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# Softball and the Female Community: Pauline Perron, Pro Ball Player, Outsider, 1926-1951

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GROWING UP THE OLDEST OF THIRTEEN CHILDREN, Pauline Perron learned early the meaning and importance of dedication, hard work, and family. Born on April 18, 1926, in LeMoyne, a small French-speaking suburb of Montreal, Quebec, an important part of Perron's childhood were physical toils in the form of both daily household responsibilities and leisure time sports and games.<sup>1</sup> Her father, passionate for sport—softball, boxing, and lacrosse—taught Perron and her younger siblings the joy and fulfillment found through physical activity and the necessary discipline, training, and strength needed to be skillful and successful. Anxiously watching for her father to come up the road after a long day at work, she grabbed the worn bat and old ball that rested inside the door of the house and raced to the small backyard with her brothers and sisters in tow to join her

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father in a ball game—this was the time of day she looked forward to the most. As a release from the demands of her strict Catholic school and seemingly endless hours of household duties, family ball games provided opportunities for Pauline Perron and her siblings to share special moments and learn an appreciation for physical empowerment.<sup>2</sup>

In twentieth-century Canadian society, sport, leisure, and physical activities have been significant social venues where men and women learn to relate to one another, struggle for authority and power, and celebrate lifestyle and community values. However, the experiences of men and women in sport have been appreciably different, in terms of access to rewards, opportunities to participate, and the cultural norms associated with physical activity. In this sense, sport has reproduced a gender order through which men and women learn, appreciate, celebrate, and denigrate specific masculinities and femininities.<sup>3</sup> However, not only are the experiences of men and women in sport considerably different; there are also variations *among* the experiences of women. Through the creation of personal meanings and understandings through sport practices, individual female athletes' experiences are formed by their personal values and the larger shifting social environments in which they live. Negotiating the often uncertain social terrain, each athlete constructs her sport experience in unique ways. To explore the nuances of a shared sense of female community, women's experiences need to be considered as primary and constitutive of a different world with particular attention directed to a critical analysis of "the everyday world of lived reality."<sup>4</sup> Each woman's perception of her experience has implications for how we reconstruct women's sport involvement of the past. Thus, to theorize women's sport experience and the associated social relationships, we must incorporate their voices and reminiscences of play. Stories of individual athletes inform the broader social processes of sport practices of the past, and challenge us to broaden our understanding of sport in Canadian society.

The story of Pauline Perron and her personal reminiscences of growing up and playing sport in Quebec and later her recruitment by the London Supremes fastball club in Ontario offer a historically specific case study of one woman's journeys between sport, work, and social life. When Perron joined the organized women's softball community in the early 1940s, she found herself amidst an ongoing controversy over amateur values during the era of professional softball opportunities for women. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, amateurism had become the prevailing behavioral code of Canadian sport. The first definition of an amateur, adopted in Canada in 1884, reflected the prevalent class prejudices of Canadian society—it was a class-based definition that sought to keep the working class off the field and to preserve sport as a middle- and upper-class social enclave.<sup>5</sup> However, by the turn of the century the class-based definition was replaced by one that reflected the seemingly immoral aspects of professionalism. The amateur ideal was developed around the men's game, within the context of middle-class values, to control the infiltration of monetary rewards for athletic performances—with the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAU of C) as the self-proclaimed national enforcer of the amateur code by the 1920s.<sup>6</sup> From his analysis of amateurism in Canadian sport, Keith Lansley found that the AAU of C was formed primarily "to satisfy the need for an authority to establish comprehensive standards of amateur status and to mediate in disputes concerning the eligibility of participants in Canadian sports."<sup>7</sup> By 1926, the

AAU of C amateur code stated:

An amateur athlete is one who has never:

1. entered or competed in any athletic competition for a staked bet, moneys, private or public, or gate receipts;
2. taught or assisted in the pursuit of any athletic exercise or sport as a means of livelihood;
3. received any bonus or payment in lieu of loss of time while playing as a member of any club, or any consideration whatever for any services as an athlete, except actual traveling or hotel expenses;
4. sold or pledged his prizes;
5. promoted an athletic competition for personal gain.<sup>8</sup>

The code also prohibited athletes from competing as amateurs if they participated with or against a professional for a prize or if they competed in a setting where gate receipts were charged. A somewhat ambiguous description, outlining the behaviors and actions that an amateur should *not* undertake, the code provided a benchmark to control sport—how sport should be played and who should play it—often resulting in the exclusion of athletes due to its restrictive terms.<sup>9</sup>

As a widespread, socially-entrenched sporting ideal seemingly constructed to control the conduct of male athletes, the amateur code also permeated the newly organized women's sport organizations of the twentieth century—organizations that often patterned their constitutions and structural format on the men's model.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, by the 1920s, governing bodies levied charges of professionalism in both men's and women's sport as they attempted to enforce strictly the prevailing amateur code in order to maintain the purported demarcation between the amateur and the professional athlete. However, examples of female softball players who received varying degrees of compensation in exchange for their skills on the field suggest that perhaps the clear dichotomy of the amateur and the professional in Canadian women's softball existed only in theory. Sport historian Alan Metcalfe suggested that the perceived difference between amateurs and professionals is a false dichotomy, constructed to control and shape sport in specific ways.<sup>11</sup> In women's sport, the public persona of governing sport organizations such as the provincial branches and the national body of the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation (WAAF) of Canada espoused the prevailing amateur ideals.<sup>12</sup> In practice, as with the men's game, financial remuneration and relocation compensations—such as guaranteed job locating—had been part of women's softball for years. The story of Pauline Perron, her life in Montreal, recruitment by the London Supremes fastball club, and the challenges she faced as an outsider and paid professional athlete who endured the prevalent amateur ideologies of Canadian sport, reveals a complexity of personal athletic experiences that serve to shape and define the wider social history of which she and other female athletes of the time were a part.

### Learning to Play Ball

In the late 1930s the Perron family moved from their home in LeMoynes, Quebec, to another small suburb of Montreal—an English-speaking town. Pauline Perron recalls that her father “thought we should learn how to speak English so he move [*sic*] us to Greenfield Park.”<sup>13</sup> In the new community, she first played competitive softball. One evening dur-

ing the daily after-work ball game in the yard, Perron recounts:

This one fella drove by and he stopped and I was about 14 and . . . he says to my dad . . . do you think your daughter would like to play ball? Apparently he had a team there in Greenfield Park, they call themselves the Packers and oh yeah he says she is ready to play ball he says that girl she'd do alright [*sic*].<sup>14</sup>

This opportunity presented an interesting challenge for Perron—who, like all of the members of her family, had a very limited English vocabulary. Having quit school at the age of ten to help her mother care for her younger siblings, sport became an ideal setting for her to learn the language. Perron recalls that, after two or three months with the team, her English had improved.<sup>15</sup> After spending two years in Greenfield Park, the Perron family returned to their home town of LeMoyne.

