

Chapter X

The Solheim Cup: Media Representations of Golf, Gender and National Identity

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Introduction: Women's Golf and the Solheim Cup

The increasing inclusion of women in sport has been mediated by societal gendered expectations. It is an oft-cited notion that sport is “an institution created by and for men” (Messner and Sabo, 1990, p. 9), and sport is subsequently inherently rooted in assumptions of hegemonic forms of masculinity (Connell, 1987). This has historically made women's involvement in most sports problematic, constrained by gender norms and medical myths which symbolically rendered them unsuitable for participation in sport. Unsurprisingly, female golfers have struggled for equality in a golf culture that, like most sports, is “widely regarded as male dominated and exclusionary” (Kitching, 2017, p. 404). Reis and Correia (2013, p. 324) highlight that the sport has a “cultural tradition of for-gentlemen-only-clubs that has excluded women from clubhouses and from practising golf”. Despite women's involvement in the sport dating back to the sixteenth century, women were often symbolically excluded from golf; they could play, but not with the same freedom or flexibility as men. Where they were excluded from full membership and playing rights, women were forced to form ladies' sections, initiated by the St. Andrews Ladies' Golf Club in 1867 (George, 2009), and subsequently women's golf developed independently from the men's game, with the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) forming in 1950 and the Ladies European Tour (LET) in 1978. Scholars have highlighted several women throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that learned and played the sport, and subsequently excelled as golfers, challenging the male hegemony of the game (George, 2009; Reis and Correia, 2013).

Whilst feminist commentators have highlighted sport as a “fundamentally sexist institution that is male dominated and masculine in orientation” (Theberge, 1981, p. 342), women have continued to engage with sport as both athletes and spectators. In the twenty-first century, Messner and Cooky (2018) highlight a gender transformation in the USA, noting that millions of girls are taking up sports such as football and basketball, and largely attribute this to shifts in the cultural expectation for and acceptance of girls' athleticism. In a UK context, Velija and Malcolm (2009, p. 629) claim that “it is widely accepted that there are now more opportunities for females to be involved in sports than ever before”. However, in golf - whilst acknowledged as one of the most successful (and lucrative) professional sports organisations for women - it has been noted by Kitching (2017) that exclusionary practices continue to impact the modern game, where women still struggle for equality of access, participation, employment and decision making in golf. Female golfers are widely perceived as inferior to

their male counterparts in driving distance, which is frequently used to frame women as less able golfers (McGinnis et al., 2005; Bowes & Kitching, 2020). Despite this, women continue to progress in the professional game, with increasing prize funds for the 2020 season on both the LPGA and the LET. The pinnacle of the game however, golf's mega-event for women, is considered to be the Solheim Cup.

The Solheim Cup, a women's professional golf tournament, was founded in 1990 by Karsten Solheim¹ as a replica of the men's Ryder Cup, a biennial team golf tournament pitting 12 Americans against 12 Europeans in match-play format. Whilst not always the case, the current structure of the two events are exactly the same: the first two days involves players from each team competing in fourballs² and foursomes³ matches, followed by a day of singles matches on the third and final day. The Ryder Cup has been claimed to be one of the most important and prestigious events in international sport. Dating back to 1926, it is considered "the oldest competition of nations in professional golf, involving the two golf superpowers: the United States and Europe" (Kali, Pastoriza & Plante, 2017, p. 102). Kali et al. (2017, p. 104) indicate that "the halo of prestige surrounding the Ryder Cup derives not only from being the oldest competition of nations in professional golf and including most of the best professional golfers in the world, but also from the fact that no prize money is awarded for winning it". The same is true for the Solheim Cup.

Similarly, the Solheim Cup, co-ran by the LET and the LPGA, is subsequently considered to be the pinnacle of professional women's golf, and female golf's only 'mega-event'. Marketed as the biggest rivalry in women's golf, the Solheim Cup was first staged in Florida in 1990, and prior to the 2019 version has been dominated by the United States 10-5. In September 2019, the sixteenth edition of the event was held at the self-proclaimed home of golf, Gleneagles in Scotland, nineteen years since the country last hosted the event and five years after the venue hosted the 2014 edition of the Ryder Cup. The first part of this chapter will critically discuss the tournament, in relation to literature on golf and national identity, and media coverage of sport and national identity, with a specific nod to work on women's sport and national identity. The second part of the chapter presents data collected from the British print media during the tournament, which will be analysed using a critical feminist framework to understand how female athletes are represented in women golf's only mega-event.

