

Nancy Lopez and Family

It was 1965. Eight-year-old Nancy Lopez was bored following her parents around the golf course. A doctor had told Nancy's mother, Marina, to exercise regularly, so each day, Marina and Nancy's father, Domingo, played golf at Cahoon Park in Roswell, New Mexico, and Nancy had to go along. Finally, she asked her parents if she could play, too. Domingo handed Nancy one of Marina's golf clubs and gave her a few quick pointers. With another group of golfers playing behind them, Domingo had no time to give his daughter a real lesson.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Nancy knocked the ball across the grass, laboring to keep up with her parents and to stay ahead of the other golfers. After that, she played every day. Her father taught her the golf strokes and when to use the various clubs. She practiced with her mother's adult-sized clubs. The clubs were too big for Nancy, but she loved golf, and her game got better and better. Before many months passed, she knew how to send the ball rocketing down the course, high over the heads of her startled parents.

Nancy's parents did all they could to help her game. Realizing that the course at Cahoon Park had no sand traps, Domingo dug a big hole in the family's backyard and filled it with sand. Now Nancy could practice hitting the ball out of a sand trap. Sand traps are large sandy areas on a golf course. Because hitting balls out of the sand is very difficult, sand traps make the game more challenging.

Like most parents, Domingo and Marina Lopez wanted a lot for their daughter Nancy and her older sister, Delma, but golfing was expensive, and the Lopez family didn't have a lot of money. Domingo and Marina worked hard and denied themselves many things so that Nancy could compete in the sport she loved.



Domingo taught Nancy everything he knew about golf. He coached her through problems and cheered her successes. When Nancy was nine, she competed in the state Pee Wee tournament and won! In golf, the lowest score wins, and Nancy's score was so low that she would have won even if she had competed against the older kids in the tournament.

Nancy was eleven when she first outscored her father in a game of golf. It was a close game, but they were both proud of her accomplishment, and years later, Domingo still had her score card from that day displayed in his office. When Nancy was twelve, she amazed everyone by winning the state Women's Amateur tournament, competing against adults, and she then went on to win the U.S. Golf Association's national competition for junior girls—twice!

Nancy Lopez lit up golf courses with her bright smile and her warm, friendly calmness. She made being a champion look easy, but it was not. She worked very hard and faced many barriers. Because the high school she attended had no golf team for girls, she asked to play on the boys' team. The school, however, would not allow it. Disappointed but determined, she asked again, and this time, with an attorney's help, the school allowed her to try out. It was a good decision. With Nancy on the team, the school won the state championship two years in a row.

Nancy and her family had racial prejudices to overcome, too. Some of the competitions Nancy wanted to enter required a country club sponsor. The club in Roswell, however, didn't want the Mexican American Lopez family as members. Fortunately, a country club in Albuquerque did. They were grateful for the chance to make Nancy's family honorary members.

By 1977, everyone knew that Nancy Lopez had a bright future in professional golf. At twenty-one, she "turned pro," which means playing in tournaments to win money, and she wanted to pay back her family for all they had done for her. She especially wanted to buy her mother a new house.

In her first year as a professional golfer, Nancy placed second in several tournaments. Then, tragically, Marina Lopez died. During this hard time for her family, Nancy took some time off from golf. When she came back, she still thought about her mother a lot, and her game was not as effective as she wanted it to be. Her father told her to just let things happen. And things *did* happen.

In 1978, Lopez blew through the world of professional golf like a warm, friendly wind, shattering records and winning five tournaments in a row. She won a total of nine tournaments that year and was named both Rookie of the Year and Player of the Year.

In 1982, the world of golf had to start sharing Lopez with a larger family. In October, she married Ray Knight, a major league baseball player, and between 1983 and 1991, she had three daughters. Although Lopez retired from professional golf after the 2002 season, she has still played occasional tournaments, and her hard work, her calmness, and her smile are still known and admired throughout the world.

Name _____

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Questions About Nancy Lopez and Family

1. What circumstances caused Nancy Lopez to learn to play golf?

2. How long had Lopez been playing golf before she turned pro?

3. Describe an obstacle Lopez faced as a young female golfer. Then describe an obstacle she faced as a Mexican American.

4. Why do you think that Lopez didn't play golf as well as she wanted to after her mother died?

5. What are two reasons that Nancy Lopez is admired throughout the world?

6. Why do you think the author titled this story *Nancy Lopez and Family*?

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The Jargon of Golf

Like most sports, golf has its own **jargon**, or special language, that is used to describe the game. Use the golf terms listed below to fill in the blanks in the following paragraphs. The paragraphs contain additional golf terms in bold type.

hole	amateur	course	stroke	tournaments
rookie	sand traps	sponsor	clubs	professional

A game of golf is played on a landscaped outdoor _____ that has grass, trees, and plants. It also has **hazards**, such as water holes, hills, and _____, where hitting the ball is more difficult, which makes the game more challenging. During a game, a **caddie** helps a golfer by handling the _____ that the golfer uses to hit the ball. Golfers use their bodies as well as their arms to **swing** at the golf ball. Each swing the golfer takes is called a _____, and the number of swings taken determines the golfer's score. The golfer's goal is to **drive** the ball toward a neatly mowed grassy area, called a **green**, and into a _____ marked with a flag. When a golfer hits a ball into the **rough**, an area that is not mowed or landscaped, extra swings may be needed to hit it out, which hurts the golfer's score.

Golfers compete against each other in _____. A young golfer who is just starting to compete is an _____, who may win a title or a trophy but does not receive any prize money. A _____ golfer earns money playing golf and competing. In a golfer's first season playing for money, he or she is called a _____. Many golfers depend on companies or organizations to _____ them, or pay their expenses for entering competitions. In exchange, golfers often wear clothing that advertises the company.

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Cause and Effect

Complete each sentence below. At the end of the sentence, circle C or E to indicate whether you wrote a **cause** or an **effect**.

1. Because Nancy was bored following her parents around the golf course, _____
_____ C E

2. Nancy's dad built a sand trap in their backyard so that _____
_____ C E

3. Nancy's parents made a lot of sacrifices to help her compete because _____
_____ C E

4. _____ because
her high school did not have a golf team for girls. C E

5. Nancy needed help from an attorney because _____
_____ C E

6. The country club in Roswell would not accept Mexican Americans as members, so
_____ C E

7. Because Nancy turned pro, _____
_____ C E

8. Nancy was a popular golfer because _____
_____ C E

Name _____

Think About It

1. Nancy Lopez has always loved playing golf. What do you love to do? Explain why.

2. Nancy's family helped her become a winning golfer. Write a paragraph that explains how someone helped you achieve a goal.

3. Write about how you have helped someone else. Explain what happened and how helping that person made you feel.
