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GOLF:
Gentlemen Only Ladies Forbidden
or is it
Golden Oldies Live Forever?

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Definitions¹

General

The game of golf consists of playing a ball with a club from the *teeing ground* into the *hole* by a *stroke* or successive strokes in accordance with the Rules.

The Spirit of the Game

Unlike many sports, golf is played, for the most part, without the supervision of a referee or umpire. The game relies on the integrity of the individual to show consideration for other players and to abide by the rules. All players should conduct themselves in a disciplined manner, demonstrating courtesy and sportsmanship at all times, irrespective of how competitive they may be. This is the spirit of the game of golf.

Committee

The “*Committee*” is the committee in charge of the competition or, if the matter does not arise in a competition, the committee in charge of the *course*.

Course

The “*course*” is the whole area within any boundaries established by the *Committee*.

Hole

The “*hole*” must be 4 ¼ inches (108 mm) in diameter and at least 4 inches (101.6 mm) deep. If a lining is used, it must be sunk at least 1 inch (25.4 mm) below the putting green surface unless the nature of the soil makes it impracticable to do so; its outer diameter must not exceed 4 ¼ inches (108 mm).

Line of Play

The “*line of play*” is the direction that the player wishes his ball to take after a stroke, plus a reasonable distance on either side of the intended direction. The *line of play* extends vertically upwards from the ground, but does not extend beyond the *hole*.

¹ Definitions as per the book *Rules of golf and the rules of amateur status 2004 – 2007* as approved by the R&A Rules Limited.

Putting Green (Green)

The "*putting green*" is all ground of the hole being played that is specially prepared for putting or otherwise defined as such by the *Committee*. A ball is on the *putting green* when any part of it touches the *putting green*.

Stroke

A "*stroke*" is the forward movement of the club made with the intention of striking at and moving the ball, but if a player checks his downswing voluntarily before the club-head reaches the ball he has not made a *stroke*.

Tee

A "*tee*" is a device designed to raise the ball off the ground. It must not be longer than 4 inches (101.6 mm) and it must not be designed or manufactured in such a way that it could indicate the *line of play* or influence the movement of the ball.

Teeing Ground

The "*teeing ground*" is the starting place for the hole to be played. It is a rectangular area two club-lengths in depth, the front and the sides of which are defined by the outside limits of two tee-markers. A ball is outside the *teeing ground* when all of it lies outside the *teeing ground*.

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1 Introduction

The focus of this research will be on gender relations that affect the organisational processes of golf in New Zealand. This area of research is of interest to me because during my experience both as a financial member of a private golf club and as a woman, I have experienced restrictions in the availability of playing opportunities. As an avid sportsperson I decided to play the game of golf in the late 1990s. Initially, I took up the game as a replacement sport due to a severe leg injury I received while playing squash; hence I now limit my involvement in sports that involve sudden movements and quick changes of direction. I have been involved with a large number of sporting organisations. Being a white New Zealand female, then in my late 30s, I found the traditional and reserved nature of the golf environment both fascinating and frustrating. For example, the times when women are allowed to play are restricted to specific times of the day during the working week and weekends. This format is known as the *designated playing times for women* and normally represent a smaller time percentage of the week when compared to the times that men are assigned as specific to them for the playing of golf.

Generally, golf clubs perceived women as additional members, and their membership is considered as an associated membership rather than a full-playing and financial membership. This perception was reflected in the dollar value that women paid for their membership fees as they generally paid a lesser amount than did men (Appendix A). The assumption was that because women did not pay the same as men they did not therefore have the right to full access to the course and resources. The limited membership for women meant that golf clubs were perceived as being organised and controlled by men for the benefit of men and their golf, and women's golf was considered secondary to the

development of the club membership and the promotion of the game (Alliss, 1989; Campbell, 1986). Having talked with a number of women members and women from other clubs it became apparent to me that the majority of clubs at that time operated in this manner and very few had what is now known in golfing circles as “equal rights” for men and women.

To elaborate on the concept of “equal rights”, the meaning in the context of private golf club membership is that some golf clubs adopt an open membership policy, where men and women pay the same membership fees, as well as instigating an open playing schedule for men and women. This means that men and women can play at any time as opposed to the traditional allocation of time slots for when men and women are permitted to play golf. The initial reasons “why” golf clubs chose to operate in a segregated time allocation format for men and women was, at that time, not clear to me as my perception of sport was that it did not matter with whom you played sport as the sports I played - such as internal club squash competitions – were based on the ability of the person not his/her gender. However, most golf clubs in New Zealand still adhere to the traditional organisational practices of allocating resources and playing times according to gender. To emphasise this point the next paragraph will describe an actual event that occurred to me while I was on holiday in Auckland.

The golf club for which I played became an “equal-rights” club in 1999. One of the main driving factors for this move was to increase the income from membership fees, as well as to restructure the golf club’s organisational framework, as communicated by the

Chairman of the Board. The motivation for the restructuring of the club's organisational structure arose from historical internal struggles of past committees, which meant the club had lost direction and vision for its future. I started playing at this point in the club's transformation process. During this time I saw the golf club's struggles and debates over what was considered the "right" way to organise the playing of golf for men and women as well as the resistance to the instigating of integrated golf for men and women. These changes meant that the traditional times for when men and women played were slowly being eroded. There still, however, remained a strong emphasis that women should play at particular times and not when these times clash with when men desire to play golf - but this too was being challenged by some women who were choosing to take advantage of the opportunities of the new integrated time frames. I was one of those women.

