

CHAPTER

1

OUT HERE

It is really a fantasy world out here. It is something that you dream about doing. You are your own boss. Especially being a woman, I can't think of any other place where you can do exactly what you want to. I really never felt like I have been harassed by the opposite sex in our world. I have never felt like I was competing with men.

In the corporate world it is a little bit different. There are the men and women competing for the same jobs. We are not. As an organization we are competitive with the men's tour as far as getting sponsors, but as individuals we are competing against other women.

That's why I have stayed out here so long. I don't want to join the real world; it's hard work. This has never been work to me.

—Tara¹

The expression “out here” is used with such frequency by the players that it hardly causes a ripple in the flow of conversation. In the context of the tour it is a shorthand way to refer to either life on the tour, or the high level of golf played on the tour. “Out here” names a social place or condition and in so doing refers to its uniqueness without drawing undue attention to it. But as is often the case with handy, all-purpose phrases, their power is not what they reveal but what remains hidden. Catch phrases often veil the uncomfortable in the context of polite conversation.

The expression “out here” is a clue toward understanding the women's professional tour. The expression both hides and succinctly

captures the social position of the professional woman golfer on a number of levels. Most immediately, it reveals how the players understand themselves as distinct from mainstream society. But within the expression "out here" also resonates the beginnings of a description of the relationship between professional competitive golf and country club golf. Dig deeper and it reveals a legacy of women existing on the fringe of the golfing community. "Out here" speaks to a particular stance of women golfers as being both included and excluded.

RELUCTANT TOLERANCE

From the start of the modern golfing era, women participated. Golf was a European game played by common folks and nobility for centuries before it landed on the shores of the United States. It came ashore in a fashion that would establish it as a popular pastime among both sexes of the upper class. After being introduced to the game while in Europe, William K. Vanderbilt brought the game home. Along with two other investors, Vanderbilt hired Scotsman Willie Dunn to build a golf course on Long Island in the spring of 1891. Dunn built Shinnecock Hills Golf Club. Almost immediately after completion, the seventy original club members of the Shinnecock Hills Golf Club requested Dunn build another nine holes exclusively for the women members.²

While some credit can be given to an upper-class flexibility around gender relations, and its European tradition of female participation, the inclusion of women in golf in this country probably has more to do with its institutional base of support, health resorts and country clubs. After Shinnecock, the game quickly spread to the other turn-of-the-century country clubs, spas, and health resorts which catered to wealthy and middle-class heterosexual married men and their families. Both men and women frequented the health spas and country clubs. Other sports whose origins reside in sex segregated institutions are less open to women's participation. Billiards, for example, has its roots in private coffee houses, pubs, and billiards halls which were the province of heterosexual single men.³ Baseball, to cite another male sport, has its roots in middle-class, all-male social clubs such as the Knickerbockers, and male-dominated occupations such as shipyard workers and butchers.⁴

Turn-of-the-century resorts developed in conjunction with the health movements of the post-Civil War era. The resorts catered to the rich and urban, supposedly suffering from illness or poor health brought on by urban living. The principle remedy, fresh air, was supplemented by a variety of other methods: rest, rugged hiking and move-

ment, electric shock, baths (hydrotherapy), celibacy, and a myriad of foods. Health advocates like Ralston, Graham, and Kellogg, whose influence on American eating habits is obvious, operated resorts during this period.

The ailing and the infirm were not the only people going to health resorts. Wealthy and middle-class puritan urbanites perceived urban life as energy sapping and ailment producing, which could be combated by an austere and reserved lifestyle. Rural resorts rejuvenated the weary urbanites and freed them from their concern for mental and physical conservation. Immersed in healing waters, healthy foods, and fresh air, urbanites could afford to loosen up and expend moral energy on little vices. By the turn of the century resorts came to represent guilt-free amusement; a decadent atonement for urban life. Saratoga Springs, for example, offered clients healing baths and organized gambling. As historian Harvey Green aptly notes:

For the purists, the spas were centers of sin and scandal, the antithesis of rational hydropathy and health. But for many middle-class Americans, they were a comfortable compromise, with just enough health-related content to assuage any possible guilt about the costs of rising social status.⁵

Saratoga Springs' oxymoronic mix of puritan cure and speculative amusements is unusual. Most health resorts mixed health treatments with physical amusements. Successful resorts, like Kellogg's in Battle Creek, offered lawn tennis, croquet, bowls, and the like. It was during this period that spas began to build golf courses in an attempt to retain popularity among those leery of the repressive health movement.⁶

