

Qualified Success? Gender, Sexuality and Women's Golf

Marnie Haig-Muir

For what may well be the world's most popular participant sport,¹ surprisingly little scholarly attention has been devoted to golf. Women's golf has been virtually ignored.² A century ago Lord Wellwood wrote in a popular golfing book, 'If [women] choose to play at times when the male golfers are feeding or resting, no one can object ... at other times ... they are in the way'.³ Despite anti-discrimination and equal opportunity initiatives little has changed since. Australia's women golfers remain the objects of *chauvinistic* displeasure on the course and in the clubhouse, and the butt of sexist humour in golfing literature, jokes and cartoons.

Australia has produced some talented female golfers over the past century, but scant notice has been taken by journalists or historians. With rare exceptions neither their names nor faces are well-known. Coverage of women's golf in newspapers and popular magazines is minimal; coverage in books, if any, is usually relegated to a few footnotes or a short chapter. Gary Mansfield's *History of Golf in Victoria*, for example devotes one chapter and some passing references to 'The Women's Game'. The book *was* published under the auspices of the (men's) Victorian Golf Association, but the ambit claim in the title is worth noting.⁴ Similarly, Terry Smith's *Australian Golf: The First 100 Years* acknowledges the pioneering Miss Mackenzie in the opening chapter, but barring several paragraphs on Babe Didrikson thereafter relegates Australia's women golfers to five pages.⁵

Gender Issues

Sport is a key institution where males learn, develop, practice and perpetuate 'manly' skills and values. Because it both constructs and is constructed by dominant views of masculinity and femininity sport is an important way to 'do gender'.⁶ Yet while it is a critical rite of passage from boyhood to manhood, sport plays little part in a girl's transition to womanhood. Whereas 'men have been traditionally socialised *into* sport, women have been socialised out of sport'.⁷ So-called 'tomboys' have even been accused of being developmentally retarded.⁸

The mainstream, perhaps more aptly, main arena, has long been male territory. From the sand and dust of ancient Greek and Roman stadia, to Augusta's immaculate fairways and greens sportswomen have been 'outsiders'. The androcentric world views which dominate sport generally undervalue female achievements thus condemning women to marginal status, or excluded 'other'.⁹ Much of this sexism and gender bias is invisible; often an institutionalised invisibility cloaked by specious claims of objectivity and value-neutrality driven by equally slippery and mutable concepts, constructs and reifications like 'the market', 'viewing public', 'prowess' and 'femininity'.

Socio-cultural context and ideology condition the ways in which gender and gender roles are conceptualised and operationalised. Within the sporting world golf arguably forms a special kind of 'cultural landscape' where hierarchical and cross-cutting power relationships between genders and/or classes are prominent features.¹⁰ The historical context of golf's evolution to popular sport status in the late nineteenth century is relevant to existing gender and class divides. As leisure became common for more privileged members of society, clubs of all kinds mushroomed. Golf clubs were seen as extensions of professional or commercial culture: places to network, or cultivate business and/or social contacts. Put simply, they were a special cultivar of the crop of men's social clubs which thrived at that time. In these public, therefore 'men's' spaces, women were allowed only in restricted places, roles and times. Golf was serious space for men, but (controlled) social space for women.¹¹ Significantly, as Brian Stoddart observed, 'the accepted patterns of society were ... even more highly regarded within golf clubs than within most other social institutions and in the public at large. Women were either wives and mothers or undergoing apprenticeships for the family role.'¹²

To participate actively in golf women first had to break into the male domain. James Fullerton Carnegie outlined their properly supportive role in 1833:

The game is ancient, manly and employs
In its department women, men and boys.
Men play the game, the boys the clubs convey,
And lovely woman gives the prize away.¹³

