

## **Episodic Volunteering: A Comparison of the Motivation of Volunteers from Two Professional Golf Events**

Gina Pauline, Ed.D.  
Assistant Professor, Department of Sport Management  
Syracuse University  
810 Nottingham Road  
Syracuse, NY 13224 USA  
Tel. 315-443-1666 \* FAX 315-443-9716 \* E-mail: gapaulin@syr.edu

Jeffrey S. Pauline, Ed.D.  
Assistant Professor, Department of Sport Management  
Syracuse University  
Syracuse NY 13224 USA  
Tel. 315-443-9823 \* FAX 315-443-9716 \* E-mail: jspaulin@syr.edu

Thalia Mulvihill, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Studies  
Ball State University, TC 810  
Muncie, IN 47306 USA  
Tel. 765-285-5463 \* FAX 765-285-5489 \* E-mail: tmulvihi@bsu.edu

### **Abstract**

*Understanding volunteer motivation has been widely recognized as a valuable component to volunteer resource management, specifically for elite sport events which attract episodic volunteers. This cross sectional descriptive study investigated the primary motivation of volunteers from two elite golf events, the Professional Golf Association (PGA) Championship, and the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Solheim Cup event. Findings indicated that volunteers from both events have a strong desire to help make the event a success. Solheim Cup volunteers had significantly higher motivation than PGA Championship volunteers for the five factors explored. The study's implications may assist sport managers and/or volunteer resource managers in designing quality volunteer experiences that enhance the overall volunteerism experience, strengthening both the episodic volunteers' work ethics and event management logistics.*

### **Key Words:**

episodic, volunteers, motivation, sports, golf

### **Introduction**

Each year as more sporting events are held, event organizers and sports managers face a growing challenge to find enough personnel, particularly volunteers, to manage the event economically and operationally. Recent decades have

witnessed a significant increase in the use of such events by national, regional, and local governments to bolster economic development (Mules & Faulkner, 1996). Research has documented the need and importance of volunteers for the successful operation and management of sporting

events (Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998; Strigas & Jackson, 2003). Volunteers are a critical core component of the sport service industry (Green & Chalip, 1998). The Professional Golf Association (PGA) conducts more than 30 tournaments utilizing more than 80,000 volunteers per year; the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) recruits over 60,000 volunteers annually. The scope of such events combined with limited economic resources point to a continuing heavy reliance upon volunteers in general, and especially episodic volunteers.

Researchers have studied the demographics, motivations, and commitment levels of volunteers for professional sport events (Hamm & MacLean, 2007). Of concern is research suggesting that the available pool of volunteers may be declining due to the increasing demands of everyday life. As a result, organizers must become more effective in their volunteer recruitment and retention.

An additional stress on sports volunteerism involves the special nature of traveling locations or one-time events. Volunteering at such events is episodic rather than sustained. Episodic volunteers are individuals who prefer short-term volunteering assignments or task-specific volunteer project opportunities (Points of Light Foundation, 2004). According to recent research, managing episodic sports volunteers is considerably different from managing continuing or permanent volunteer positions, suggesting the need for different strategies (Getz, 1991). It is important to understand the unique opportunities, demographics, and motives of episodic sports volunteers.

Professional golf tournaments differ from other sport events and non-sport episodic volunteerism opportunities. Golf events are often held at different locations

each year, forcing managers to recruit primarily a new volunteer group at each location, making management efforts more challenging. For example, the annual PGA Championship rotates geographically within the United States, while the bi-annual LPGA Solheim Cup rotates every two years between the United States and a different European country. An event held at traveling locations may appeal to a different set of motivations for volunteering as compared to fixed locations (Fairley, Kellett, & Green, 2007). Professional golf events also require volunteers to pay a substantial fee. For the PGA and LPGA events, this ranges from \$75 to \$175 to cover the cost of a volunteer uniform. A required payment may influence the motivation of volunteers and thus recruitment strategies.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Various disciplines have contributed theories and models regarding volunteer motivation. Previous research has also examined the motivation of volunteers in a variety of contexts including social services (Clary, Snyder, & Ridge, 1992); health professions (Fletcher & Major, 2004); and sports events management (Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998). One predominant theory, the functional approach, suggests that volunteers may be recruited and sustained by satisfying their psychological gain. Central to this model is the idea that people engage in various activities for purposeful, goal-oriented reasons (Katz, 1960). Clary et al. (1998) proposed six primary functions served by volunteerism: values, social, career, understanding, enhancement, and protective. They found that when the volunteer experience matched an individual's primary motivation for volunteering, individual volunteers reported greater satisfaction and stronger intentions to continue. The