Softball was Pauline Perron's passion. She recalls, "I always went with my glove. . . . I pretty near slept with my glove. That mean's you're gonna [*sic*] get somewhere, you know. If you just throw your glove on the floor and you forget about it then you won't get what you want."<sup>16</sup> Upon returning to LeMoyne, Perron joined the Major Ladies' Softball League (MLSL) in Montreal.<sup>17</sup> Formed in the 1920s, the MLSL offered an opportunity for girls and women to play organized competitive softball. Perron fondly recalls her father's influence on her development as a softball player: "He used to come and see me play ball. And if I made a mistake and I wasn't hitting it just right, you know, he wouldn't say you didn't hit it right . . . he'd say I think we're gonna [*sic*] have some practice tonight."<sup>18</sup> Driven by a life-long passion for sport and inspired by her father, Perron's quick hands and heavy hits helped her team, the Montreal Paramounts, win the championship title in 1944.<sup>19</sup>



Greenfield Packers, Montreal, Quebec, 1943. COURTESY OF PAULINE (PERRON) SCRIVEN.

Returning to LeMoynes at the height of World War II, Perron balanced her time playing softball in the MLSL with paid employment. Working in various factories throughout 1944 and 1945, she helped her family regain financial stability after a decade of economic depression. When Canada entered the war, female workers assumed the roles of men in many workplaces. Historians Bill Corfield and Hume Cronyn write, "Women filled the ranks, wore overalls, bobbed their hair, carried lunch pails and worked the graveyard shift."<sup>20</sup> Stressing the opportunities for women to work outside the home, Perron remembered that World War II "provided opportunities for me to get a job. . . . All the men they went to war, and they needed some women . . . to work, so we went to work. . . . [T]hat's what the ladies did."<sup>21</sup> However, the gender order of the workplace returned to its pre-war conditions as women relinquished their employment to the returning soldiers. Perron moved among several places of employment near her home in LeMoynes, Quebec, during the latter years of the war, including a factory making rainwear for the soldiers, Dawes Black Horse Brewery, and the Dominion rubber plant. When asked why she worked so many jobs in such a short period, she recounted that if men came back "say they had an arm amputee or something, they could do some jobs that we could do, like sitting down and when you see the bottles go by, like to see if they are clean and stuff like that. So that's how come, like after a while then you didn't have a job anymore."<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, the social and economic conditions created by World War II resulted in significant changes in the lives of many Canadian women.<sup>23</sup> During the war, women entered the workforce in mass numbers and, thus, assumed new roles in society. Yet, despite extra demands on women's lives and pressures to assume the place of men both in the home and in the workplace, women still found time to engage in physical activities. Among the most prominent of Perron's memories of working in factories during the war are the informal softball games with the other employees during lunch breaks:

I used to go to work with my glove and at lunch hour I would go out and practice with the guys. I always did that . . . and they'd accept me. They didn't say nothing they'd just say "are you coming Pauline" and I'd say "yeah I'll be there in a few minutes." And we'd practice at lunch hour and then we went back to work.<sup>24</sup>

Despite working ten-hour shifts, often overnight, and continuing to fulfill her household responsibilities, she was determined to continue playing ball.

### Accusations and Implications of Professionalism

When Perron joined the MLSL in the 1940s, charges of professionalism were rampant in women's softball. Historically in Canada, economic crises, such as the Depression of the 1930s, encouraged professionalism in sport.<sup>25</sup> Undoubtedly, during times of hardship and unemployment, men and women used whatever skills they had to support their families financially. Sport historian M. Ann Hall suggested that women softball players were often attracted to other cities by lucrative compensation.<sup>26</sup> Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, news reports indicated a constant flow of players between Ontario and Quebec. As early as 1933, the *Toronto Daily Star* reported with moral disdain that the "importation of softball players . . . was fast becoming a scandal in women's sport circles."<sup>27</sup> Yet, a decade later by the early 1940s, consistent with the ebb and flow of the amateur code,

the importation of women from different cities and provinces to bolster teams was an acceptable practice across the country. According to the *Montreal Daily Star* in 1945 there was only one team in the MLSL, the Mansfield Softball Club, that had no imported players from Ontario or the West.<sup>28</sup> Myrtle Cook, columnist for the *Star* explained:

Softball managers working on the old principle that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, annually look outside our Quebec area for players. Importations reached a new high this season when half a dozen or more girls came in from a northern Ontario town and a couple more checked in from the west.<sup>29</sup>

In 1933 the widespread recruitment of softball players from Ontario to Quebec prompted the Quebec branch of the WAAF to investigate four athletes from Toronto who migrated to Montreal to play softball, under the charge that jobs were made for imported softball players as a way to camouflage professionalism.<sup>30</sup>

Professional ball for women in the United States began as early as the 1860s. According to sociologist Gai Berlage, the Philadelphia's Dolly Vardens, a black women's team that formed in 1867, is the earliest record of a women's professional ball team in the United States.<sup>31</sup> Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, professional barnstorming teams staged exhibitions across the country. By the 1940s the payment of players in the professional women's baseball leagues was widespread and accepted as long as the players were labeled as "professional," leaving no discrepancy regarding their amateur status. Formed during the height of World War II, to circumvent the possible decline in men's baseball with the increase of military recruitment, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) and other professional women's leagues of the 1940s offered a rare, elite, professional, paid sport opportunity for women.<sup>32</sup> Hall reports that, by the 1940s, women's softball in the United States had indeed become "big business"—providing moments of glory for some women and unfulfilled fantasies for others.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout its fourteen-year existence from 1943 to 1956, a small number of Canadian women—approximately 10 percent of more than 600 players—played in the AAGPBL.<sup>34</sup> In 1945 news reports revealed that the governing bodies for women's sport in Canada, and more specifically the espoused amateur values of Canadian sport, were ideologically challenged by the American women's professional and semi-professional leagues. The problem for Canada's governing bodies of women's softball arose when women who played professional baseball in the United States returned home and wanted to resume playing for Canadian teams. In May of 1945 Irene Wall, secretary for the national branch of the WAAF, issued this warning:

Women softball players who were continually breaking federation rules regarding participation of professional girl softball players in amateur games must be stopped at once. The Canadian women who went to New York and Chicago to play professional softball, and wish to return to play in Canada had to apply for permission through their local WAAF branch. They had to be officially reinstated before they could play. Until they re-applied they were suspended according to the amateur rules.<sup>35</sup>

