

MICKEY WRIGHT, LPGA
WWGA 2012 Woman of Distinction Honoree



Considered “A Living Legend in the World of Golf,” **Mickey Wright, LPGA**, is the 2012 recipient of the Women’s Western Golf Association’s “Woman of Distinction” award. She was the premier LPGA player during the 1960’s with a swing noted by Ben Hogan to have been the best in golf. While her name is often mentioned in the same breath as Hogan, Sam Snead and Bobby Jones, her swing was, and possibly still remains, a picture of perfection.

By the age of 27, Miss Wright had won all four majors; by the age of 28, she had won the four majors – twice and was semi-retired at the age of 34. One of the greatest players in LPGA history, she has 82 tournament titles and ranks second in all-time career LPGA wins behind Kathy Whitworth (2010 WWGA Woman of Distinction honoree) who has 88. Whitworth said, *“The Western Open (I think) was one of her favorite championships, particularly the one held in Madison, Wisconsin in 1963. It was played at Maple Bluff Country Club, a beautiful course with narrow fairways, big trees and elevated greens. She always spoke fondly of the event as one of her favorite courses. She almost lapped the field on her way to winning by nine shots, I know, because I was the one who finished second!”*

Wright is a five-time Vare Trophy winner (1960-64) and is the only player in LPGA history to hold all four major titles at the same time. She won the final two majors of the year in 1961, the U. S. Women’s Open and the LPGA Championship, and then took the first two majors of 1962, the Titleholders Championship and the **WOMEN’S WESTERN OPEN**.

Rhonda Glenn, Manager USGA Communications said, *“I’m so fortunate to be the one that Ben Hogan and Byron Nelson told when they said Mickey Wright had the greatest golf swing they’d ever seen. It was in the late 1980s and the occasions were interviews with those two great men. I already knew, however, of Mickey’s place in the game. As a very lucky teenager, I was paired with her twice in tournaments and had a front-row seat on her tremendous grace, skill and passion for the game. No one has ever loved golf more than Mickey Wright. It’s entirely appropriate that you (the WWGA) present her with this honor (WWGA Woman of Distinction.)”*

From 1959-68, Wright captured 79 of her 82 victories, averaging 7.9 victories per year. During the 1960s she dominated the decade by claiming 68 of her 82 career victories, 15 more tournaments than any other player in that decade (Kathy Whitworth had 53 wins); Mickey won 44 tournaments in four years (1961-64).

Whitworth commented, *“Mickey was always gracious to play with, and it was a joy to watch her execute the many shots she played no matter what they were. I remember one of the first times I played with Mickey was in French Lick, Indiana. We were on a par four that had a tree in the middle of the fairway. Mickey hit the tree and with no follow through, she was still able to hit the green; that was when I realized I was in the company of greatness!”*

THREE TIME WOMEN’S WESTERN OPEN WINNER ... Miss Wright won the **WOMEN’S WESTERN OPEN** three times. This Open has the distinction of being the first women’s major championship ever held; the tournament was held from 1930-1967. Her first win came in 1962 at the Montgomery Country Club, Montgomery, Ala. where she defeated Mary Lena Faulk. She won again in 1963 at Maple Bluff Country Club in Madison, Wisc. defeating Kathy Whitworth and then again in 1966 at Rainbow Springs Country Club in Mukwonago, Wisc. defeating Margie Masters and JoAnn Prentice.

Some of her many highlights include: During 1963-64 she served as president of the LPGA and was voted Associated Press Woman Athlete of the Year; in 1964 she was inducted into the Hall of Fame of Women’s Golf and the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1976. In 1967 Wright was one of the six inaugural inductees into the “LPGA Hall of Fame” along with Patty Berg, Louise Suggs, Babe Zaharias, Betty Jameson and Betsy Rawls. (Berg, Suggs and Jameson are all past recipients of the WWGA’s Woman of Distinction award.) She was inducted into the International Women’s Sports Hall of Fame in 1981; named “Golfer of the Decade” by GOLF magazine for the years 1958-67 during the 1988 Centennial of Golf in America celebration; inducted into the California Golf Writers Association Hall of Fame in 1993; in 1994 was honoree of the PGA Tour’s Memorial Tournament; in 1999 named Female Golfer of the Century by the Associated Press; in 1000 was voted one of GOLF DIGEST’S 50 greatest golfers of all times; and was recognized during the LPGA’s 50th Anniversary (in 2000) as one of the LPGA’s top-50 players and teachers.