researchers also acknowledged the multi-motivational nature of volunteering (i.e., diverse and multiple goals).

Most theoretical research on volunteer motivation has been conducted in the non-profit sector involving traditional settings. While sports organizations need volunteers on a regular basis, much of sports volunteering is episodic and short term (i.e., 20 or fewer total hours at a single annual event). Professional sports events seem to have a strong attraction for episodic volunteerism while social services seem to be related more to purposiveness or intrinsic motivation. Research has demonstrated the significance of subcultural elements of sports involvement which may provide insight into sport volunteers (Donnelly, 1993). Sports cultivate their own expectations, beliefs, and values (Green & Chalip, 1998). Episodic volunteers join a special subculture where they can meet athletes, socialize with executives, and share experiences attracting sports enthusiasts. From these unique experiences they tend to motivate themselves to do more (Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998). Based on these differences, researchers must continue to examine sports volunteers as a separate entity.

Strigas and Jackson (2003) developed the Sport Volunteer Motivation Scale to assess volunteers' motivations in sports settings, defining five possible motivational factors: material, purposive, leisure, egoistic, and external. The purposive factor recognizes the volunteers' desires to support and contribute to the sports organization and community. The material factor is the expected gain by the volunteer (material or social status) in exchange for his/her service. The leisure factor refers to an individual volunteer's need for various leisure choices. The external factor examines the extent to which volunteers are influenced by factors outside of their

immediate control, such as family traditions or significant others. The egoistic factor involves an individual volunteer's needs for social interaction, interpersonal relationships, and self-actualization.

Recently, researchers have begun to explore the demographics, motivations, and intentions of golf volunteers. Hardin, Koo, King, and Zdroik (2007) utilized an exploratory factor analysis to identify and assess four factors that explain how individuals' motivations to volunteer: self interest, external, purposive, and escapism. Self interest, followed by purposive, explained the majority (33.18%) of the total variance among the study's volunteer participants. Hamm and MacLean (2007) examined volunteer motivations, commitment, and intentions to remain at a professional women's golf event. They found that volunteers were motivated by leisure pursuits and a commitment to their community. More studies are clearly needed to expand the knowledge of episodic volunteerism at golf events. Twynam, Farrell, and Johnston (2003) recommended that future research examine and compare special event volunteers among different sports. Research is also needed to examine volunteers from different gender-focused sports events.

## Methods

This descriptive, exploratory study utilized a quantitative methodology and written questionnaire to examine the primary motivation of episodic volunteers at a men's (2005 PGA Championship) and a women's golf event (2005 LPGA Solheim Cup). The researchers posed three research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of episodic volunteers for these two events?
2. What factors motivate these volunteers?

3. Are there significant differences between volunteers' motivation for a men's and women's golf event?

#### *Participants*

The population for this study consisted of episodic volunteers from the 2005 PGA Championship and LPGA Solheim Cup, held in the Northeast and Midwest regions respectively. The convenience sample consisted of a total of 877 episodic volunteers: 470 for the PGA Championship and 407 for the LPGA tournament. Episodic volunteer duties included: course marshal, hospitality, merchandising, walking scorer, credentialing, and ticket sales. Volunteer time commitment was a minimum of 20 hours; only 25% spent more than 25 hours assisting with each annual event. Volunteer responsibilities primarily occurred during the tournament week. Episodic volunteers with higher levels of responsibilities worked with the tournament year round and upwards to 60 hours during tournament week.