The development of Pinehurst Country Club in Pinehurst, North Carolina illustrates the connection between health resorts and recreational golf. In the 1890s James W. Tufts of Boston bought land in Pinehurst with the intention of attracting ailing Northerners to purchase winter homes there. In this regard he retained the services of Dr. George Carver, who argued that the air at Pinehurst had healing powers. Pinehurst did not attract the wealthy Northerners until 1896, after Tufts' son Leonard, along with Dr. George Carver, laid out a nine-hole golf course. The golf course not only encouraged long walks for Carver's patients, but helped attract clients to the Pinehurst resort. In 1900, Tufts and Carver hired a professional who built additional courses. In 1901, Pinehurst hosted an amateur tournament for men, and in 1903, it added a women's tournament. In a relatively short time, Pinehurst gained a reputation as a golf haven, and became a popular

stop for wealthy Northerners traveling to and from Florida.⁷

At the time that women were taking up the game of golf at country clubs and health resorts and playing in amateur tournaments, distinctions between the sexes were being emphasized socially. According to popular writings of the time, the country was suffering from a "crisis of masculinity." It was hardly a crisis, so much as solidification of an ideology to restore a patriarchal gender order. The crisis of masculinity played upon the collective fear that the closing of the frontier, urban development, sedentary work, the suffrage movement, and the increase of women in the paid labor force would result in men becoming weak and effeminate.

In the late eighteenth hundreds and the early nineteenth hundreds, the argument for distinct, separate spheres for men and women was widely advocated as a measure to curb the feminization of men.⁸ Country clubs, health resorts, and other mixed-sex settings adopted gender distinctions which, to the contemporary observer, seem quite bizarre. While men and women traveled to health resorts together to find relief from the same urban ailments of tiredness and nervousness, the treatments for men and women were quite different. Men were often advised to endure a rugged lifestyle. Resorts and private country clubs offered male members hunting and fishing lodges to accommodate manly adventures. Meanwhile women suffering from the same ailments were told to take bed rest and put on restrictive diets.⁹

It was during this period that the concept that sport turned boys into men and that athletic prowess is a symbol of manliness crystallized in American culture.¹⁰ For over a century now, sport has been a resource through which men "do masculinity." The structure of recreational golf reflected the sentiment of the day. The masculine image of golf was maintained by keeping women's golf separate from men's golf and thus allowing for distinct social meanings to develop for each sex. Playing time for women was restricted to ensure that no male golfer would cross paths with female golfers. The country club harbored male-only rooms within the clubs, male-only events, and male-only leadership, all of which enhanced the perception that golf was a male domain. Separate tee boxes for women exaggerated and reified the biological distinction of sex. Clubs adopted rules prohibiting women from wearing pants or shorts or manly dress while on the course, highlighting the genderedness of the activity.

Although women have always been participants in American golf and the country club, it has been as outsiders. Nothing illustrates the status of women more clearly for me than the arrangement of the bathrooms in the clubhouse at the LPGA tournament in Rochester. The

women's room is inside close to the dining room. The men's room is located down the hall on the outer edge of the building, by a back entry way, with a window overlooking the tenth tee. The architecture reflects the norm: men play golf, and meet their wives in the dining room.

The sex segregation of the country club borders on the absurd. One male amateur and a participant at an LPGA pro-am interviewed related the following when asked about the attitudes of his fellow members toward the women's tour.

There are alot of guys out there—some of my good friends—that just don't want to golf with women or have women on the golf course. . . . In fact I'll tell you a story. About ten years ago, my daughter was two years old, my good friends belonged to a club. They invited me out one Saturday morning just to socialize. I came out with my daughter, she was young and I was carrying her around. I walked into the grillroom of this very exclusive club with my buddies, and as we approached a group of men playing cards, one of these jerks looked at me and said, "There are no women allowed in the grill room." Now I didn't know how to react. I knew he was referring to my daughter, I was holding her in my arms. Can you believe it, my two-year-old daughter?

I told him if I heard another comment close to that I was going to put his cigar out on his forehead. We got out of there!

Within the golf world women have existed on the periphery. For almost a century they have been limited to weekday playing times, excluded from membership unless married to a man, and barred from holding positions of power. The golfing world reluctantly tolerates the participation of women in golf. Although some of the segregating structures of the country club have been challenged recently, women remain outsiders within the world of golf.

THE SUBWORLD OF PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S GOLF

On the fringe of the country club as a result of gender, the tour player is further set apart by her relationship toward the game. Although they share the same game, language, and fashions, the world of the professional golfer is qualitatively distinct from the amateur world. Take, for example, the language of the golfing world. Players use phrases like "blasted out of the sand," "drained a ten footer," and "get up and down" to describe what they do. This sort of language is understand-

able to most within the social world of golf. However, the terms often take on new meaning when they are used on the tour. "Scraping dew," for example, refers to playing golf early in the morning. It alludes to the mark a golfer's swing leaves as the clubhead passes through the dew-laden grass. Within the recreational golfing community it is a romantic image associated with the dedicated amateur. On the tour, it generally has the negative connotation of an early morning tee time. These tee times are filled by weaker players.