(Supra-)National Identity and Golf

¹ Karsten Solheim (1911-2000) was a Norwegian-born engineer who creating the golf equipment company Ping in 1959 and, alongside his wife Louise, was a committed supporter of women's golf.

² Fourballs involves four balls on the course: two players per team go head to head. The player that scores the lowest on each hole wins the hole for their team.

³ Foursomes involves two balls on the course: again, two players per team go head to head. However, each team only has one ball and players will hit alternate shots until the ball is holed. The team that scores the lowest on each hole wins the hole for their team.

International sport is often heavily linked with national identity, although golf is not often considered in the same way. Harris et al. (2017) describe how little research has considered the place of the nation in relation to golf. It has been claimed that the sport is often relatively insignificant in inculcating national sentiments. Owing to the lack of direct competition formats, nation versus nation contests and the absence of physical confrontation present in many other sports, golf is generally devoid of flags and nationalistic tendencies. Professional golfers playing on global tours are considered borderless athletes (Chiba, Ebihara & Morino, 2001) who transcend national, racial and ethnic borders, de facto sports citizens of the world. For Liston and Kitching (2019, p. 6), "golf is relatively inured from displays of nationalism that are more commonplace in international team sports". Despite this, Bairner (2003) notes that the sport does have links to identity politics, and there have been instances where professional golfers have taken on cultural significance and become viewed as embodiments of the nation (Kitching & Bowes, 2020; Liston & Kitching, 2019).

There are some unique tournaments in golf that provide some avenue to consider the place of nationhood and national identity. Whilst Liston and Kitching (2019) explain that golf has little to do with national identity, they do note that golf's recent inception into the Olympic Games and the biennial Ryder Cup/Solheim Cup matches provide an exception. Team competitions within golf, with national or supra-national representation, provide an unusual instance where issues of national (and supra-national) identity in international golf settings might come to the fore. These events provide professional golfers with a unique opportunity for national representation: players representing (supra-)national teams, wearing (supra-)national uniforms, playing in front of thousands of fans waving (supra-)national flags, with their faces painted in (supra-)national colours. As Kali et al. (2017, p. 103) state:

Playing for one's country is a great honor for which even very wealthy professional golfers vie. Being part of an elite groups of golfers who have the privilege of representing their countries, and not a direct monetary gain, is considered the Ryder Cup's own reward.

In researching the portrayal of national identities in sport, the examination of print or electronic papers has been widely used. In relation to the 2008 Ryder Cup, Harris et al. (2017) studied local and national print media in the USA and found that the tournament was an important site for framing narratives of the nation in media discourse. In examining print and electronic media accounts of the 2006 match in USA Today to assess how images of the US nation are presented, Harris and Lyberger (2006) found that the US loss was positioned within a broader narrative of a crisis in US sport and was attributed to the individualistic nature of US society and an overall cultural decline. These studies indicate the complicated nature of collective identity expressions in (men's) golf.

For both the players and fans of the Ryder Cup and Solheim Cup's European Teams, the notion of national identity is complex. Despite representing a Team Europe, often there are overt displays of national allegiances, with fans getting behind this unique and convoluted tribalism in golf:

...while some fans of the European players in golf's Ryder Cup unfurl the flag of the European Union, many persist in waving their national flags despite the multinational composition of the European team (Bairner, 2001, p. 2).

Maguire (2011) notes that the Ryder Cup and the Solheim Cup are central in the somewhat tentative emergence of a European sports identity, although the degree to which athletes feel any strong sense of identification to the geographical continent is as yet unexplored. The moveable geographical boundaries of the Ryder Cup event, along with the otherwise rare expressions of European identity articulated, has resulted in its derision in some quarters. Media examinations during the tournament have questioned the collective identity generated and Steen (2015, p. 349), in writing about the men's Ryder Cup, noted:

With collective golfing success have come hints of a collective cultural identity; unfortunately, golf, lacking the passions, physical confrontation and tribal loyalties that underpin mass appeal, is probably the sport least likely to have a wider social impact.