#### *Instrumentation*

The research instrument was a written questionnaire consisting of two sections, (1) demographics and (2) volunteer motivation, with a total of 52 items. Demographic questions investigated age, gender, educational level, marital status, income, employment status, golf participation, and previous sports event volunteer experience. Volunteer motivations were examined utilizing the Sport Volunteer Motivation Scale (Strigas & Jackson, 2003). The 40-item self-report measure of motivation to volunteer explored the five factors (i.e., material, purposive, leisure, egoistic, and external) described previously. The wording of four questions that referenced a marathon event was modified to reflect a golf event. A Likert-type response scale was used ranging from "not

important at all" (1) to "extremely important" (5). Summated scores for the five factors were calculated by the procedures outlined by Strigas and Jackson. The scale has been shown to be both internally valid and reliable with a  $\alpha = .93$  in two studies of episodic marathon volunteers.

#### *Data Collection*

The questionnaire was hand distributed to episodic volunteers who were willing to participate at each respective event's orientation and credentialing two weeks before the event, over the course of two and a half days (i.e., Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday). Questionnaires were administered during mandatory volunteer credentialing (i.e., orientation) meetings conducted throughout the day so as to ensure that volunteers assigned to all time shifts would have the opportunity to participate in the data collection. During the meetings, event organizers briefed the episodic volunteers about their responsibilities and distributed uniforms and credentials. This opportunity was selected since all volunteers had to attend one of these sessions. The researchers explained the purpose of the study and directions for completing the survey. Questionnaire completion required approximately 10 minutes. By collecting the data prior to the actual event, the actual volunteer experience would not influence participants' responses.

The researchers attempted to have all episodic volunteers attending the mandatory credentialing meetings complete the survey; however, approximately 33% of the total volunteer population for each event participated.

#### *Statistical Design and Analysis*

Descriptive statistics were calculated for demographic information about participants. Mean scores and ranks were calculated for each of the 40 volunteer

motivation items. Means and standard deviations were then calculated for the five motivation factors. MANOVA was then conducted to compare the motivation factors (purposive, egoistic, leisure, material, external) by event (PGA Championship and LPGA Solheim Cup). Follow-up univariate tests and Scheffe's post hoc tests were calculated when appropriate. The level of significance was set at  $p < .05$  for all analyses.

### **Findings and Conclusions**

The findings for the demographic profile of volunteers from the PGA and LPGA events are presented in Table 1. Unlike most other sports event volunteers, the episodic volunteers in this study closely resembled the general golf-playing population in: age (45 years and older, 76.8%), ethnicity (Caucasian, 96.6%), and household income (\$75,000+, 75.1%). This is not surprising based on the statistics of golf participation as 45 million people call themselves golfers in the United States (Graves, 2003). The demographic profile aligns with previous research regarding volunteers for golf events (Hardin, Koo, King, & Zdroik, 2007). The majority of participants in the present study could have been influenced to volunteer by their familiarity with golf. The first recruitment strategy for episodic golf events should be to consider golf enthusiasts. However, if knowledge of golf is not necessary, event managers and VRMs may utilize various tactics to demystify the sport to draw a broader volunteer population.

The episodic volunteers in this study were experienced; the large majority of respondents (93.4%) reported prior sport event volunteerism, but the Solheim Cup

volunteers had significantly more experience. Almost 99% of LPGA volunteers reported previous sports experience, with a mean of 144 hours for an average of 8 events. In comparison, 84% of PGA volunteers reported prior sports experience with a mean of only 56 hours for fewer than four events. Interestingly, the volunteers were recruited from different sources. Volunteers for the PGA Championship were recruited through the PGA office. Solheim Cup volunteers were recruited through the local sports corporation, which puts on multiple events. This could explain the variation in the amount of previous sport event volunteer experience. Event managers seeking volunteers should consider recruiting volunteers from other episodic sport events. Through sport corporations and commissions, organizers have the opportunity to obtain more experienced individuals, since they already attract episodic world-class events.