Based on the ideological divide between accepted definitions of amateur and professional sport, Canadian women who were chosen to play professional softball in the United States were penalized by their home governing bodies. Upon returning, they had to be granted special permission for reinstatement as amateur athletes.<sup>36</sup> In Montreal the ama-

teur-professional debate moved to center stage in May of 1945 when former professional player Helen Stanford applied to join the Montreal Paramounts in the Major Ladies' Softball League. Cook explained:

[W]e understand Helen and two other ex-professionals, Mary Shastel of Winnipeg (now in Toronto) and Gladys Davis, Toronto, applied for re-instatement as amateurs. Their pleas received a sympathetic hearing from the Ontario Women's Softball Union but they had to refer the matter to the Ontario branch of the W.A.A.F. of C. The Branch with present rules on the books had no alternative but to refuse re-instatement. The rule does not permit re-instatement until three years after cessation as a professional. . . . [T]he Quebec Branch considered her [Helen Stanford] case on the week-end [*sic*] and had no alternative but to abide by the Waafers regulations.<sup>37</sup>

Similarly, in June of 1946, the *Free Press* of London reported that June Hardy, a player for the Midtowns in the American Olympic League, returned to Canada after a brief period as a paid professional athlete. The reporter inferred that Hardy might "have to be a spectator for life."<sup>38</sup> Female players, who were denied re-entry to the Canadian amateur system, were left without the opportunity to continue playing organized softball, because there were no professional leagues in Canada for women.

Unlike the professional women's leagues in the United States that operated as self-governing, financially independent for-profit sport organizations, Canadian women's softball leagues across the country operated under the provincial and national governing bodies and by extension had to abide by the regulatory amateur code. Yet, despite restrictive codes of conduct for amateur athletes, evidence suggests that player remunerations frequently breached amateur regulations. Many teams across the country were commercially sponsored and had the financial means to offer significant inducements for female softball players—a practice that was publicly unacceptable yet deeply entrenched in women's softball circles. Dorothy Robins, a player for the Brucefield Bombers in a southwestern Ontario rural church league, received financial support in 1928 to play for the team in the nearby town of Seaforth during an important championship series: "I was hired by another team for fourteen dollars," she recalls. They paid me to play for them because you see . . . they were playing a special team. . . . [T]hey wanted to win that game."<sup>39</sup> Fourteen dollars was exorbitant pay for one game, when as a live-in domestic she earned only thirteen dollars for one month's work.<sup>40</sup>

### Relocating to London: Perron and the London Supremes

Throughout 1943 and 1944, Pauline Perron had heard rumors of financial benefits for female softball players being recruited to play for teams in other cities. In 1945 she became part of the ideological struggle between proponents of amateurism and professionalism. At the end of the 1945 season, two players from the Montreal Paramounts, pitcher Hazel Baynton and catcher Jean Aiken, originally from Ingersoll and Woodstock, Ontario, respectively, were recruited to play for the London Supremes.<sup>41</sup> Within a few months, Perron's life also changed. In the fall of 1945, she received a telegram from the London Supremes' coaching staff offering her a contract to play first base for the 1946 season. Later, after moving to London, she learned that Baynton and Aiken had advised the coaching staff to recruit her to play first base if they wanted to win the championship.<sup>42</sup>



Initially Perron was distraught about the possibility of leaving her family and the town where she had grown up:

I got a telegram when I got home, and of course I heard it was the Queen's city London. . . . I started crying 'cause I had never been away from home. . . . [O]ne of my cousins came over and he looked it up on the map and he said "oh no Pauline you're going to London, Ontario." Oh, well that isn't too bad, even then it was five hundred miles from home. . . . [S]o anyway they sent me my fare and I came down on the train.<sup>43</sup>

Perron had never heard of the London Supremes, nor did she know what to expect of her new life in Ontario; yet, in the end the decision was relatively simple—it was her chance to be paid for what she loved to do the most, play softball. The London Supremes, established in 1946 under the direction of Bill Farquharson, was a team new to the women's softball circuit. Yet, despite their short time together as a team, the women who were recruited to play shared similar and often entwined athletic experiences.

Historically, sport provided an arena where women could develop intense relationships with other women and compete in physical activities where they could be aggressive, play hard, and shake off the social restrictions of traditional femininity. In London the 1940s and 1950s girls' and women's softball community emerged from the city playground programs established in 1920. In turn-of-the-century Canada, the community playground program initiative was a response to increasing industrialization, urban expansion, and growing commercial distractions, which prompted middle-class social reformers to campaign for urban parks and supervised playgrounds to provide children with "respectable" amusements.<sup>44</sup> The London City Council, following the lead of other Canadian cities—Toronto, Montreal, and St. John's—conducted a vote in 1920, which approved the implementation of a supervised playground program. Jurisdiction of this venture was placed under the Public Utilities Commission (PUC)—the rationale being that playgrounds fell under the authority of public parks, and parks were the responsibility of the PUC.<sup>45</sup> After establishing a playground department within the PUC and providing a \$10,000 operating grant, the city opened its first playgrounds on June 23, 1920, with a staff of female and male supervisors who offered activities for children aged eight to sixteen from morning until dusk during the summer months.<sup>46</sup> During the 1920 season, the city operated three playgrounds—Thames Park, Queen's Park, and Burkett's Flats, with a male and a female supervisor for each playground.<sup>47</sup> Picnics, hikes, swimming, track and field events, and other various schoolyard games comprised the program.<sup>48</sup> On Friday evenings, children from all playgrounds gathered at Thames Park for weekly competition in front of friends and family members who came out to watch.<sup>49</sup> The summer season culminated in a year-end track and field meet at the end of August when all of the children from the various playgrounds assembled at Tecumseh Park to display their talent and demonstrate new skills. Irene Wedderburn recalls the end-of-the-year competitions in which she participated during the 1930s:

What they would do, each park had a colour, Kensington Park was purple, Gibbons was blue, different colours, and they would give you one yard of material, and you took it home and gave it to your mother, and she had to make you shorts, and she also had to keep a piece about three inches wide, to go across from shoulder to waist, like the Olympics. And you were also to make a

big flag with a big white K on it. Every park had a flag and they would march everybody in the group around Tecumseh Park, and then if you won an event you got up on the podium with your flag. . . . It was great. And of course the parents all came out and cheered you on you know.<sup>50</sup>

This final gathering was a chance to showcase growing talent and to say farewell to the summer and the special friendships that developed through two months of playground activities.