Steen (2015, p. 348) further described the USA – Europe match play event as “the oddest of major sporting competitions”; the USA in “red-white-and-blue” competing against a team “under a little-recognised flag...popularly referred to – and with no irony whatsoever – as ‘Team Europe’, a multinational collective with little or no mutual identity to speak of beyond a professional rivalry with the Americans”. However, whilst the body of research on the Ryder Cup is scarce, it is even more stark for the Solheim Cup, with no published empirical work on it – despite an increasing body of academic literature that has interrogated press coverage of women in sport.

Gender and National Identity in the (Golf) Sport Media

In considering the significance of the Solheim Cup to national identity, there is an additional layer to consider in terms of gender. Clearly sport plays a central role in the formation of national identity, however, the sport that is central to recreating the national imagined community is often considered a male-only domain. Hobsbawm (1990, p. 143) had concluded that “the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people”, although it is hard to conceive that he thought those eleven people were anything other than men. Indeed, Hobsbawm argued that sport, at least for males, has proved uniquely effective in generating a sense of belonging to the nation. Sport, including golf, is also constructed as a male domain in the mass media, with Kane (2013) highlighting the symbiotic relationship between the sports media and hegemonic masculinity. Women's

inclusion within the sports media is thus problematic; when women do find themselves on the sports pages of the popular press, they are often represented in ways that restrict our imagination about women's sport and retain the hegemonic position of men in sport (Bruce, 2015). However, Biscoomb and Griggs (2013), Petty and Pope (2019) and Bowes and Kitching (2019) have all found shifts towards a greater awareness of, and coverage of, female athletes in the sports media.

Portrayals of female golfers in the sports media have an ambivalent history, where golf media has been shown to replicate the same exclusionary practices that are evidenced within the game. Although Billings et al. (2008, p. 65) highlight that rising audience interest in women's golf brought about challenges to golf's "masculine hegemonic entrenchment", both televised and print media coverage of golf have continued to offer representations that reinforce divisions of gender, class, disability and race (Billings et al., 2006; Billings et al., 2008). There are, however, examples that offer some challenges to the gendered norms and traditional depictions of women in golf media. Research found that the media coverage of Annika Sorenstam's involvement in the 2003 PGA Colonial Tournament retained a gendered angle on the one hand, but on the other there were examples of non-gendered explanations of her successes too (Billings et al., 2006). More recently, Bowes and Kitching (2019) describe the print media representation of professional female golfers (again, when competing alongside men) as a double-edged sword, with positive informed coverage littered with gendered language. Kitching and Bowes (2020) then later describe how the print media framed Irish golfer Leona Maguire in non-gendered ways, as a model citizen representative of her nation.

There have been a few notable pieces of work that have considered the role of national identity in media coverage of women's sport. Wensing and Bruce (2003) note that coverage of female representatives during international sporting competition may follow different 'rules' than one would usually see in their representation. They explain that women competing for the nation "may be less likely to be marked by gendered discourses or narratives than reporting on everyday sports" (Wensing & Bruce, 2003, p. 393). Bruce (2008, p. 62) later demonstrated, in the context of New Zealand, that "women who win for the nation are highlighted as worthy of attention". She notes that concepts of gender marking, compulsory heterosexuality, appropriate femininity, infantilization, downplaying sports and ambivalence, fail to help us understand the way that female athletes are represented, drawing attention to the way "nationalism almost completely overrode the usual ways that the sports media report on female athletes" (Bruce, 2008, p. 67).

Bowes (2020) describes how international sporting competitions open up an avenue for sportswomen to be presented as legitimate national representatives, in both their media representations and their self-presentations. Further, Bowes and Bairner (2018) highlight that international sportswomen on the international sporting field *can* become active embodiments of their nation, fulfilling a role of proxy warriors in sport. Whilst Bowes and Bairner (2018; 2019) note that female athletes have a role to play in embodying the nation,

this was in team sports that are often already closely aligned with a sense of national identity. This chapter then aims to extend this work, and that on professional golfers (Kitching & Bowes, 2020; Liston & Kitching, 2019), to consider the ways in which female golfers in the 2019 Solheim Cup are represented in the sports media. Before doing so, it is important to present an overview of the competition itself.