Regarding the second purpose of the investigation, descriptive statistics revealed the importance of 40 items in influencing the motivation of volunteers. Table 2 ranks the 18 highest and five lowest reasons for volunteering by event. For the PGA, the highest ranked reason was "It is fun to volunteer for this event," while for the LPGA volunteers, the primary motive was the "desire to make the event a success." Both of these items reflect purposive motivation, supporting the desire to support the event and community. Volunteers did not expect any form of personal gain for their service as the least motivating reasons fell within the material factor.

Table 1  
*Selected Demographic Characteristics*

Characteristics	Number (Percent of Participants)					
	PGA Championship (n=470)		Solheim Cup (n=407)		Total (N=877)	
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	354	(75.3%)	140	(34.4%)	494	(56.3%)
Female	116	(24.7%)	267	(65.6%)	383	(43.7%)
<b>Age</b>						
18-24	10	(2.1%)	2	(0.5%)	12	(1.4%)
25-34	18	(3.8%)	28	(6.9%)	46	(5.2%)
35-44	73	(15.5%)	71	(17.4%)	144	(16.4%)
45-54	123	(26.2%)	92	(22.6%)	215	(24.5%)
55-64	154	(32.8%)	132	(32.4%)	286	(32.6%)
65+	91	(19.4%)	82	(20.1%)	173	(19.7%)
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
Caucasian	452	(96.2%)	395	(97.1%)	847	(96.6%)
African American	3	(0.6%)	6	(1.5%)	9	(1.0%)
Native American	5	(1.1%)	0	(0%)	5	(0.6%)
Hispanic	5	(1.1%)	4	(1.0%)	9	(1.0%)
Asian American	5	(1.1%)	2	(0.5%)	7	(0.8%)
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Married	376	(80.0%)	270	(66.3%)	646	(73.7%)
Single	52	(11.1%)	103	(25.3%)	155	(17.7%)
Divorced	23	(4.9%)	26	(6.4%)	49	(5.6%)
Widowed	18	(3.8%)	8	(2.0%)	26	(3.0%)
<b>Household Income</b>						
Less than \$75,000	64	(13.8%)	153	(37.5%)	217	(24.9%)
Over \$75,000	405	(86.2%)	254	(62.5%)	659	(75.1%)
<b>Employment Status</b>						
Full-Time	256	(54.5%)	215	(52.8%)	471	(53.7%)
Part-Time	45	(9.6%)	28	(6.9%)	73	(8.3%)
Unemployed	22	(4.7%)	38	(9.3%)	60	(6.8%)
Retired	147	(31.3%)	126	(31.0%)	273	(31.1%)
<b>Golf Experience</b>						
Play Regularly	369	(84.3%)	341	(83.8%)	737	(84.0%)
Do not play	101	(15.7%)	66	(16.2%)	140	(16.0%)

**Table 2**  
*Means and Ranks of Volunteer Motivation Items*

Volunteer Motivation Item (Factor)	Overall	PGA event		LPGA event	
	Mean	Mean	(Rank)	Mean	(Rank)
<i>Highest Ranking Reasons (top 18)</i>					
I wanted to help make the event a success (P)	4.18	3.95	2	4.44	1
It is fun to volunteer for this event (P)	4.18	4.08	1	4.29	2
Volunteering creates a better society (P)	4.03	3.83	3	4.27	3
I am genuinely concerned about the event (Ex)	3.86	3.70	4	4.05	5
Complimentary items played a very important role in my decision (M)	3.76	3.39	7	4.19	4
I wanted to be appreciated by others (Ex)	3.73	3.52	5	3.97	6
Volunteer activities energize me (P)	3.63	3.49	6	3.79	7
Others to whom I am close place a high value on community service (M)	3.43	3.34	8	3.53	11
Volunteering for this event enables the organizational committee to provide more services for less money (P)	3.38	3.10	9	3.71	8
I wanted to put something back into my community (P)	3.30	3.06	10	3.57	10
I wanted to volunteer because the events put on mirror our national values, image, or heritage (P)	3.28	2.94	12	3.68	9
I wanted to work with people from different age groups and backgrounds (Eg)	3.15	2.96	11	3.36	12
I wanted to develop friendships with other volunteers (Eg)	3.08	2.91	13	3.27	13
My friends/significant others are volunteer for this event (Ex)	2.79	2.76	14	2.83	17
Volunteering for this event is worthy of my time and effort (Eg)	2.74	2.66	15	2.84	15
Most people in my community volunteer (Ex)	2.71	2.57	17	2.87	14
I wanted to improve my skills and abilities (Eg)	2.68	2.54	18	2.84	15
Volunteering for this event is considered prestigious (Eg)	2.58	2.61	16	2.59	20
<i>Lowest Ranking Reasons (bottom 5)</i>					
Volunteering will look good on my resume (M)	2.00	1.96	36	2.05	35
I wanted to slow down the pace of life (L)	1.96	1.95	37	1.98	37
Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles (L)	1.92	1.91	38	1.94	38
I wanted to gain some practical experience toward paid employment (M)	1.81	1.83	39	1.78	39
My employer/school is going to give me extra credit for volunteering (M)	1.54	1.56	40	1.53	40