Since the early 1920s, London playground programs offered new social space for girls and boys, where friendships were formed and physical abilities developed.<sup>51</sup> Within the playground setting, hundreds of children, including the women of the Supremes, had an opportunity to learn a variety of sport skills including softball. In 1921 a playground baseball league was organized with eight girls' teams and eight boys' teams and a 124-game schedule.<sup>52</sup> Recalling her experiences at the playgrounds, Shirley Youde attributes learning to play softball to "going to the parks."<sup>53</sup> Recounting her eagerness to arrive early at the playgrounds everyday, she stated:

I remember I'd get up in the morning, my mom would say to me "Now, you know we'd [*sic*] have . . . breakfast now, when the dishes are done and . . . you make your bed and you do all these things and then you can go to the playground." Well I'm telling you, you never saw anything get done so fast in all your life!<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, Irene Wedderburn joined the playground in 1933 when she was eight years old.<sup>55</sup> She remembers anxiously awaiting the opening of the season at the beginning of July. Reminiscing about the fun she had under the supervision of male and female university students who taught her such sport techniques as running, broad jump, high jump, and relay events in preparation for the season-ending track and field meet, she provided these reflections:

There was a softball program for the girls, a volleyball program for the girls and a basketball program so you could get involved in all of those. . . . And I loved every minute of it. . . . I could hardly wait for the parks to open in the summer. . . . July the 1<sup>st</sup> was the opening day and you could hardly wait to go down and meet your supervisor.<sup>56</sup>

These are memories of a shared sense of belonging and enjoyment, a degree of intimacy through friendship, found in the company of others who shared similar interests of leisure and sport activities. During an era when girls and women had limited access to physical activities, it was acceptable in playground programs to run, jump, throw, and explore the benefits and enjoyment of moving their bodies. But these programs were only available to children aged eight to sixteen. When the boys reached age sixteen, they could join city sports leagues. Girls, however, had no such sporting opportunities. They could work as playground supervisors, but this connection to sport was peripheral at best. Year after year, organized sport created cycles and seasons of friendships for London girls, but it all ended abruptly on their sixteenth birthday.

This scenario, however, changed in 1942. During the summer of that year, the London Recreation Department under the direction of Farquharson organized the London Girls' Major Softball League. As an alternative source of revenue for Labatt Park, the women's league was welcomed as a fruitful replacement to counteract the effects of World War II that plagued the men's leagues.



The London Supremes, Labatt Park, London, Ontario, Canada, c1946. COURTESY OF RUTH (WALKER) YOUNG.

The women's softball league commenced in London during the height of World War II when social, political, and economic changes infused the daily lives of every individual in the city. Before the war was over, 30,000 men had been recruited from London's Military District No. 1.<sup>57</sup> This was a considerable number since the population of London in 1940 was only 77,369.<sup>58</sup> As the Canadian nation readied itself for the possibility of war, women's responsibilities also increased. In London, H.B. Beal Technical School began teaching war-related classes. The Domestic Arts Department at Beal also adjusted its curriculum from how to prepare dinners for their future husbands to training women to produce mass meals for soldiers.<sup>59</sup>

The inaugural league in 1942 consisted of four teams, each one representing a ward of the city: the Shamrocks from the southeast, the Cardinals from the northwest, the Eagles from the south, and the Royals from the east ward. The recreation department provided the athletes with brightly colored uniforms, and each team was given two gloves, one for the first-base player, and the other for the catcher, who was also provided a mask and a chest protector.<sup>60</sup> Wedderburn and Robertson fondly recall memories of intense rivalries amongst the teams and the supportive family-like atmosphere that developed among their teammates. Robertson reminisces, "We were just like a big family."<sup>61</sup> For these women this new league presented a means to stay actively involved in a sport they loved. The leagues not only offered new opportunities for competition, but it also enabled their childhood female athletic community to continue into their adult years.

Undoubtedly, World War II created opportunities for women to participate more actively within the public sphere, and it was more acceptable for women to "play ball." In addition to a new range of social and physical opportunities, sport also gave women a public forum to engage in traditionally feminine charitable enterprises. Women used exhibition matches to raise money for war-related causes and agencies and to entertain the home-based troops and the community.<sup>62</sup> For example, Wedderburn and Robertson recall participating in exhibition games to raise money for the "Milk for Britain" fund and toward the maintenance of the welcome home hut where returning soldiers were reunited with their families.<sup>63</sup> Shirley Youde and sisters, Helen and Pat Gorman, recall how their participation in city sports leagues offered them an additional support network during

these times of uncertainty.<sup>64</sup> Youde specifically remembers social gatherings with other women on the team:

[W]e used to go to Ruth Christie's house after a baseball practice. On Oxford street. . . . We'd all gather there and have a good time, this is mostly what we did during the war. It was the girls that got into groups you know together. . . . [W]e'd be hiking or bicycling or playing ball or skating. . . . [W]e really didn't have a lot of time for guys during the war. We were too busy.<sup>65</sup>

The sport stories of women from London suggest that women who played sport in London during the war and post-war period differed from other women of their time. Sportswomen were different from other women in their immediate social settings. When asked about the relationship between sportswomen and non-sportswomen during the 1940s and 1950s, Robertson simply stated that women who played sport were "different" and "better" than other women. Youde suggested, "We weren't quite as feminine maybe. We used to dress a little sportier you know."<sup>66</sup> Evidently, women exchanged symbolic value through sport in social hierarchies similar to active men.<sup>67</sup> They had different definitions of self, based on their identities as sportswomen; thus, women who did not play sport were perceived to be missing a great deal.

In 1945 the best players from the London Girls' Major Softball League were selected to play on the newly established London Majorettes in the Western Ontario Senior Girls' Softball League.<sup>68</sup> The following year, the newly christened Supremes, with the imported recruits, Hazel Baynton, Jean Aiken, and Pauline Perron, entered the Michigan-Ontario Fastball league. Playing in front of as many as two thousand fans at Labatt Park, the Michigan-Ontario "international circuit" included teams from Hamilton, London, Windsor, Lansing, Flint, and three teams from Detroit.<sup>69</sup> The Supremes were not commercially sponsored but were supported by the sale of season tickets, regular gate receipts, and advertising in program booklets that were sold at games in London and distributed for free in American cities where the team played.<sup>70</sup>

When Perron arrived in London at the beginning of January of 1946, she was provided accommodations, first at the local YMCA, then with the family of a local businessman. She was also provided with employment at the Webster Air Equipment Company where she earned \$39.00 per month. For Perron her first week of work in London was both frustrating and rewarding:

He [the manager of the factory] says . . . you gonna [*sic*] do that over on the conveyor belt, they had all these little airplanes, and he says you paint them blue then there was a space and a little bus and you paint them red. Well, I did that for two days, I says, "Henry this just won't do! You've gotta [*sic*] find me a job because my muscles wanted to work!" . . . And he says, "[W]hat do you want to do?" I says "I want to work outside loading the trucks" . . . So he put me back there. When the guys came, of course I was out on the platform. And they'd come over with the truck and they wouldn't back up the truck! . . . So I says to them "[A]ren't you gonna [*sic*] back up your truck so I can load it up?" And the guys they'd look at me and I'd say "[D]on't worry about it I'll load it up, back up!" So that's what I did.<sup>71</sup>

Perron, accustomed to physical labor and hard work, used the long hours of factory work to strengthen her muscles and keep her body in condition for her upcoming Ontario debut with the London Supremes.<sup>72</sup> Accommodations and employment were only part



London Supremes Program, 1950. COURTESY OF RUTH (WALKER) YOUNG.

of the remuneration Perron received when she joined the Supremes; she was also paid seven dollars per game. Reflecting on the money she earned she declared, "Really I made more money playing ball than I did working."<sup>73</sup> A paid professional athlete, she recalled, "I thought in '46 that I had the world by the tail . . . because everything was paid for . . . your hotel, your transportation, your meals, and everything else."<sup>74</sup> Growing up in a working-class neighborhood, in a family that struggled to put food on the table everyday, Perron had not previously experienced such a degree of financial stability.

### **The Challenges of Female Community**

Despite the comfort level associated with a steady income and financial security, Perron found joining the Supremes in 1946 to be socially challenging. Most of the women on the team, apart from her ex-teammates from Montreal, were born and raised in London. Sharing their adolescent years, they were a closely-knit group that bonded together through years of competition on athletic fields in playground programs. In her classic essay, originally published in 1975, historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg offered an analysis

of nineteenth-century female friendships at varying degrees of intimacy, from the supportive bond of sisters, to the fervor of adolescent girls, to declarations of love among women.<sup>75</sup> Smith-Rosenberg's analysis, an alternative approach to conventional explorations of same-sex relationships traditionally based in Freudian psychosexual developments, emanates from the contextualization of female friendships within the broader cultural and social intersections of the society in which women live.<sup>76</sup> Her work reinforces the importance of female companionship, camaraderie, and friendship—a sense of community—in women's lives, fostered through daily interactions of women at home, at work, and at play. Smith-Rosenberg's somewhat controversial focus on the meanings of relationships among women set an important foundation for explorations of female companionship and the creation of female community in relation to specific social and cultural constructs including those shaped within the realm of sport and physical activity.<sup>77</sup> Within the framework of structural and social constraints within which women live, some groups of women shared a sense of community and camaraderie, developed through and built on their sport experiences and involvement in community programs and city teams. Although the women of the Supremes attended different playgrounds across the city of London, they shared the common experiences of competing with or against one another in various city events such as the annual playground track and field meet at the end of August.<sup>78</sup> They had created a special community of women—based not on traditional forms of support, like midwifery or the moral support of churches—but a shared experience of physical empowerment that bonded them socially.<sup>79</sup> Perron was an outsider, not only by geographical definition, missing the common bonds created through growing up and playing sport in the London community, but she was also tainted in the eyes of her teammates as a paid professional athlete.

Without question, women who actively engaged in sport in the 1940s and 1950s were pioneers acting outside of the boundaries of normative behavior. Historical case studies of sport reinforce arguments made by such scholars as Richard Gruneau, Ann Hall, Susan Birrell, and Nancy Theberge that sport is a site of cultural struggle.<sup>80</sup> Reaffirming the work of Raymond Williams, Gruneau has asserted that “in certain contexts, some groups have been *empowered* more than others and this has had implications for the creation of socially dominant cultural forms and practices.”<sup>81</sup> Most, if not all women, engaged in the struggle as outsiders, creating unique sporting communities. Since 1949 with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's landmark *The Second Sex* (1953), scholars have been searching for ways to understand, explain, and overcome women's generally accepted “otherness.”<sup>82</sup> The growing body of literature on the gendering of sport throughout history and women's sport experiences more specifically provides countless examples. The seminal work of Ann Hall, Bruce Kidd, Susan Cahn, Pamela Grundy, and Jennifer Hargreaves, to name only a few, offers an important foundation for the study of women's sport experiences of the past, identifying social structures, obstacles, and discriminatory practices that have been challenged by groups of women and men over the last century.<sup>83</sup> Yet, female athletes' experiences should not be defined and explored in opposition to male experiences. Rather, as feminist theorist Marilyn Frye suggests, women's experience and the category “women” need to be “self-supporting rather than dependant on negation.”<sup>84</sup> Women should not be considered as men's “other.” Women may not be “insiders” in the male sports culture, but throughout history there are many examples of vibrant female

sporting communities—leagues of their own that are remembered fondly with glowing appreciation and reaffirmed with lasting friendships. Through research and scholarship, sport historians must consider the possibility of alternative meanings that the oral histories of former sportswomen reinforce.

The personal relationships and the construction of the “other” *within* groups of women, such as the London Supremes Fastball Club, must also be considered. Like Pauline Perron, Jean Aiken and Hazel Baynton came from Montreal to play for the Supremes. That Aiken and Baynton grew up and played sport in small towns in close proximity to London did not make them more readily accepted by the team. Reflecting on the place of these three women on the London team, Audrey Robertson explains, “They didn’t fit in anyway. They weren’t home brewed.”<sup>85</sup> However, Perron’s outsider position was more prominent than Aiken’s and Baynton’s, as she was a highly skilled, imported player from Quebec, with a prominent French accent as a constant reminder of her place of origin. In 1946, protesting the recruitment of players from outside London for the team, members of the Supremes refused to take the field during one of their games. Irene Wedderburn remembers finding out that Baynton, Aiken, and Perron—the imported players—were being paid. The specific incident has remained fresh in her memory “so the next game the girls on the Supremes decided they were on strike.”<sup>86</sup> Perron was on the field and the other girls refused to join her. When asked why the team did not join her on the field, Perron stated:

because they felt . . . they didn’t need a first baseman from Montreal, that they had lots up here in Ontario. . . . I felt really bad about it. . . . [M]y Dad always taught us, you could beat ‘em all . . . because we used to box . . . and so my Dad says, “just, you know, take it easy and cool and just let ‘em talk, don’t argue with them.” . . . I was so hurt, and I was so mad. I didn’t show it, but when I threw them the ball, they’d come running up to me and say “Pauline don’t throw so hard!” I’d say “[W]hat was the matter with you, can you catch it?” . . . [Y]ou know when the game was over I went down and I talked to them. I says “Look, I know that you girls think that I shouldn’t be coming down here from Montreal.” I says “[Y]ou did not hire me, you don’t have anything to do with that part of the team, it’s just your opinion” and I says “[I]f we’re a team we’ve got to work together. We can’t keep doing this.” You know, I was very good about it, I didn’t hold a grudge.<sup>87</sup>

To end the strike, the coaches promised the players monetary compensation in exchange for their performance on the field. Gorman recalls, “I think we got a hundred dollars, I think that was all we ever got.”<sup>88</sup> Estranged by her teammates, Perron was shocked: “I was hurt very much because I was shy and kind and good hearted. You know when you come from a big family, you share things and stuff.”<sup>89</sup> Aiken and Baynton remained with the Supremes for one season before moving on to other teams. Perron was a prominent member of the team from 1946 until 1949. Team money quickly dissolved the moral high ground of amateurism, although regional differences lingered. The tensions that erupted when Perron joined the Supremes in 1946 offer direct evidence of the close-knit female athletic community that existed among these women—an athletic community that for the most part was closed to outsiders who did not share similar experiences and shared histories of physical activity.