Mickey Wright had a stellar career and the WWGA Board of Directors and Associate Directors are proud of all her accomplishments and what she has done for golf – especially women’s golf!

Mike Whan, LPGA Commissioner said, *“Mickey Wright is arguably one of the best golfers in history – male or female – of her generation with 82 LPGA victories and 13 major championships. She blazed a trail that so many others have followed and, in doing so, has rightfully earned her position in the World Golf Hall of Fame. We are proud to call her a member of the LPGA and thrilled to see her honored with the Women’s Western Golf Association’s Woman of Distinction award.”*

“Not only did Mickey hit great golf shots, she was a great role model as well. She was honest and always conducted herself at a very high level. I knew if I needed help, and I did several times, that I could go to her. Without a doubt, Mickey’s wisdom and intellect helped me become the player I became,” said Kathy Whitworth, she continued, *“I have many wonderful memories playing with Mickey, one of my favorites is when we were teamed to play in the Legends of Golf with the men in Austin, Texas – it was a once in a lifetime opportunity to be able to play alongside Mickey – I consider it one of my highlights of my career.”*

John Kaczowski, President & CEO, Western Golf Association Evans Scholars Foundation said, *“The Western Golf Association Evans Scholars Foundation is thrilled to see Mickey Wright as the recipient of this year’s Women’s Western Woman of Distinction award. It is fitting that she will receive this honor, based on her professional golf career, which includes membership in the World Golf Hall of Fame and over 82 wins on the LPGA tour. Our organization is delighted to see Wright add this distinction to her decorated career in honor of her commitment to the game of golf.”*

At the WWGA’s Annual Meeting, Mickey was lauded with tributes from many as the Woman of Distinction honoree. The USGA provided the WWGA with a video that was shown when she received the USGA Bob Jones award in 2010.

She was not able to be in attendance to physically receive the award but wrote the following which was read at the meeting:

“My fondest memories are the following ... first ... playing in the 1951 Women’s Western Amateur. I played against and was defeated by the wonderful Mrs. Dot Porter. I lost the match but gained a heroine and friend for life. I miss her, as I’m sure all of you who knew her do.”

“I also fondly remember the 1962 Women’s Western Open tournament played at the Montgomery Country Club in Montgomery, Alabama. I was fortunate to win the play-off for the championship against my good, good friend Mary Lena Faulk, and ironically won by using the Bullseye putter she had generously given me in 1956.”

“Some of my fondest memories are of the Women of the Western who ran the tournaments: a few of the many are Mrs. Owen West, Mrs. Charles Dennehy, Mrs. Philip (June) Atwood who is also a past recipient of the Woman of Distinction award, Mrs. Charles Price and Mrs. William Scott, all are past presidents of the organization. They worked very hard, and were also so gracious to us, the players.”

Miss Wright was asked if she had a favorite course ... she replied, “Yes, indeed, I have a favorite course on which I won the Western Open. In 1963 we played the Maple Bluff Country Club in Madison, Wisconsin. The course was probably the toughest Major course we ever played. It was set up beautifully, very tight fairways, extremely long, and in wonderful condition with long, difficult rough. It remains one of my five favorite courses ever.”

If she were here today to receive the award ... she said,

“If I were at the meeting receiving the award in person, the first thing I would want to say is how grateful I and the rest of the LPGA Women were to the Women’s Western for establishing a Major tournament for us. You selected top-notch golf courses and set them up to be difficult tests of golf as a Major should be.”

“Next I would apologize for not being there in person to tell you how honored and appreciative I am to receive this award. This has been quite a year for me at age 77. First to have the USGA honor me with “The Mickey Wright Room” at the USGA Museum in Far Hills, New Jersey, and now the icing on the cake with your “Woman of Distinction” award.”

“Thank you for being here, and continued thanks to the ladies of the Women’s Western Golf Association for their selfless contributions to the game we all love.”