The LPGA is really a world within the world of competitive golf. Professional golf is not amateur golf played better. It is qualitatively distinct. Athletes who excel at one level of sport do not move easily to the next level. They do not improve in a linear fashion. Rather, athletes make qualitative leaps from one world to the next.¹¹ In the case of competitive women's golf, they jump from junior golf, to collegiate golf, to the mini tour, and maybe to the professional tour. Each world has its unique expectations and demands, and distinct structures.

Success at one level does not guarantee success at the next. Nat, for example, did quite well on the mini tour, yet she was struggling with the world of professional golf. Cathy on the other hand, described herself as a "good player in college, but not great or anything." She "wasn't an All-American or anything like that," but after surviving the first year, Cathy bloomed into a consistent top-twenty finisher, leaving collegiate champions in another world.

Professional golfers are not the best collegiate players, but they are the best collegiate players and mini-tour players who were able to make adjustments to the new setting and new expectations. Rookies like Sara seem to understand this process intuitively, giving themselves time to adjust to their new world. In the following quote, she discusses the process of getting adjusted to the tour.

You are out here for the first year, you do not know what is good for you yet. That is something you learn each time you come to a place. You get to know how much you can play or that you only want to hit the balls for so long. You learn something new at each tournament.

Plus, the veterans know exactly where they are going and how to get around the town they are in. When they go to a new town they know where the post office is and the grocery store. It takes me three times as long to do anything.

Although she was having trouble getting around the cities which hosted tournaments, she was a quick study of what kind of discipline was

expected of her on the tour. The qualitative distinction between collegiate golf and the professional tour is clear in Sara's attribution of her rapid improvement to the social expectations.

When you are out here you don't realize how much practice you are doing. You don't just play eighteen holes. You come out here in the morning and hit balls, then play a round, grab something to eat, and practice for another two hours. It is a routine. At home you just play nine holes or eighteen and when you come in you might put in maybe 30 minutes and then go home. But around here you have got a hundred and forty people who want to do just as well as you or better than you and you see them hitting balls. It is a motivator. You see people (*pointing to the driving range*) out there practicing all the time.

Like most other professional sports, the LPGA is a subworld within a social world. Its members' everyday lives and perspective on the sport only vaguely resemble the majority of those who play golf. Professionals don't just hit it farther, straighter, and with more consistency than mini-tour players or collegiate players, they engage the sport in a qualitatively different fashion. The techniques, attitude, and discipline change with each level of the sport. The very way they think about the game is different. The distinction between the professional and amateur golfers, the staple of LPGA fans, can be extreme.

Your average golfer wants to improve, but they don't want to change and they don't want to practice. And I don't blame them, practice is boring, *they don't even know how to practice*. They would rather get out on the golf course. (Tara)

It is not that professionals merely do more of it, they do it differently.

Relating across an abyss of incomprehension can become an irritant for some players.

Fans don't know what it is like to play professional golf because they are only relating to their weekend experiences. They don't know it is a seven-day-a-week job. One guy just asked me what I do with the rest of my week. They just don't know. (Gerta)

The expression "out here" often refers to this distinction between professional golf and other golfing worlds.

STRUCTURAL INSULATION

The professional woman player's isolation within the world of golf and the country club is compounded by her sense of being outside mainstream society. The expression "out here" also captures contemporary players' understanding of their social position.

Being outside the mainstream is the consequence of the tour's structure. The tour is never in one city for more than a week, usually less. Players, caddies, and staff are much more likely to be "on the road" than at home. During the thirty-five weeks that the tour is in season, most players compete in thirty tournaments and stay "out" for four to five weeks at a time. One player described the tour as a "traveling circus," another as a "little bubble that travels from city to city, week after week." The everyday life of the player resembles that of a modern-day nomad.

Like a circus or a production company, the members of the LPGA begin to depend on each other to maintain a sense of continuity. After their golf rounds are completed, players tend to spend time with each other or check in with each other. Val's comparison to other occupations is illustrative of this distinctive aspect of the tour:

In our environment, we have friends other places only because we go to the tournament sites and we see them once a year. But we are with the players and caddies all the time, all year. So we are going to be going out to dinner and rooming with each other. It is a completely different environment than a business situation. (Val)

In addition to being in constant contact with the people affiliated with the tour, the mobility of the tour inhibits the development and nourishment of intimate relations with people not on the tour. June describes the feelings of isolation as she recounts her transition to tour life:

I graduate and make the LPGA tour, which was a big, big goal, and then suddenly I was thrown into something I didn't really want. I mean golf is one thing, but what I turned my life into, I didn't know I was qualifying for that. I mean I expected to play a lot of golf but, I also live in a damn van. I live at airports, I am constantly on the phone arranging traveling. I live out of a suitcase and you know I don't have any set routines anymore.

