

# Wealthy Women Establish Country Club Sport in Florida

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Wealthy women played a prominent role in the development of golf and tennis at Florida's resorts. Their sports participation was chronicled in the society columns. The annual Woman's Golf Championship of Florida was held on the links of the Palm Beach Golf Club. By 1916 women from many eastern cities entered the tournament. During the early 1920s women's golf grew in an atmosphere of prosperity brought on by the greatest land boom in Palm Beach history.

Palm Beach was also the site of the annual Women's Tennis Championship of Florida. Leading female players were attracted to the mild winter temperatures and resort atmosphere. Miss Eleanora Sears and Miss Molla Bjurstedt were among the notable entries in the 1919 tournament. Tennis tournaments, like golf competition in Palm Beach, caused the sports to become more popular each year. The winter season offered year round residents the opportunity to study the game. Exhibition matches, the state tournament, and daily informal matches improved the skill of many local tennis enthusiasts.

By the early 1920s Miami Beach was attracting its share of wealthy tourists. The first annual women's invitation golf tournament was held at the Miami Beach Golf Club during the last week of February in 1921. Although numerous exhibition tennis matches and local tournaments attracted large galleries and ranked players it was not until 1922 that a tournament sanctioned by the United States Lawn Tennis Association was held on Miami Beach.

During the formative years of Florida's resort growth, affluent women experienced success, acceptance, and respect as competitors in country club sport. Golf and tennis champions were role models for other women who saw them play.