DEVELOPMENT

Women & golf a mutual attraction

Judy Bell became the first woman president of the U.S. Golf Association two years ago, the same time that Alice Dye was elected the first female president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects. Now that Nancy Lopez is receiving the Old Tom Morris Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, what does she feel this says about the involvement of women in golf?

“I think women’s involvement has grown tremendously over the last five or six years,” Lopez said. “We’ve come a long way. A lot of people say, ‘Why aren’t you getting paid as much as the men?’ or ‘Why, why, why. You can only do what you can do.’

“I think there are many more women playing it and enjoying it. I think even in the corporate world, they realize a lot of things get done on a golf course. It’s a quiet place. It’s away from phones. It’s peaceful. Yet, you do realize you want to do business with, because you learn more about their character on a golf course than anywhere. And I think women, especially corporate top executives, are finally catching on to that.”

Lopez said that women are also getting involved “so they won’t be golf widows. They enjoy being with their husbands more, and want to play golf with them and hopefully be the kind of golfer their husbands enjoy playing with. ‘It’s fun for me,” she added. “I like to go to pro-ams and see groups of women playing, and the men really accepting that. Many years ago, when I was coming up I was not allowed to play on some golf courses because I was a woman.”

As for Alice Dye and Judy Bell, “they are quality women in golf,” Lopez said. “They respect the game. They respect the male game and yet they respect the women’s game, also. When you have women who can do that, they have a lot of sense about golf. It’s not an attitude [declarin] ‘Women should be doing this or that.’ It’s more a statement. ‘We can do all it together’ — for both men and women.”

“I’ve always respected Judy Bell very much. I used to play with Alice Dye when I was an amateur. I am flabbergasted that I can even put my name beside theirs. It’s an honor. When I started playing golf I just wanted to be the best I could be.”

Q&A with Lopez

Continued from previous page

Lopez: Youths, family, golf help one another

Pointing to the golf industry’s push to open programs to get youths involved in the game, Nancy Lopez feels children and families are issues to be considered.

Youth programs, she said “are something we really need to think about. It’s so important. It’s a way men’s golf, or even collegiate golf, and you barely see any American players coming up. You see a lot of foreigners scooping up scholarships and playing for college teams. We need to develop junior golf as much as we can in the United States. You look at the Tour and a lot of foreigners win each week.”

Meanwhile, she said, golf can be an important cog in keeping the family unit together.

“Every day everyone in my family is going 100 miles an hour. They don’t have that to two hours to go out and play on the golf course. But if I can get them all on a golf course it would be a lot of fun,” Lopez said.

While her two oldest daughters — Ashley, 16, and Erin, 15 — are softball and basketball players and not interested in golf, her youngest, 8-year-old Torri, is an avid golfer, Lopez said.

“It’s not just the training of the young,” she added. “We have to get the parents to support their kids. My Mom and Dad supported me 100 percent. That’s why I know I got to where I am today. They spent that time, money and effort to encourage me playing golf. Nowadays, because mom jobs do work, it’s difficult.”

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