The Story of the 2019 Solheim Cup

The 2019 teams were decided approximately a month before the tournament started. Team Europe was announced first, on the 12th August 2019, and was made up of the top three players on the LET Solheim Cup points list, followed by the top five LET members on the Women’s World Golf Rankings (WWGR) not already qualified, and four captains’ picks (see Table 1). The team was captained by nine-time Solheim Cup player Catriona Matthew (Scotland), and assisted by former Solheim Cup players Dame Laura Davies (England), Kathryn Imrie (Scotland) and Mel Reid (England)⁴. Team USA was announced on the 26th August 2019 and consisted of the top eight players from the LPGA Solheim Cup points list, followed by the top two American players on the WWGR not already qualified, and two captains’ picks (see Table 2). Team USA was led for the third time in a row by Juli Inkster, supported by assistants Pat Hurst, Nancy Lopez and Wendy Ward. As holders, team USA needed 14 points to retain the Solheim Cup, with 14.5 required for Team Europe to take the trophy.

Table 1: Team Europe

Player	Country	LET Points Rank	WWGR (12 th Aug)	Solheim Cup Apps
Carlota Ciganda	Spain	1	13	3
Anne Van Dam	Netherlands	2	93	0
Caroline Hedwall	Sweden	3	116	3
Charley Hull	England	4	29	3
Georgia Hall	England	8	33	1
Azahara Munoz	Spain	N/A	36	3
Caroline Masson	Germany	N/A	52	3
Anna Nordqvist	Sweden	14	60	5
Celine Boutier	France	6	61	0
Jodi Ewart Shadoff	England	N/A	78	2
Bronte Law	England	N/A	25	0
Suzann Pettersen	Norway	N/A	644	8

⁴ The captain is able to select her own assistant captains and will often pick former Solheim Cup players whom she knows well. In this regard, there is often a strong influence from one of Europe’s nations (in this regard, the UK).

Table 2: Team USA

Player	LPGA Points Rank	WWGR (26 th August)	Solheim Cup Apps
Lexi Thompson	1	3	3
Nelly Korda	2	10	0
Danielle Kang	3	15	1
Lizette Salas	4	17	3
Jessica Korda	5	18	1
Megan Khang	6	46	0
Marina Alex	7	32	0
Brittany Altomare	8	40	0
Angel Yin	10	31	1
Annie Park	16	42	0
Morgan Pressel	20	55	5
Ally Macdonald ⁵	9	57	0

Prior to the tournament starting, Team USA were strong favourites: the average WWGR for Team USA was 31, with 5 of the world's top 20 players, compared to Europe's 103 (or 54, if you remove the anomaly of Suzann Pettersen's world ranking⁶), with only one player inside the WWGR top 20. The tournament started on Friday 13th September, with Team Europe winning the morning foursomes session 2.5-1.5, and the afternoon fourballs session shared 2-2. Saturday 14th September again started with a morning foursome session, also squared at 2-2, with Team USA winning the afternoon fourballs 2.5-1.5. Starting 8-8, it was a tense singles day on Sunday 15th September. The tournament came down to the last match left out on the course, where Suzann Pettersen for Team Europe had to hole a birdie putt on the 18th green to score the 14th and final point to win the Solheim Cup for Team Europe. She duly holed it, promptly followed by her unplanned, and surprising, retirement from the sport. The event was considered one of the closest of all time, with renowned women's golf journalist Ron Sirak proclaiming "you'd have to search far and wide to find a more dramatic finish anywhere in the history of sports" (LPGA.com, 15 Sep 2019).

A Critical Feminist Research Approach: Framework and Methodology

The event was hailed as a great success and saw significant press coverage in terms of print media, online media and television coverage. So, addressing a lack of academic attention to women's professional golf, and the Solheim Cup more specifically, this chapter aims to consider the intersection of gender and national identity using British media coverage of the Solheim Cup as a case study. As per some of the authors' previous work (Bowes & Kitching, 2019; Kitching & Bowes, 2020), this chapter adopts a critical feminist theoretical approach. A privileging of men and men's activities can result in the reproduction of institutionalised

⁵ Ally Macdonald was initially a travelling reserve, but initial captain's pick Stacy Lewis had to withdraw due to injury.

