

## **The Family Chips In**

*...to Brittany Lincicome's rising star status on the LPGA tour*

By Lisa Baker

You wouldn't call Brittany Lincicome a self-made woman.

She wouldn't let you.

At 20, Florida's Lincicome has held her LPGA tour card for only two seasons, but just weeks ago the 39th-seed picked off three higher ranked, better known and better funded opponents to take her first career tournament, the HSBC Women's Match Play Championship in New Jersey. In her wake: Michelle Wie in the quarterfinals, Lorena Ochoa in the semis, and Hall of Famer Juli Inkster in the final.

But Lincicome isn't one to hoard credit. She's the first one to tell you she does it all while riding high on the shoulders of her family.

Her father and her two brothers introduced her to golf years ago, taking her on the formerly all-male, after-dinner round under the lights on a nearby course.

Within six months she had scored her first hole-in-one, which brought cheers from one brother and something less than enthusiasm from the other. "He'd never had one himself...He was mad," she says, laughing.

It was clear that while golf was a favorite activity of others in the family, it was the younger Lincicome who would go far. In short order, the family was ready to back her all the way...to a college scholarship.

That was the goal.

There wasn't much talk of professional golf, the LPGA or lucrative sports endorsements.

It was all about a potentially free education, something that could, in Lincicome's pragmatic mind, get her a shot at being a veterinarian or maybe working professionally with children.

"When I was 14 or 15, I realized that there were so many scholarships for girls that went unused. If you could shoot in the high 70s as a female golfer, you could get a scholarship," she says.

And so, family members pitched in every way they could.

When practices caused lapses in her school attendance, her mother—who already was running the family's other business, a 75-child daycare—volunteered to homeschool her in every subject but math. "It turned out math had changed a lot," Lincicome says.

The one-on-one approach took her from sixth grade through high school, allowing her more time to devote to practice while at the same time ensuring she didn't miss anything academically.

When competitions came up around the country, her dad was her transportation manager—which is to say, he drove her.

When tough financial decisions had to be made, the family sacrificed to ensure that Lincicome's golf was held harmless—all before it was clear that she would get to the professional ranks.

Now that it's a reality, the Lincicome family has taken a deep breath, and continued exactly as before, doing it all in-house. Mom, Angie, continues to operate the daycare—ironically, the kind of business she can own and operate but not the kind of service she would ever use in her own parenting.

Dad, Tom, is both caddie and agent, an arrangement that suits the plain and practical ways of the family. “I hate giving agents money,” Lincicome says. “I just figure we're not trying to go out and get big deals. I just let my game show itself and people will come and contact us.”

She doesn't concern herself with some of the fluffier aspects of women's golf—whether Michelle Wie snubs other golfers, whether women should play the men's tour, or whether the color pink now belongs to Paula Creamer. Mostly, Lincicome figures, she's in it for the game. The rest isn't deserving of too much angst.

On golf and cosmetics: “Some want to appeal to a younger audience since golf has been sort of an older sport. I wear what they give me to wear,” Lincicome says. “You know what the tour is looking for—the younger crowds. So, they want makeup and earrings, and I think if it helps the tour, I'm for it.”

On Michelle Wie reportedly snubbing her at the HSBC: “Maybe she was just focused,” Lincicome told Slam! Sports. “Maybe I was messing her up by trying to talk to her.”

On playing the men's tour, according to Slam! Sports: “Like people have said out here, ‘If you can't beat Annika (Sorenstam), you don't need to go play another tour’...So after I dominate this one, maybe I'll try it, but it's definitely not anywhere in my future.”

Away from the cameras and interviews, Lincicome shows up for practice and the wearing, repetitive work, hitting bucket after bucket of balls, armed only with her sanity-saving iPod. She says she could play round after round of golf and never tire of it, but practice is another thing. “It's the most boring thing you can do,” she declares.

Relaxation is, like much of her life, simple and family-centric: She still plays golf once a week with her brothers when she's home. “We hang out together all the time,” she says.

Besides golf, there's fishing. Nothing fancy, just lines off the dock and catching "whatever will get on my hook."

For excitement, there's Texas Hold 'Em, where Lincicome is attempting to work on her poker face, and her restraint. "I don't have a poker face. I laugh and smile too much. I'm also learning not to play *every* hand I get."

Like golf, she says she could play cards all day, but remains prudent with her cash, bringing a small amount to the game, quitting if she loses it, and telling a reporter from *The Poker Gazette* that her palms sweat every time she has the maximum bet—\$8—on the table. She says she can't imagine living any other way but frugally, even if she were number one on the cash list. "I would just feel so guilty if I went out and spent a bunch of money on myself. It's just not the way I was brought up."

She is reminded each day on the green of the family standard—and the family's steadfastness, although she admits having her father as caddie can get complicated. "When you're playing well and you're getting along, it's great. It's really crappy if you're not playing well and you just yelled at him all day, and he's your dad."

Even so, she says, she doesn't have to worry what will happen at the end of the round when they walk off the green. "On the course, it's all business. When we're off, we're father and daughter again."