Pauline Perron, London Supremes, 1946. COURTESY OF THE LONDON (ONT.) FREE PRESS NEGATIVE COLLECTION, THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO ARCHIVES, LONDON, ONTARIO.

Soon after moving to London, Pauline Perron met Ed Scriven, a retired Canadian Air Force pilot. They married on September 24, 1946, and devoted themselves to rearing a family. With the support of her husband, Perron played first base sporadically with the Supremes until 1950. In the spring of 1951, the Supremes toured Arizona and California for three weeks.<sup>90</sup> Unable to go with the team, Perron identified that incident as one of her biggest regrets. Expressing her lingering disappointment she declared: “I got married and my husband wouldn’t let me go to California, so that was that. . . I should of [*sic*] got mad and went [*sic*], ‘cause I never got that opportunity again. No you don’t have it again. It never comes around twice.”<sup>91</sup> Trips such as this presented important—perhaps once-in-a-lifetime—opportunities for these women. Helen Gorman postponed her wedding in order to go on the trip with the team. She recalls:

My husband, that I married, he wanted to get married in April, and I said “[I]f we get married in April you’re not going to want me to make that trip to California are you?” And he said “[N]o,” and I said “Leo I can’t miss that trip, I just can’t miss that trip.” . . . [S]ee we were gone for three weeks.<sup>92</sup>

Through sport, some women had the opportunity to explore the world outside of the city. They competed in provincial leagues, traveled to other provinces to compete for championship titles, and to other countries for exhibition matches.





Detroit Gears vs London Supremes game advertisement, Michigan-Ontario Women's Fastball League, *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 10 July 1947, p. 34.

## Conclusion

To understand the relationship between sport and women's social lives—how women created opportunities for themselves in public life—requires historically specific case studies that isolate the contemporary thought and practice of the period, while simultaneously considering the immediate historical context. However, most historical investigations chronicling Canadian women's sport focus on national sport organizations and major urban centers such as Toronto and Montreal.<sup>93</sup> Although this is an important starting place for analyzing women's sport, it marginalizes community programs and the social histories of girls and women in smaller urban and rural settings such as London, Ontario.<sup>94</sup> Incorporating oral histories of women who participated in community sport during the first half of the century is critical for understanding women's community sport experiences. Reminiscences of play, work, and social life serve as a link between the personal experiences of the participant and the wider social history of which they were a part.<sup>95</sup> Equally as important, given the often limited sources historians work with to reconstruct the past experiences of female athletes, oral accounts and reminiscences offer a unique insight and in this case led to the discovery of documents and photographs that would otherwise not have been uncovered. Thus, the social identities of women created through unique "female communities" are imperative parts of this historical reconstruction. More specifically, the individual stories of women, such as Pauline Perron, who engaged in sport and physical activities in various locales, enrich our understandings of the meaning of sport in women's lives.

The payment to female ball players in Ontario and Quebec in exchange for their services on the field suggests that the amateur-professional divide was ambiguous and in many cases a complete myth. Despite the efforts of governing sport bodies to police instances of professionalism and to enforce the amateur ideal, the story of Pauline Perron and, by extension, the history of women's softball in Montreal, Quebec, and London, Ontario, supports Metcalfe's false dichotomy.<sup>96</sup> Perron's story tells us about women at work, at play, as outsiders, and as athletes. It challenges common assumptions about sport and women's participation. It reminds us that sport history is social history.



<sup>1</sup>On January 1, 2002, LeMoynes was amalgamated into the city of Longueuil, a suburb of Montreal, Quebec.

<sup>2</sup>The information for this paragraph is from the author's interview with Pauline (Perron) Scriven, 1 June 2005, Strathroy, Ontario, notes in possession of author. This interview is part of a larger oral history research project of twenty-five interviews with women who played softball in London, Ontario, and surrounding areas from 1928 to 1956.

<sup>3</sup>R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987), 134-139.

<sup>4</sup>Pirkko Markula, ed., *Feminist Sport Studies: Sharing Experiences of Joy and Pain* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 5. See also Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, *Breaking Out: Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 117.

<sup>5</sup>Alan Metcalfe, "The Meaning of Amateurism: A Case Study of Canadian Sport: 1884-1970," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 26 (1995): 44.

<sup>6</sup>See Alan Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 100. For additional information on the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada (AAU of C) and the development of the amateur-professional dichotomy in Canadian sport, see K.L. Lansley, "The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and Changing Concepts of Amateurism" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 1971); Frank Cosentino, "A History of the Concept of Professionalism in Canadian Sport" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 1973); Metcalfe, "The Meaning of Amateurism," 33-48; Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 55-63; Don Morrow, "A Case Study in Amateur Conflict: The Athletic War in Canada, 1906-1908," *The British Journal of Sports History* 3 (1986): 176-178; Don Morrow and Kevin Wamsley, *Sport in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2005), 70-86; and Keith G. Jones, "Developments in Amateurism and Professionalism in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Canadian Sports," *Journal of Sport History* 2 (1975): 29-40.

<sup>7</sup>Lansley, "Amateur Athletic Union of Canada," 6.

<sup>8</sup>Amateur Athletic Union of Canada, *1926 Handbook*, pp. 9-10, in Amateur Athletic Union of Canada Papers, J.J. Talman Regional Collection, The University of Western Ontario Archives, London, Ontario (hereafter AAU of C Papers).

<sup>9</sup>Metcalfe, *Canada Learns to Play*, 99-100.

<sup>10</sup>For example, the Women's Amateur Athletic Federation (WAAF) patterned its constitution after the Amateur Athletic Association of Canada in 1925. See "Constitution Is Drafted for Women's A.A.U. of Canada," *Toronto Daily Star*, 26 November 1925, p. 16. And the Ladies Ontario Hockey Association patterned its constitution after the Ontario Hockey Association in 1922. See "Over Forty Teams Enter New Series," *Toronto Globe*, 18 December 1922, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup>Metcalfe, "Meaning of Amateurism," 33.

