

READY FOR SHOWDOWN



NANCY LOPEZ AND DONNA CAPONI PUT ON THE BOXING GLOVES TO PROMOTE THEIR "CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH" IN THE \$200,000 J&B SCOTCH LPGA PRO-AM TO BE PLAYED APRIL 7 - 10 AT THE DESERT INN COUNTRY CLUB. LOPEZ IS DEFENDING CHAMPION AND HAS WON THE EVENT TWICE, JUST AS CAPONI HAS. BOTH LADY GOLFERS DELIVER A KNOCKOUT PUNCH TO AL FERRO, PRESIDENT OF THE PADDINGTON CORP., IMPORTERS OF J&B RARE SCOTCH, AND CO-TOURNAMENT HOST.

NANCY LOPEZ

Nancy Lopez always believed that total concentration and a good mental attitude made her a superstar. The last two years, by her own admission, these valuable elements have deserted her.

But after the first two tournaments of 1983, Nancy feels she and her two intangible friends have been reunited.

"I felt total concentration today," she said after winning the Elizabeth Arden Classic earlier this month. "I haven't had that in a long time."

The last time the slimmed-down Lopez said that was during the 1982 \$200,000 J&B

Scotch Pro-Am at the Desert Inn when she waltzed her way to victory by five shots.

"My confidence level is the highest it's been since 1979," she said as she reached for the \$30,000 first prize proffered by tournament chairman Al Ferro, president of J&B Scotch, and host Burton Cohen, president of the Desert Inn and Country Club.

She shattered Donna Caponi's tournament record of 286 by seven strokes with a 10-under-par 279 on rounds of 70-67-69-73. Nancy was cruising with a huge nine-shot lead after 63 holes, causing her playing companion, Hall-of-Famer Sandra Haynie to remark, "I almost congratulated her at the turn, but I didn't want to disturb her concentration."

In the heady aftermath of victory, Nancy said, "Right now I feel I'm going to win many more tournaments this year. The weight loss (more than 30 pounds) has helped my swing considerably. I'm able to get through the ball quicker and smoother, and I think I'm hitting it farther."

What didn't help was domestic turmoil and a subsequent dissolution of her four-year marriage to sportscaster Tim Melton.

Nancy and her game suffered. "I just couldn't get myself in there 100 percent," she admitted. "In a four-day tournament, I'd play three rounds very well and then I'd have a 77 or 78. I think it was just a lack of concentration, yet when I went on the golf course I really felt I was in total concentration."

"I'd get kind of mad out there. I think if you concentrate totally, you don't get mad at yourself for hitting those bad shots. I just need to work more on my game in 1983 and probably not play in as many tournaments. I need to get my confidence level up to where it used to be."

The pretty, brown-eyed Lopez, who turned 26 in January and is now afield in her sixth campaign, insisted last fall that she still had the skill to play well enough to regain her accustomed position at the top, despite being winless for seven months.

"Golf is so mental that it requires a lot of confidence to play it well. Unless you have it," she explained, "I don't think you can really perform as well as you need to. I really needed

to work on just practicing hard to get the confidence, which will help me play better mentally."

Also helping her peace of mind was her marriage last October to Ray Knight, the stellar third baseman - first baseman of the Houston Astros. Winless since March of 1982, Nancy has won two of three tournaments since her marriage.

During the Mazda Japan Classic, with her husband following her on every shot, Nancy roared out in front with five consecutive birdies. She posted a 66 for a three-shot lead and subsequently won by six.

Despite her victory and the accompanying \$30,000 first prize, Nancy finished seventh on the money list, her worst showing ever, with \$166,474.

In her first tournament of 1983, Nancy, who never has done well in Florida and had a fourth-place finish as her best to prove it, tied for 13th in Mazda's U.S. tournament at Deerfield Beach, Florida.

The following week she won the Elizabeth Arden, giving her a two-for-three victory average since she became Mrs. Knight.

Nancy credits Ray for her victory. "I didn't realize it, but because I had lost so much weight, I wasn't hitting the ball as far as I used to. Ray suggested I take one more club than I did before. I did, and I put the ball closer to the hole."

With her \$22,500 paycheck in the Elizabeth Arden, Nancy has lifetime earnings of \$976,660 and needs only \$23,340 to become golf's fourth millionaire behind Kathy Whitworth, Donna Caponi and JoAnne Carner.

"One of my goals for 1983 is to reach that million dollar mark, so I can be the youngest ever to do it," Nancy said.

Pat Bradley, who has career earnings of \$978,318, could beat Nancy to the No. 4 position, but Pat is 31.

Nancy's second objective will be more difficult to achieve. Winner of 26 tournaments, including the LPGA Championship, Nancy said, "I'd love to win another Major this year and four other tournaments and get into the Hall of Fame."

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