She concluded, “Hope this covers your questions and displays my true affection and gratitude to the WWGA.”

Kindest regards,

MICKEY WRIGHT

Some of Mickey’s Records include . .

Youngest to reach 30 wins ... at age 26 years, 11 months, 7 days at the 1962 Sea Island Women’s Invitational ... Others of note (both WWGA Women of Distinction honorees): Kathy Whitworth was 27 years, 6 months, 27 days at the 1967 Raleigh Ladies Invitational; and Nancy Lopez was 28 years, 4 months, 13 days when she won the 1985 Chrysler-Plymouth Charity Classic

Fastest to reach 40 wins ... Mickey Wright, 8 years, 1 month, 2 days, 1963 – at the Sea Island Women’s Invitational
Others of note to reach 40 wins ... Annika Sorenstam, 8 years, 9 months, 5 days at the 2002 Samsung World Championship ... another WWGA Woman of Distinction honoree ... Louise Suggs took 9 years, 3 months, 18 days, at the 1959 Dallas Civitan Open (does not include her eight wins prior to the inception of the LPGA)

Youngest to reach 40 wins

Mickey Wright, 27 years, 11 months, 20 days, 1963 Sea Island Women’s Invitational ... Kathy Whitworth, 28 years, 10 months, 8 days, 1968 Gino Paoli Open ... Annika Sorenstam, 31 years, 11 months, 27 days, 2002 Samsung World Championship

Fastest to reach 50 wins

Mickey Wright, 8 years, 8 months, 21 days, 1963 Visalia Ladies’ Open
Annika Sorenstam, 10 years, 3 months, 3 days, 2004 Office Depot Championship Hosted by Amy Alcott ... and Kathy Whitworth, 10 years, 3 months, 19 days, 1969 Lady Carling Open

Youngest to reach 50 wins

Mickey Wright, 28 years, 7 months, 8 days, 1963 Visalia Ladies' Open ... Kathy Whitworth, 29 years, 6 months, 23 days, 1969 Lady Carling Open ... Annika Sorenstam, 33 years, 5 months, 25 days, 2004 Office Depot Championship Hosted by Amy Alcott

Largest come-from-behind victory

10 strokes, Mickey Wright, 1964 Tall City Open ... 10 strokes, Annika Sorenstam, 2001 The Office Depot Hosted by Amy Alcott ... 10 strokes, Louise Friberg, 2008 MasterCard Classic Honoring Alejo Peralta Presented by Nextel

Most consecutive wins in scheduled events ...

4 -- Mickey Wright, 1962 (Heart of America Invitational, Aug. 9-12; Albuquerque Swing Parade, Aug. 17-19; Salt Lake City Open, Aug. 23-26; Spokane Open, Aug. 31-Sept. 3) ... 4 -- Mickey Wright, 1963 (Alpine Civitan Open, May 10-12; Muskogee Civitan Open, May 16-19; Dallas Civitan Open, May 23-26; Babe Zaharias Open, May 31-June 2) ...

4 -- Kathy Whitworth, 1969 (Orange Blossom Open, March 13-17; Port Charlotte Invitational, March 20-23; Port Malabar Invitational, March 27-30; Lady Carling Open, April 17-20) ... 4 -- Annika Sorenstam, 2001 (Welch's/Circle K Championship, March 8-11; Standard Register PING, March 15-18; Nabisco Championship, March 22-25; The Office Depot Hosted by Amy Alcott, April 12-14) ... 4 -- Lorena Ochoa, 2008 (Safeway International Presented by Coca-Cola, March 27-30; Kraft Nabisco Championship, April 3-6; Corona Championship, April 10-13; Ginn OPEN, April 17-20)

Most majors won, season

3 -- Babe Zaharias, 1950 (U.S. Women's Open, Titleholders, Women's Western Open)**

***Only three majors were held in 1950*

3 -- Mickey Wright, 1961 (LPGA Championship, U.S. Women's Open, Titleholders)

3 -- Pat Bradley, 1986 (Nabisco Dinah Shore, LPGA Championship, du Maurier Ltd. Classic)

and the list goes on and on ...

 Permission granted for some of the above by the LPGA