Sportswriters around the turn of the century may well have been 'more obsessed with the eating habits of women golfers than the golf',¹⁴ but the

game was considered to have redeeming virtues. For genteel girls, golf was a healthy and suitably decorously recreation if 'treated as a pastime: a pleasant way to spend a few hours ... not ... as a serious obsession which might risk getting out of control'.¹⁵ Women were considered emotionally unstable and organisationally incompetent. British sportswriter Horace Hutchinson's attitude is a good example:

Women never have and never can unite to push any scheme to success. They are bound to fall out and quarrel on the smallest or no provocation; they are built that way! They will never go through one Ladies' Championship with credit. Tears will bedew, if wigs do not bestrew, the green. Constitutionally and physically women are unfitted for golf.¹⁶

Gender-based exclusion and patriarchal control were legitimated by claims about women's 'unsettling and ... pernicious influence',¹⁷ and poor emotional control under pressure. Despite the prevalence of this kind of misogyny, golf remained an acceptable activity for well-to-do women because it '... was non-threatening to male players ... provided the opportunity ... to mingle with males and females of the same social standing ... [and] was ... a healthy form of moderate exercise ... for ladies'.¹⁸ Apart from exercise-value, golf helped develop socially desirable attributes like self-control and equanimity. It '... steadies the nerves ... takes women out of themselves, and acts as a gentle counterpoise to tea and gossip'. Equal opportunity? No problem to the much-quoted Dan Soutar. Low markers 'should be allowed to play over the men's courses at will, except on Saturdays and public holidays, it being understood that they would always be willing to allow men ... to pass them, if the latter so desired'.¹⁹

One of the most pervasive and effective devices used to reinforce the golfing gender divide is what Marian Burton Nelson calls 'gender-marking';²⁰ specifically a recurrent pernicious linguistic distinction separating women's golf from (real, that is, men's) golf. That distinction is, of course, quite spurious, but for many people, including all-important image-makers and purse-holders, the two are, or are made out to be, categorically and hierarchically different sports. The way female sporting participation is usually qualified by 'gender-marking' is crucial because it implies and assumes that men's sport and sporting men constitute the normative standards against which other performance is measured. Through this process women's golf is relegated to secondary status, an afterthought, or a sop to those few strange souls who may be genuinely

interested.

Dale Spender revealed the power of language in consolidating 'hegemonic masculinity'.²¹ Consider for example, the values under-pinning the once common term 'proette', supposedly funny one-liners like 'I'm playing like Tarzan — and scoring like Jane', or a condescending reference by Peter Thomson to 1996 Women's Australian Open winner Catriona Mathew as 'quite the little lady'.²² The gendered language commonly used in golfing circles is both instructive and significant. Women golfers are not *golfers*, but women, preferably 'ladies', thereafter golfers. Gendered norms ensure that women's golf features only in a qualified fashion. Even in supposedly egalitarian Australia there's golf, and women's golf; the *Australian Open*, and the *Women's Australian Open*; golf magazines and *women's golf magazines* and so on.²³ Other examples could be given, but would merely reiterate and reinforce the same point *ad infinitum*.

'Associate' Membership

The first recognised female golf club in the world was formed at St Andrew's in 1867. For 30 years activities were restricted to putting on poor ground well away from the 'real' golf played by male members. Twenty-five years later, Australian women golfers first claimed their own, albeit restricted, place when Melbourne golf club²⁴ half-opened its august doors to female golfers as 'associate' members in 1892. At least one Victorian club, Surrey Hills, had admitted women to full membership in the 1890s. But with other, more influential, clubs of the time holding to the 'associates' model, this aberrant situation was short-lived, leaving the conservatively constructed gender hierarchy enthroned for the next 90 years. Until anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation passed during the 1970s and 1980s forced change upon them,²⁵ Australian golf clubs, like their overseas counterparts, continued to have (male) Members and (female) Associate Members who had lesser rights on the course and in the clubhouse.²⁶ Most 'associates' were, by definition, related to the club's male members. Even in these halcyon days of equal opportunity and unisex membership categories, the demeaning appellation of 'associates' lingers around golf clubs.

