

only half the problem



Two pro golfers who have made the "mega-bucks" are Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus, shown here during the 1972 PGA.

"There are usually more spots available in the fall," Muir said. "Last year there were 20 to 23 spots open. In the spring there were only about a dozen."

But before a golfer can even attempt to qualify for one of those spots, he has to get past the regional tournament. The field of 300-400 is cut down to 50-100. Those remaining battle it out in a 72-hole tournament for one of the openings on the tour.

SO, SUPPOSE A golfer is lucky enough to make it past all these obstacles and finally get his card. He then can lean back, play on the tour and collect his earnings, right?

Nope. The marginal tour player is still facing an uphill battle. Now that he has his tour card, he has to fight to keep it and make sure he isn't one of those who

loses his card the following year.

The beginning tour player isn't given a place in every tournament. He has to earn his way in. Every Monday, a qualifying round is held for that weekend's tourney. The touring pros on the lower end of the scale have to play well in the qualifier just to get the chance to play in the upcoming tournament.

To keep his card, a pro golfer has to win \$7,000 a year.

"They (PGA officials) don't stick right to that figure," Muir said. "It depends on how the golfer is doing. I've seen guys earn only \$1,500 in a year, but they've played well enough to get a six-month extension."

Muir hasn't gotten past the first step yet. Neither have hundreds of others. But as long as there's still big money to be made on the tour, they'll all keep trying.

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