

Metro/Sports

Teaming Up for Health Awareness

LPGA Stars Launch Campaign About Severe Bladder Condition Afflicting Thousands

Terry Jo Myers, a three-time LPGA Champion will be participating in this year's Safeway LPGA Golf Championship at Columbia Edgewater Country Club, recently gave a talk in Portland about her 15-year struggle and eventual triumph over interstitial cystitis (IC), a chronic and frequently misdiagnosed bladder condition.

Myers also discussed her role in "On Course for Better Health," a national educational campaign designed to raise awareness about IC and its treatment launched by the American Foundation for Urologic Disease (A.F.U.D.).

While a student at Florida International University, Myers complained about a recurring pain in the bladder that felt like a papercut - making it difficult for her to urinate. Over the years, her condition worsened. Her physician's only advice was that she live with the mysterious bladder problem.

According to Dr. Susan McSherry, a urologist in New Orleans, "her pain level was enormous." Despite her disability, Myers stayed true to her goal of wanting to join the ranks of women in the LPGA. It was through her competitive spirit and strong frame of mind that was a major factor in handling the embarrassing discomfort.

It was later revealed through intensive medical tests that Myers' condition is called Interstitial Cystitis. It occurs when portions of the urinary bladder lining - known as the glycosaminoglycans or "GAG layer" - fail in their normal function to provide a buffer against the effects of highly acidic urine stored there.



Terry Jo Meyers will be competing in the 29th annual Safeway LPGA Golf Championship from Sept. 19-24 at Columbia Edgewater Country Club. 144 of the LPGA's best will compete for a purse of \$800,000.

Cardinal symptoms include: bladder pain, lower abdominal or pelvic pain, frequent need to urinate, continuing pressure in the lower abdomen and painful sexual intercourse.

Interstitial cystitis (IC) is a chronic and often painful bladder condition that affects more than 450,000 people in the United States, 90 percent of whom are women. Classic IC symptoms include the urgent and frequent need to urinate, as well as pelvic or bladder pain. Doctors frequently misdiagnose IC as a urinary tract infection and prescribe antibiotics, which prove ineffective.

As a result, IC patients can often endure years of pain and frustration and consult numerous physicians

before reaching an IC diagnosis.

Myers, who first revealed she suffered from IC in 1994, has worked tirelessly to raise awareness about the condition.

"IC had a significant impact on both my personal life and career," Myers said.

"For 10 years, my family and my golf career took a back seat to my struggle with IC. I suffered in silence, thinking there was nothing I could do to relieve the pain, but I know now that there is effective treatment and support for people with IC. 'On Course for Better Health' will help those who may have the condition and their physicians recognize IC so it can be properly diagnosed and treated."

Dottie Pepper, a 16-time LPGA

winner, has known Myers for more than 10 years, even before her pro career began in 1988.

"On tour, I witnessed the hardships Terry-Jo experienced while battling IC," Pepper said. "I was amazed at the courage she demonstrated and impressed by her remarkable comeback from the condition. Her commitment and determination inspired me to lend my support to this campaign."

The "On Course for Better Health" program includes a public service announcement (PSA) campaign featuring Myers, as well as educational materials that will be distributed to patients and their families through physicians nationwide. A.F.U.D. has also established a toll-free confidential hotline, 1-877-ON-COURSE, and a Web site, www.oncourseforbetterhealth.com, where people can obtain information about IC and ways to treat the condition.

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Rev. 4/00

NBC's Games Find Solid Ratings

NBC has gotten off to a reasonably strong start with the Summer Olympics, with Friday and Saturday ratings putting the network ahead of the pace set in 1992 and slightly behind 1996.

According to preliminary national data from Nielsen, the primetime portion of Friday's Opening Ceremony from Sydney, Australia, delivered a 16.1 rating in homes and a 29 share. That's a 17% increase over the 13.8/29 for the Barcelona games in 1992 and 6% better than the 15.2/29 for Seoul in 1988.

Saturday's preliminary 13.6/25 primetime rating was off 12% from the 15.4/29 for 1988. There is no meaningful comparison to 1992 because the Opening Ceremony was held on Saturday that year.

This year's taped Games, of course, don't figure to challenge the ratings delivered by the 1996 Summer Olympics from Atlanta, which featured plenty of live action. The live telecast of the opening night from Atlanta, for example, garnered a whopping 23.6/45 - the second-highest-rated Opening Ceremony ever (Winter or Summer).

NBC is shooting for roughly a 17.5 homes rating for its 16 nights of primetime coverage, about on par with 1988 (17.7) and 1992 (17.1) but well shy of 1996 (21.6). Network execs should have a better idea of where these Games will rank after the numbers come in for the first few days of this week, when the Olympics face formidable competition from the likes of "Monday Night Football" and "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire."

NBC's 2000 Sydney Olympics first two-days of coverage stands at an estimated 14.5/27 - down 30% from 1996 (20.5/41), up 5% from 1992 (13.8/29) and off 6% from 1988 (15.4/30).

NBC's showing on Friday was its best in homes and key demos

since the Summer Games in Atlanta four years ago, while Saturday's rates as its best since Game 1 of the World Series last October.

CBS' repeats of summer smash "Survivor" don't appear to be posing much of a chal-

lenge to the Olympics. On Friday, for example, a repeat of the first episode of "Survivor" (4.6) managed just about one-fourth the overnight score of the Olympics for the 9 o'clock hour (18.2).

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