Geelong Golf Club, one of the oldest in Australia, has two claims to fame in women's golfing history. Home of the first formally constituted women's club in the land (July 1893), Geelong was also the site of Australia's inaugural national golf championship.²⁷ This path-breaking event was contested by thirteen intrepid women players in August 1894,

some two months before the inaugural men's event. Significantly, despite this chronological precedence, 'ownership' of the (unqualified) Australian title is vested with men; gender-marking ensuring that the female champion attains only qualified success.

Women golfers fought hard for their limited rights and defended them strenuously. In 1899 Royal Melbourne's Secretary wrote to the club's 'associates' in 1899 requesting:

1. [w]hen ladies and gentlemen arrive by the same train ... the gentlemen ... be allowed to drive off before the ladies start.
2. ... where ... a party of gentlemen have indicated that they are delayed by a party of ladies, the ladies shall wait after holding out and permit the gentlemen to drive off before them at the next tee.

The incensed 'associates' firmly informed the council that 'it was quite impossible to fall in with the first proposal, but the second was a rule which had always been adhered to by regular players', and the matter was dropped.²⁸ These well-bred and 'proper' ladies understood the bounds of 'their space, and were quite prepared to resist territorial takeovers.

Successful women athletes, including golfers, may be threatening because they fail to conform to conventional (heterosexual male) images of how females should look and/or behave, that is, deferential, weak, incompetent and, if unattached, available. If not, then, according to a peculiarly warped logic, they 'must' be gay! Sportswomen are in a double-bind. Since men are, *ceteris paribus*, stronger and more powerful than women, serious participation in sport may be deemed 'unfeminine', by implication, 'unnatural' for women. If they, as females, play 'like women', then their performance is, *ipso facto*, 'second-rate', because it rarely stands comparison with their male equivalents in terms of power, speed, aggression or similar androcentric measures of physical prowess. If, on the other hand, women play, or behave, 'like men' — take their sport seriously, train hard, develop muscles, display physical skill and so on, then their 'femininity' may be queried.

Images of Sexuality

Ken Dyer stated that women 'are beginning to demand a say in formulating images of sexuality [because] to expand the range of meanings female sexuality can express to equal the range of male sexuality has always expressed [adds] dynamism and strength ...'²⁹ Not before time. Shunned

in her own right, and damaging others' 'normal', that is, 'feminine' heterosexual images, a 'mannish' female athlete is doubly damned. Leaving aside problems linked to the normative standards inherent in this pejorative nomenclature, 'deviant' sexuality 'allows' men whose masculinity is threatened and /or insulted to respond in hostile, aggressive, often crude ways.

Sexual labels like 'unfeminine', 'butch', 'lesbian', and 'second-rate men' are used to denigrate sportswomen and women's sports. References to the 'image problem' permeate writing on women's golf, especially professional golf. The term is a euphemism impugning players' sexuality and refers specifically to an ongoing preoccupation with lesbianism especially amongst professional ranks. This issue is crucial to producing and reproducing the dominant gender hierarchy because, as Susan Cahn reminds us:

the figure of the mannish lesbian athlete has acted as a powerful but unarticulated 'bogey woman' of sport, forming a silent foil for more positive, corrective images that attempt to rehabilitate the image of women athletes and resolve the cultural contradiction between athletic prowess and femininity.³⁰

'Cultural contradiction' captures the essence of many debates surrounding women's sport, and provides useful clues to interpreting perceptions and depictions of sportswomen. Adverse connotations and outcomes associated with the (lesbian) 'image problem' go a long way towards explaining otherwise puzzling aspects of the ways female athletes present themselves in public. Pat Griffin once referred to women's sport as being '... held hostage to the "L-word"'.³¹ Sound 'femininity' credentials are supposedly the key to public and sponsor acceptance.³² Hence the focus on 'sexy' young sportswomen, 'super-mums' and the passing parade of significant (male) others and children on and between the covers of the popular press as symbols of 'normality'.³³