Key: P=purposive; M=material; Eg=egoistic; Ex=external; L=leisure

Table 3  
*Test of Between-Subjects Effects for Volunteer Motive Factors*

Factor	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Purposive	1	105.23	.001
Egoistic	1	16.06	.001
Material	1	11.96	.001
Leisure	1	3.86	.050
External	1	16.35	.001
Error	862		

In comparing the motivating factors among the two volunteer groups (Table 3), MANOVA results revealed significant differences between the PGA and LPGA events [Wilk's  $\Lambda = .888$ ,  $F(5, 858) = 21.65$ ,  $p = .001$ ]. The between-subjects tests revealed that Solheim Cup volunteers were more highly motivated than PGA volunteers on all five factors. The nature and uniqueness of the LPGA event could have had an effect on the overall motivation of the volunteers. The Solheim Cup is held only in the United States every four years at traveling locations (versus the annual PGA Championship) - a rarer opportunity. Volunteers for the Solheim Cup exhibited higher motivations on all five factors, perhaps based not only on the uniqueness of this opportunity but also being influenced by the significantly higher sport event volunteerism experience of the LPGA volunteers. Based on their prior experiences, volunteers may have been able to align their motives more closely to their event responsibility.

The researchers also examined the means and standard deviations for the subscale scores (Table 4.) The findings support using a multifactor functional approach with golf event volunteers,

particularly for episodic opportunities. The episodic volunteers in this study indicated motivation across all five dimensions with purposive, egoistic, material, and leisure being stronger than external for both events. The highest ranking reasons supported the purposive factor ( $M = 3.84$ ): volunteers from both events had a genuine concern for contributing their time, efforts, and experience to make their event a success. In contrast to the existing literature, the external factor was the least important to these volunteers ( $M = 2.23$ ). Strigas and Jackson (2003); Williams, Dossa, and Thompkins (1995), and Farrell, Johnston, and Twynam (1998) all found that motivation related to the material factor least influenced individuals' decisions to volunteer; however, in this study, material was the third most reported motive.

Because of the required fee, the episodic volunteers in this study may have expected some form of material return for their services. The elite status of these events may also have influenced their material motivation. Overall, the results of this study align with previous research on volunteer motivation (Williams et al., 1995; Farrell et al., 1998), yet differ from more recent studies (Strigas & Jackson, 2003).



Table 4  
*Means and Standard Deviations for Volunteer Motive Factors*

Factors	Mean Score (Standard Deviation)					
	PGA Championship (n=470)		Solheim Cup (n=407)		Total (N=877)	
Purposive	3.62	(.035)	4.09**	(.028)	3.84	(.024)
Egoistic	2.57	(.041)	2.79**	(.038)	2.67	(.028)
Material	2.36	(.036)	2.52**	(.032)	2.43	(.025)
Leisure	2.29	(.039)	2.40*	(.036)	2.34	(.027)
External	2.15	(.030)	2.32**	(.031)	2.23	(.022)

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .001$

The reason for the different results could be attributed to the type of event being studied, as only the work of Williams et al. (1995) and Farrell et al. (1998) focused on elite episodic international sports events. Specific to golf events, the present study supports the work of Hardin et al. (2007) yet is different from Hamm and MacLean (2007) in regards to motivations to volunteer.

