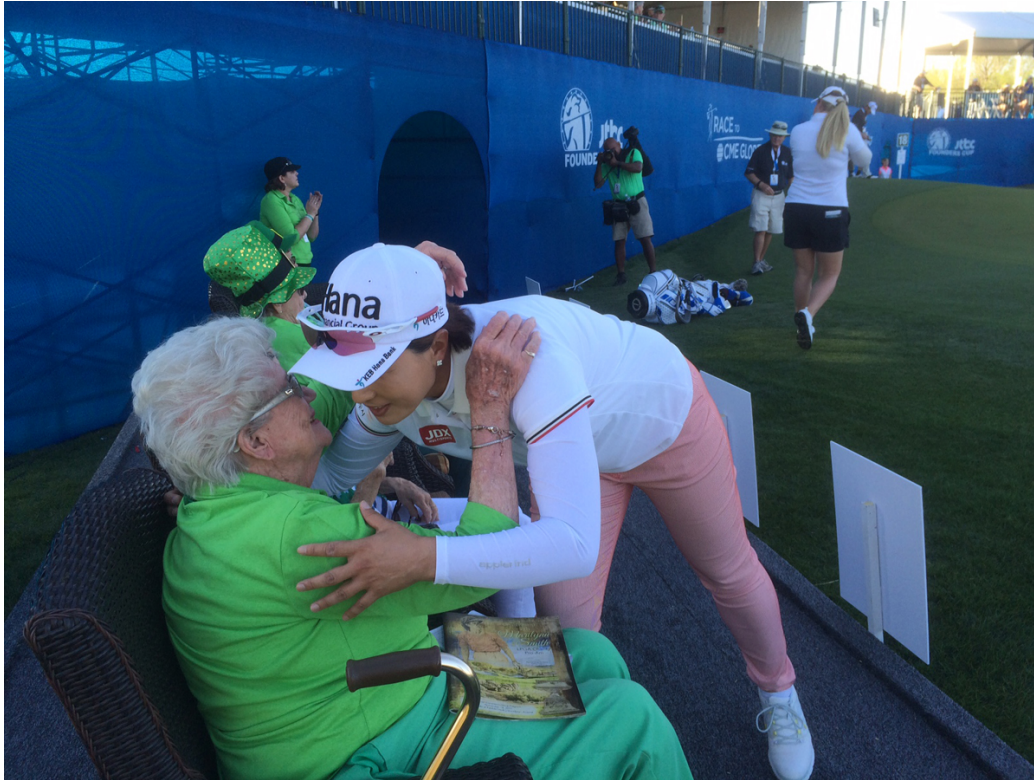


Golf and the Mentor Game

By Missy Jones • @missyjonjones

March 20, 2016



The LPGA was founded in 1950 by a handful of pioneering women who made the fledgling tour their “labor of love”. They roared into small communities and left their imprint on the fans who followed them and who sometimes housed and fed them. They went to minor league baseball games, boxing matches and anywhere people gathered to sell THEIR tour. This proud piece of history of the now, high-profile, global, multi-million dollar LPGA Tour is the bones on which the mentor game is built.

Se Ri Pak talked of her responsibilities to the young South Korean players coming up while discussing her retirement.

“It means a lot (to be in field at Founders). First of all, because the founders, it's because of them we are here ... this is where my own dreams came true. So that's basically the steps I'm following in, so same thing as from my country, just the young kids, the young players, they are trying to play golf, which they are making me an idol. They follow me step by step.”

The Founders, the Legends and veteran players like Juli Inkster, Karrie Webb and Se Ri Pak go out of their way to help and mentor the players following behind them. Not on

just how to win or make a swing but how to live. They give sage advice on surviving on the Tour but also share life lessons and laughs as well. The founders give many tidbits of encouragement and advice to players as they walk off Hole 18 here at the JTBC Founders Cup in Phoenix.

One of the mantras LPGA commissioner Mike Whan likes to chant to his players is: "Think like a founder." By that he means take ownership of this tour today in the same way the founders did 65 years ago. Whan's point is that the LPGA will thrive if the players make it thrive. Beyond the health of the Tour, these relationships make for happier, more well rounded athletes. It's important.

Paul Boehmer, the LPGA Club Repair Technician, was seen going out of his way to make sure that the LPGA-Girls Golf participants touring his trailer knew who Patty Sheehan was as she stood on the range. She along with other greats, Pat Bradley, Betsy King and Nancy Lopez played an exhibition and are on hand this week supporting the players. Passing the history, passing the knowledge and making players feel wanted and included goes a long way in both professional and amateur female golf.

Golf 20/20 and PGA of America, among others, have done studies that show that female recreational players view golf as a social activity. Therefore, women tend to want to play golf with their friends as well as seek out instruction with other women. Players at the elite level are not much different in that sense. The players who develop friendships out here and who get support from those who have come before them flourish. Part of what makes golf so great is that 17 year old amateur, Hannah O'Sullivan and 55 year old Juli Inkster both made the cut and that Juli will be telling her "great shot" if they play together.

The LPGA values this sense of history. Bringing all of these generations of players from LPGA-Girls Golf to amateur players like Hannah O'Sullivan, to Tour players, past and present, and founders all together this week is amazing and makes the Tour stronger.