

Shannon Fish Diary

WOMEN'S GOLF

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I remember sitting outside of the Homewood Suites in Daytona Beach after the last round of the LPGA Tour's Qualifying School in 2011. I was crying, and I mean *really crying*. I had missed advancing to second stage by one lousy shot.

My mom and best friend Janice were trying their best to console me. They told me I was a good player and this wasn't the end of the road. They tried to

remind me that I had taken an entire year off from competition before I hastily decided to sign up for Q-School and give it a go at the LPGA. Q-School was my second tournament in almost a year and a half. I was slightly unprepared.

My mom and Janice told me all of this, but I wasn't listening. Instead, my head was in my hands and I kept saying, "I'm a failure." I almost quit golf again. The disappointment was almost crushing.

After about an hour hanging around in the pity pool, I snapped out of it and realized there would be another Q-School and other professional playing opportunities. I vowed that, no matter what, I would return to first stage in 2012 and advance to second stage.

I really couldn't take that feeling of failure two years in a row. No way.

Fast forward to last month. After a year on the Cactus Tour in Arizona and a life-changing appearance on The Golf Channel's Big Break, I returned to Daytona Beach for Q-School. We stayed at the same Homewood Suites.

Whether that was a good idea or not, I'm not really sure because all the memories from 2011 came flooding back. I saw myself sitting at that same table crying. My chest tightened, and I felt that same disappointment again—and the tournament hadn't even started yet.

Not good.

For the past several months, I've launched an all-out assault on my mental game by working with the folks over at GolfPsych in Boerne. Honestly, I was never a believer in the importance of the mental game. I was always the player saying, "There's nothing wrong with me." I couldn't have been more wrong and now fully believe the mental game separates the pros from the Joes. I knew immediately the things I have been working on mentally were going to be invaluable.



Shannon talks about the pressure of trying to earn her LPGA Tour card

We arrived in Daytona four days before the first round. I spent that time trying to remain calm and focused on my mental goals for the day and visualizing myself smiling after the final round. I visualized myself holding the white envelope that contained the invitation to second stage.

When the first round arrived, I was anxious. I did my best to stick with my mental routine, but the athlete inside me was

ready to compete. I knew that I worked all year toward these four days and that if I didn't pull through this time, I'd be back at square one. All the work since 2011 would be meaningless.

That's a lot of pressure.

Even though my hands were shaking so much on my first tee, I managed to get my drive in the fairway. I was 1-under after three holes and finally calmed down. Then, I blocked my drive dead right on my fourth hole and left with a triple bogey.

Way to go, Shannon, I thought. *You just tripled the fourth hole of Q-School.* That's the kind of mistake that knocks people right out of qualifying. The 36-hole cut would be about 2- or 3-over. Ouch.

That's when my mental routine kicked in. I stayed calm and played the next 68 holes in 1 under to finish tied for 30th. I advanced to second stage by five shots and accomplished my goal.

Now I have a new goal: advance through second stage. By the time you read this, I might already be playing. Second stage is Oct. 9-12 in Venice, Fla. With my newfound mental game, I'm moving in the right direction and one step closer to my dream of playing on the LPGA Tour.

Wish me luck! **TL**

**SHANNON FISH**

Shannon Fish, winner of the 2007 Texas Women's Open as an amateur, is in her first year as a professional golfer. The native of Spring has one victory and four top-five finishes on the Cactus Tour in Arizona. One of 11 young pros featured in the 17th season of The Golf Channel's Big Break reality show, Shannon will check in monthly with a diary column about her journey to the LPGA Tour.

Follow Shannon on Twitter @ShannonTFish and visit her website at [shannonfish.com](http://shannonfish.com).



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