

Pro golfer from Montco sets sights on LPGA tour

By John George

Emily Gimpel first started swinging a golf club on a local course when she was 4 years old.

“My father loves golf; he’s very into it,” said the 23-year-old Lafayette Hill native, while looking out over the first tee at the Whitemarsh Valley Country Club. “I grew up a few blocks from here. My father [John Gimpel] used to like to come here after work and I’d tag along with him so I could spend time with him. He gave me the bug. He always kept it fun for me. I’d build sand castles in the bunkers. He later let me drive the cart. It was always fun and playing golf is still fun for me.”



Montgomery County native Emily Gimpel is hoping to make the LPGA tour.

Two decades later, Gimpel — who played on the golf teams at Mount Saint Joseph's Academy in Flourtown and the University of Maryland — is one step away from competing on the Ladies Professional Golf Association tour.

Big it's a big step.

Gimpel, who turned pro two years ago, is competing with other hopefuls on the [LPGA's](#) Symetra Tour, a developmental tour for women golfers. It's her second year on the Symetra Tour, and the first where she played well enough to qualify for full status — meaning she can play in as many events as she wants.

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The top 10 money earners on the Symetra Tour earn LPGA cards for the following year.

To get to this step, she had to twice participate in the LPGA's qualifying school where golfers who have never played in the LPGA compete head-to-head in a series of three tournaments against other newcomers from around the world, the ladies European tour, the Symetra Tour, and LPGA players who didn't earn enough the previous year to maintain their tour standing.

"It's quite intense," Gimpel said. "The way I play golf is I try to be really relaxed and keep my personality out there the same as it is off the course. I think that's why I've been able to succeed in my first two years going to Q [qualifying] school. It a matter of staying grounded and not getting ahead of yourself.

"Qualifying school is definitely cutthroat," she said. "You can start thinking, 'If I do well, I can play in the [LPGA](#) and it will be life-changing,' but if you think like that you are not going to play well."

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"I try to stay relaxed. I make up little games," she continued. "Last year I was playing well in the second stage to get to the finals and I kept making up stories with my dad. I'd say things like 'We're playing a scramble with my little sister and we need to make some birdies to make her happy.' You play little games like that with yourself to make it seem less important."

Gimpel expects to play about 20 of the 24 events on the Symetra tour, which holds tournaments throughout the country. She said it's fun to play in the smaller towns.

"They really embrace it and love having the tour there," she said. "Next week we are going to Greenwood, South Carolina. It's a tiny town, but the people really love it... There's one hole that has a little lake. People drive their boats on it and have parties and live music. It's a blast. There are places I'd never see without golf, and I'm happy I get to see them."

The life of a professional golfer, Gimpel said, involves a lot of travel. She prefers to drive to events to avoid the hassle of air travel, but it was a flight home two years ago, after playing in tournament in Texas, that helped her land a corporate sponsor.

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"I met a man on an airplane, Len Santivasi, and we got to talking," she said. "He is a wonderful person. He loves to talk to people and help them. I call him my angel. He is friends with the CEO of [AmeriQuest](#) [Douglas Clark]. He heard my story and said, 'I am going to help you.' A couple months later I had my sponsorship with AmeriQuest."

AmeriQuest, based in Cherry Hill, is a provider of technology-enabled financial process automation services.

[Kate Freer](#), vice president of marketing for AmeriQuest, said Gimpel is the only professional athlete the company sponsors. She confirmed a “mutual connection” made the introduction.

“We had the chance to meet with Emily and she is a lovely young woman,” Freer said. “We saw this as a chance to support a local athlete.”

AmeriQuest is providing financial support to Gimpel. Freer declined to disclose the amount. In return, Gimpel promotes the company’s brand on her apparel and in discussions with other people she meets competing on the Symetra Tour.

John George covers health care, biotech/pharmaceuticals and sports business.