

Babe Zaharias

LPGA Founder



Deceased: 9/27/56
Rookie year: Founder
Career victories (last): 41 (1955)
Majors won: 10 (4 as an amateur)
Career-low round: 67
Playoff record: 0-3
Career earnings: \$66,237# (456)



Due to loss of early LPGA records, this figure falls short of Zaharias' true career earnings.

Professional

Career

- One of 13 founders of the LPGA.
- One of the greatest female athletes of all time due to her accomplishments in golf, track and field, basketball and numerous other sports.
- Won 41 professional tournaments, including 10 events prior to the inception of the LPGA in 1950; five of her 41 victories came when she was an amateur (1940-47), including four major championships.
- In 1967, when the LPGA Tour Hall of Fame was created, was one of the six inaugural inductees; the LPGA recognized her induction year into the Hall of Fame of Women's Golf (1951) as her official induction year into the LPGA Tour Hall of Fame.
- In 1955, captured the final two victories of her career: Tampa Open and the Peach Blossom Classic.
- In 1954, won the U.S. Women's Open just months after a cancer operation; she was 43 years, 7 days old, and stands as the second-oldest player to win an LPGA major championship (behind Fay Crocker, 45 years, 7 months, 11 days old at the 1960 Titleholders Championship); captured her only Vare Trophy for lowest scoring average.
- In 1953, underwent the first of two cancer operations.
- In 1951, won her 10th LPGA title (not including her 10 wins prior to the inception of the Tour), setting an LPGA record that still stands for the fastest to 10 career wins — one year and 20 days; also holds the record for fastest to 20 wins — two years and four months at the 1952 Bakersfield Open; and fastest to 30 wins — five years and 22 days at the 1955 Tampa Open.
- From 1950-51, led the LPGA Tour in earnings.
- In 1950, won all three of the LPGA's major championships: U.S. Women's Open, Titleholders Championship and Western Open.
- She is the winner of 10 major championships: three U.S. Women's Open titles (1948, 1950 and 1954), three Titleholders Championships (1947, 1950 and 1952) and four Western Open victories (1940, 1944-45 and 1950).
- In August 1947, turned professional.

Amateur

Zaharias began concentrating on golf in 1935 at the suggestion of sportswriter Grantland Rice. She played her first tournament a year after taking up the game and won her second event, the 1935 Texas Women's Invitational. Zaharias was ruled a pro by the USGA two weeks later for her baseball and basketball earnings. She regained her amateur standing in January 1943. From 1946-47, she won 17 out of the 18 amateur tournaments she entered, including the 1946 U.S. Women's Amateur Championship and the 1947 British Amateur Championship. In winning the latter, she was the first American to capture the British title since it was first played in 1893.

Personal

Given name: Mildred Ella Didrikson...Changed last name spelling to s-o-n as an adult...Married pro wrestler George Zaharias in 1938...Babe got her nickname after hitting five home runs in a baseball game...She knew little of golf growing up in Beaumont, Texas; it was not until after she had gained world fame in track and field and All-American status in basketball...She also mastered tennis, played organized baseball and softball and was an expert diver, roller-skater and bowler...At one time in track and field, she either held or tied for the world record in four events—the javelin throw, 80-meter hurdles, high jump and long jump...Won two gold medals and one silver medal in 1932 Olympics...Earlier that year she won eight of 10 events in the AAU's National Women's Track and Field Championship and won the meet as a one-woman team for Employer's Casualty...Named the Woman Athlete of the Year by Associated Press in 1931, 1945-47, 1950 and 1954...From August 1952 to July 1955, served as president of the LPGA...In 1954, received the William D. Richardson Award by the Golf Writers Association of America for her consistent outstanding contributions to golf and the Ben Hogan Award for her comeback to golf after cancer operations...Won the USGA Bobby Jones Award in 1957...The Babe Didrikson Zaharias Memorial Center, a museum, is open daily with no admission fees in Beaumont, Texas, on Interstate 10...A Babe Zaharias Foundation also exists to raise funds for cancer research...Her autobiography is titled *This Life I've Led*...Was named "Golfer of the Decade" by *GOLF Magazine* for the years 1948-57 during the 1988 Centennial of Golf in America celebration...Named *Sports Illustrated's* Individual Female Athlete of the Century in 1999, as well as one of six athletes who changed their sport...Voted Woman Athlete of the First Half of the 20th Century in a poll conducted by the Associated Press...Named Top Woman Athlete of the Century by

the Associated Press in 1999...Named 10th on a list of the 50 greatest North American athletes of the past 100 years for ESPN's *SportsCentury* (the only female athlete in the top 10)...Recognized during the LPGA's 50th Anniversary in 2000 as one of the LPGA's top-50 players and teachers.

LPGA Victories, Awards, Etc.

Professional Victories (36): 1948 All American Open, World Championship, **U.S. Women's Open**, 1949 World Championship, Eastern Open. **1950 Titleholders Championship**, Pebble Beach Weathervane, Cleveland Weathervane, **Women's Western Open**, All-American Open, World Championship, **U.S. Women's Open**, 144-hole Weathervane. **1951** Ponte Verde Beach Women's Open, Tampa Women's Open, Lakewood Weathervane, Richmond Women's Open, Valley Open, Meridian Hills Weathervane, All-American Open, World Championship, Texas Women's Open. **1952** Miami Weathervane, **Titleholders Championship**, Bakersfield Open (tied with Marlene Hagge, Betty Jameson and Betsy Rawls), Fresno Open, Women's Texas Open. **1953** Sarasota Open, Babe Zaharias Open. **1954** Serbin Open, Sarasota Open, Damon Runyan Cancer Fund Tournament, **U.S. Women's Open**, All-American Open. **1955** Tampa Open, Peach Blossom Classic. **Professional Victories as an Amateur (5): 1940 Western Open. 1944 Western Open. 1945 Western Open. 1947** Tampa Open, **Titleholders Championship**.
LPGA Awards (2): 1954 Vare Trophy. **2000** Commissioner's Award (LPGA Founders).

Major Championship History*

	47*	48	49	50*	51	52*	53	54	55
KNC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
LPGA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	DNP
OPEN	DNP	1	2	1	3	DNP	DNP	1	DNP
DM	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

*Won four Western Opens (1940, 1944-45, 1950), which was a major from 1930-67; won three Titleholders Championships (1947, 1950, 1952), which was a major from 1937-42, 1946-66 and in 1972.

Zaharias' LPGA Record

(Year, number of events, best finish, money, rank, scoring average)

1950	10	1	\$14,800	1	75.88	1953	10	1	\$ 6,345	6	75.70
1951	14	1	15,087	1	74.92	1954	17	1	14,452	2	75.61
1952	8	1	7,503	5	75.76	1955	8	1	3,398	N/A	75.60