Some elite women athletes must undergo an ignominious sex 'test' to 'prove scientifically' they are female. One complained, '... I have certificates in three languages saying I am a woman, so that someone can say 'you play like a man'. 'When women are called dykes, or "hairy legs", or androgynous', Marilyn Waring argued, 'the burden of proof falls on women themselves ...'.³⁴

So the late great Mildred ('Babe') Didrikson Zaharias found out to her

cost. Arguably this century's greatest all-round sportswoman, controversy dogged the Babe throughout much of her life. Her 'gender heresy'³⁵ frequently brought her sexual identity under fire until she married wrestler George Zaharias in 1939. Until then, when she apparently passed some kind of respectability test, 'the media', Mariah Burton Nelson noted, 'ridiculed ... Didrikson as "boyish", "mannish", a "girl-boy child", "unfeminine", "unpretty", "not-quite female", and a "Muscle Moll" who could not "compete with other girls in the very ancient and honoured sport of man-trapping"'.³⁶

Reveled and castigated by '... reporters and members of the public as a freak' during her illustrious and highly versatile (pre-golf) sporting career, the triple Olympic medallist later claimed 'My sports career began with golf.'³⁷ Public acceptance came only after the brash Texan tomboy converted her controversial androgynous image to a more 'feminine' one by marriage, altering her hairstyle, grooming and clothes, and professing great passion for domesticity at any opportunity afforded her. Once married, her 'threatening' status apparently dissipated, and mainstream media mostly treated her respectfully. Because she could match, often beat, men *on their own terms*, Babe measured up to male sporting values, and her 'magnificent — simply magnificent'³⁸ golf was customarily measured by men's standards.³⁹ One report called her '... a finer physical specimen than 75 per cent of male golfers ...'⁴⁰

Todd Crosset stated in his study of the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), '... because sport is a resource for men to do gender, women's excellence in sport is often felt as a threat to masculine identity'.⁴¹ Power and strength are important performance indicators in many sports. Much of the sporting public's perception of golfing ability is based on men's performance and /or capabilities, particularly power and distance. Although 43 per cent of the average game is putting and another 20 per cent short iron shots, power is what *really* counts. In a 1939 article 'Can a woman play as well as a man?' one reporter asserted, '... women are not in the same class as men at golf ... their drives are comparatively puny affairs, and thus they are hopelessly handicapped ...'.⁴²

Sport as Male Turf

Sport may be maintained as male turf by belittling women's athletic prowess through sexual slurs and similar means. There is, as Jim McKay observed, little advantage in simply substituting 'rambos for bimbos'.⁴³ With rare exceptions women simply cannot take on men 'at their own

game'. Comparing women's sporting achievements directly with their male counterparts makes as much sense as matching a sprinter with a distance runner. They are essentially different, but not in a hierarchical fashion. Recurrent pieces along the lines of 'Could a woman win the Open?' assume the inherent inferiority of women and women's golfing events.⁴⁴

Sport's socio-cultural significance in Australia is illustrated by the space and time devoted to it by (predominantly male) media people who decide what 'the public' will have served up — male sports and horses.⁴⁵ We are continually told 'no-one' wants to see/read/hear about women's sports. 'Popularity' and 'image' are almost infinitely mutable, especially in the hands of skilled marketers and image-makers. Thanks to nesting sets of mutually reinforcing fallacies, women's sport remains an 'also ran', marginalised, trivialised or ignored.⁴⁶ Conventional marketing wisdom claims sex 'sells' women's sport. As a result, much of 'the [women's] sport we see on TV "could cynically be described as tits and bums"'.⁴⁷ Strength, power, speed, toughness, aggression and the like have come to define both sporting success and essential elements of masculinity in a self-perpetuating feedback loop which inevitably marginalises women's sporting achievements. In this 'nexus between maleness and publicly acclaimed physical skill ...' stronger, faster, tougher sport 'sells' best.⁴⁸

