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## College Golf

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### **College Golf: A Pathway to the Pro's**

Since 2020, there has been a new meaning to golf at the collegiate level.

The PGA Tour has recognized that success at the elite level of college golf is a strong indicator of a player's potential as a professional. Therefore, the PGA Tour has made major moves to open these opportunities to college golfers as it battles with LIV golf.

Going forward, the Top PGA Tour U Player will earn a PGA Tour membership, and the Top 5 college Seniors in the country will earn Korn Ferry Tour status and have a realistic chance of streamlining their way to the PGA Tour within a few months of finishing college, the Top20 players will have "status" on a PGA affiliated tour.

College golf is changing right in front of our eyes.



#### **ELIGIBILITY, REQUIREMENTS & RANKING**

- A player must compete in NCAA D1
- A player must complete all 4 years in college *\*(not required to get a degree)*

- A player must compete in at least 9 events in each of their final 2 years of college, 18 total
- Only Seniors will be eligible for the traditional PGA Tour U ranking each year.
- All collegiate players in D1 will be eligible for PGA Tour U Accelerated
- Official Ranking – based on WAGR #'s, weightings TBD
  - *Counting Events* – College events and PGA Tour Events, including majors
  - *Non-Counting Events* – other Amateur events & non-PGA

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

A. **Winner of PGA Tour U** - PGA Tour membership and eligible for all open, full-field events after the NCAA Championship in May, starting with the RBC Canadian Open

B. **Finish Top 5** – Korn Ferry status, exempt into 8-9 open full-field events, starting the NCAA Championship thru the final event of the current year Korn Ferry Tour, players will also be exempt into the final stage of Q-School (*if needed*)

C. **Finish 6-10** – Conditional Korn Ferry status

D. **Finish 11-20** - Earn status on PGA Tour Canada/Latino America and also exempt thru 2nd stage of Q-School (*if needed*)

**\*\*\*NEW as of Nov 2022:** Underclassmen, can now earn PGA Tour membership through a new program called PGA Tour University 'Accelerated'. Players will accumulate 'points' as underclassmen, if 20 points are earned by the end of their 3rd year of NCAA Eligibility, they will immediately be eligible for the PGA Tour.

Here's an example of the point structure:

- Haskins Award - Most Outstanding Collegiate golfer - 3 points
- Hogan Award - GCAA award for outstanding play and academics - 3 points
- Nicklaus Award - Best ranked player in college golf - 3 points
- Mickelson Award - Most outstanding freshman - 2 points
- WAGR ranking - Up to 5 points for the Top 5 best career rank
- Individual Tournament Wins - US Amateur, NCAA Individual Championship, Western Am, British Am, & others - up to 3 points
- Team Appearances - Walker Cup (2pts), Palmer Cup, World Am Team Championship
- Top Finishes in Major events or PGA Tour events -

- Top20 in a Major - 2 points
- Compete in a Major - 1 point
- Top-10 Finish in Tour Event - 1 point
- Made Cut - 1 point
- Therefore, if a player were to finish T-12 in the 2023 US Open, he would earn 4 points. 1 point for competing, 1 point for a made cut, and 2 points for a Top-20 finish.

According to the PGA Tour, since 2010, only 3 players would have earned membership thru PGA Tour Accelerated: Can you guess them?

- Patrick Cantlay at UCLA
- Justin Thomas at Alabama
- Patrick Rodgers at Stanford

Additional Note: In our transfer portal article, we noted Eugeno Lopez-Chacarra who transferred from Wake Forest to Oklahoma State and now is seeing success playing as a rookie for LIV Golf.

## WHAT ARE OTHERS SAYING?

*“It’s an exciting opportunity for college players to be able to earn some professional status because of good play on the course. Over the last few years it’s clear that the top college players have games that can compete on tour so it’s nice they will be given an opportunity compete in events without having to qualify or wait until the fall for Q-school. I think it’s definitely a great move by the PGA tour.”*

**Corey Conners, PGA Tour Player, Kent State University (2014)**

*“Looking back, PGA Tour U could have saved me 4 or 5 years getting to the PGA tour. The inclusion of PGA Tour U is a great move by the Tour and I fully support the idea of opening up the Korn Ferry Tour to top college Seniors, but obviously some tweaks and adjustments will need to be made as we progress forward. PGA Tour U will hopefully take an unbiased approach instead of only handing out exemptions to players with the strongest connections or the most qualified agents.”*

**Dylan Frittelli, PGA Tour Player, University of Texas (2011)**

*“I love the new PGA Tour U program. Rewarding the best college golfers will bring a new level of excitement to the Korn Ferry Tour and ultimately the PGA Tour, faster than ever. College golf is very strong, and college teams regularly play PGA Tour course setups. Yes, the Mid-Major players will need to win more head-to-head matchups and take advantage of weaker fields in college golf but ultimately the best players, regardless of their conference, will rise to the top”*

**Lanto Griffin, PGA Tour Player, VCU (2010)**

*In the PGA Tour U Golf Channel article a few top Coaches spoke out:*

*“This is an evolutionary step for college golf. It validates the hard work that everyone is putting in and celebrating guys playing really high-level golf and doing school at the same time.”*

**Stanford, Head Coach, Conrad Ray**

*“In other sports, there is a direct connection between college and the pros ... we just haven’t had that”*

**Arizona State, Head Coach, Matt Thurmond**

## **OTHER PATHWAYS TO THE PGA TOUR**

- Korn Ferry Tour
- Korn Ferry Q-School
- PGA Tour Latino America
- PGA Tour Canada - Mackenzie
- PGA Tour China
- Sponsor’s Exemptions
- European Tour
- Challenge Tour
- Other tours across the world

In the past, we’ve seen a trend of top college players leaving college, vanishing from the spotlight, then emerging on the big stage a few years later. This is mainly because of the complexity and difficulty of the PGA Tour qualifying process. In most cases, players start with little or no status and must work their way up on the smaller tours or go thru Korn Ferry pre-qual, 1st, 2nd, and final stage for qualifying “school”.

This particular trend has become a real concern for college coaches, many of whom have players questioning whether they should forgo their final year(s) of college in lieu of starting their pro careers at an earlier age.

While it’s too early to tell if the emergence of the new ranking will put more focus on the top college golfers and keep them in school for 4 years, I believe this is a great move by the PGA Tour and will prove to be advantageous for the up-and-coming stars of the next generation and their pathway to the PGA Tour.

Thanks for reading,

Michael J. Smith

*Founder, ForeCollegeGolf*

*ForeCollegeGolf is a college placement and recruiting business where Mike aims to apply his background in competitive golf and recruiting education to help educate players, their families, and coaches about the college recruiting process.*

*If you have any questions about the article above, any feedback, an article idea you would like to provide; you can contact us at [mike.smith@forecollegegolf.com](mailto:mike.smith@forecollegegolf.com) or [www.ForeCollegeGolf.com](http://www.ForeCollegeGolf.com)*

