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Female Sport in Ontario, 1919-1939

This paper has a modest goal: to expand and deepen our knowledge about female sport across the length and breadth of Ontario, from Windsor in the west, to Sault St. Marie, to Ottawa in the east and Niagara Falls. Additionally, it examines their involvement in large cities such as Toronto and in small hamlets, such as Staffa. It aims to build on the foundations laid by Kidd, Lenskyj, Bouchier, Hall and others. The database was collected from an examination of twelve newspapers. There were significant differences in terms of female participation in and involvement in the organization of different sports. The sports were, therefore, placed into two groups, six primarily competitive sports and six sports with strong social overtones. In each case the extent of competition, nature of their involvement in the organization of the sport, the groups participating, the groups sponsoring the sports. and the problems facing them were examined. Particular attention was focused on their relationship

with male dominated organization. The picture that emerged was that girls and women were heavily involved in sport across the length and breadth of Ontario, from the largest cities to the smallest hamlets. The different levels of involvement were related to population size and density. Very simply across the length and breadth of Ontario females were involved in sport both on the playing fields and on the executives of team, district and provincial organization. However, the nature of their involvement differed from sport to sport. In some cases the sport was played within the confines of male organizations and male domination. In others, they participated with men in the organization of the sports while in others the females controlled all aspects of the sports. What their involvement reveals was that there was no one model of female involvement. The main part of the paper examines the different models of female involvement and places that within the context of the literature.