

Coles announces her plans to retire

By ED VYEDA

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SAN JOSE — Swinging a 5-iron on the practice tee, with a couple buckets of golf balls dumped in front of her, it seemed like just another work day for Janet Coles. But Tuesday was different, since it was one of the last work days Coles will spend as a full-time player on the LPGA Tour.

"I'm retiring," said Coles, a 1972 Watsonville High graduate who is in her 13th year on the Tour. "If I could play in my back yard, I would play until I die. But after traveling for 13 years, it's not for me anymore."

Coles, who played 25 events last year and finished 50th on the money list, is playing in only her 11th Tour event of 1989 at this week's Konica San Jose Classic, Friday through Sunday at the Almaden Golf and Country Club. "I've been inching my way out," said Coles, 35,



Janet Coles

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who grew up in Aptos and lives in Carmel.

"The motivation just isn't there," Coles said of her reason to step away from the game. She is healthy and her game is in decent shape. But while the money is good, it's not enough to keep her out on the Tour full-time. In only 10 events this year, she's still won \$20,203, putting her over the \$600,000 mark in career earnings.

"I *can* play, and I feel like I still can play with the big players," she said. "I could go on, but I'm at the point in my life that I'd rather improve the quality of my life."

Although she hasn't informed the LPGA about her retirement, Coles said that she will keep her commitments through this year, then plans to play in no more than five events in 1990, and may play in only one.

"This year has not been easy," said Coles, who consulted with her parents about making her career move. "This is not an easy transition. You can be totally 100 percent sure about it, but that doesn't make it easy."

"I'm really going to miss the competition and the friends I've made," said Coles, who has two career victories since first joining the Tour in February of 1977. "The neatest part about it is all the friendships — not just golfers, but all the people I've stayed with, and all the sponsors and other people who make it fun to play golf."

Coles, who graduated in 1976 from UCLA (where she played on the women's golf and basketball teams) with a degree in kinesiology, got her first Tour victory in the 1978 Lady Tara Classic. Then in 1983, her best year on the Tour, Coles won the Lady Michelob and won \$110,000 to place 12th on the money list.

"I have never been a great player, but I've been a consistent player," Coles said. "I did the best I could. I feel extremely fortunate and grateful for what I was blessed with."