⁶ Whilst on paper her world ranking might lead one to question her involvement, Suzann Pettersen was the most experienced player in the field and one of Europe's greatest ever Solheim Cup players.

practices where women are excluded, marginalised and perceived as less important. While feminist perspectives that focus on equality and discrimination are criticised for oversimplifying females' diversified dispositions, critical feminisms write in relation to power, where gender relations are often defined by hegemonic masculinity and supported by cultural norms of male domination and female subordination. Thus, critical feminism as used in this chapter acknowledges the normalisation of patriarchal power relations in golf and media.

Data for this chapter were collected via the online electronic news database Nexis UK by the second author. The second author searched for full text newspaper articles from publications in the United Kingdom, using the keywords 'Solheim Cup' (anywhere in the text). Articles were collected between the dates of the 12th August 2019, the day of the first Solheim Cup team announcement, until the 22nd September 2019, a week following the tournament (and thus the commencement of a new tournament week on the professional circuit). An initial search yielded 244 articles, but filtering for repetitive content, irrelevant content such as television schedules and articles under 50 words, this was reduced to 136. The following print media outlets were included: Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday, Daily Mirror and Daily Mirror (Ireland), Daily Star, The Daily Telegraph and The Sunday Telegraph, The Express, The Guardian, The Independent and i-Independent, The Observer, The Sun, The Sun (Scotland) and The Sun (Ireland), The Times, The Times (Scotland) and The Sunday Times, and online articles from the same sources (that were not repeated in print versions). As part of the data collection, the authors recorded a number of particulars about the data, including the date, newspaper, page number and/or section (if provided), journalist and headline.

All articles were subject to a process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The lead author implemented a theoretical thematic analysis, a process which acknowledges the researcher's role in knowledge production (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The lead author went through the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013), including familiarisation (an initial reading of the articles), reading and re-reading, coding, and then developing and reviewing themes. Following the development of themes, the second author was then consulted to verify the accuracy of these themes. Throughout this process, both authors adopted an explicitly feminist lens, acknowledging the gendered power relations that highlight the problematic ways women are represented in the sports press. The authors present four key themes from the data:

- The Solheim Cup *as golf*
- National proxy warriors
- Pettersen the 'Supermum'
- The Ryder Cup's Little Sister?

This chapter will draw upon both qualitative and quantitative measures to describe the above patterns of media coverage during the Solheim Cup. Furthermore, we present a discussion of the themes alongside extracts from the British print media's headline tournament coverage.

The Solheim Cup *as golf*

Despite taking a critical feminist perspective, one of the most obvious themes identified was that of a clear level of increased legitimacy of women's golf, in this instance the Solheim Cup, *as golf*. The press often took a non-gendered approach in how they wrote about the tournament, which we felt was evidenced in multiple ways. Firstly, of all the articles that were analysed, 116 of the 136 articles, over 85%, lead with the Solheim Cup as the key feature. This is significant because we have previously seen women's golf can be often written about as a sub text to a mainstream men's golf article (see Kitching & Bowes, 2020). For example, some early headlines described the make-up of each team:

Van Dam seals a Solheim Cup spot (i-Independent, 12th August 2019)

Cristie Kerr left out of US Solheim Cup team (Telegraph, 26th August 2019)

It was also noted that there was an obvious lack of gender marking of the coverage. Of the articles that were analysed, 97/136, or 71%, had no specific gender marking of the tournament itself. What we mean by this is there was no reference to the event as a *women's* event, or no reference to the players as *female* players. Later headlines demonstrate the lack of gender marking for the tournament, drawing on the official tournament name as well as key players:

Hull blows chance to give Europe commanding lead (Daily Telegraph, 14th September 2019)

Europe stay level-headed as Hall and Boutier dig deep in Solheim Cup (The Observer, 14th September 2019)

However, within these articles there were occasional mentions of other tournaments, whose official name was gender marked (15/136; 11%): Ladies Scottish Open, Women's British Open and CP Women's Open in Canada; the problem herein then is possibly not one of the media coverage, but of the organisational structures of professional golf. Like Bruce (2016) identified, there is a reduction in the gender marking of women's sport across the sport media landscape, of which this coverage seems to follow suit.