Two images offer sportswomen escape from their double-bind. Both are firmly grounded in heterosexual views of the world and women's 'proper' place/s in it. In golf, one could be characterised as the 'Jan Stephenson' path, the other as the 'Nancy Lopez' route. The first flaunts and trades upon physical attributes; the second establishes safely heterosexual credentials by means of marriage and motherhood.⁴⁹ Of one a journalist may write, 'She is a star and the crowds come to see her nipples as well as her niblick'.⁵⁰ For the other, home, hearth, husband and children provide 'normality' credentials.

Women's golf, especially professional golf in the US (where women have been most successful in achieving sponsorship and public recognition) has been dogged by the 'image problem'. Why this obsession with sex, sexuality and image in women's sport, when quite different standards apply in men's sports? Money and power are the keys. Golf is expensive to play, more so to promote and play at professional level. 'Sexiness' and/or 'femininity' are commercial assets according to

conventional wisdom,⁵¹ hence preoccupations with 'image'. Players' images must appeal, or be changed to appeal to corporate executives' preconceptions, or to what individuals believe 'their' market wants.

'Dykes on Spikes', and the 'Femininity' Fix

Tempers flared in 1995 over public assertions about lesbianism and 'butch' golf damaging both sponsorships and the broader appeal of the women's game. CBS commentator Ben Wright also claimed women golfers were 'handicapped' by their 'boobs',⁵² and gratuitously insulted the amiable and exceptionally talented Laura Davies whom he said was '... built like a tank'.⁵³ Wright initially denied having said anything of the sort, and said the reporter was lying. When he was eventually forced to confirm the allegations, Wright was fired by CBS and checked into an alcohol rehab unit. LPGA Commissioner Ritts publicly rejected Wright's claims, noting corporate sponsorship had actually increased significantly.⁵⁴

Some fault in this, and similar incidents must be borne by the LPGA which, as Lorne Rubenstein said, '... has consistently shied away from coming out and defusing the entire subject [of players' sexuality].'⁵⁵ Former Commissioner Mechem hit the nail on the head when he said, 'the LPGA's major problem and biggest challenge by far is not the personal lifestyle of its players. Any problem we have is in being a women's organisation. This is a systemic, societal problem.'⁵⁶ Attitudes to this kind of 'problem' may be changing. Footjoy/Titleist cancelled US\$1M of advertising in *Sports Illustrated* after a 1997 'beatup' linked a 'lesbian party scene' with the prestigious Dinah Shore tournament.⁵⁷ Said Wally Uihlein, Footjoy/Titleist's Chairman and worldwide chief, the piece was '... symptomatic of a condescending mindset towards women in golf in general'.⁵⁸

Conservatism dies hard. Lewine Mair roundly criticised Muffin Spencer-Devlin for 'coming-out' as a lesbian, and complained about the supposedly 'adverse publicity' surrounding the Dinah Shore. 'The truth', Mair maintained, 'is that in all the other weeks on the golfing calendar, the LPGA circuit comes across as a family-oriented affair.'⁵⁹ The *real* truth is that like the rest of society, sexual preferences of LPGA tour players range across a wide spectrum and are, in any case, completely irrelevant to players' golfing ability or performance.

