

# GOLF

Professional golf in the United States is coordinated by the Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) of America, a nonprofit organization that promotes the sport while enhancing golf's professional standards. The PGA of America (2007, <http://www.pga.com/home/pgaofofamerica/about-the-pga.cfm>) states that in 2007 there were more than twenty-eight thousand PGA professionals in the United States, both men and women. However, most of these members were primarily golf instructors; only a small fraction compete in high-profile tournaments.

The PGA of America traces its roots to 1916, when a group of golf professionals and serious amateurs in the New York area got together at a luncheon sponsored by the department store magnate Rodman Wanamaker (1863–1928). The point of the meeting was to discuss forming a national organization to promote golf and elevate the occupation of golf professionals. The meeting led to the organization of the first PGA Championship tournament, which was played later that year. The PGA Championship has grown to become one of professional golf's four major championships, along with the British Open, the Masters, and the U.S. Open. Together, these four tournaments make up the unofficial Grand Slam of golf. (See Table 5.1.) Besides the PGA Championship, the PGA of America sponsors three other top golf events: the Senior PGA Championship; the Ryder Cup, which every two years pits a team of top American golfers against their European counterparts; and the PGA Grand Slam of Golf, an annual event in which the winners of the four major championships compete head to head. Besides these championships, the PGA of America also conducts about forty tournaments for PGA professionals.

However, while professional golfers in the United States are members of the PGA of America, most of the actual golf they play is under the auspices of other organizations. Worldwide, professional golf is organized into several regional tours, each of which usually holds a series of tournaments over the course of a season. There are approximately twenty of these tours around the world, each run by a national or regional PGA, or by an independent tour organization. Each tour has members who may compete in as many of its events as they want. Joining a tour usually requires that a golfer achieve some specified level of success, often by performing well in a qualifying tournament. A player can be a member of multiple tours.

The world's top tour by far, in terms of money and prestige, is the PGA Tour, which since 1968 has been a completely separate organizational entity from the PGA of America. In 2007 the PGA Tour (<http://www.pgatour.com/r/schedule/>) had forty-eight official events offering more than \$280 million in total prize money. The PGA Tour organization also runs two other tours: the Champions Tour for golfers over age fifty; and the Nationwide Tour, a sort of minor league of professional golf.

## The History of the PGA

According to the PGA Tour (2007, [http://www.pgatour.com/company/pgatour\\_history.html](http://www.pgatour.com/company/pgatour_history.html)), the first U.S.

| <b>Event</b>     | <b>Location</b>  | <b>Scheduled time</b> |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| The Masters      | Augusta, Georgia | April                 |
| U.S. Open        | Location varies  | June                  |
| British Open     | Location varies  | July                  |
| PGA Championship | Location varies  | August                |

Open took place in 1895 in Newport, Rhode Island. Ten professionals and one amateur competed in the event. The Western Open made its debut in Chicago, Illinois, four years later.

Tournaments were initiated throughout the country at about this time, although there was no coordination or continuity among them. English players dominated the competition in U.S. tournaments. As interest in golf continued to grow, American players improved. Enthusiasm for the sport began to increase after John McDermott (1891–1971) became the first U.S.-born player to win the U.S. Open in 1911. By the 1920s professional golf had spread to the West Coast and southward to Florida, and the prize money was becoming substantial.

The PGA Tour was formally launched in late 1968, when the Tournament Players Division of the PGA broke away from the parent organization. The tour grew during the 1970s and 1980s, with its total annual revenue increasing from \$3.9 million in 1974 to \$229 million in 1993.

## The Champions Tour

The Champions Tour, which is run by the PGA Tour organization, hosts thirty events each year in the United States and Canada for golfers at least fifty years old. The tour grew out of a highly

successful 1978 event called the Legends of Golf, which featured two-member teams composed of some of the game's best-known former champions. Following on the success of the Legends event, the Senior PGA Tour was established in 1980, with two tournaments and \$250,000 in prize money. The Senior Tour proved remarkably popular, as fans flocked to golf courses and tuned in on television to see legendary competitors such as Arnold Palmer (1929–) and Sam Snead (1912–2002) in action. Even though their playing skills may have diminished somewhat from the level of their prime playing years, the former champions proved popular with golf lovers across the country. At the start of the 2003 season the Senior Tour changed its name to the Champions Tour. The 2008 Champions Tour ([http://www.pgatour.com/2007/s/06/28/2008\\_schedule/index.html](http://www.pgatour.com/2007/s/06/28/2008_schedule/index.html)) offered total prize money of nearly \$58 million over twenty-nine tournaments.

Most tournaments on the Champions Tour are played over three rounds (fifty-four holes) rather than the customary four rounds (seventy-two holes) typical of PGA tournaments. The five majors of the senior circuit are exceptions, because they are played over four rounds. The major tournaments of the Champions Tour are the Senior PGA Championship, the Senior Players Championship, the Senior British Open, the U.S. Senior Open, and The Tradition.

## The Nationwide Tour

The Nationwide Tour is the developmental tour for the PGA Tour. Its players are professionals who have missed the criteria to get into the main tour by failing to score well enough in the PGA Tour's qualifying tournament, known as Qualifying School, or who have made it into the main tour but failed to win enough money to stay there. The Nationwide Tour gets its name from the company that bought the naming rights in 2003, the Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company of Columbus, Ohio. It was called the Nike Tour and the [Buy.com](http://www.buy.com) Tour before that. When the tour was first launched in its original form in 1990, it was known as the Ben Hogan Tour.

