



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



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Re-Branding the PGA

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You likely have heard about Saudi Arabia's national wealth fund's professional golf organization (LIV) merging with the American Professional Golfers' Association (PGA), as well as the European counterpart.¹ One press release stated the U.S. organization will still be called the PGA. How the news outlet could make this claim is far-fetched, as the players themselves have little idea about the details of the deal.

Tom Watson, a PGA legend, said he was taken aback by this sudden, secret deal. Rory McElroy, an active and imminent player, expressed concern about the near absence of input from the PGA players.

The U.S.-based golfers, who *are* the PGA, were not informed that this huge change in professional golf was going to take place. The merger reportedly came about because of financial difficulties of the PGA and European tours, and their inability to match the purses of LIV tournaments.

Complaints about this merger are coming from many PGA players and politicians. They relate to the Saudis' involvement in 9/11 and human rights violations. Given the uproar this merger has created, let's consider a few ideas.

First, the PGA might no longer be the Professional Golfers' Association. One suggestion is the Persian Golfers' Association. The name would be taken from the fact that Saudi Arabia and Iran---AKA, money fountains---take up much of the Persian Gulf coast line.

Another name floating about is the Petroleum Golfers' Association, retaining the iconic PGA initial, but bowing to reality.

The Saudis and Iranians control a lot of oil and have a lot of money. But they are sensitive to Americans thinking that golf is American as American apple pie, even though it was invented in Scotland. So, they will stay with the stalwart PGA initials. After all, who knows what other initials, such IBM, stand for? For that matter, 3M, 4H, HUD, or SOS?

Part of the LIV strategy might be to move some of the American-based golf tournaments to the Middle East to save money. One of the most expensive components of golf course management is the maintenance of sand traps. They are ready-made in the Middle East.

Water hazards are a bigger problem. But with the Arabs' desalination plants, they can match Mar-a-Lago. Besides, with the deep pockets of Saudi Arabia, courtesy of Americans' fixation on automobiles whose gas tanks are bigger than many foreign cars, money is of little concern.

So, goodbye to us golf wannabes who watch pro golf on TV. We usually view a few seconds of golf in-between hours of commercials for lite beer. But booze is not allowed in the Saudi culture. So, let's get used to TV ads about tiny cups of undrinkable coffee.

There's more. The all-American game of football, led by the National Football League (NFL), might be bought out and re-branded as the Arabian Football League.

The NFL is a cash-cow, right up the Saudis' alley. But a PR problem exists. Foreigners use the word "football" for the sport that Americans call "soccer." But what does the entire world know in relation to American savvy?

Anyway, the proposed Arabian Football League is reported to be changing some rules and the scheduling of its TV presentations. First, all measurements in the game will be done in

¹ LIV refers to the Roman numerals for 54, the score if every hole on a par 72 course is birdied.

meters, not yards. Thus, that fabled football saying, “Ten yards and a cloud of dust” will be replaced with, “Ten meters and a cloud of sand.”

There’s more. The National Basketball Association (NBA)---another cash-cow---might be purchased by Qatar. The league will be called the Qatar Basketball Association (QBA). Qatar, a miniscule country of immense wealth, is rumored to be building a gigantic gym for the NBA Sacramento Kings. In the spirit of the Middle East monarchs, the team could be renamed the Qatar Emirs.

The Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) is reportedly under consideration for being purchased by the Saudis. Why not? In for a dime, in for another dime. Plus, there is a fledging women’s golf system in the Middle East.

However, until recently, Saudi females could not go out in public without the escort of a male relative. Nor could they drive. These restrictions have been loosened during the past few years.

Nonetheless, another logistical problem has discouraged LPGA members from jumping on the Middle East buying bandwagon. How to get to a tournament? Saudi women are under social pressure not to drive unless accompanied by a male relative. As mentioned, until recently, females in the Saudi Kingdom could not walk, much less drive, in public. So, there are not many females in Saudi Arabia who have experience in driving. Thus, most Saudi females, golfers or not, do not know how to drive a car, much less a golf cart.

In order for the Saudi females to be granted the privilege of driving a car, they had to mount a massive “Women to Drive” campaign. Now, they can somewhat drive to the golf course to drive their golf balls.

Another concern is how to sew a Nike swoosh patch onto the hijab of a Saudi female golfer. Thus, it appears the LPGA tour will not meet the same fate as the PGA tour.

For professional sports, why stop with golf and others described in this report? Big money invariably buys out smaller pocketbooks. It happens every day in hundreds of businesses. Sports are no different. The bottom-line rules business behavior.