Further evidence of the legitimacy of the event *as golf* was noted in the purpose of the coverage. The content of the writing often focused on the event itself, rather than slipping into ambivalent coverage that juxtaposed sport content with irrelevant content (Bruce, 2016). An example here was Team Europe's Charley Hull's impending wedding, which featured in only 2/136 articles. Continuing to focus on the golf, almost half of all articles (64/136, 47%) mentioned team picks – either prior to the tournament or throughout their involvement at the tournament:

Law and Ewart Shadoff earn wild cards for Solheim Cup (Daily Telegraph, 13th August 2019)

Juli calls Solheim Veterans (The sun, 27th August 2019)

Furthermore, 18% of articles published within a week of the event taking place mentioned the crowd numbers, which was positioned at between 80,000 and 100,000 spectators:

Cup is crowd pleaser (The Times Scotland, 17th September 2019)

This further served to legitimise the event as a significant sporting event and position the women as athletes.

National proxy warriors

The role of national identity has been identified as central in legitimating women's position as national representatives in sport (Wensing & Bruce, 2003; Bruce 2008, 2016; Bowes, 2020). Writing about the Ryder Cup, Steen (2015, p. 349) notes that the "continental identity – hitherto unseen in any serious sporting arena and further witnessed in the camaraderie of participants in the women's Solheim Cup – is ripe for further investigation". It was clear, then, that from the outset national identity was a key descriptor of the players in the tournament. The headlines from the tournament often lead with a 'team' identity descriptor for either Team USA or Europe:

US call up Cup vets (Daily Mirror, 27th August 2019)

Solheim Cup 2019: Europe and USA level at 8-8 going into final day (The Independent, 14th September 2019)

Europe on the level (Daily Mirror (Ireland), 15th September 2019)

However, within the text of the articles, 67% mentioned the specific national identity of the European players. This demonstrates how important national identity is, as part of the supra-national European identity that being part of Team Europe instigates. The overtness of national identity descriptors for the European team members demonstrates that national identity is potentially more significant in describing athletes than the supra-national team identity. According to Wensing and Bruce (2003) and later Bruce (2008, 2016), for female athletes, media coverage of events where athletes are marked by their nationality may be less likely to be gender marked. Thus, the centrality of national identity is significant here in legitimising the 'bending of the rules' in terms of how gender was less likely to be used to frame female athletes.

Furthermore, Bowes (2020) describes how the media can draw upon a battle narrative to frame female athletes as proxy warriors in international sporting competitions. This was something that was evident here, with nearly half (47%) of all articles about the event containing some form of 'fight talk' or 'battle narrative'. Pre-tournament, the Sunday Times noted:

Gleneagles can be a happy hunting ground for Europe again (8th September 2019).

During the tournament week, there was a headline focus on the press conference 'quips' from American Danielle Kang, and European Suzann Pettersen. The Express (Ireland) went with the simple: 'War Cry' (13th September 2019), and the war/battle narrative from Kang

and Pettersen's press conference discussions continued to hit headlines across a range of print media outlets:

Kang looking to 'crush' Europe (Daily Mail, 12th September 2019)

Europe hit back at US in bitter war of words (Daily Mail, 13th September 2019)

Suzann going for the throat (The Sun Scotland, 13th September 2019)

During the tournament, the headlines persisted with a battle focus in describing Bronte Law's performance after day one, and Celine Boutier and Georgia Hall's play following day two:

Bronte in a battle (Daily Star, 14th September 2019)

Fightback from Boutier and Hall gives Europe hope (The Sunday Telegraph, 15th September 2019)

Similarly, it was evident at the conclusion of the tournament, where the print media hailed Pettersen as 'heroic' after she holed the winning putt:

Davies hails Norwegian heroic role but wants her to carry on (The Daily Telegraph, 16th September 2019)

This narrative helps to position women as legitimate athletes for their nation by framing them in warrior-like roles – or proxy warrior (Bowes & Bairner, 2018) - whilst also expanding frames of reference for female athleticism (Dashper, 2018).

