



## **I'm a rookie – no longer!**

***By Barbara Darling Bracken, Portland Pinot Putter***

Well, certainly a rookie at golf competition. Though my entire career was competitive -- I was paid on straight commission and constantly compared to co-workers – this golf GAME competition is an entirely new format...one that I needed to be convinced, "It's just for fun."

Fortunately, my team of experienced veterans held firm on this mantra, not just in their encouraging words and confidence, but in their trust that I would rise to the occasion on my debut.

In preparation, I made a checklist:

1. Look professional.
2. Hone some techniques (still some work to be done here).
3. Act and be part of The Partnership, i.e. fit in.
4. Contribute when possible.

I cleaned my clubs; bought new golf balls and gloves; practiced on the weakest parts of my game (tee box, fairway, short game and putting); built up my endurance from 9 to 18 holes; learned everyone's nickname, email and beverage preference; and finally, tried to spot opportunities where and when I could be helpful to the whole group.

Off we go to the EWGA Cup Match Play Regionals in Sparks, Nev. Thankfully, I was and am with the best EWGA Chapter ever...At our first gathering for all 19 West Coast entrants, nearly everyone from our three fabulous teams was so sincerely glad to have me there, delivering hugs and great enthusiasm for this Newbie. We talked about the aspects of competition: the emotional, physical, and mental challenges, recognizing our own, our partner's and our competitors' strengths and weaknesses. And they understood how daunting this first-time experience was for me.

As a rookie, I brought "coffee, black -- now would be good." I was allowed to help make a salad and do dishes, jumped out to wash the car windshield, parked the car out in the far lot when needed and was given all the assurance in the world that my jitters would fade.

Well, that didn't ever happen, but all the camaraderie, the security of friends, and the truly relaxed fun gave me strength. Winning for our team and Portland was a BLAST!

My sincere thanks and appreciation to my teammates for the trust they had in me and reviving my much needed sense of play. Deb, Marilyn, Syd, Donna, Dori, Terrie, Sue and our manager Nancy, you are the best!

Hopefully, our entire Chapter will celebrate as our three Match Play teams are off to Orlando in November. I know we'll do our best for Portland, have fun and know that what we do makes a difference.