

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

THE GAME OF GOLF IS LATEST VICTIM OF FACTIONALIZATION

The "gentleman's sport" of golf has become downright ungentlemanly. But it's not because so many women are playing the game.

The Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) Tour, which has controlled the sport for more than 90 years, is being challenged by a deep-pocketed upstart called LIV Golf. LIV (54, in Roman numerals) represents the number of holes that will be played at each of its events, compared with 72 holes at PGA tournaments.

You might describe the PGA as a monopoly, ripe for disruption. LIV saw and seized an opportunity to attract a younger market to a game that's grown in popularity during the pandemic. (The average PGA Tour viewer is 64.) LIV wants to make the game more exciting by accelerating the pace of play and creating a party atmosphere at its events.

For now, what LIV is known for is throwing enormous sums of money at golfers to grow their market share. So far, it's lured 10 of the top 50 golfers — most notably, San Diegan Phil Mickelson, who

was offered \$200 million to play in the LIV Golf Invitational Series. According to Golf Monthly, that's double what Mickelson earned over his 30-year PGA Tour career.

The prize money is equally astonishing: Mickelson and other players will vie for \$225 million at eight LIV events.

The source of the money is causing consternation. LIV is backed by a \$2 billion commitment from the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia. Its chair, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has been linked by U.S. intelligence to the 2018 murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

The country has a long history of violating human rights. Just last week, a Saudi woman was given a 34-year prison sentence because she followed and retweeted activists and dissidents on her Twitter account.

LIV's critics say Saudi Arabia is "sportswashing" — using golf to buy legitimacy and bolster its global image. China — with an appalling human rights record of its own — sportswashed earlier

this year as host of the Winter Olympics, themed "Together for a Shared Future." As Michael Rosenberg observed in Sports Illustrated, "Any form of good, wholesome fun can seem like it is presented by good, wholesome people — even when the facts say otherwise."

The sportswashing clamor makes me wonder if LIV would be better regarded if Scotland was behind it.

As it turns out — at least so far — not everyone is lured by the promise of playing less golf for more money. Tiger Woods — considered by many to be golf's GOAT (greatest of all time) — rejected an offer worth \$700 million to \$800 million to play in the LIV series. Woods was also approached to be LIV's commissioner.

At the Open Championship in July, Woods candidly spoke about his disapproval of the LIV circuit, saying that some players had "turned their backs" on the PGA Tour that had made them famous. He expressed concern that LIV's guaranteed payouts would disincentivize practice and, in the long

run, hurt less-experienced players. But mostly, Woods seemed to lament LIV's break with golf tradition.

To be clear, tour players are not employees of the PGA; they operate more like independent contractors. Payday only comes for golfers who play well enough to make a tournament cut. So, the attraction of LIV to some is understandable. But there's another consideration: the PGA Tour Player Handbook, which sets limits on participation in non-PGA events. Players are expected to abide by it.

It all makes right and wrong in this situation a little less certain.

There was no uncertainty on the part of the PGA, however, which suspended 17 players who competed in the inaugural LIV tournament in June.

Eleven of them filed an antitrust lawsuit; three sought a temporary restraining order so they could compete in the tour's FedEx Cup Playoffs, for which they had previously qualified. (The judge ruled against them, saying they didn't suffer "irrepa-

rable harm.")

Like the tour operators, PGA fans fail to see any nuance. Washington Post sportswriter Sally Jenkins put it this way: "Every week, deserters to the Saudi golf exhibition circuit manifest new forms of obliviousness to go with their remorseless greed. These are not millworkers taking on U.S. Steel to champion freedom for the working guy. They're dealbreakers who do exactly as they please for profit. Freedom of choice is what they exercised."

So now, even the gentleman's sport of golf has become factionalized. It will take more than the traditional handshake between golfers at the end of a round to restore its reputation. It will take decency and respect. Just like golf was known for, in the good old days.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit ncrconline.com

PATROL

FROM B1

happen: Move slowly, don't have anything in your hands, follow commands from the officers outside.

The family complied. The 18-year-old was arrested without force.

