

Shake-Ups on the Green

After a year of heated arguments and even a lawsuit, pro-golf rivals join forces.

Call it the shot heard 'round the world. On the morning of June 6th, one of the biggest and most shocking announcements in the sports world was made. Players of the U.S.-based Professional Golfers' Association Tour (PGA) and the Saudi Arabian LIV Golf learned, most via social media, that the rivals were joining forces. The PGA dropped a lawsuit against LIV and announced the startling merger of those two with the European Tour.

Over the past year, a dispute between the PGA and LIV filled golf headlines. LIV was founded in 2022 and is backed by the wealthy Saudi Arabian government and that nation's Public Investment Fund. LIV offered players tens of millions of dollars to play in the new league. PGA couldn't match that. Many big-name players, including Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson, and Brooks Koepka, took the offer.

Golf fans and many PGA players opposed LIV due to its funding source. Saudi Arabia has a history of human rights issues, including associations with the 9/11 terrorist attackers. Some players refused to align themselves with LIV for ethical reasons. They accuse LIV of "sports washing." That charge suggests Saudi Arabia uses LIV to boost its tarnished public image.

Last year, the PGA suspended golfers who competed in a LIV event without releases required under the tour's policy. The suspensions were to last at least through the 2024 season. LIV players could participate in only four major golf events: the Masters, U.S. Open, PGA Championship, and Open Championship, but not in other PGA events.

Now players who say they didn't "sell out" to LIV are **incensed**. The merger erases the restrictions on those who didn't remain loyal but migrated for financial gain to LIV.

As part of the merger, the PGA Tour, European Tour, and LIV will form a for-profit entity called NewCo. This development piqued the interest of the U.S. government. A Senate panel will review the agreement that might tie a "cherished American institution" to the Middle Eastern power, according to Senator Richard Blumenthal. "Americans deserve to know what the structure and governance of this new entity will be."

Ambiguity remains around what the merger means for the future of golf and for players who joined LIV voluntarily. Still, many players who love the game hold out hope that this will ultimately bring the golf world together and grow the sport long-term.

Why? It's important to stand up for what's right, even if it's uncomfortable or costly. That applies in all areas of life—even professional sports.

Caption or Did You Know? addition:

LIV is the Roman numeral for 54. That's the total score on a 72-par (18-hole) golf course if a player "birdies" on every hole.

Sources:

<https://apnews.com/article/liv-golf-pga-europeann-tour-saudi-arabia-a316315863e88d3f69b763fbdc82ebe0>

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LIV also boasts a different tournament structure which joining players like.