<sup>12</sup>See, for example, the 1937 Articles of Alliance between the AAU of C and WAAF, Amateur Athletic Union of Canada, *1937 Handbook*, p. 114, AAU of C Papers.

<sup>13</sup>Scriven interview.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>In 1944 Perron played first base for the Montreal Paramounts. See Myrtle Cook, "Pitching Princess: Hazel Baynton Has Indian Sign on Toronto Simpsons," *Montreal Daily Star*, 12 August 1944, p. 10. The team won the league championship that year. In 1945 Perron played for the MacKay-Smith team. See "Paramounts Meet Verdun," *Montreal Daily Star*, 28 July 1945, p. 19.

<sup>18</sup>Scriven interview.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. See also "Paramounts Beat Royals," *Montreal Daily Star*, 13 July 1945, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup>Bill Corfield and Hume Cronyn, *The Home Front: London, Canada 1939-1945* (London, Ont: Sterling Market Products, 1992), 35.

<sup>21</sup>Scriven interview.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>See Alison Prentice *et al.*, *Sport in Canadian Society* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), 13-15. For additional information on how World War II led to significant changes in women's sport participation see M. Ann Hall, *The Girl and the Game* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>24</sup>Scriven interview.

<sup>25</sup>Lansley, "The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada," 205.

<sup>26</sup>Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 95.

<sup>27</sup>"Toronto Girls Centre of Montreal Softball Rift," *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 May 1933, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup>"Mound Favourite," *Montreal Daily Star*, 7 July 1945, p. 21.

<sup>29</sup>Myrtle A. Cook, "In the Women's Spotlight," *Montreal Daily Star*, 28 July 1945, p. 19. Unfortunately, there are limited WAAF records available regarding how the organization policed and enforced charges of professionalism except what can be gleaned from newspaper reports. Historian Bruce Kidd, in *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, relates that according to Margaret Lord, member of the Ontario WAAF branch for more than twenty years, "the main files were destroyed by Irene Wall in the late 1950s. Irene Moore McInnis, president of the Ontario WAAF branch, kept copies of the Ontario and national constitutions, only to have them stolen from a sports history display in Thorold [Ontario] several years ago" (Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, 290n60). Irene Wall, a prominent member of the Quebec WAAF branch, worked hard to keep the WAAF running in the 1940s. In 1954, the WAAF amalgamated with the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada. Wall, adamantly opposed, refused to pass along the files of the WAAF to the AAU of C choosing to burn them instead. See Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 133.

<sup>30</sup>See Myrtle A. Cook, "In the Women's Sport Light," *Montreal Daily Star*, 1 May 1945, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup>Gai Berlage, *Women in Baseball: The Forgotten History* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 28.

<sup>32</sup>For additional information on the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) and professional women's baseball in the United States see Merrie A. Fidler, "The Development and Decline of the All-American Girls Baseball, 1943-1954" (Master's thesis, University of Massachusetts, 1976). This thesis has recently been published. See Merrie A. Fidler, *The Origins and History of the AAGPBL* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006); W.C. Madden, *The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Record Book* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2000); W.C. Madden, *The Women of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League: A Biographical Dictionary* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1997); Lois Browne, *Girls of Summer: In Leagues of Their Own* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1992); Barbara Gregorich, *Women in Play: The Story of Women in Baseball* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1993); and Berlage, *Women in Baseball*. For biographical accounts of specific players see Carolyn M. Trombe, *Dottie Wiltse Collins: Strikeout Queen of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2005); and Patricia L. Brown, *A League of My Own: Memoir of a Pitcher for the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarlane, 2003).

<sup>33</sup>Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 124. For more information on the start-up costs of the league see Berlage, *Women in Baseball*, 137.

<sup>34</sup>Browne, *Girls of Summer*, 5.

<sup>35</sup>"Federation Warns Girl Softballers," *Montreal Daily Star*, 29 May 1945, p. 17; "Charges Rules Broken by Women Athletes," *Montreal Gazette*, 29 May 1945, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup>The AAU of C regulations required an athlete to sit out of sport for three years before they could be reinstated as an amateur athlete. See Amateur Athletic Union of Canada, *1926 Handbook*, AAU of C Papers.

<sup>37</sup>Myrtle A. Cook, "In the Women's Spotlight," *Montreal Daily Star*, 29 May 1945, p. 17.

<sup>38</sup>Beejay, "Girls' Softball," *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 7 June 1946, p. 23.

<sup>39</sup>Dorothy (Robins) Bell, interview with author, 3 October 2005, Exeter, Ontario, notes in possession of author.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>“London Returns of Major Women’s Softball,” *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 21 February 1946, p. 21.

<sup>42</sup>Scriven interview.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 34.

<sup>45</sup>“Playgrounds to be under Parks,” *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 2 January 1920, p. 12.

<sup>46</sup>See Public Utilities Commission, *42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report*, (London, Ont.: Public Utilities Commission, 1920), 68; and E.V. Buchanan, *London Water Supply: A History* (London, Ont: London Public Utilities Commission, 1968), 7.

<sup>47</sup>“Supervisors Named for Playgrounds,” *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 23 June 1920, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup>For more on the playground movement’s provision of public bathing and swimming, see Robert S. Kossuth, “Dangerous Waters: Victorian Decorum, Swimmer Safety, and the Establishment of Public Bathing Facilities in London (Canada),” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 22 (2005): 796-815.

<sup>49</sup>Each Saturday the *Free Press* reported the results of these end of the week meets. For example, see “Playground Sports,” *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 31 July 1920, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup>Irene (Wedderburn) Brownlie and Audrey Robertson, interview with author, 13 December 2004, London, Ontario, notes in possession of author.

<sup>51</sup>For more information see Buchanan, *London Water Supply*, 7. The Playground Department was given a \$10,000 grant for the 1920 operating year. In this inaugural year, 764 boys and 646 girls regularly attended the London playgrounds. See Public Utilities Commission, *42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report*, 68. The following year, the total number of boys and girls who participated from the end of June until the end of August reached 99,511. Public Utilities Commission, *43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report*, (London, Ont.: Public Utilities Commission, 1921), 80.

<sup>52</sup>Public Utilities Commission, *43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report*, 80-81.

