

# LPGA Rookies Get Support

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One of the things LPGA commissioner Mike Whan likes to say to players is: “Think like a founder.” What he means by this is that the 13 women who started the LPGA in 1950 did everything from setting up courses, making rulings, writing checks and constantly promoting the tour anywhere sports fans gathered by attending minor league baseball games, boxing matches and other events.

Toward this end, the LPGA spends a lot of time and energy making sure rookies are fully integrated and completely comfortable on tour as soon as possible. It’s a concerted effort by the entire staff that should be commended. Getting everyone on the same page makes for happier, more engaged participants and a better overall product. The goal is to make rookies feel like the LPGA is their tour. Here are some of the requirements for new players.

- Rookie Orientation, which is held the day after Q school finals, where the LPGA covers rules and regulations, the anti-doping policy, player services, player portals, roundtable discussions on caddies, security and discussions about life on tour.
- Rookie Dinner with Golf Channel Announcers and Production Staff.

- Participate in designated POD (Peer - Onsite - Distance) activities. POD Partners is a multi-level, rookie-centered relationship-building program designed to help rookies assimilate onto the LPGA Tour both on and off the golf course, ensuring a healthy and successful transition into the LPGA. Every rookie is placed in a POD for their rookie season. Each POD consists of six or seven partners consisting of three or four LPGA Tour rookies, one staff liaison, one active player and one veteran (non-competing) player. There will be designated POD activities planned throughout the year.

Besides these requirements, the rookies must fulfill “Rookie Hours”. Players typically cover all of these in their rookie year, but there are some that manage it over two years depending on their schedule and playing status. These hours include:

- Pro-am Shadowing where rookies walk with and observe a veteran player or POD Partner for 9-holes during an official LPGA Pro-am round. Anybody who has played in an LPGA Pro-Am will attest that it is where fans are built. Players understand the importance of these rounds to their careers and sponsor expectations.
- Rules Officials sessions where they learn about course set-up, pace of play, rulings, and other duties of the Rules Officials.
- Media Training where they work one-on-one with LPGA media staff on successfully handling interviews and effectively delivering their message.
- Visit the Golf Channel production truck and/or telecast booth to learn about what it takes to put on a Golf Channel telecast.
- Spend an hour with Paul Boehmer in the equipment trailer where they can see him do the job of the dozens of equipment people you might see out on the PGA Tour.
- Sponsor Requests designed to help the rookies become accustomed to the on-site process and participation of sponsor requests and “Outside the Ropes” initiatives. The activities are critical to the business of the LPGA and the communities in which they play.

Depending on the year, the LPGA also holds sessions on time management, sponsorship and the customer experience. Why? So they know how each cog in the wheel works. The LPGA wants the players to “buy into” the Tour and promote it just as the staff would.

If we spend some time in another’s shoes, we have empathy and respect for what they do. We might not always agree with them but we can, more often than not, see their side of the situation.

Spending time alongside a media staffer let's the player see the amount of work the staffer puts in to promote THEIR Tour. Their questions may have seemed annoying before but after spending time with them, they are glad to answer. It's all about perspective. Is the equipment trailer taking too long to get your club re-gripped? Well after seeing how hard Paul works for all the players, you might have a little more patience.

What do TV producers do all day long? How can I as a player make their job covering an event easier? Why did the Rules staff mark this water hazard this way and how can I manage and succeed with the Pace of Play policy?

By educating new players on all the components that make up the LPGA and contribute to its success the LPGA builds a new base of "founders." This rookie education program is just one more way in which the tour is building for the future, one that seems brighter now than ever.