Gender and Sports Leadership; Professional Golf Association; Professional Sports; Race/Ethnicity and Sports Leadership; Women's Leadership in Sport.

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Leadership in Recreational Sports Organizations

Not unlike other sport administrators, recreational sports leaders are charged with many responsibilities, including creating a vision for the organization, establishing goals and developing an agenda to meet those goals, building a team, supporting and motivating personnel, and solving problems. Recreational sports leaders like city recreation managers, park rangers, and campus recreation directors also encounter a wide range of issues specific to recreation- and leisure-based services. Recreational sports