

# Golf Dominates Women's Sports in North Carolina During the Depression Years

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The dominant sport for North Carolina women in the decade of the 1930s was without question golf. Sports were less depressed than the overall economy during this decade, and certainly this characterized golfers in the country club set. Daughters of upper-class families and wives of businessmen and professionals golfed and occasionally even achieved newspaper notoriety on the sports pages. Country clubs in Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Asheville, Raleigh, Pinehurst, and Southern Pines usually hosted at least one invitational event annually, complete with prizes for various golfing achievements along with a swimming party, luncheon, or tea. The fact that women retained their femininity on the links both in dress and demeanor helped ensure its acceptability. The most noteworthy North Carolina female golfer, Estelle Lawson Page, captured many of her titles in this decade, including the 1937 United States Amateur Crown. Tennis, swimming, and even polo, although appealing to some women of this same social status, failed to achieve golf's popularity.

North Carolina women in the colleges were introduced to numerous sports, such as archery, tennis, field hockey, basketball, baseball, swimming, track and field, gymnastics, equitation, and fencing, in the 1930s. participation invariably took the form of formal instruction in single gender classes followed occasionally by field day events or play days. Usually competition was restricted to intraclass or intramural events, although some colleges sponsored intercollegiate basketball teams.

Schoolgirls, especially in rural areas of the state, actively competed on basketball teams. Local, county, and district tournaments led to the crowning of champions, a few of whom were pictured on the sports pages. Often doubleheaders of girls' and boys' games were scheduled. Recreationally, girls engaged in playground baseball tournaments or participated in volleyball, cageball, or horseshoes. Some working women vied for basketball victories, while many females from various social classes were encouraged to learn to swim.