#### **Implications for the Profession**

Episodic events, including sports events, bring together volunteers of different demographic characteristics and motivations. Motivations of episodic volunteers associated with an elite episodic sports event relate to a balance of personal, social, and material factors with common interests in being part of a special event and contributing to its success. To ensure satisfied episodic volunteers, prospective volunteers' motivations should be assessed early in the recruitment and training process. Individual volunteers may then be better aligned with tasks they likely find the most rewarding.

The findings also suggest practical actions for other organizations interested in maintaining the support of volunteers in their activities, particularly for episodic events. The present study, along with previous research, provides a clearer picture of the golf volunteer population as well as contributes to knowledge on the overall volunteer population. The multifactor functional approach to understanding the motivations of volunteers is further substantiated. Volunteer resource managers who understand the motives sought by episodic volunteers will be better prepared to provide experiences that satisfy purposive, egoistic, and material functions. This will result in more effective, recruitment, management, and retention strategies that are effective in meeting the needs of both the organization and episodic volunteers.

For episodic events, organizers and VRMs may need to alter recruitment tactics based on the type of event as well as the target volunteer market. Event organizers must understand motivating factors, which in the present study included an emphasis on

purposive, egoistic, and material factors, in order to align with the volunteers' rationales and aid in the satisfaction of their experience. The application of the present may also provide current VRMs with suggestions on how to appeal to the most important motivational factors. For recruitment, appeal to the purposive factor by providing meaningful opportunities, such as giving a significant task and asking episodic volunteers to present their findings to event administrators, who may also learn more about means to effectively manage the event. This will allow volunteers to feel they are appreciated and making a difference. Egoistic factors should also be considered. Event managers should provide opportunities to socialize through a reception after the event or by setting up a volunteer tent during the course of the event. Another recommendation is to align episodic volunteer activities with individuals' specific motivations for volunteering. Event organizers looking to incorporate the material factor should ensure the availability of tangible benefits sought by volunteers, since this appears to be a cornerstone management strategy for sustained episodic golf events. Since golf event episodic volunteers must pay, they expect a material gain of some form (e.g., a reception, thank-you note, or a free round of golf). These strategies may contribute to an event's short- and long-term success.

In order to advance the application of the functional theory within sports volunteerism, future research is recommended to examine potential connections between golf and other episodic sports events. Furthermore, two episodic volunteer populations should be explored, one within the sports sector and the other in the non-sports sector, in an effort to directly compare the motivational differences between the two groups. This will further assist with volunteer management as it may

be possible to draw from non-sports volunteer-based programs for episodic sport events. It could also greatly assist events operations based on the vast number of volunteers needed.

Volunteers for episodic events will continue to have a significant impact on event management. For event managers, high operation costs as well as a continuing struggle for volunteers emphasize a continuing need to be more effective in all aspects of volunteer resource management. By better understanding and targeting episodic volunteer motivation as well as the different constituencies prior to recruitment, from an event management standpoint, episodic events will have the opportunity to be more effective.

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### About the Authors

Gina Pauline, Ed.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Sport Management at Syracuse University. Her research covers the motivation and satisfaction of sport event volunteers, sponsorship recall, as well as women's issues in sport. Her teaching interests are: sport marketing, sport law, and women, sport, and popular culture.

Jeffrey S. Pauline, Ed.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Sport Management at Syracuse University. His research interests include exercise adherence, college selection by student-athletes, and volunteer motivation and satisfaction. He has authored several articles and conducted presentations throughout the country.

Thalia Mulvihill, Ph.D., is an associate professor of Higher Education and Social Foundations of Education at Ball State University. She also serves as the Assistant Dept. Chair/Director of Doctoral Programs. Her research agenda focuses on the history and sociology of higher education with a focus on women and gender issues.