

# A Focus on Women's Sport in Florida During the Depression Decade

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The purpose of the study was to determine the factors which contributed to the growth of women's sport in Florida during the 1930s. The economic condition of the state, the political climate, institutions of higher education, transportation, land developers, the tourist industry and the impact of climate were investigated in light of the growth and development of sport among women. Data was collected from newspapers, college yearbooks, college catalogs, and magazines.

During the depression decade Florida's economy was not as adversely affected as some other states. A major reason for the boost in the economy was the allocation of federal money for public relief and welfare, farm crop support, public construction, and soil conservation. Public works programs provided employment and placed some money in circulation through the purchase of construction materials. The effects of the depression were somewhat alleviated through the investments of Alfred I. du Pont. In 1926 du Pont purchased nearly 70,000 acres in Franklin, Bay and Walton counties. Between September 1929 and August 1931 he opened seven banks in Florida. By 1935 du Pont's banks reported deposits of over 40 million dollars, obvious evidence of financial stability and confidence in the economy. Florida's economy was substantially bolstered by the money

spent by visitors who made Florida their winter residence in the 1930s. The state recovered from the depression more rapidly than other states as a result of the tourist industry.

Sport was reported in Florida newspapers without reference to financial instability. Women's swimming, basketball, golf, tennis, softball and bowling received a great deal of attention from the press. The temperate climate provided a natural atmosphere for year round sports participation and attracted sports organizations such as the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States (AAU). The AAU sanctioned a variety of sporting events and brought attention to the state's champions and nationally known competitors. Country club sport continued to flourish in the 1930s while most intercollegiate competition had been replaced by intramural and interclass events. City league basketball fueled by high school teams provided women with opportunities to engage in competitive opportunities outside the context of educational institutions. Women's tennis paralleled the development of women's golf as both sports attracted national champions and wealthy participants. Both sports received extensive coverage in newspapers throughout the state. Female champions in a variety of sports were often featured in newspapers bring visibility and respect to sport for females.