

## LINKS PLAYERS INTERNATIONAL

# Ministry History

Links Players International began as the Links Letter, a brief two-color newsletter, produced as an outreach tool by group of PGA Tour professionals beginning in 1980. The Links Letter was sent free to all who asked for it.

In the early 1980s, through the work of Jim Hiskey and Tom Flory, the Links Letter became the production of the Links Fellowship, an outgrowth of the Fellowship ministries in Washington, D.C. The primary purpose of the Links Letter remained to broadcast the testimonies of Tour players with the hope of planting seeds of faith in readers, particularly golfers.

A secondary ministry of the Links Fellowship became to establish local groups of believers associated with golf throughout the country. To this end, Jim Hiskey traveled extensively, helping men and women start such groups, called Links Fellowships. The familiar LINKS acronym/mission was built to encourage and guide these groups. Successful national conferences were held.

Additionally, the Links Fellowship produced new resources, including tracts and video tapes.

Over time, the Links Letter mailing list grew to as many as 60,000. The list, however, was inconsistently maintained.

By the mid-1990s, the Links Letter and the Links Fellowship began to experience financial shortfalls. In the fall of 1997, the Links Letter ceased publication, and the Links Fellowship office was unable to support consistently the many local Links Fellowships.

In 1999, Tom Flory, on behalf of the Links Fellowship, approached College Golf Fellowship about the possibility of taking over publication of the Links Letter. College Golf Fellowship agreed to take over the Links Letter and other Links activities beginning in 2000. A new organization, named Links Players International, was formed. Ken Hopper was hired as CEO, and Jeff Hopper was hired as Media Director. Rik Massengale moved from director of CGF to president of LPI.

CGF restarted the Links Letter on a subscription basis in April 2000 with a cover story about Casey Martin. Since that date, the Links Letter has been published bi-monthly without lapse as a 16-page full-color magazine.

In mid-2000, Links Players established [www.linksplayers.com](http://www.linksplayers.com). The Web site is easily the most extensive of its kind, featuring nearly 30 player profiles and 500 archived devotions. The Web site offers several resources newly produced since the LPI formation, including five new tracts and a six-week Bible study, in addition to books

and materials produced by others.

In fall of 2000, LPI started the Links Daily Devotional, posted to the Web site. In late January 2001, the Daily Devotional began dissemination via e-mail with 70 readers. Today, 600 golfers receive the Daily Devotional via e-mail.

In January 2002, President Rik Massengale was moved to a primarily fund raising capacity, with Brad Payne taking over as day-to-day director of the CGF division of Links Players. In May 2002, Rik Massengale announced his resignation from LPI. The board made no immediate decision to replace him.

In August 2002, the Links Players board decided it would be in the best interest of CGF to embark on its own college-focused venture, forming a new organization. LPI would explore its own options for continuing the Links Letter and adult-focused ministries. In October 2002, Ken Hopper stepped out of his CEO position and Jeff Hopper was chosen to serve as interim executive director.

In February 2003, Jeff Hopper was named executive director of what has become the most active golf communications ministry in the world, providing ongoing information about Tour players, Christian golf personalities, golf fellowships, and golf ministries, as well as resources for evangelism and discipleship of golfers.