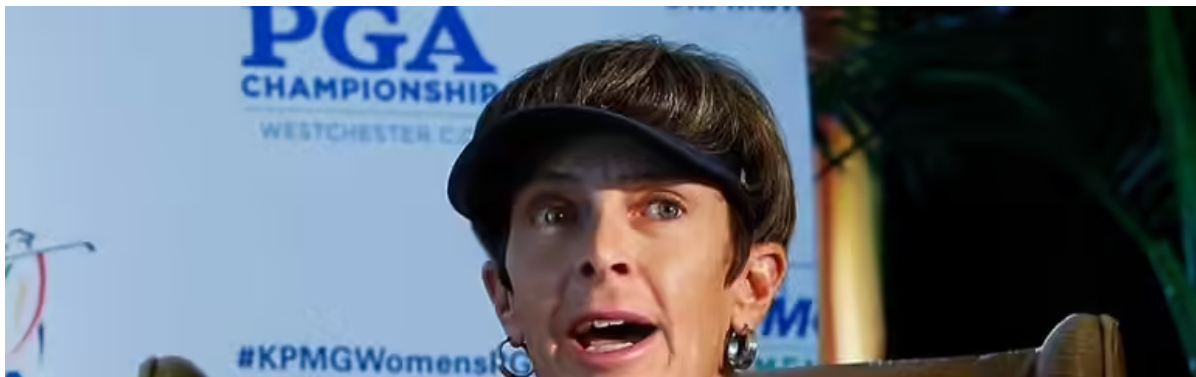


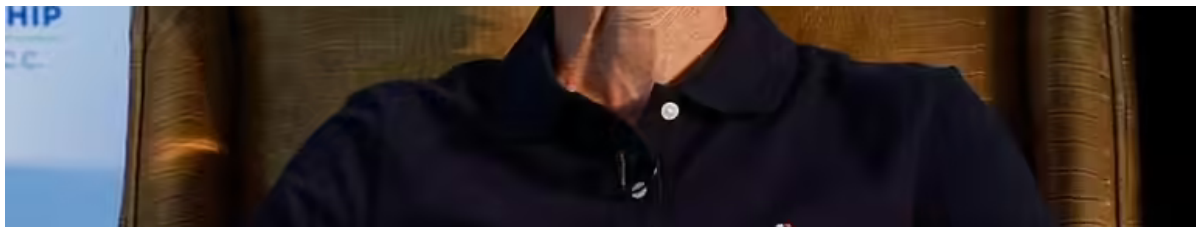
SPORTS / COLUMNISTS

## As Jean Bartholomew says, playing other sports is great for golfers



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From left, Stacy Lewis and Jean Bartholomew speak to the media during the KPMG Women's PGA Championship - Media Day on May 11, 2015 at Westchester Country Club in Rye, N.Y. Credit: Getty Images / Mike Stobe

By **MARK HERRMANN**

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If young people really want to excel at golf, they need to play something besides golf. Hit a baseball, shoot a basketball, swing a tennis racket, kick a soccer ball. It all helps, according to studies -- and by the example of Jean Bartholomew's long golf career.

She has worked in the sport throughout her adult life, having played on the LPGA Tour and becoming a successful teaching pro in Florida. Bartholomew, 48, will play alongside Lydia Ko, 18, and all of the other top tour pros in the first Women's PGA Championship at Westchester Country Club June 11-14. Bartholomew will be the one with a swing and an outlook shaped by having been a star basketball and field hockey player as well as a golfer at Garden City High School in the 1980s.

"I think people who have played other sports last longer. Physically, they're stronger and they don't burn out as fast," Bartholomew said at media day this week. "Look at Lydia Ko. She's so good, it's amazing. But she says she wants to retire at 30. I didn't get on the tour until I was 28."

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Bartholomew acknowledges that being golf specialists at early ages has helped some female players become professional stars in their mid- to late teens. But it just wouldn't have worked for her. She made Newsday's all-time Long Island high school athletes list for having been so versatile. "I think it made me a more rounded athlete. And I appreciated the golf when I did get the chance to play," she said. "If you're playing golf since you're 5 years old, and that's all you play, you can get stale."

Jack Nicklaus was a standout high school basketball player. Tiger Woods ran on the cross-country team. Jordan Spieth played baseball, basketball, football and soccer. The No. 1 player in men's college golf, Maverick McNealy of Stanford, considered playing college hockey.

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Michael Hebron, the PGA Hall of Fame director of golf at Smithtown Landing, said, "All the research that I'm familiar with says that all the kids that play single sports in lower grades have more injuries and more social problems . . . One of the reasons we do our camp one day a week is so that kids have a chance to play other sports."

Hebron added that the balance, timing and rhythm that are vital to a golf swing are well served by other activities. So at his youth golf camp, students toss bean bags and water balloons and swing baseball bats.

"Early specialization is very detrimental in making progress," said the pro who has studied and/or lectured at many universities, including Harvard. "All the studies show that most of the kids who leave golf leave it because they started too early."

Bartholomew often has said that had she played only golf when she was a kid on Long Island, she would not be playing now. She is sure she would have grown sick of it. Instead, she is a four-time champion of the LPGA's national club pro tournament.

"I still have the passion for the game. I might not be able to play the way I did because of my back and stuff, but I still enjoy it," she said. "Basketball was my favorite sport. It's still my favorite sport. It was my best sport. But here I am, making a living in golf."

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### Outings

The 17th Annual Ann Liguori Foundation Golf Classic will be Monday at Friar's Head in Riverhead. Proceeds go to charities involved with cancer prevention and research. Visit [annliguori.com](http://annliguori.com) . . . Puccio Electric will hold its fourth annual outing in memory of Paul Puccio and benefiting the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation, at Swan Lake Golf Club, Manorville, on June 5. Visit [puccioelectriccorp.com](http://puccioelectriccorp.com) . . . The Southampton Lions Annual Charity Tournament, to support the vision impaired, will be June 10 at Noyac Golf Club. Call 631-283-0929.

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