

GolfHer: History records that a woman, a queen no less, Mary Queen of Scots, originated the sport of golf in 1552 when she commissioned a golf course be built at St. Andrews in Scotland. An avid golfer who had traveled to France to play, the queen thusly brought golf from France to Scotland. This same Queen Mary, at the same time, also instituted an assistant position to the golfer called a caddie.

The Royal and Ancient Golf “Club” of St. Andrews Scotland, started in 1735 with a men-only membership policy, indifferent that these men would golf on the St. Andrews Golf “Course” commissioned by a woman in a sport begun by that woman two centuries prior.

Disconcertingly, after 1552, no one truly heard about women golfing (though they did) until 1893, the year Issett Miller devised the “handicap” system to calculate a net score from a gross score. The British Men’s Golfing Authority thought Miller’s scoring technique was ridiculous but when the United States Golfing Association adopted it, the British had to rethink their ridiculous claim of Miller’s handicap.

Golf recognition and appreciation historically seem to be due these two women golfers and the sport of golf deservedly to be respected as a “women’s” game! So, one might ask, how? why? did it come about that women were excluded from? kept out of? golf on into the 21st century.

It wasn’t until 2007 that St. Andrews, itself, hosted its first women’s professional tournament, the Women’s British Open. And not until March 2014 that that Royal and Ancient Golf “Club” of St. Andrews Scotland, proposed a motion to admit women members subject to current club members’ vote in September 2014. The current membership voted favorably.

Across the pond in the 1930s, American women golfers played where and how they could, mostly in amateur or self-designed tournaments. Professional golf tours for women did not exist, and women were not welcome in the tours for men, which did exist. Babe Didrikson-Zaharias, the leading American golfer, male or female in the 1940s and 1950s, founded the ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) with twelve other women in the mid-1950s.

In the fifties, the women traveled by auto-trailer-camper caravans with their scoreboard strapped to a vehicle, often camping along their route. With road maps in hand and golf clubs in tow, they took to the road often traveling up to 1,000 miles between tournament stops. They played for their love of the game and minuscule purses in front of sparse galleries. On at least one occasion they played for nothing when a promised purse failed to materialize.

Once the LPGA caravan pulled into town, well before the tournament began, the women went to work, often organizing a golf clinic for the public or a pro-am in an effort to raise money. Whatever money they raised would make a better tournament purse. Rarely or never would a newspaper or magazine report the ladies’ tournament; they did their own

p.r. to spread the word. The total Tour's prize money was \$50,000 in its first decade.

In the 1960s the LPGA began to grow as women in all sports gradually gained more acceptance. The numbers of golf tournaments and prize money was still scarce, but golf industry manufacturers began to value the women's sport market. Tours for women golf professionals began to be organized and sponsored. In 1963, the LPGA received its first television coverage.



In 1972, the Colgate-Dinah Shore Winners Circle debuted on the LPGA Tour offering \$110,000—the first six-figure purse in women's golf. Shore was a true ambassador for women's golf, a trailblazer for women, and a great hostess for the tournament. Concerned about the image they carried into the game, Shore proposed LPGA players needed to dress and look professional. She knew about the business of golf and that the image of individual players evoked the image of the Tour. She knew what it took to attract public and media attention and that sponsors and corporate sponsorship would follow. The annual LPGA Tour prize money reached \$4.4 million in 1979.

In the 1980s, as the impact of Title IX saw growing numbers of young women entering tour golf as a profession, the first women's tour retirement system was approved and a commitment to kids began with the LPGA Urban Youth Golf Program and the LPGA Girls Golf Club. Prize money kept a steady climb and corporate America began to shift its focus towards women's golf. The annual LPGA Tour prize money reached \$14 million.

In the 1990s the LPGA Foundation was established as a charitable organization. It benefits youth golf and scholarships, a catastrophic illness fund for members, and the development of the LPGA Hall of Fame. Purse monies grew to \$25.3 million in 1996.

The LPGA has grown into the most significant women's sporting organization in the world. Still, in a sport begun by a woman in 1552, men in early 2000s America, similar to the men of 1735 Scotland, still try to keep out women.

In 2002, women's activist Martha Burk privately requested reconsidering the male-only Fortune 500 CEOs membership policy of Augusta National Golf Club in a polite letter to the club's chairman Hootie Johnson. Johnson reportedly went ballistic and responded that admitting women as members "would not be done at the point a bayonet." It became a

national argument over where women ought be “allowed” to go.

In 2003 Burk publicly led a protest at Augusta during the US Masters, one of the four major tournaments in professional golf (for men). The uproar led the club to decide not to have advertising for the CBS broadcast of the Masters that year and the next.

In 2006 a group of Exxon shareholders that included Burk actively accused Exxon of violating company discrimination policies by supporting the gender discriminating golf tournament. Burk called the shareholders action "just one small step."

August-2012 Breaking News: IBM, one of three principal sponsors of the Masters, had elevated a woman to CEO “without“ an invitation to her to join the ANGC albeit their four previous CEOs (men) had been invited. Within the month women were invited to play on its course for the first time in the club’s 80-year history. Burk declared victory.

”Slowly but surely lots of crumbs add up to a cake” twittered another women's sports pioneer, Billie Jean King, a king in the style of a queen who started the sport of golf in 1552.

Sources: <http://nancyberkley.com/774892.html>;
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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LPGA>; <http://www.levo.com/articles/lifestyle/women-in-golf-history>; <http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/21/us/us-augusta-female-reaction/index.html>;
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