



McKinney lands Nationwide finale

Salesmanship Club to operate event at TPC Craig Ranch

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The PGA Tour was looking for ways to enhance its Nationwide Tour Championship. Salesmanship Club officials have been pursuing methods to raise more money for their charity. And the TPC Craig Ranch in McKinney was interested in hosting an event.

All three organizations got what they wanted Wednesday when it was announced that the 2008 Nationwide Tour Championship is coming to Craig Ranch.

The season-ending tournament, scheduled for Nov. 6-9, will offer a record \$1 million purse with \$180,000 to the champion. The Golf Channel will broadcast all four rounds.

With the Nationwide Tour Championship, the Dallas-Forth Worth area has three PGA Tour-sanctioned events. The Salesmanship Club, which runs the EDS Byron Nelson Championship, will operate the Nationwide Tour Championship.

The Nationwide Tour is an extension of the PGA Tour, with the top 25 in earnings receiving promotions each year. The Tour Championship features the top 60 players in earnings. The season-ending tournament has plenty of drama with players trying to crack the top 25 in the finale.

Most Nationwide Tour events are played in medium markets. But the Tour has branched out to larger markets because of the exposure and sponsorship opportunities.

The 2007 Nationwide Tour Championship was played in San Diego. Houston will host in 2009, followed by San Diego. The tournament will probably return to the Dallas area in 2011.

"Our tour continues to grow competitively," Nationwide Tour president Bill Calfee said. "You can't watch a PGA Tour telecast without the television commentators talking about the Nationwide Tour. The Nationwide Tour, frankly, has made the PGA Tour better."

With the Salesmanship Club's vast volunteer base and experience running events, everything was in place for a Nationwide Tour event.

Andy Stern, president of Salesmanship Club Charitable Golf of Dallas, said the Salesmanship Club's Youth and Family Centers will benefit from the Tour Championship. It will also allow Salesmanship Club officials to build relationships with future PGA Tour stars, which will help the EDS Byron Nelson.

"We are going to treat them like PGA Tour players are treated," Stern said. "This is a totally different event. That makes it a challenge for us. We've raised \$6.4 million the past few years [through the Nelson tournament]. We've got to find other ways to raise money."

The TPC Craig Ranch is well suited for a Nationwide event. It has staged a wide variety of events, including the second stage of PGA Tour Qualifying this week. Craig Ranch will be the first Tournament Players Club to host a Nationwide Tour event.

Larsson wins NTPGA finale: Dean Larsson, assistant pro at Bent Tree CC, beat Jamie Elliott, director of instruction at Bridlewood GC, in Wednesday's final of the Cleveland Golf/Club Car NTPGA Match Play Championship at Northwood Club in Dallas.

Larsson made three birdies and an eagle on the back nine. On 18, he chipped in from 25 feet, and Elliott missed a 15-foot birdie putt to extend the match.

Larsson, who earned \$4,000, capped a remarkable year with the win. He also captured the NTPGA Assistants' Championship and Section Championship. Elliott was trying to make history with a third straight Match Play title.

The season-ending tournament featured the top 32 players on the NTPGA Player of the Year Point Challenge.

Knost starts strong: Former SMU standout Colt Knost shot a 68 and is three shots behind leader Dave Schultz after the first of four rounds of the Second-Stage PGA Tour Qualifier at the TPC at Craig Ranch.

Knost is in a tie for sixth. The top third of the 79-player field will advance to the final PGA Tour Qualifying beginning Nov. 28 in Winter Garden, Fla.

LPGA to drug test: The LPGA Tour on Wednesday released its policy for drug testing that will start next season, making it the first professional golf organization to require randomly selected players to prove they are clean.