Once '... jokingly referred to as the Lesbian Professional Golf Association'⁶⁰ the LPGA has gone to great lengths to 'feminise' players'

images over the past twenty years. Weight, grooming and clothes are closely monitored, and an 'image consultant' travels with the tour. This approach was adopted in response to falling sponsorship and accusations of rampant lesbianism on the tour in the mid-1970s when '... female golfers were just too dumpy, too butch, to make Big Bucks ... To change the unlovely image of the women's tour [Commissioner] Volpe, began to sell golf the way Madison Avenue was selling soap. In selecting promotable heroines, Volpe looked at bustlines rather than drives.'⁶¹

Australia's golfing 'sex symbol' Jan Stephenson featured prominently in the campaign. Never shy to exploit her physical attributes, Stephenson's daring poses in widely publicised photographs caused a sensation. Criticism drew the retort, 'I'm not ashamed of my body and if I feel like flaunting it, I'm going to'.⁶² Stephenson, who was and still is a talented golfer, reaped rich rewards from this publicity campaign as well as her golfing prowess. But sex appeal and 'femininity' may outweigh sporting merit. Prowess certainly took second place when mediocre Laura Baugh, said to have 'a pert smile and a coaxing bosom',⁶³ traded on her looks to earn '... up to half a million dollars a year off the golf course' while world record-holding tournament winner Kathy Whitworth took 22 years and around 80 victories to win \$US1 million.⁶⁴

New initiatives are lifting the public profile of women's golf in the US, but in 1997 physical attributes still took precedence over sporting ability. First, Buick signed former 'Charlie's Angel' Cheryl Ladd as their first female 'personality' to represent the company in the golfing world. She joins well-known PGA tour members Ben Crenshaw and Steve Elkington. Ladd may have a 'very recognisable name', but unlike her male counterparts, is a golfing non-entity. Second, Nike endorsed 'young, brash and pretty' then amateur Kelli Kuehne to the tune of US\$1.25 million. While her professional ability is unproven, Kuehne's personality and playing style 'fit' Nike's image.⁶⁵ Third, equipment-maker Lynx replaced top golfer Michelle McGann with 'glamour girl' Kristi Hommel as their representative.⁶⁶ While high-ranking players are hardly cash-strapped, they could be forgiven for wondering at potential sponsors' priorities.

'Image problems' are endemic. Virtually bankrupt in the mid-1980s, WPGET executive director Colin Snape, urged players 'to exploit their dress sense and sex appeal ...' to attract sponsorship.⁶⁷ Stephenson claimed the 'predominantly male' media is 'preoccupied with gays' on the women's

tour,” but Jane Lock said ‘You are led to believe that the women over there are all sexually strange. It’s a myth ... some people have said things on the spur of the moment just to be controversial ...’⁶⁹

The ALPG looks after the professional interests of around 90 Australian women pro golfers. Yet if popular press reports are any indication, Australian women’s golf in the late 1990s is pretty much the Karrie Webb show, with bit parts played by Jane Crafter, Corinne Dibnah, Jan Stephenson and a few others. Until the ‘world-wide Webb’⁷⁰ phenomenon hit, women’s golf and women golfers here had a very low profile indeed as ALPG chief, Don Johnson discovered. Stumping Sydney seeking sponsorship and publicity in the late 1980s Johnson was ‘told bluntly that nobody knows anything about women’s golf. What about Corinne Dibnah, who won the British Open in 1986? “Never heard of her”, blurts out the fancy fellow behind the desk.’⁷¹

Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination in women’s golf received little attention until the conservative 1950s and 1960s yielded to the more liberal 1970s. Second-wave feminism was in full swing; increasing numbers of women were entering the workforce, and more women had more money. During the 1970s Colgate-Palmolive’s new US CEO, David Foster used sporting sponsorship to attract these ‘modern women’ and steal a march on competitors. Once fears of ‘a lineup of machine-like muscular female sluggers ...’ faded in the face of ‘women’s golf [which] still retains its femininity ...’,⁷² companies like Colgate-Palmolive, Wills and Qantas sponsored women’s tournaments in several countries. But the tide of sponsorship ebbed late in the decade, leaving women’s professional golf in Australia high and dry.

