

Louisiana Golf Association Membership/What Does it Mean?

The short answer to the question is that the LGA governs amateur golf in Louisiana. If you're familiar with who the USGA is.....the LGA serves the same purpose that the USGA serves nationally, in its area of jurisdiction, i.e., Louisiana. The LGA's mission statement, though short, packs a pretty powerful punch in just a few words.

The stated mission of the LGA is.....*To foster the enhancement and expansion of amateur golf through the development of member and information services, the promotion of opportunities for all who want to play, and the protection of the game's integrity and valued traditions.*

Over the course of the last ten years, the LGA has grown from an organization that simply existed to conduct its statewide amateur championships, to a full-service state golf association that strives to accomplish its stated mission. While the LGA provides numerous peripheral benefits and services to approximately 110 Member Clubs and approximately 18,000 individual members its core services include the following:

- The provision of USGA approved course and slope rating services to all Louisiana golf courses. These course and slope rating services, valued at a minimum of \$2,500, are free to LGA Member Clubs. The LGA is the only organization in Louisiana licensed by the USGA to provide these services.
- Administration of 23 LGA Championship events and LGA and USGA qualifiers. This, the LGA's original service, is still an extremely important one which the organization continually strives to upgrade in order to enhance the competitive experience for its tournament players.
- The LGA provides oversight and administration of the USGA Handicap System in Louisiana. Again, just as with course and slope rating services, the LGA is the only organization licensed by the USGA to provide handicapping services to clubs in Louisiana.
- Upholding the integrity of the Rules of Golf and the Rules of Amateur Status. If you have a question about whether some activity might violate the rules of amateur status, or you need a quick interpretation of an obscure rule, the LGA is the organization you're going to call.

These services are the nucleus of what the LGA does. Without the LGA and its services there would be no benchmark from which to compute a USGA Handicap Index (your Handicap Index is based upon the USGA course and slope rating system) nor would there be an entity to oversee the Amateur game in Louisiana. And, while the LGA has no formal tie to the USGA, that organization sincerely looks to the LGA to govern the Amateur game here. The LGA is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the game and its valued traditions (remember the LGA's mission statement?). Just as the USGA carries out these responsibilities on a national level, the LGA does the same in its area of jurisdiction (i.e., Louisiana).

These core services are extremely important to the maintenance of the game we all love and the LGA is committed to upholding its responsibilities in all of these areas. In addition, the LGA also feels a strong responsibility to create additional access to the game for both its new players and longtime members; as well as to create additional benefits to its Member Clubs and individual members.

The LGA is continually on the lookout for value-added services that it can bring to its membership (both Member Clubs and individual members alike). The LGA has partnered with the Audubon Golf Trail (AGT) to provide a discount card for its individual members that allows them to receive a free cart fee at each of the thirteen AGT courses each year (a \$195 value). The LGA has also negotiated a partnership with Bushnell, Inc. to allow Louisiana golfers the opportunity to purchase laser rangefinders at \$100 off the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP). Participants in the LGA Handicap Network receive an additional \$50 off MSRP, effectively allowing them to purchase the Bushnell product at 30% off retail (a pretty timely benefit with the recent sanctioning of these devices by the USGA and R&A).

The LGA also provides handicapping services to its LGA Handicap Network clubs. Participant clubs are provided with a computer, touch-screen monitor, label printer, and report printer, as well as cutting edge handicapping and tournament management system software. There's no denying the LGA Handicap Network has had a tremendously positive impact on the integrity and credibility of handicaps statewide which will only improve as time goes on.

Just within the past four years, the LGA has initiated its own website at www.LGAgolf.org. The LGA website exists to provide visitors with information about the game, and in particular, golf in Louisiana. At www.LGAgolf.org, you may register online for LGA Championships, follow LGA Championship events with a real-time on-line scoreboard, search for course information on LGA Member Clubs in the course directory, review your (and your cronies') handicap information and post a score on-line if you're a LGA Handicap Network participant, link to other golf websites, and much more.

In addition to all of these programs, the LGA conducts seminars on such topics as handicapping, course rating, rules, etiquette, and other subjects that its constituency feels important. The LGA also liaisons with its many allied golf associations 'for the good of the game.'

Here's the challenge for the LGA. For most of the benefits and services that are listed above, there's really no revenue component. Unfortunately, the LGA doesn't have the TV rights revenues coming its way that the USGA does. Therefore, in order to continue to provide the benefits and services that are so critical to the health of the game in Louisiana, the LGA asks its clubs, and individual members in those clubs, to fund what it does. The LGA's annual dues total \$150 per club plus \$9 per year per member (plus an additional \$4 per year per member if a club participates in the LGA Handicap Network). That means if someone's a member of a LGA Member Club, they have an ownership

stake in the LGA. On the surface, it looks like a pretty good deal. Look a little deeper and the value gets even better. For nine bucks a year (a whopping 75 cents/month) that individual gets \$195 worth of value with the Audubon Golf Trail discount card alone. Use it only once and they've recouped their annual individual dues. In addition, the individual's club gains all the benefits of LGA membership, i.e., course and slope rating services (a minimum \$2,500 value), a computer hardware and software package if the club's a LGA Handicap Network participant club, etc., etc.

But the real bang for one's buck comes in helping the organization do what its mission requires that it do.....

.....foster the enhancement and expansion of amateur golf through the development of member and information services, the promotion of opportunities for all who want to play, and the protection of the game's integrity and valued traditions.....

.....this is where the real legacy of what the LGA does for the game lies.....and where the legacies of those that support the LGA through their membership also lie.

The LGA hopes that its supporters recognize that this is what their small investment on an annual basis helps the organization do. The organization also hopes that its membership knows that its sincere thanks goes out to them for their willingness to support the game we all hold dear in this manner. If the question's asked, "What's the LGA ever done for me," hopefully there will be some LGA advocates willing to educate the questioner with the facts relative to all the LGA does for the game and its growth. The LGA welcomes inquiries from clubs and/or individuals about membership. If club decision-makers are aware of all the LGA does for the game, and all the benefits that it provides to Member Clubs and individual members, it will be obvious that everyone wins by being a Member of the LGA.

The Louisiana Golf Association