

# Coronavirus Is a Road We've Been Down Before and From This, Too, We Shall Survive

By Ron Sirak • @ronsirak

March 16, 2020



Most mornings we look out the kitchen window, see our backyard and think that's all that matters. And mostly that's true. Then one day life throws that window open wider and we see our neighbor's yard, and the one beyond, and the next town over and we become aware of the world around us. Right now, golf's global tour – the LPGA – is swept up in a global fight.

The rash of cancellations last week because of the Coronavirus are about much more than the LPGA, golf, sports or any other narrow window on the world. While the well-being of tournaments, the tour and all those who make their living through golf are impacted in an extremely personal way, survival requires an immensely collective response.

That's why Commissioner Mike Whan was correct in taking the bold action he took of immediately shutting down the Tour. And that was a decision made all the more difficult because Whan's constituency – LPGA members – have nowhere near the economic security of NBA players, PGA Tour members or others in the more lucrative world of men's sports.

But Whan was acting for the greater good. He was concerned about the health and safety of not just his players but of all people. The LPGA is uniquely positioned to understand how connected the world has become and the move to shut down, first, three tournaments in Asia and then three more in the United States was a wise action.

Meantime, the Tour is working non-stop for its members. Talks are ongoing about how to reschedule postponed tournaments or add previously unscheduled events. And there is every reason to be optimistic. The TV deal recently announced that goes into effect in 2022 is just one example of the bright future ahead for the LPGA.

Meanwhile, Whan is also fighting for the now. Shortly after the shutdown was announced, the Commissioner tweeted this:

“To all sponsors who endorse LPGA athletes. PLEASE consider disregarding # of events they play or how many times they are televised in '20! I know they want to play, but we are keeping them (and others) safe. Please don't penalize them for my decisions!!  
Respectfully, Mike”

Most endorsement deals have performance benchmarks that determine how much is paid out. These

benchmarks include number of victories, major championship wins, position in the Rolex Rankings and other goals. But they also include tournaments played and TV appearances.

When the LPGA embarked on a baby boom a couple years ago some of these performance clauses came to light because women were missing time while on maternity leave, a complication not experienced by male athletes. Some companies stood up and paid their LPGA players the full amount of the deal. The same leadership needs to be shown now by corporate partners.

One of the good things about having been around as long as I have is that it provides perspective – even though it also puts me in the Coronavirus high-risk category because of my age. But the dusty pages of history and the hazy recollections of memory are full of reminders of the resiliency of the human spirit and the ingenuity of the human imagination.

I remember standing in our backyard in 1957 staring into the night sky to watch Sputnik pass overhead, the Soviet satellite carrying with it the threat of nuclear war, a fear amplified each time we had an air raid at school and did duck-and-cover drills under our desks. But we survived.

In 1962, there was the Cuban missile blockade when the United States and the Soviet Union came about as close to war as ever. President John Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. Later that decade, American inner cities erupted in civil rights riots and universities were shut down by students protesting the war in Vietnam. But we survived.

On a June night in 1968, as I celebrated my graduation from Neshannock High School, we gathered at New Castle Country Club for an all-night dinner dance. About 2:30 a.m., word came that Bobby Kennedy had been killed after winning the California primary. For many, it was the end of hope. But we survived.

As a journalist, I saw Three Mile Island in 1979, gas lines, a couple of stock market crashes and 9/11. At The Associated Press, I had a colleague kidnapped by terrorists and held seven years; another's 11-year-old daughter was murdered by terrorists in Rome airport; another died in a helicopter crash covering the war in Afghanistan and yet another was shot while reporting on the fall of communism in Romania.

Most scars never heal they just become less painful reminders of the past, a permanent blemish that celebrates our enduring strength and unending capacity to adapt. The scary thing now is that we don't know how – or when – this will end. But it will end. And we will survive. That's what history tells us.

There will be normalcy again; there will be golf again; there will be an LPGA Tour again. Meantime, we will electronically hold hands while maintaining appropriate social distancing. I will keep doing what I do – write – and hopefully that will provide you some distraction.

As Vera Lynn sang when she lifted England's spirits during the darkest days of World War II: "We'll meet again; don't know where, don't know when; But I know we'll meet again some sunny day." See you on that sunny day. Meantime, keep reading.