"About as textbook as you can get," Bolton said later.

East County roots

Bolton was raised in El Cajon, and she can trace her origins as a cop to the job that got her through school.

More than 20 years ago, Bolton was studying for her associate's degree at Grossmont College. During the day, she was an unarmed security guard at Granite Hills High School.

On March 22, 2001, the main item on her calendar was a staff party.

She and several colleagues had gathered inside a break room to celebrate the birthday of her supervisor, Jeremiah Larson.

Larson had just handed a piece of cake to Rich Agundez, an El Cajon cop seated nearby, when everybody heard a "pop" outside the room.

Probably just seniors with balloons, Bolton thought.

Earlier that month, a 15-year-old had opened fire at Santee's Santana High School, killing two. But what were the odds of another shooting in the same district?

Another "pop." Somebody yelled "gun."

Agundez stood and ran out of the room.

Outside, an armed 18-year-old had already wounded two teachers and three students. Agundez shot the young man, ending the spree before anyone died.

In the aftermath, both Bolton and Larson joined El Cajon's Police Department.

While Larson had already been moving in that direction, the shooting was a "catalyst" for him.

"I thought the same thing as Amber," he said recently. "I'd rather be on the side of this that can respond with a weapon instead of just having a radio."

For Bolton, it took a series of conversations with a friend on the force to convince her.

But since signing up nearly 16 years ago, "nothing has happened to make me rethink what I do," she said.

Threat of violence

The constant threat of violence was one of the first things Bolton brought up when a reporter climbed into her SUV during her shift in July.

From the driver's seat,



NELVIN C. CEPEDA U-T FILE
El Cajon police Officer Amber Bolton responds to an overdose call earlier this month during one of her 12-hour shifts.

Bolton lifted a handheld radio and demonstrated how to call for help.

If something happens where I go down, we're Unit 244, she told the reporter.

She leaned to her left, exposing her utility belt.

If things really go south, she said, this is how you holster my gun.

Then she pulled out of the parking lot and onto city streets.

There was no set route. She drove past churches, signs in Arabic, vacant lots cooking in the sun.

Bolton's been driving these roads long enough that she can tell when she's veered into a neighboring city by the gradient of the concrete. (El Cajon's is gray, Santee's more yellow, she said.)

Her blonde hair stayed in a bun, even as wind blew in from an open window.

The temperature ticked up in the 70s. If things really got hot, she knew which stores would let her stand in their refrigerators.

Nearly a fifth of El Cajon lives below the poverty line, and recent surveys in the region show a rise in the number of people on the streets or in shelters. Overdoses are also up, and Bolton now sees three to four a week.

She's also noted an increase in mental health calls, although she's not sure how much is due to residents just being more comfortable asking for support.

Cops have wrestled with mental health too.

Around 2013, Bolton was called to the scene of an accident.

By that point in her career she'd sat near plenty of bodies, and there wasn't even a corpse at this site.

While a Ford F-150 had slammed into a golf cart, the woman inside was still clinging to life and had been tak-

en to a hospital.

But after Bolton arrived, someone showed her a picture of what the woman's injuries looked like.

Maybe the photo was one traumatic image too many. Perhaps the very absence of a body let her imagination run wild with what the moment of impact must have looked like.

All she knew for sure was the nightmares started soon after.

Bolton signed up to see a therapist.

"I've had a lot of rookies in my car over the last couple months," she said. Her main advice: "Don't be afraid to ask for help."

Fire call

While Bolton spoke, she listed to radio chatter through an earpiece.

A little after 11 a.m., a call came in: An empty lot had caught fire at Franklin and Johnson.

"Two forty-four on Main and Mollison," Bolton responded, giving her location.

She drove toward the intersection, her eyes moving between the road and her laptop, mounted over the center console.

She turned onto Johnson.

"Ooh boy," she said.

A column of smoke stretched far into the sky. Flames several feet high moved toward nearby homes. Neighbors stood outside with garden hoses, trying to beat back the fire.

Bolton stopped in the middle of the road, angling her SUV to cut off traffic. She told a dispatcher what other streets needed to be blocked off, then stepped outside.