Pettersen the 'Supermum'

Arguably the story of the event was the inclusion of Suzann Pettersen, via a captain's pick from Catriona Matthew, to Team Europe. It was noted as significant as it was less than two months after her return from maternity leave, following a near two-year absence from the sport. Of the articles that mentioned captains' picks, 75% of them noted the selection of Team Europe's Suzann Pettersen, despite the fact she was only one of seven players that were captains' picks during the tournament (when including both the withdrawn Stacy Lewis and her replacement Ally Macdonald for Team USA). The surprise element was drawn primarily from her world ranking at the time of the tournament, which framed her as a 'gamble' - despite her impressive history in the tournament as one of Europe's most decorated Solheim Cup players:

World No 620 not a gamble, says Matthew (The Times London, 13th August 2019)

Captain Catriona rolls Solheim dice (Daily Mail, 13th August 2019)

In this way, the framing of Pettersen prior to the tournament could be one that positions the role of athlete and mother in conflict and incompatible (McGannon et al., 2015). Over half of all articles examined mentioned Pettersen in some form, but only 12 of these articles *did not* mention her role as a mother. Reference to her as a mother places Pettersen within

familiar family networks (Dashper, 2018). From a critical feminist perspective, this can be read as problematic: it retains a framing of Pettersen embroiled with femininity and the appropriate roles of women. Pettersen's son Herman was often mentioned by name, which serves to construct the family unit as familiar and positions her in relation to heteronormative ideals (Dashper, 2018). This is a strategy the golf media has previously used in their coverage of Nancy Lopez (Team USA vice captain), where Jamieson (1998) positions the focus on marriage and motherhood as a modern-day apologetic that trivialised Lopez's athleticism. Furthermore, this can be seen as ambivalent coverage, in which the sport media focuses not explicitly on women's athletic achievements.

Much like McGannon et al. (2012) found with media representations of Paula Radcliffe post pregnancy, Pettersen's identities involve her being both a national athlete and a mother intertwined. However, as the tournament progressed and Pettersen played out the starring role, the media's pre-tournament fears over her suitability to play were negated. For example, the following headlines were published by The Sun newspaper:

Mother of all wins: Solheim Cup heroes Pettersen and Matthew show the power of being a supermum after Europe beat America at Gleneagles (The Sun, 16th September 2019)

The legend of 'supermum' will continue to grow (The Sun, 17th September 2019)

McGannon et al. (2015) described the 'athlete mother as superwoman' framing, with athlete mothers challenging the notion that women have to retire to have a family and shattering the myth that motherhood and sport are incompatible. Pettersen, after holing the tournament winning putt, enabled the media to shift the narrative into a supermum framing - a woman that can do it all, at the very top, although she had to prove herself first:

Europe win Solheim Cup as Suzann Pettersen justifies inclusion by putting winner at Gleneagles (mirror.co.uk, 15th September 2019)

The Ryder Cup's Little Sister?

Despite a clear shift in how the print media presented both the athletes and the tournament, there was still some evidence of problematic media strategies. One such strategy involved the use of men's sport as a benchmark. In the articles examined, although 70% were not gender marked, 27% did make some point of reference to the Ryder Cup, the men's version of the event, and 17% likened female players to male equivalents. This was centred on American Danielle Kang, referred to as the Solheim Cup's Patrick Reed (a top male golfer who has represented Team USA in the Ryder Cup), and Europe's Bronte Law, likened to male European Ryder Cup players Francesco Molinari and Ian Poulter:

Poulter helps Bronte give Europe advantage (Daily Mirror, 14th September 2019)

Law hoping to enjoy a repeat of her Molinari cup moment (The Sunday Telegraph, 8th September 2019)

The articles that were gender marked (39/136; 29%) made distinctions that this was the best event in *women's* golf or featured the best crowds for a *women's* event. However, only two headlines from the data sample were specifically gender-marked, although these were both articles that highlighted the subordinate position of the women's game, in order to try and prompt some form of change:

Women's golf never gets due credit (The Times, 20th August 2019)

Women's golf let down as 5 live snubs Solheim Cup (Daily Mail, 10th September 2019)

There was some evidence that old habits die hard in the popular press regarding how they covered women's sport, although this was notably sparse including in more 'tabloid', sensationalist style papers. For example, The Sun (Scotland) led with the following headline going into the singles day:

All the singles ladies (The Sun (Scotland), 15th September 2019)

However, perhaps the worst example of gendered journalism was the following statement:

They used to say the Solheim Cup was the 'Ryder Cup with lipstick'. These days, 'with stilettos' might be a better fit.' (Daily Mail, 12th September 2020).