This funding drought was gender specific. While the Women’s Australian Open folded due to poor funding, prize money for the 1979 (men’s) Australian PGA tour reached nearly \$800 000.⁷³ In 1980 one journalist wrote of this sexism:

The [Australian] LPGA has, in the 1970s become the pariah of Australian golf. The women professionals have had to play second fiddle to their male counterparts. The men’s tour was in a depressed state and professional golf had to compete for the limited sponsor and consumer dollars. *The success of either tour could only come at the expense of the other ... Economics*

*dictate that only effective promotional vehicles will receive the precious sponsorship dollar.*⁷⁴

Women's golf still runs a distant second in the money stakes. Leaving aside appearance money and endorsements, the purse for 1995 Women's Australian Open totalled \$A250 000. The purse for the men's equivalent event that year was \$A850 000.

The media pays little attention even when Australian sportswomen win big events. When Karen Lunn won the 1993 British (Women's) Open by eight strokes her win rated two 6 cm columns on the back page of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Greg Norman *lost* the US Open to Paul Azinger the same day. His *second* place rated a large picture and two articles covering over half the page.⁷⁵ Small wonder Australian women golfers are known to so few. With the partial exception of the ABC, Australian TV, radio and print media are obsessed with men's sport.⁷⁶ A 1992 official report noted that television devotes only 1.2 per cent of air time to women's sport, compared with 72.8 per cent to men's sport. Newspapers are little better with 4.5 per cent of space for women's sport and 85.6 per cent for men's sport.⁷⁷ Some progress has been made. A more recent report shows Australian newspapers devoting 10.7 per cent of sports coverage to women's sport; commercial TV, 0.2 per cent; and non-commercial TV, 20 per cent.⁷⁸

Maisie Mooney,⁷⁹ has confirmed on going discrimination and significant disparities between equal opportunity principle and practice in many golf clubs.⁸⁰ Change is slow, but media treatment of Karrie Webb may herald change for the better. Apart from a few relatively minor digressions about her split with fiancé Todd Haller, Webb's golfing prowess has been treated on its sporting merits. The 'gritty little lass', has some (non-sexual) image problems of her own, but made *Australian Golf Digest's* 1997 'top 12' players list.⁸¹

Women's Golf Australia and its state affiliates, ALPG, IMG, promoter Bob Tuohy and other believers have been working hard to raise the public profile of women's golf in this country. They have been assisted by Australian players' recent successes. Long-time resident of the US Jane Crafter,⁸² for example, created a perfect leadup to the new-style Alpine Australian Ladies' Masters by winning the last of its previous incarnation the preceding December.

Last February's A\$850 000 (US\$650 000) ALM was a landmark. Now co-sanctioned as an LPGA tour event, it is the world's richest women's

golf tournament outside the US Majors.⁸³ Along with a host of overseas stars, the 'show-down' between popular 'local' crowd-pleasers Crafter and Webb was made to order for public consumption. The tournament attracted good media coverage as a top-class sporting event, so why the provocatively sexist publicity poster picturing a golf ball captioned, 'Have you ever been hit by a girl?' and 'Ladies' inserted editorial-style between 'Australian' and 'Masters'?

Women's sport commonly receives short shrift in the media unless, of course, it's 'a leso story',⁸⁴ or has some 'sex appeal'. In a classically circular argument, newsworthiness and popularity are common reasons given for poor coverage. How do the media know there's no interest in women's sport? The answer involves values and the assumptions they inform. With its own superstar, maybe Australian women's professional golf could be considered commercially significant. Maybe not. The (revived) Women's Australian Open Golf championship was notably absent from the so-called 'major events' listed in 1996 Victorian Government self-promotion brochure.⁸⁵

NOTES:

