

Johnson juggles LPGA qualifiers, Futures events

Written by Julie Williams, *Golfweek*
March 25, 2011

WINTER HAVEN, Fla. – A handful of players in the field at the Future Tour season opener made a last-minute, cross-country trip after attempting to take advantage of a new LPGA policy. Eight players at the Florida's Natural Charity Classic attempted to Monday qualify for the Kia Classic, the first domestic pay-for-play event on the LPGA schedule. One came very close, while the rest just added another line of experience to their resumes.



Jennifer Johnson, new to the pro circuit after capping her freshman season at Arizona State with a runner-up finish at the NCAA Championship last spring, lost in a three-for-two playoff at Industry Hills Golf Course in Industry Hills, Calif. Jane Rah and Lee Anne Pace prevailed, sending Johnson to Lake Region Yacht and Country Club.

“It would have been nice to play near home so my mom could have come out and watched, but you just gotta do what you gotta do,” said Johnson, of Carlsbad, Calif. “Wherever you are, it will be a good week.”

It's already shaping up that way for the 19-year-old. After opening with a 3-under 69, Johnson stood tied for third midway through a long day of play.

Though this one didn't turn out as she had hoped, Johnson is grateful for the opportunity to Monday qualify into LPGA events this year. She plans to hit many of the events on the Futures Tour schedule this year with her dad as her travel buddy, but still play a handful of LPGA qualifiers.

“The fields are pretty big, so it's tough, you know,” she said of the 56-player field in California.

Recent UCLA grad Sydnee Michaels has much the same plan, though for her, Futures Tour takes precedence.

“I think it's great that they're letting us have the opportunity to play,” Michaels said. “I think it's a good thing for us because it's like we can get in and play but at the same time, my main priority is getting my tour card so I want to focus on Futures events. If an LPGA tournament is going to conflict with a Futures event, I'm going to have to make a decision.”

Michaels opened with 74 in Winter Haven, what she calls a minor hiccup in what has otherwise been a successful start to a pro career. Michaels cashed in her amateur status in August after the U.S. Women's Amateur.