

New Developmental Women's Professional Golf Tour to Kick Off in January 2022

PXGWMPC success inspires operators to create even more opportunity for players aspiring to the LPGA and a financial fund to support them

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EINPresswire.com/ -- When Mark Berman started the PXG Women's Match Play Championship (PXGWMPC) with the simple mission of shining a light on women's professional developmental golf, he had no idea it

would lead to buying an entire tour. Inspired by the players and their stories, Berman is setting out to draw more attention to the developmental level of women's professional golf and create more playing opportunities for women pros. The [East Coast Women's Professional Golf Tour](#)

(ECWPGT) will launch with a Winter Series beginning January 17 followed by its summer schedule in May with events in the eastern third of the U.S.

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The ECWPGT is committed to building a tour around the players, providing an avenue to hone in on skills needed for the next level and earn a living while out there.”

Jessica Porvasnik, Touring Professional & ECWPGT Advisory Board Member

Currently, there are only three developmental tours in the U.S. which host events in Florida, Arizona, and Texas and a few surrounding states. Berman purchased the Florida-based NWGA, a 16-year-old women's tour, rebranding it as the ECWPGT with plans to rebuild it from the ground up, providing more playing and earning opportunities for professional female golfers. While all three tours will have their share of future [LPGA](#) stars, the ECWPGT is positioned to deliver a more economically viable pathway for women

in the Eastern third of the country where no professional events at this level currently exist.

The ECWPGT will kick off with a Winter Series at the Black Bear Golf Course in Orlando on January 17, followed by six more tournaments throughout Florida. The summer schedule will be announced at the 2022 PGA Merchandise Show and will coincide with State Opens in New



England, the Mid-Atlantic, the Carolinas, Georgia and wrapping up with the PXGWMPC as an end of season culmination. Said Berman, "Our goal is to complement the other tours rather than compete. We'll keep an eye on schedules, so players don't have to choose one over another. At the same time, there are plenty of players looking for tournaments. We're creating events in areas where players are currently underserved, helping them cut down on front-end costs." He added, "We are committed to a tournament experience that demonstrates how valued and meaningful these players are as women and athletes, while preparing them for the Symetra Tour and [LPGA Q School](#)."



Mark Berman, founder of the ECWPGT with Jessica Porvasnik, winner of the PXG Women's Match Play Championship.

Travel costs eat up budgets for developmental tour players who pay their own entry fees, which largely fund tournament purses. Most U.S. professional players below the LPGA level are self-funded and do not have big sponsor contracts like their male peers at the same level nor a national program behind them like so many international players. While men and women have the same expenses, there are dozens of developmental men's tours with significantly larger purses making it viable for them to be on the road for 10-12 weeks at a time. Many female professional players have side jobs to which they must return to make up the delta between earnings and expenses. The ECWPGT creates a regionalized approach narrowing the gap between the high cost of playing and the low earnings potential.

For example, the 2021 WAPT money winner, Jessica Porvasnik, earned \$23,000 during its official money season and an additional \$13,000 winning the PXGWMPC. By traveling to State Opens and playing on the then-named NWGA, she earned another \$17,000, but barely breaking even in what was an incredibly successful year. Porvasnik, an All-American at Ohio State, was one of many players with whom Berman spoke before launching the ECWPGT to ensure he understood the financial challenges of women's developmental professional golf. Porvasnik is now on the ECWPGT Advisory Board. "Mark cares a lot about women's golf and is committed to building a tour around the players, providing an avenue to hone in on skills needed for the next level," said Porvasnik.

Added NC State grad and Advisory Board member Cecily Overbey, who moved from North Carolina to Florida for more access to professional tournament golf, "We play for money and

opportunity. That's our motivation, but the purses aren't usually big enough to make it worthwhile if it's not close by. There are a lot of girls coming up, and they're also going to need a place to play."

Jess McAlister, owner of Digital Golf Collective, a golf industry marketing and branding company, and ECWPGT Advisory Board member, sees the challenges these women face and believes the ECWPGT's vision can help shape the future. "This tour will draw a lot of players off the sidelines who are simply not playing, yet want to, and waiting for Q School, where they end up most times unprepared," said McAlister. She added, "Now we'll get to see them, meet them, and hear their stories before they get to the LPGA. There are so many good players who need the time to develop, and it's important to expand that pathway. Streamlining this developmental level is the pipeline for the LPGA's future."

A recent Golfweek article pointed out that 10 years ago there were 1,200 girls ranked on the National Junior Golf Scoreboard and there are now nearly 5,000 – a 400% growth. The American Junior Golf Association has seen its girl's membership double to 2,000 members over that time frame. Where ten years ago a common refrain in the golf world was that 10% of college golf scholarships were going unused, now there are more than 700 full college programs.

The ECWPGT has also established the Access Golf Fund to provide financial support for its players. The Access Golf Fund will help ensure each tournament purse reflects the value and importance these women bring to the game, making it worth their while to invest their time and money into pursuing their LPGA careers. The Access Golf Fund will also provide micro-scholarship dollars to assist players with entry fees and travel costs.

The ECWPGT is open primarily to the developmental professional players, those ranked below the Top 14 on the LPGA's Symetra Tour. The tour will accept amateur players ages 16 and over on a waitlist basis as space permits and plans to award WAGR points. Registration for the Winter Series is currently open on the Tour's website www.ECWPGT.com and @ecwpgt.

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