

Jennifer Johnson to turn pro after one year at ASU

Written by Ryan Herrington, *Golf Digest*
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There had been speculation since the spring that **Jennifer Johnson's** freshman season at Arizona State might be the only year she spent in Tempe, that pro golf was calling and the 18-year-old from LaQuinta, Calif., couldn't resist the sound. Every time I inquired with her about the subject, however, Johnson insisted the rumors weren't true.

I was able to confirm this morning, though, what was first reported by MyDesert.com yesterday, that Johnson indeed will turn pro after competing as an amateur in one last event: next week's U.S. Women's Open (she earned an exemption into the field by finishing runner-up at last year's U.S. Women's Amateur, but the exemption requires she be an amateur for it to be used).

Johnson told ASU women's coach **Melissa Luellen** of her decision Monday and has been in contact with her teammates about it over the course of the past few days.

"It was a hard call for her to make, and it was a hard call for me to take," Luellen told Golf World. "We loved Jennifer and had so much fun with her her freshman year. We obviously wish her a ton of luck and hope she'll be a great Sun Devil alumni on tour.

"I thought we'd have her for another year," Luellen noted when asked about the timing of the decision. "But big life decisions are hard to make. I think she thought long and hard. She's a great student and as all college athletes know, academics is a big piece of [college life]. She did great academically. She just wanted to spend 100 percent of her time working on her game."

This decision comes despite the fact that twice in the last month Johnson insisted that she was going to return to ASU in the fall. When the rumors of a possible departure surfaced at the NCAA Championship in May—where she finished second to help her secure national freshman-of-the-year honors—she said she had thought about it but would play another season for the Sun Devils. Then at the Curtis Cup earlier this month, after Golf Channel reported during its telecast that Johnson was going to turn pro, she denied that was the case.

Johnson's first event as a professional is likely to be the Duramed Futures Tour's Alliance Bank Golf Classic in Syracuse, N.Y., July 30-Aug. 1.