

# No rest for West

By Tom Gorman

**A**lthough the calendar says January and the thermometer indicates freezing cold, the golf season is never over for accomplished businesswoman Tracy West, whose work days begin early and end late.

Golf is not just a game for the 39-year-old West, it's a business. As tournament director for the Senior PGA Tour's Bank of America Championship, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary June 20-26, she has some serious planning to do in the next six months.

"I have a great job," West said. "And, yes, it's a full-time, year-round position even in the dead of winter. In addition to establishing financial commitments from 100 corporate partners and overseeing 1,600 volunteers during tournament week, I have established relationships with the players and travel to eight events a year. Recruiting is important and most of the senior players enjoy coming to the Boston area and continue to come back every summer.

"There are a lot of hard-working people involved in the success of this tournament, which is the oldest 54-hole event on the Champions Tour schedule."

**I**n a sport dominated both on and off the course by men, West's career path is driven by ambition, skill and personality. She is one of only three female tournament directors on the Senior Tour circuit and is widely regarded as among the top-10 most influential people in the Massachusetts golf industry. The accolades from her peers are a testament to her renaissance woman status, since she also balances a home life with her husband Mike, 9-year-old son Emerson and 7-year-old daughter Hayley.

"Tracy has done a marvelous job as tournament director of that senior event," said Jane Blalock, whose 17-year career on the LPGA Tour includes 29 victories, and who is president of JBC, an international golf marketing agency located on Long Wharf. "It's comforting to know that a woman can step into such a multifaceted job and perform admirably. The job almost requires that you run a small corporation, but with a much smaller staff. The duties are endless and include catering to corporate clients, working with player relations, securing volunteers, schmoozing, public relations and much more. They always have a good field, so that's a testament to her success."

"Tracy is the best," said 2003 winner Allan Doyle at a recent visit to Concord's Nashawtuc Country Club, host of the event. "We get spoiled at most of the places we go, but Tracy extends a warm, personal invitation to each and every player out here, and they appreciate it. Of course, this is a special place for me, but speaking for most of the players out here, I know they think the world of Tracy and the fabulous job she does when we are in town. We know there's a lot of work involved."

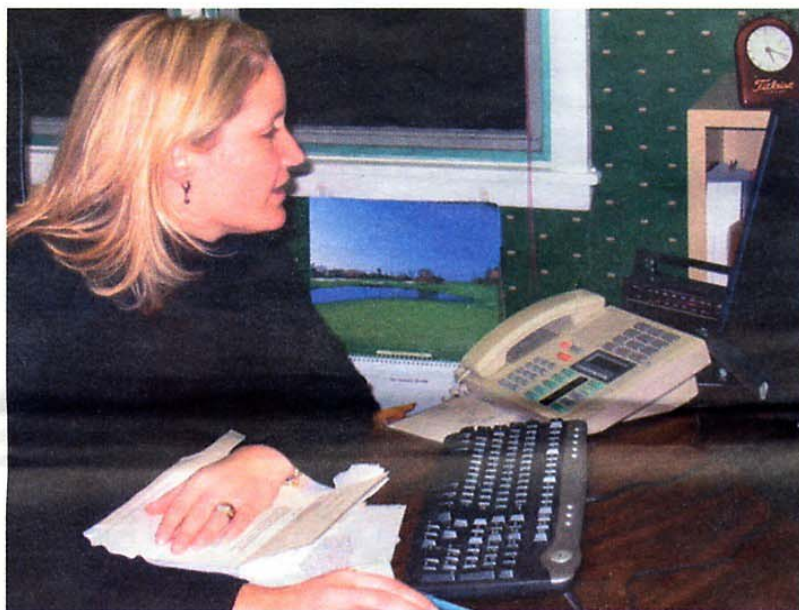
**T**racy (Haller) West was born in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., a small town near the Canadian border — not exactly a booming golf mecca and where the golf season might be two months. Her father, Jack, who was

Management Group, and I was assistant tournament director for the Minneapolis event. It was fun and educational at the same time. Together, from 1993-1998, we managed several tournaments. ... I became tournament director of the Boston event in 1999 and have been here happily ever since."

**A**lthough the Senior PGA Tour has been labeled the most successful senior sports venture in history, West has seen the Senior Tour go through some unique growth. In 1998 the Tour held 42 events with purses totaling \$45 million. This year there are 28 scheduled events offering \$50 million in prize money, with an average purse of \$1.8 million.

"The Tour has fewer tournaments this year, but it is healthier and stronger than ever," said West, who plans to invite all the previous winners of the event to a celebration during tournament week. "The pros now have a more convenient schedule to play around. In past years, it was a burden to play in six or seven or eight tournaments in a row. Now they don't have to worry about that type of grind."

Last year's winner was Craig Stadler, but since this is a special silver anniversary year, West is optimistic of having an appearance by Jack Nicklaus or Tom Watson or even Greg



## West is hard at work in preparation for the 25th edition of what is now called the Bank of America Championship in Concord.

in the Hallmark Stores business, introduced her to the game at an early age. Her older brother, Tony, 41, became a professional for many years before recently returning to the retail business.

After graduating from Lake Superior State College in 1986, West earned her MBA in finance from Michigan State in 1988. From there she started a career in the corporate world as product manager for Foremost Insurance Co. in Grand Rapids, Mich. Her first introduction to the world of professional golf took place at a Senior Tour event (First American Classic) in 1990 when she volunteered to help out the local Grand Rapids Jaycees. In 1991, she chaired the corporate hospitality committee, which included 35 volunteers, and her vision of a future in the golf business bloomed.

"In the fall of 1992, I took a pay cut and started a business with Hollis Cavnar, who had extensive pro golf tournament experience with the USGA," West recalled. "We named the company Pro Links

Norman, who turns 50 in February. Fan favorite Chi Chi Rodriguez is the only three-time champion, (1986-88) and has played in every tournament since turning the Big Five-0 in 1988. Miller Barber has played in 23 of the 24 events dating back to 1981 when Bob Goalby first won at Marlborough Country Club. And in a very memorable awards ceremony in 1982, Arnold Palmer won and was presented with a rocking chair on the 18th green.

"I've been very fortunate to have an opportunity to work at Nashawtuc and the Boston area where there is such a strong emphasis on sports and golf," said West, who in December started her own golf management company called Hayson Sports Group, with able assistance from marketing director Brian Oates, Kristina Kintzer and Denise Greska. "To think we have had Arnold Palmer play in our event in the last six years is a blessing. Golf fans still want to see the living legends of the game. And where else can you see the living legends still play their sport? Only in golf!" **BSR**

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