



# CHASING A DREAM

## INSIDE THE LIVES OF PROFESSIONAL GOLFERS

Professional golf looks glamorous from the outside. The athletes train with the best coaches at the best facilities. They play at the best venues. They make tons of money. Their lives are so easy (after all, they play a game for a living). Or, so the popular opinion goes. In reality, players spend grueling hours on the course. They power through setbacks, take risks, make sacrifices, and there's no guarantee it will all pay off.

### COMMITMENT

For athletes trying to make the PGA or LPGA Tour, the work never stops. "You have to treat it like a full-time job," says Anthony McGeorge, a recent graduate of Texas State University originally from England and now in his first year of professional golf. "There are other guys out there working really hard, so you really have to be productive with your time. If you're on the course you have to make it count. The competition's just too good."

That means training and practicing daily, including practice drills, swing tune-ups, and regular workouts. "During a typical practice week, I'm up at 5:30 every day and I'll be at the gym by 6:00," says Archie Ramos, a San Antonio-based golfer from Laredo with his eye on the Web.

com Tour in 2019. He works out, goes home to stretch and have a quick breakfast, and then heads to the course to start practicing. "My daily practice sessions typically involve maybe an hour and a half of putting, an hour and a half of chipping, an hour of hitting balls, and then I play rounds," says Archie. "After that, I evaluate what I did well and what I need to work on, and then I practice that for another hour or more. I'll get home around 6:30, eat dinner and relax."

### ENDLESS PURSUIT

Like any pursuit, golf is filled with ups and downs. Even when players do finally crack the Tour list, there's no guarantee they'll stay there. Some earn their Tour cards, others earn partial status, like Madeleine Sheils, an Arizona-based golfer who played at the University of Nebraska before spending four years on the Symetra Tour. She finished T23 at the LPGA Final Qualifying Tournament to earn priority list category 17 (i.e. *partial*) status for the 2018 season. "Last year, I wound up playing in 13 LPGA events," explains Madeleine. "This year, because I didn't finish in the top 125 on last year's money list, I had to go back to Q-School and try to re-earn my spot on the LPGA

Tour. I finished pretty close to the same number as last year, so I expect to get the same amount of starts.”

To be successful, players have to find ways to stay focused through the highs and motivated through the lows. Some rely on the support of family and friends or practice daily meditation. Others have found encouragement from fellow athletes. At any rate, they have to stay focused because, even though it may not seem like it, opportunities are often just around the corner. “You have to be prepared,” explains Anthony, “So that when the right opportunity comes up—you can take it, because there might not be another one.” But, at the end of the day, the road to the Tour requires more than commitment, a willingness to take risks, hard work, even more than talent and skill: It requires *faith*. “I guess the reason we all do this is because, deep down, we believe in ourselves,” says Anthony. “We believe we can get there.” ○



## ANTHONY MCGEORGE

### ***What do you consider your biggest accomplishment in golf?***

Probably every foreign-born player in the U.S. would say getting a scholarship to play division one college golf, and I had a number of top ten finishes in college. But I started playing in my small hometown at my tiny school; I'm not from a big city like London. My high school never had a kid go abroad before to study or play sports or anything like that. To come from the tiny little golf course that I started at to now being over here, that's probably the best thing I've accomplished.

### ***Favorite course you've played?***

That's a tough one. I've been able to play at quite a lot of nice venues. I would say the best course I've probably ever played on, or my favorite, was the PGA Centenary Course at Gleneagles in Scotland. I played on it quite soon after they had the Ryder Cup there a few years ago now. It's just phenomenal. Here in the U.S., my favorite is actually quite strange compared to some of the other places I've played that would probably be considered more prestigious venues. It's called Old Corkscrew, and it's near Naples, Florida.

### ***What differences have you seen between U.S. golf and golf in the U.K.?***

In general, U.S. courses are significantly longer than courses in the U.K., and obviously there are different grasses. In the U.S., everything's played through the air, so the courses are designed to be played through the air, and you need to really have that sort of high-ball, long-hitting game to be effective. I'm not saying that's the only way you can be effective, but in England the courses are a lot shorter, and I play on what would be a true links, so I can roll the ball up, and it doesn't have to be played through the air.

## MADELEINE SHEILS

### ***What brought you to golf?***

I first got a club in my hands when I was five. My dad had played his whole life, so he brought my sister and me to the game just as another fun thing for us to do in the summer. I took to it really quickly. I joined the junior golf program at our local course, and loved that I got to play with a bunch of girls my age. It was a social thing for me. So I was bit by the golf bug early. I still played other sports up until high school, but I knew that I definitely wanted to play college golf.

### ***What have been the biggest highs of your career?***

Earning a win on the Symetra Tour in 2015. It's very competitive out there, so that was big for me. And then getting on the LPGA and re-earning my Tour card this year, even though it's not full status. It's been such an honor to be a part of the Tour and have a chance to chase my dream alongside the best players in the world.

### ***What's the biggest misconception people have about playing professional golf?***

People don't always realize how much work goes into it, especially in women's golf, where the size of the pool is much smaller and sponsorship dollars are fewer and farther between. With entry fees, caddy salary, travel costs, equipment, and coaching, you're usually in the hole quite a bit when you first stick a tee in the ground at a tournament on Thursday, so you better make sure you're ready to go if you want to earn your money for the week. So that's probably the biggest misconception: That golfers have it all made once they make it to the Tour.

### ***How do you move forward after a setback?***

I have certainly gotten better at recognizing that ups and downs are just part of the game. The less time I spend being down on myself, the quicker I can get on to improving myself and being ready to go the next time I have an opportunity. I certainly rely on people close to me for support when I'm struggling. I definitely consider myself a hard worker, so if things aren't going right, I'm going to find a solution, try something new, put in a little more time—whatever the situation might call for. I practice meditation to try and clear my head and remain calm and in the present. Working out also usually helps me get rid of frustration and get myself some endorphins.



**What goals are you currently working toward?**

Long-term, my goal is to win a major and be on the Solheim Cup team. My goal for this season is to get two top tens, and to earn my way into the Asian swing events at the end of the season.

One of my goals along the way is also to encourage as many young girls to get into sports and chase their dreams as I can. I'd love to see more coverage of women in sports and therefore more participation. I want to encourage parents to get their girls involved, especially in golf. It can bring so much to a kid's life.



PHOTO CREDIT: BERNARD BRAULT



**ARCHIE RAMOS**

**How long have you been playing golf?**

I picked up a club when I was seven. My dad and I would go out once a year until I was around the age of 10, when we started getting into it more. When I was 12, he asked if I wanted to play a golf tournament. I got last place, so I was a little salty, and I was like: *You know what, I'm going to work at this 'cause I'm not getting last place again.*

**What do you consider your biggest accomplishment in golf?**

I think just the accomplishment of getting a full-ride scholarship when I was in school. Golf wasn't really a big thing in my city and no one really took it seriously in terms of my decision to just focus on golf. I felt like it was the right decision and my dad understood and was super supportive. A lot of people were pretty negative about it for a long time, but I fought through it and ended up doing really well and got a full ride to a division one school. I was there for two years, then transferred and got a full ride at the second school as well.

**How much of golf is mental?**

I would say 80 to 85 percent for sure. It's a big thing to have a sharp mind and know you can do it, know you can hit a shot, and stay focused on a certain goal. There are some pretty ugly swings out there, pretty bad techniques, but they play great because they have a strong mind. They think they're awesome, and it's true.