<sup>53</sup>Shirley (Youde) Fickling, interview with author, 28 April 2005, London, Ontario, notes in possession of author.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Brownlie and Robertson interview.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>F.H. Armstrong, *The Forest City: An Illustrated History of London, Canada* (Northridge, Ont.: Windsor Publications, 1986), 192.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 327.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>60</sup>Brownlie and Robertson interview.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 3. Hall also describes the way national organizations such as the Canadian Ladies Golf Union raised money for the war effort (p. 101).

<sup>63</sup>“All-Stars and Modern Girls Play Tie Before 2000 Fans,” *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 12 August 1945, p. 12; Brownlie and Robertson interview, 13 December 2004.

<sup>64</sup>Fickling interview; Helen (Gorman) Brulotte and Pat (Gorman) Belliveau, interview with author, 11 April 2005, London, Ontario, notes in possession of author.

<sup>65</sup>Fickling interview.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>For a discussion about the hierarchical nature of men’s sport experiences see Michael Messner, *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2003), 61-84.

<sup>68</sup>In 1946 a junior team, the Sapphires, was also established. The Sapphires played against smaller communities and acted as a feeder team for the Supremes. They existed for only one season.

<sup>69</sup>Beejay, “Supremes Set for Softball Debut,” *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 23 May 1946, p. 19.

<sup>70</sup>Letter, John P. Metras, Liason Officer, to Board of Governors of the London Supremes, 18 April 1946, box 423, "Current Flashes" folder 1943-46, Public Utilities Commission Collection, Talman Collection.

<sup>71</sup>Scriven interview.

<sup>72</sup>The Supremes opened their season in May of 1946 with exhibition games. The official 1946 season began on June 1, 1946, when the Supremes defeated the Detroit Chene Trombley team 5-3. See Beejay, "Hill Says Supremes' Pitching is Tops," *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 7 May 1946, p. 16; Beejay, "Supremes Set for Softball Debut," *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 23 May 1946, p. 19; "Supremes Have Close Call, Edge Sapphires 2-1," *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 29 May 1946, p. 16; and Jack Park, "Supremes Nip Detroit in Ninth," *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 3 June 1946, p. 20.

<sup>73</sup>Scriven interview.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth Century America," *Signs* 1 (1975): 1-29.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>77</sup>See, for example, Susan Birrell and Diana M. Richter, "Is a Diamond Forever? Feminist Transformations of Sport," *Women's Studies International Forum* 10 (1987): 395-409; Nancy Theberge, "Gender, Sport, and the Construction of Community: A Case Study from Women's Ice Hockey," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 12 (1995): 389-402; Julie Stevens, "The Declining Sense of Community in Canadian Women's Hockey," *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* 9 (2000): 123-39.

<sup>78</sup>Brownlie and Robertson interview.

<sup>79</sup>The information from this paragraph comes from interviews conducted with twenty women who attended the London playground programs during the 1930s and 1940s and played softball in the London Girls Softball League when it was organized in 1942. The following is a list of the women interviewed: Irene (Wedderburn) Brownlie and Audrey Robertson, 13 December 2004, London, Ontario; Helen (Gorman) Brulotte and Pat (Gorman) Belliveau, 11 April 2005, London, Ontario; Frieda (Abbott) Willsey, 18 April 2005, London, Ontario; Doreen (Wedderburn) Bugler, 25 April 2005, London, Ontario; Faye (Wright) Rennie and Yvonne (Wright) Traver, 26 April 2005, London, Ontario; Phyllis Callaghan, 27 April 2005, Harrietsville, Ontario; Shirley (Youde) Fickling, 28 April 2005, London, Ontario; Mary (McLeod) Whyte, 2 May 2005, London, Ontario; Bernice Cummings, 5 May 2005, Dorchester, Ontario; Ruth (Walker) Young, 12 May 2005, London, Ontario; June Davidson, 26 May 2005, London, Ontario; Pauline (Perron) Scriven, 1 June 2005, Strathroy, Ontario; Joan Tanner, 2 June 2005, London, Ontario; Jean (Harper) Walch, 21 September 2005, London, Ontario; Dorothy (Harding) Arrand, 22 September 2005, London, Ontario; Doreen (Leonard) Peters, 23 September 2005, Dorchester, Ontario; and June (Hawke) Jones, 26 September 2005, St. Thomas, Ontario, all notes in possession of author.

<sup>80</sup>See Richard Gruneau, *Class, Sports, and Social Development* (Windsor, Ont.: Human Kinetics, 1999), 1-60; Hall, *The Girl and the Game*, 1; Susan Birrell and Nancy Theberge, "Feminist Resistance and Transformation in Sport," in *Women and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. D. Margaret Costa and Sharon R. Guthrie (Windsor, Ont.: Human Kinetics, 1994), 361-362.

<sup>81</sup>Richard Gruneau, "Modernization of Hegemony: Two Views on Sport and Social Development," in *Not Just a Game: Essays in Canadian Sport Sociology*, eds. Jean Harvey and Hart Cantelon (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988), 21. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>82</sup>See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H.M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953), xiii-xxiv.

<sup>83</sup>See Hall, *The Girl and The Game*; Kidd, *Struggle for Canadian Sport*, chap 3; Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong* (Toronto: Maxwell Maxmillan, 1994); Elizabeth Etue and Megan K. Williams, *On the Edge* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 1996); Pamela Grundy, *Learning to Win* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); and Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>84</sup>Marilyn Frye, "The Necessity of Differences: Constructing a Positive Category of Women," *Signs* 21 (1995): 998.

<sup>85</sup>Brownlie and Robertson interview.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Scriven interview.

<sup>88</sup>Brulotte and Belliveau interview.

<sup>89</sup>Scriven interview.

<sup>90</sup>See "London Supremes Start on Exhibition Tour of Western States," *London (Ont.) Free Press*, 18 May 1951, p. 34. Interestingly, apart from this article there is no coverage in the *Free Press* of the Supremes' tour to the United States and no mention of how they did against their American opponents.

<sup>91</sup>Scriven interview.

<sup>92</sup>Brulotte and Belliveau interview.

<sup>93</sup>The most prominent exceptions include Nancy B. Bouchier, *For the Love of the Game* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); and Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

<sup>94</sup>One example is Hall, *The Girl and the Game*. While a comprehensive overview of Canadian women's sport participation in Canada over the past century is much needed, Hall focuses on the broad stories of women's involvement in sport, mainly at the provincial/territorial and national levels. In the concluding statements of the book's epilogue, she acknowledges her approach and states that she hopes "others will fill in the missing details through regional and local stories" (p. 215).

<sup>95</sup>For more on the debate of the validity and usefulness of evidence from oral histories, see Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 25-81, 118-189; Gwyn Prins, "Oral History," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Peter J. Burke (Oxford: Polity, 2001); and Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 83-136.

<sup>96</sup>Metcalf, "Meaning of Amateurism," 33.