Whilst it is important to retain a critical focus when investigating the ways women's sport is compared to men's sport, there also exists a justification that using the Ryder Cup as a benchmark may prove useful in providing the audience with a point of comparison in which to build understanding - only time will tell if this is a media strategy that will decline in coverage of the Solheim Cup.

Conclusion: Evidence of change?

We're now watching so much women's sport they are no longer seen as women but as performers (The Sunday Times, 15th September 2020)

This chapter has provided further evidence of positive media shifts in the representation of women's sport, and specifically in women's golf. On the whole, coverage focused on the Solheim Cup *as golf*, female golfers *as golfers*, and in the majority reporting on sporting content *as sport*. This framing in one of golf's 'mega-events' has potential to translate into consistency in the types of representations female athletes receive in the sport media, moving away from sexualisation and feminisation towards more legitimacy in their inclusion as *athletes*. Whilst it is important for female athletes to be seen in the sport media, perhaps of equal importance is the ways in which they are portrayed.

The significance of both national and supra-national identification in the Solheim Cup was clear and is one thing that marks out this mega-event as unique on the golfing calendar. The emphasis of both national and supra-national identification is obvious and could be evidence of why the reporting was not overly gendered (Wensing & Bruce, 2003; Bruce, 2008). The women were presented as proxy warriors doing battle – significant for women to be seen as legitimate athletes *and* legitimate national representatives.⁷ It is clear that international team events in golf open up a space for more gender neutral coverage (compared to previous discussions of media coverage in women's golf – see Bowes & Kitching, 2019), and for increased legitimacy of the women's game in the sporting press.

However, it is important to retain a critical focus in our analysis of the print media coverage. Whilst it is undoubtedly exciting for women's golf fans and feminist sport media scholars to see women dominating stories and headlines, it is worth noting that the extent of media coverage is contextual – the mega event of women's golf, played in the 'home of golf', with four British captains and four British players. It remains to be seen whether the global sport media can find a more permanent space for gender-neutral stories about the women's game outside of its showcase tournament. In terms of the type of coverage, it could be argued that the reduction of gender marking in the coverage of the Solheim Cup is specific to this tournament, as the Solheim Cup is a tournament specific to the women's game. Again – the challenge is to pay attention to whether or not media coverage of women's golf more broadly can and will follow similar patterns. In this vein, as the event continues to grow in stature and success in the future, it will be interesting to see if the print media continue to pay attention to the men's version of the competition as a point of reference.

However, as Dashper (2018) notes, the most likely consumers of the British sport media are men, reading stories written by male journalists for a male-dominated audience. For the sample of media analysed here, there were 30 different authors cited – of which only one (Molly McElwee writing for the Times Scotland) was female. It could be argued then that if the underrepresentation of female sport journalists continues, it will be hard to see more progressive and consistent change in print media coverage. Franks and O'Neill (2016) highlight that there is a trend of invisibility of female sports journalists in national UK papers – a finding supported here - and as Kian and Hardin (2009) note, it is male writers that are more likely to reinforce gender stereotypes. The wider implications of this have the potential to be significant – more equitable coverage in the sports media could have a noteworthy impact on the gendered culture of golf more broadly. The success of the Solheim Cup, including its strong presence in the sport media, could well be a springboard to shifting perceptions of women in golf cultures and challenging the male hegemony of the game.

⁷ The ideas were further developed for a special issue on war, peace and sport: Bowes, A., Bairner, A., Whigham, S. and Kitching, N. (Forthcoming). Women, war and sport: The battle of the 2019 Solheim Cup. *Journal of War and Culture Studies*.

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