

Jennifer Johnson's star power rising on LPGA Tour

Written by Larry Bohannon, *The Desert Sun*
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It's been an interesting journey in the desert for Jennifer Johnson. She's gone from a 12-year-old visiting the desert to see what the world of the American Junior Golf Association is all about to a high school star for a school that didn't have a girls' golf team to being a star attraction Saturday at the opening of the new PGA Tour Superstore in Palm Desert.

"Attention shoppers, we have LPGA star Jennifer Johnson on the putting green where she will be giving a putting clinic," the voice rang out Saturday to hundreds of shoppers attending the grand opening of the Palm Desert store.

Sure enough, people started to gather and the 22-year-old Johnson talked with fans and showed off a few of the putting tips that have made her a rising star on the tour. Johnson was surrounded not only by her father but friends from the desert, including those from The Palms Golf Club in La Quinta, where she played much of her desert golf. Johnson has moved back to Carlsbad, where she lived before coming to the desert for high school.

It doesn't seem that long ago that Johnson was a top player for Desert Christian Academy in Bermuda Dunes. Then again, it doesn't seem that long ago that she took second in the U.S. Women's Amateur and placed second in the NCAA individuals in her only year at Arizona State University.

And it truly wasn't that long ago, just last May as a matter of fact, when Johnson stamped herself as one of the top Americans in the game with a victory in the Mobile Bay LPGA Classic in Alabama.

"I wasn't really even sure what was happening," Johnson said of that first victory. "So many things were going on, I just wasn't sure what was going on or what was happening."

Set on LPGA Tour

Maybe that's the best way to win your first tournament in the big time, not knowing what exactly is going on. What was happening to Johnson was she was shooting a final-

round 65 to vault to the victory. There was hope that the win would put Johnson on the U.S. Solheim Cup team, but she finished just short of an automatic berth and didn't get one of U.S. captain Meg Mallon's two captain picks.

For now, Johnson is happy to have won her first LPGA event and to know that she doesn't need to worry about where she will be playing in the coming years. She was happy and a little surprised to learn that her win guarantees her starts in the next three Kraft Nabisco Championships (unless the tournament makes a radical change in its eligibility criteria).

"There are so many lists these days," Johnson said. "The money list, world rankings, Solheim Cup. It's tough to keep track of them all."

Johnson has two more tournaments on her LPGA schedule this year, the Lorena Ochoa Invitational in Mexico and the season-ending CME Titleholders in Florida. At 30th in the current year's money list and 57th in the official world rankings, it's no wonder Johnson is happy with her golf life these days. And it's no wonder people will line up to watch her give golf tips.

Larry Bohannon is The Desert Sun golf writer. He can be reached at (760) 778-4633 or larry.bohannon@thedesertsun.com. Follow him on Twitter at [@MyDesertGolf](https://twitter.com/MyDesertGolf).