The entrenched expectations of the segregated allocation of time frames for the playing of golf by men and women did not become apparent to me until I tried to play golf on a Saturday morning at a golf club in Auckland during the year 2000. The general practice of when men and women play golf is that men play golf on Saturday, and women play during the week and have specific allocated times during the weekend when they can play on the course. Also, for a woman to play during the weekend she must apply to the women's committee for a *player's dispensation* which is normally granted to "working" women so that they can have a game of golf at the weekends. However, the expectation is that when she ceases work she will revert to playing during the week. This practice does not occur at the club to which I belong; so segregated gender times for playing golf on Saturday morning was not an obvious issue for me or for them. At my club, there is

an allocated time slot for women who wish to play in the club competitions. It is through the playing of club competitions that players can be considered for “Pennant”² golf competition. Club competition is considered as serious golf and is different from those times when players desire to play a game of golf for social reasons and have their cards assessed for handicap purposes.

Upon my arrival at the Auckland club I proceeded to pay “green fees” - but the club official did not accept my money. Consequently I was also refused access to the golf club and the course. I was taken aback because I had never encountered this restrictive and controlled access to a golf course before, and the refusal of entry onto a golf course confused me. When I asked the reason why I was not allowed access to the course the club official indicated to me that it was not the designated time for women to play golf, therefore I was not allowed to play even though my name was on the “Start sheet”³. It was indicated to me by this same official that I would be allowed to “walk the course” while the men played their game, but I was not permitted to play a game of golf. Hence, I left with one of my male playing partners and located a club that would accommodate both men and women playing golf together on Saturday morning. His reaction to the situation was that of disgust as he could not see the problem with men and women playing together regardless of the time, but the other two players of the group (who were men) chose to remain at the course and continue their game. These two men could not see that I was disadvantaged by not being allowed to play, as the problem did not affect their game. What would have affected their game would have been to have left the

² “Pennant” golf is the selection of players to represent the club at interclub competition level.

³ A Start sheet is the official daily playing register which identifies the time for groups of players to tee off as well as who is playing in a particular group of golfers.

course, as I and one of my male playing partners did, as this would have meant that time was wasted while locating a course that would accommodate men and women playing together. In my opinion this was obvious gender discrimination - as the golf club to which I paid membership fees allowed men and women to play on Saturday mornings as recreational golfers, but women were not eligible to enter the respective competition of the day. I left feeling confused and annoyed because of the lack of flexibility in the club rules of men and women playing on Saturday morning. It was not until several days later that I became curious as to the formal and informal structures within which the playing of golf is controlled organised at the various golf clubs around New Zealand.

On returning to my local club I started to investigate the problem that I had experienced at the Auckland golf club and found that this practice of gender discrimination is not restricted to golf as it does occur against women in other sporting codes throughout New Zealand. For example, a female soccer player was playing in a male-dominated grade in a Palmerston North competition. Apparently her abilities and skills were equal to, if not better than, those of some of her male colleagues. It was not until a formal complaint was made by an opposing team objecting to her involvement in the team that she was prevented from playing ("Fifa rules women out of team," 1997) (Appendix B). This scenario supports the claim that gender discrimination exists in New Zealand sport, and that these continuing examples and restrictions of male-dominated environments still reinforce the accepted segregated spheres of men's and women's sport. The choice of some local clubs to continue to organise and play golf in segregated time slots appears to be the reinforcement of society traditions in the area of sport. The resistance of local golf

clubs to changing the organisational practices and traditions of golf, in my opinion, is an example of discrimination against women in sport and therefore against women in society.

Having pondered the many possible reasons for my rejection by the golf club in Auckland and the acknowledgment of the continuing practices of some golf clubs which operate in a segregated format for men and women, I came to the conclusion that the segregated gender environment of golf is an issue of gender discrimination. The opportunity to enjoy the freedom of choice is not available for women in today's golfing community. Due to my rationale and my desire to play golf I have taken this opportunity to conduct research into the organisational practices and processes that occur within private golf clubs in New Zealand today.

The Human Rights Act (1993) of New Zealand indicates that discrimination against another person because of race, gender, cultural identity, religious belief, or class is considered as an offence in New Zealand society. This component of the Act, however, does not apply to private clubs and sporting organisations, as they are considered exempt from this legislation. Molloy (1997), who is a lawyer specialising in sport, highlights the issue of discrimination in the context of women in sport and uses examples of discriminatory behaviour against women in Australia and New Zealand, which in her opinion is undermining the advancement of women in the sporting arena. Molloy rejects the Human Rights Commission's suggestion that the inequalities and discriminatory practices which women experience in sport will be rectified as greater numbers of women

participate in their respective sports. This position by the Human Rights Commission not to take any direct action against private clubs to resolve the inequalities and discriminatory practices within sports has meant that sports clubs are not required (by legislation) to ensure that women are given opportunities equal to those available to men for participation in sport. Molloy suggests that until sporting codes are held accountable for their discriminatory practices the advancement of all sport will be restricted. Also that the benefits to which minority groups and individuals are entitled under the Human Rights Act (1993) should be addressed in all spheres of life, regardless of participation numbers or historical male/female sporting codes practice (Molloy, 1997) (Appendix C).

The next chapter identifies the theoretical concepts that were used to understand the research question. Identified as the key theories in this research were gender and feminism, as well as the relationship of those theories in the social and work environments (Game & Pringle, 1983). The study of the relationship between the theories is then undertaken and applied to the context of sport organisations.