

# Legends Celebrate the History of Women's Golf

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Tomorrow is determined by the acts of today, but those deeds are piled upon countless yesterdays. History is an unerring educator and a shining example is the Legends of the LPGA, the official senior tour of the LPGA, a venture the corporate world would be smart to realize is a potential gold mine if backed with the proper resources.

Is there an interest in senior women's golf? Absolutely. No sport fan is more dedicated than golf fans. That fan base is relatively small compared to team sports, but it has an unbridled passion that comes from a complete understanding of the challenges of the game. For golfers, only playing golf is more fun than watching golf.

And there are a whole lot of us Baby Boomers out here who grew up watching these legends compete. We are an audience the corporate world would do well to reach with its advertising dollars through tournament sponsorships, player endorsements and TV advertising. Selling golf to us is like selling Mallomars to someone with the munchies. It's a no-brainer.

The USGA took a huge step forward for professional senior women golfers when in 2018 it staged the inaugural U.S. Senior Women's Open at historic Chicago Golf Club. On Aug. 27 this year, Trish Johnson won the 5th U.S. Senior Women's Open at Waverley Country Club near Portland, Ore., as the USGA honored the past, celebrated the present with an extremely compelling championship and prepared the stage for tomorrow.

The winners of the U.S. Senior Women's Open now include World Golf Hall of Fame members Laura Davies and Annika Sorenstam, both of whom also won the U.S. Women's Open – Davies once and

Sorenstam three times. That list of winners also has past USGA champion Jill McGill as well as European stars Helen Alfredsson of Sweden and Trish Johnson of England.

And that's something else the corporate world needs to note: Golf reaches an international audience. The LPGA is golf's global tour and those fans will follow their favorite players into the Legends Tour of the LPGA. My hope is that the creation of the U.S. Senior Women's Open by the USGA established a marquee championship around which a more robust tour for senior women golfers can grow.

The Legends of the LPGA provides the framework for such growth. On Sept. 8, two dozen legends will gather at The Ridge Club in Sandwich, Mass., for the 6th BJ's Charity Championship presented by Kimberley-Clark. BJ's has been loyal supporter of senior women's golf by encouraging its vendors to chip in and has used the event to help charitable causes.

That's another aspect of golf sponsorship the corporate honchos need to notice. No sport gives back the way golf does. The charitable components of both the PGA Tour and LPGA Tour help build community ties that further strengthen the loyalty of the fan base, a loyalty to both the tours and the sponsors.

"We're thrilled to host the 6th annual BJ's Charity Championship at The Ridge Club and welcome this incredible line-up of LPGA Legends to showcase their talent," said Bill Werner, executive director, BJ's Charitable Foundation.

"We're grateful for our sponsors who have generously supported this tournament, which benefits the BJ's Charitable Foundation and helps families who face challenges with food insecurity, education and health and wellness," Werner said.

The defending champions in the one-day, two-person scramble at The Ridge Club are Pat Bradley, a Cape Cod resident who is in both the World Golf Hall of Fame and the LPGA Hall of Fame, and Jamie

Fischer, who is Director of Instruction of Conway Farms Golf Club in Lake Forest, Ill.

“BJ’s Wholesale Club is such a great partner and a wonderful title sponsor for this Legends team event,” said Bradley. “I’ve been playing in this event for many years and what BJ’s does for the Boston area and the community is just incredible. I am honored to be a part of it. I walked the fairways on the LPGA Tour with Jamie’s mom years ago, and it is a treat to be able to play with her daughter in this event. It’s wonderful to see life come full circle and to have this opportunity once again.”

Hosted by 27-time LPGA Tour champion Jane Blalock, the BJ’s Charity Championship gives the legends a rare opportunity to play with a partner. “The team format makes the BJ’s Charity Championship a favorite stop for the Legends of the LPGA every year, and the last couple of holes guarantee a thrilling finish,” said Blalock, a member of The Ridge Club.

Here are the 12 teams this year:

- Jane Blalock/ Patricia Meunier-Lebouc
- Elaine Crosby/ Cathy Johnston-Forbes
- Lorie Kane/ Nancy Scranton
- Michelle McGann/ Suzy Whaley
- Wendy Ward/ Vicki Goetz-Ackerman
- Pat Bradley/ Jamie Fischer
- Liselotte Neumann/ Alicia Dibos
- Sherri Steinhauer/ Hollis Stacy
- Becky Morgan/ Trish Johnson
- Jan Stephenson/ Laura Diaz
- Rosie Jones/ Michele Redman
- Juli Inkster/ Pat Hurst

Beside the U.S. Senior Women’s Open, the only other professional senior major for women is the Senior LPGA Championship, first played in 2017. Its minimum age is 45 while the U.S. Senior Women’s

Open cutoff is 50, a difference that may need to be reconciled at some point, perhaps unifying around the 45 number.

But the foundation for a vibrant senior golf tour for women has been established by the Legends of the LPGA. Now some smart corporate types need to build on that foundation. Let's see: legendary players, a loyal fan base, an international audience and a compelling charitable component? Seems like a no brainer to me. Gentleman, and gentlewomen, who control corporate marketing budgets, write your checks.