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How the Senior Tour Is Killing Golf

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How The Senior PGA Tour is Killing Golf *(needs formating)*

The greatest golf phenomenon of the past fifteen years has been the Senior PGA Tour. For the sake of the game, I wish it had never been invented. What the Senior Tour has going for it is nostalgia and good demographics -- there are a lot of retiring baby boomers out there, people who grew up idolizing Palmer and Nicklaus. The Senior Tour was a marketing sure thing, and it's made rich men out of the likes of Mike Hill and George Archer, the very same guys who were crying fifteen years ago that the "all-exempt" Tour was detrimental to competition and interest in the game. But what does the Senior Tour do for the growth of the game today? Absolutely nothing. The people who support it are already avid golfers, who would have spent their money on some other aspect of the game if they didn't spend it on admissions to Senior events or a pro-am slot. And the people we really want to get interested in the game -- young people and women in particular -- don't have any interest in watching Chi Chi Rodriguez and John Paul Cain. The Senior Tour just helps to cement their impression that golf is a boring, elitist, old people's game. [Which is why we thank God for Tiger Woods.] What the Senior Tour has done is kill the growth of the LPGA Tour, a vehicle which might have brought more young people into the game, and helped break down a few of its remaining sexist barriers. But the LPGA Tour has gone nowhere since Nancy Lopez was 25, because advertisers put their money behind the better demographics of the affluent senior audience, and because the people who can afford to play in pro-ams would rather play with Lee Trevino than Juli Inkster. [Personally, I'd rather play golf with Helen Alfredsson than with any man alive.] Yes, you can make the case that those seniors helped to popularize the game way back when it wasn't that profitable, and that they deserve to be rewarded for its success. The argument is the same for Social Security, but a lot of people of my generation have little sympathy for either institution. In the end, we don't love golf because of what Palmer and Nicklaus and Chi Chi did -- we love it for the game. So did they, before they began to look upon golf riches as their entitlement.