The fire was only feet from a neighboring fence.

An engine from the local Heartland Fire-Rescue De-

partment pulled up, then another.

"It's moving toward that house," Bolton told arriving firefighters.

Josh Stewart jumped out of a truck. The firefighter dragged a hose to a hydrant, plugged it in and twisted a valve.

The hose jerked, then froze, the water stopped by a twist in the fabric.

Stewart kicked it. The hose bulged again, and water flowed around the back of the truck — where it hit another kink.

Bolton appeared. She swung back her foot and drove a boot into the hose, straightening it out.

Water rushed out of the nozzle and onto the lot.

The fire was out before noon. Nothing was damaged.

Firefighters continued spraying the ground for a while after, while Bolton and another officer watched from across the street.

Neighbors approached with questions. At 5 feet, 5 inches, Bolton sometimes had to look up at whoever was talking. But her eyes, hidden behind black Maui Jim's, kept tabs on everyone's hands. She always wanted to know what the hands were doing.

A man approached.

He thanked Bolton for showing up, then launched into a complaint about local crime.

"Even at night we hear shooting," he said in accented English. "Gun shooting!"

Bolton told him to call 911 whenever he sees something suspicious. The man said he did, but cops didn't always come.

The dispatchers "still re-

lay that information to the officers," Bolton responded.

Talking to people may be what she likes most about

the job.

Bolton plans to retire

from the force in about eight years, when she turns 50, and she's thought about what other jobs will let her keep up the conversation.

Maybe she could work for Amazon. Who doesn't love the Amazon driver?

Interacting with people

Around 12:30 p.m., Bolton got another call.

A homeless woman was at a nearby am/pm, and the store's staff weren't happy.

Reports like that were common. Bolton had found people sometimes tools off before police arrived, so she first turned down a nearby alley, in case the woman fled there on foot.

Nobody was visible.

Bolton parked at the am/pm. Another El Cajon cop, Kyle Webb, was already outside with a store employee. Bolton quietly joined them.

The homeless woman had gone, and the employee was furious. "She steal Snickers!" the staffer said, arms waving. She described the havoc she'd like to wreak on the accused.

"I can't advocate violence," Webb said, "but you're allowed to protect yourself."

After some more back and forth, the employee went inside.

The two cops stepped away from the entrance and traded stories about their least favorite arrests.

"We tackled a lady that — she was super high, running on the roadway, and she had urinated on herself," Bolton said. "And then the guy with bugs."

"Bed bugs?" Webb asked.

"I think, like, body lice," Bolton said. "So then I felt like I had stuff crawling on me."

"I love it when you get to jail, after you've already patted them down and spent some time with them and they're like, 'Oh yeah, I got MRSA,'" Webb said.

Bolton's interactions with colleagues feel more relaxed than when she started. In the 2000s, it was more paramilitary, Bolton said. Lots of "sirs," "ma'am's," keep your hands crossed in the briefing room.

At 1 p.m., another call.

Bolton drove to a two-story apartment building, where a woman had said her son stole her car.

An El Cajon officer stood outside. He and Bolton briefly conferred. The other cop said he was talking to the mother, so Bolton pulled out to look for the son.

These calls were tricky to resolve, she said. It could be hard to charge someone for taking a vehicle if they once had permission to use it. Plus, this guy could be anywhere.

The lack of action some-

times left residents frustrated.

Frustrations

Bolton got it. Some cases left her frustrated, too.

She didn't like that voters changed the law a few years back to limit when cops could arrest people with drugs.

Drug arrests made sense to her. She felt they could serve as a wake-up call.

Tough moments became tougher when children were involved. The previous week, she said, she and a clinician from a Psychiatric Emergency Response Team encountered a woman having some sort of breakdown.

The cops had to take her kids, both still in diapers.

Then there were the protests.

In 2016, El Cajon police shot and killed a Ugandan refugee whose vaping device was mistaken for a gun. Rallies lasted for weeks.

"It was probably the scariest time of my career," Bolton said. "You didn't know who were friendlies."

George Floyd's murder launched similar protests in seemingly every community.