In 2007 the Nationwide Tour (<http://www.pgatour.com/h/schedule/>) consisted of thirty-two events. Three of them were in Australia, New Zealand, and Panama, and the rest were in the United States. The prize money for Nationwide Tour events is typically about one-tenth that of a PGA Tour tournament, ranging from about \$450,000 to \$750,000.

The Nationwide Tour has proven to be an excellent feeder system for the PGA Tour. The PGA Tour reports in "Wilson Gets Nationwide Tour's 200th PGA Tour Win" (March 5,

2007, [http://www.pgatour.com/2007/h/03/04/200\\_tour/index.html?eref=sitesearch](http://www.pgatour.com/2007/h/03/04/200_tour/index.html?eref=sitesearch)) that Nationwide Tour alumni have won two hundred PGA Tour titles, including eleven major championships, as of 2007. A number of top players, including Ernie Els (1969–), David Duval (1971–), Jim Furyk (1970–), David Toms (1967–), and Stuart Appleby (1971–), played the Nationwide circuit before achieving success on the PGA Tour.

## Other Men's Tours

As noted earlier, the PGA Tour is merely the biggest and richest of the world's many professional golf tours. There are many others around the world, some of which—such as the Nationwide Tour—prepare players for entry into the PGA Tour. In 1996 the International Federation of PGA Tours was formed by golf's five chief governing bodies around the world. As of 2007 the International Federation (<http://www.worldgolfchampionships.com/wgcinfo/international/index.html>) had six members: the PGA Tour (United States), the Asian Tour (Singapore), the Japan Golf Tour, the PGA European Tour, the PGA Tour of Australasia, and the Sunshine Tour (South Africa). Together, these tours sanction the Official World Golf Rankings.

The PGA European Tour, headquartered in England, is the premier professional golf tour in Europe and is second only to the PGA Tour in money and international prestige. The European tour was established by the British PGA, but in 1984 it became a separate entity, just as the PGA Tour became independent from the PGA of America in 1968. In 2006 the European Tour (2007, <http://www.europeantour.com/>) consisted of forty-nine tournaments in twenty-six countries, offering prize money totaling about \$168 million (based on August 2007 exchange rates). Most of the top players on the European Tour, including Els, Retief Goosen (1969–), Sergio Garcia (1980–), and Padraig Harrington (1971–), are also members of the PGA Tour. Like the PGA Tour, the European Tour has a developmental tour, called the Challenge Tour, and a senior tour, called the European Seniors Tour.

The Japan Golf Tour is the third biggest professional men's tour (not counting senior tours) in terms of prize money available. However, prize money in the Japanese Tour has not kept pace with the growth of money in the PGA and European tours in recent years.

Performance in all the previously mentioned tours—the six International Federation members, plus the Nationwide and Challenge Tours—earns Official World Golf Ranking points. Other

regional tours worth noting are the Tour de las Americas, which is seeking to be included in World Ranking calculations; the Indian Golf Tour; and the Hooters NGA Tour, which is the third-tier U.S.-based professional tour, below the Nationwide Tour in money and prestige.

## Women's Tours

Women's professional golf, like men's golf, is organized into several regional tours. The top tour for female professional golfers is the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), which operates the LPGA Tour. Unlike the PGA Tour, the LPGA Tour and the LPGA are not distinct organizations. Both of these terms generally refer to the LPGA that is based in the United States. Internationally, there are other regional LPGAs and tours, including the LPGA of Japan, the LPGA of Korea, the Australian Ladies Professional Golf tour, and the Ladies European Tour.

Founded in 1950 by a group of thirteen golfers, the LPGA is the oldest continuing women's professional sports organization in the United States. It features the best female golfers from all over the world. The 2007 LPGA Tour ([http://www.lpga.com/content\\_1.aspx?mid=0&pid=52](http://www.lpga.com/content_1.aspx?mid=0&pid=52)) consisted of thirty-five events offering total prize money of over \$54 million. Most LPGA Tour events take place in the United States. In 2007 there were also two events in Mexico and one each in Canada, Sweden, Japan, and Australia. Four LPGA tournaments are considered the tour's majors: the Kraft Nabisco Championship, McDonald's U.S. LPGA Championship Presented by Coca-Cola, the U.S. Women's Open, and the Ricoh Women's British Open (held jointly with the Ladies European Tour).

Besides the main tour, the LPGA also coordinates a developmental tour called the Duramed Futures Tour. The Futures Tour began in Florida in 1981 as the Tampa Bay Mini Tour but is now a national tour that functions as a feeder system for the LPGA, filling the same role as the Nationwide Tour does for the men. In 2007 the Duramed Futures Tour (<http://www.duramedfuturestour.com/AboutUs.asp>) featured a nineteen-tournament national schedule and a total purse of about \$1.6 million.

In 2001 the LPGA created the Women's Senior Golf Tour for players over age forty-five. Its name was changed to the Legends Tour before the 2006 season. As of 2007 the Legends Tour had only six events.