

**ELIZABETH
“BETTY” MAY
JAMESON
1919-2009**



**LADIES
GOLF
PIONEER**

Trailblazers in women’s golf have faced prejudice and sexism, but they also have shown that they are athletic, competitive, independent and successful. Glenna Collett Vare dominated golf in the 1920s. Olympic champion Babe Didrikson Zaharias won ten Major championships and attracted fans everywhere. Patty Berg won a record fifteen Majors. Kathy Whitworth won 88 titles. The list can go on and on.

Included on this list is Betty Jameson, one of the founders of the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). Elizabeth May Jameson was born in May 1919 in Norman. Golf historian Herbert Warren Wind compared her to Ben Hogan in her ability to hit the ball straight. She loved to play tennis, but switched to golf at age eleven and never looked back.

At age thirteen, Jameson won her first title. By 1939, she had won four State Championships, the first woman to represent a Dallas high school varsity team. Betty went to the University of Texas, where she became a student of the legendary coach Harvey Penick. Despite the fact that there was no women’s golf team at the time, Penick saw the potential in Jameson and took her under his wing.

In 1942, she became the first amateur player to win the Western Women’s Open, a Major at the time, and the Western Women’s Amateur in the same year. She turned professional in 1945, signing a three-year deal with Spalding Sporting Goods. The tall, blond-haired Jameson was one of the Tour’s photogenic “glamour girls”. In 1947, Betty won the U. S. Women’s Open with a 295 total, becoming the first female golfer to score a sub-300 score in a 72-hole tournament. Years later, she called it the proudest moment of her career.

In 1950, the Tour’s “Big Four” – Patty Berg, Louise Suggs, Betty Jameson and Babe Zaharias – were among thirteen women who established the LPGA, one of the most successful women’s sports organizations in history. They organized golf tournaments, established rules and by-laws, supervised membership, and set up courses.

Jameson added to her legacy when she donated the Vare Trophy in 1952, named after her idol Glenna Collett Vare. It is still given annually to the player with the lowest average. She had her best year in 1955, winning four tournaments. It would be the final year that Jameson dominated women’s golf. She retired for good in 1970 and died at age 89 in 2009 in Boynton Beach, Florida.

Jameson won thirteen LPGA and three Major championships. Her career earnings were \$91,470, a respectable sum in an era when women caravanned to tournaments. Jameson was inducted into the LPGA Hall of Fame in 1967 as one of the six inaugural inductees, with her friends Berg, Suggs, and Zaharias. In 2000, she was recognized as one of golf’s top 50 players and teachers. Jameson’s pure skill led to her becoming one of the most successful female golfers in history, but her contributions to the game off the greens surpassed her amazing career.