

Sports

Thursday, October 27, 2011 » MC

■ World Series postponed

Game 6 of the World Series was postponed Wednesday because of a wet forecast, delaying the Texas Rangers' bid to clinch their first championship. **7C**



Lopez says LPGA is making a comeback

■ **Upswing is being fueled by American golfers**

By Jon Santucci
Special to Treasure Coast Newspapers

PALM BEACH— Nancy Lopez says American female golfers are making a comeback and points to players such as Alexis Thompson as the reason why.

Local golfers have an opportunity to learn from and play a hole with Lopez at the Swinging Fore the ARC (Advocated for the Rights of the Challenged) Golf Tournament at Piper's Landing Golf Club on Saturday.

Lopez, 54, was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1987. She had 52 tournament wins (48 on the LPGA Tour), including three LPGA Championships. In 1978, Lopez was named the LPGA Rookie of the Year, Player of the

Year, Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year and won the Vare Trophy for the lowest scoring average.

Lopez will make her season debut on the Legend's Tour at the Third annual Legends Tour Open Championship next month.

Lopez spoke to Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers about her career and the state of women's golf.

Q: Why are you playing in the ARC Tournament?
A: I think they've had

the ARC Tournament for a few years now (five) and when Barbara Flowers asked me to be a part of it, I really didn't know what ARC was. But once I found out about it, it was great charity for me. My No. 1 charity is AIM for the Handicapped, which benefits children, and ARC benefits children and adults with developmental disabilities, so it was right up my alley.

Q: What do you think

See LOPEZ, 3C



Nancy Lopez enjoyed a Hall of Fame career with 52 tournament wins (48 on the LPGA Tour), including three LPGA Championships, and believes the LPGA is on an upswing. She says the surge will be fueled in part by young American golfers such as Alexis Thompson.

LOPEZ from 1C

of the current state of the LPGA?

A: It's making a comeback. I think the economy hurt it and we've had a few commissioners, but now they have Michael Whan and I think he's doing a great job. The sponsors love him and there's a lot more doors open for the LPGA now. There's tremendous talent out there with the tournament win a few weeks back by Alexis Thompson. (Thompson, 16, is from Broward County and won the Navistar LPGA Classic on Sept. 18 to become the youngest player ever to win a LPGA tournament.) That was a big spot for the LPGA and she's the real deal in golf right now. I captained her in the Junior Solheim Cup in 2009 at age 14, and watching her, I think she's going to be the shot in the arm the LPGA really needs right now with American players.

Q: With the LPGA Tour dominated by internation-

SWING FORE THE ARC FIFTH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Featuring: World Golf Hall of Famer Nancy Lopez

When: Saturday

Where: Piper's Landing Golf Club, Palm City

Time: Check-in and breakfast at 7 a.m. Golf clinic with Lopez at 8:15 a.m. Shotgun start at 9 a.m.

Entry fee: \$200 (all proceeds benefit ARC of Martin County)

For more information: Call Tracy Howse at 772-341-7964 or go to www.arcmc.org

al players, can American golfers make a comeback?

A: There's so much talent on the Tour and a lot of foreign players. That doesn't hurt our Tour, but it hurts the excitement of American people because they're wanting to watch American players win. I love (foreign players) to death, but in America, they want to see Americans win. In Korea, they want to see Se Re Pak win. It is an universal game now. I think there was a time when they would ask us if there were any American players on the horizon and there wasn't. Now, they're starting to develop American players again. The col-

leges are doing a great job of that.

Q: What do you think of the LPGA Future's Tour?

A: I know there's a few players out there and I think it's great, but the purses have to be bigger for these players. It's a great way to get players ready for the LPGA and prepare them, but I would always encourage American players to stay in school and develop their game there. It's a struggle for so many players when they get on the LPGA Tour. It's hard to keep your card and you don't get to play every week. I really think the best idea is to stay in college, get your college

degree so you always have something to fall back on. When you consider it, there are a lot of scholarships available to play in college and develop skills — and they develop a lot quicker.

Q: Looking back, what sticks out to you about your career?

A: I thank God for my career. I was blessed to play the game that I did. I met a lot of great people in golf and it was a wonderful life. I was able to compete, make a lot of money and travel everywhere. My dad paid my way as an amateur even though he couldn't afford it. I think I was able to help the LPGA Tour grow. I feel it was a big part of that and still am. I go to a lot of outings and exhibitions now. It opened a lot of doors for me.

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