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"This isn't the first time I've been in a late group," he said. "I've had to deal with that many times...I feel pretty comfortable with that."

After he rolled in another nine-foot putt for birdie on the 16th, Gomez asked caddie Faculdo Carassale if second place was close behind him (it wasn't), and if he had to play aggressive (he didn't) or just par the final two holes. His wedge into 18 inches on the par-four 17th was just lagniappe.

Gomez had never won on the Nationwide Tour, with two seconds including last year's BMW Charity Pro-Am, and he finished 27th on last year's money list - only two spots and a couple of thousand dollars away from full PGA Tour status.

"I had only conditional status last year and played in only 19 tournaments," he said. "This year I have full status, and I know I have the skill to earn my card."

And some really big checks, like the \$99,000 one he was handed on the 18th green. He goes into the Tour's next event, the Stonebrae Classic near San Francisco April 12-18, as perhaps the Nationwide's hottest player with a tie for 16th, a tie for 10th and Sunday's victory in his last three events. He's also third on the Tour money list with \$124,083 after his Open win.

Mucho dinero, one might say.

Dan McDonald can be reached by electronic mail (danmcdonald@cox.net) or by fax (337) 857-8763.

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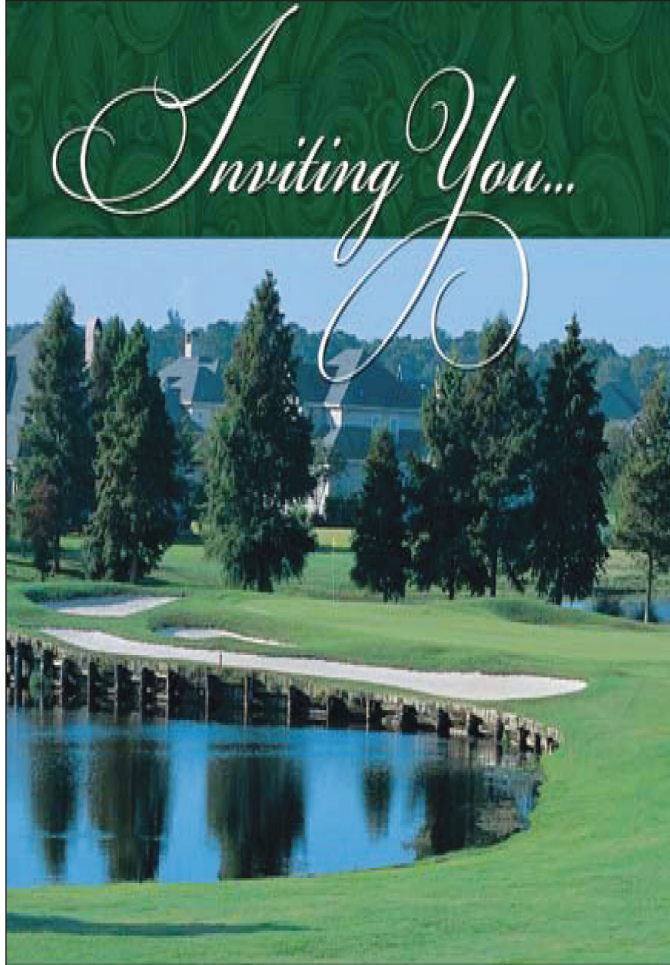
that she can spend time on family and her charities. Those are certainly legitimate, even noble reasons to turn ones back on the rat race of professional golf. I just hate that we'll not be able to enjoy her infectious smile and competitive nature on the women's tour anymore. She's one of those rare individuals that wins more than anyone and yet is liked immensely by those she beats. When's the last time you heard something negative said about Ms. Ochoa? Quite refreshing, wouldn't you say when the vast majority of sports news lately has been about Mr. Roethlisberger and Mr. Woods and their respective indiscretions.

I'm confident Lorena will have a wonderful life, with or without golf....having said that, I can't help but hope we might see her back in the game sometime in the not-too-distant future.

PEBBLE BEACH, ANYONE?

At the risk of appearing to gloat....I'm heading to Pebble Beach in mid-June for the USGA's 110th Open Championship. I was fortunate enough to work as a rules official at both the 1999 U.S. Amateur and 2000 U.S. Open there and I'm excited to return again this year. It is truly one of the most beautiful places on earth. I'll again plan on reporting on my rules experiences there in my next column. This will be the fifth time the USGA has taken its Open to Pebble since 1972 (1972/Nicklaus, 1982/Watson, 1992/Kite, 2000/Woods, and now 2010/can Mickelson get the second leg of the Grand Slam?). It will no doubt be an exciting Championship.

Carr McCalla is the Executive Director of the Louisiana Golf Association. He can be reached by phone (337.265.3938) or e-mail (cmccalla@lgagolf.org).



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