- 1 B Stoddart, 'Wide World of Golf: A Research Note on the Interdependence of Sport, Culture and Economy', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, no. 7, 1990, p. 378. Australian participation rates have been estimated 5.1 per cent of males and 1.4. per cent of females. P Clark, 'Tee Totals: the Truth about Golf', *Age Good Weekend*, 3 Jan. 1998.
- 2 Notable exceptions include S E Cayleff, *Babe: The Life and Legend of Babe Didrikson Zaharias*. University of Illinois Press, 1995; M Chambers, *The Unplayable Lie: The Untold Story of Women and Discrimination in American Golf*, NYT/Pocket Books, New York, 1995; T W Crosset, *Outsiders in the Clubhouse*, SUNY Press, New York, 1995; L Kahn, *The LPGA: The Unauthorised Version*, Group Fore Productions Menlo Park, 1996.
- 3 Lord Wellwood, 'General Remarks on the Game', in H G Hutchinson, ed., *Golf*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 5th ed., 1895, p. 48.
- 4 Publisher of *Golf in Victoria*, which pays little attention to women's golf.
- 5 T Smith, *Australian Golf: The First 100 Years*, Lester-Townsend, Sydney, 1982. This treatment came courtesy of *Australian Golf*, a publication which still pays lip-service at best to women's golf.
- 6 See for example, L Bryson, 'Sport and the Maintenance of Masculine Hegemony', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1987, pp. 349-60; E Dunning, 'Sport as a Male Preserve: Notes on the Social Sources of Masculine Identity and its Transformations', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1986, pp. 79-90.
- 7 S Forby, 'In Defence of Women's Bodies in Sport', *ASSH Bulletin*, May 1989, p. 8.
- 8 H Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality*, Women's Press, Toronto, 1986, pp. 57, 66-7; Crosset, *Outsiders*, pp. 94, 254 discuss this term and its implications.
- 9 For example M J Kane and J B Parks, 'The Social Construction of Gender Difference and Hierarchy in Sport Journalism -Few New Twists on Very Old

- Themes', *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1992, pp. 49-83.
- 10 Race too may crosscut gender.
 - 11 Editor Carter says too many people 'have an image of the game which is outdated and still regard women golfers as ladies of leisure with time on their hands or those who have now retired'. J Carter, 'Time for a New Image?', *Women and Golf*, Sept. 1996, p. 72.
 - 12 B Stoddart, 'Golf', in W Vamplew and B Stoddart, eds, *Sport in Australia: A Social History*, CUP, Melbourne 1994, p. 86.
 - 13 Quoted in J George, 'Women and Golf in Scotland', *Oral History*, Spring 1997, p. 47.
 - 14 D. Gatehouse, unpub. manuscript.
 - 15 Lily Watson, 'Athleticism for Girls', *Girls' Own Paper*, 25 Oct. 1902, p. 62, quoted in George, 'Women and Golf', p. 46.
 - 16 Horace Hutchinson to Blanche Martin (first LGU treasurer), 9 Apr. 1893, quoted in Lewine Mair, *One Hundred Years of Women's Golf*, Mainstream, Edinburgh, 1992, p. 13.
 - 17 Wellwood, 'General Remarks', p. 48.
 - 18 M G Phillips, 'Golf', in W. Vamplew et al, eds, *Oxford Companion to Australian Sport*, OUP, Melbourne, 2nd ed., 1994, p. 186; see too, M G Phillips, 'Golf and Victorian Sporting Values', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 6, no. 2, May 1989, pp. 120-34.
 - 19 D Soutar, *Golf in Australia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1906, pp. 138-9.
 - 20 M B Nelson, *The Stronger Women Get, The More Men Love Football*, Harcourt Brace and Company, New York, 1994, p. 208.
 - 21 D Spender, *Man Made Language*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 2nd ad., 1985.
 - 22 ABC TV coverage, Day 4, 1996 Women's Australian Open.
 - 23 Or could it be said, à la Didrikson, that a restricted Open is a contradiction in terms? Smith, *Australian Golf*, p. 91.
 - 24 Later Royal Melbourne Golf Club.
 - 25 Royal Sydney, which finally allowed women full membership rights in April 1998, was one of the last to comply.
 - 26 'Associates' paid lower subscriptions, but could not be full members.
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