I lost all my friends—well I haven't lost them but it certainly is a different communication with them—some people

call it their support network, but now I see why they say that—I lost my family more or less. I don't have that—It is different. I call them from places I don't even know the area code I'm calling from. (June)

While June may overstate the trauma of turning pro, most players seem to share these general sentiments. The inability to maintain close relations off the tour and the bonding between players isolates and focuses a player's attention on issues of tour life.

The feeling of being away from home as a result of the constant travel is a commonly shared complaint. Again, June dramatically captures the sense of dislocation resulting from the constant travel:

I travel and I travel and I travel. You kind of lose perspective. You're like, where the hell am I, what am I doing? Why am I doing this? Did I ever want to do this? Why do I work so hard to wake up in wherever, to play another round of golf? That is hard, really hard. (June)

The constant travel leads to a sense of groundlessness. Players feel apart from mainstream society, or in their words, cut off from "reality" and relationships.

The worst part of it is not being able to stay in one position for more than two and a half months. Not enough time to build any type of relationship—male or female, sexual or otherwise. Not being able to grow plants, not being able to cook, not being able to ski, not being able to do what normal people do on their days off. (Gerri)

On the professional level, the game is consuming and, as a result, isolating. Players generally spend about six to eight hours a day playing or practicing golf. In some cases, players sustain a routine of eight hours of golf, six or seven days a week, for five to six weeks in a row. The following description of a tournament-day routine by Helen seems fairly typical of an average tour player.

A typical day really depends on what day of the week it is. A tournament day would be: get up three hours before my tee time. If it's late I do try to sleep in because then I don't have all day to get the nerves going, get the adrenaline going. Get up three hours before, get dressed and have breakfast and get out

to the course about an hour and a half before. Practice: hit balls, chip, putt, putt, chip, hit. And then play.

After I've played the four hours [rounds last about four and half hours] I don't like to stay out there and beat balls for three hours. [An exaggerated reference to some of the other players, most of whom hit for about an hour afterwards.]

Not right away. I do go back and practice, but I like to break it up 'cause I know my concentration. I can't concentrate for an hour before and then four hours on the course, and then go straight back out to the range. Six hours straight, I can't. So I like to break it up. I'll take a break, either I'll go back to my private housing or the hotel or I'll go jogging or go work out or take a nap, do the laundry. I'll do something in between and go back and practice with a fresh mind. (Helen)

In addition to the minimum seven hours at the course playing or practicing, the demands of professional golf shape the way most players arrange their evenings. Many players leave the course with their putters in hand to practice their putting stroke in their hotel room before going to bed. Other players listen to relaxation tapes, to help them "visualize" their game before they retire for the day. Often, before they can even leave the course, they must make an appearance at a tournament-sponsored event.

For many of the better players, there are local publicity and sports news spots to do, and print news interviews to give, in addition to "schmoozing" with sponsors. More experienced and higher-ranked players reiterate Helen's assessment of the time demands but add the entertainment aspect of the sport.

You figure a round takes five hours to play, four and half, you always practice before and after, that makes seven. It always takes ya an hour or so to get ready, that's eight. And then there are cocktail parties. (Ethel)

The cocktail parties Ethel mentions above, refer to the better players' responsibility to rub elbows with local tournament sponsors.

It is not simply that golf takes so much time, but that the players' sense of time is distinct from broader society. The tempo to life seems unhurried. Their world is task-oriented, not time-driven. Players seem concerned with time only when it stipulates their tee off. Conventional time is the backbone of American society. Industry measures work and profits in units of times. Most people arrange meetings, define the lim-

its of their interactions, eat meals, and arrange golf games according to conventional time. Professional golfers on tour adjust their life according to a round of golf. As Helen points out,

The tee time determines everything, in terms of what time breakfast is going to be and what time lunch is going to be and what time I'll get up.

As a result, players are more likely to arrange appointments and meet friends according to the completion of a round of golf than a time on the clock.

Most players can keep a fairly good handle on the day of the week because the tour's basic format does not change from week to week. Monday is a travel day. Tuesday is a practice day. Wednesday is a pro-am tournament (a fundraising tournament with local recreational golfers). Thursday and Friday are preliminary rounds of the tournament. Saturday and Sunday are the final rounds. Dates and months are not as clearly defined for the players as days of the week. The LPGA tour lasts for between 35 and 40 weeks each year. It begins in Jamaica in January, and travels to Florida, Hawaii, and Southern California in the winter and early spring. The tour slowly winds its way north and east, hitting New England and Canada in July and August. In September the tour plays the Northwest before heading back into Southern California. By migrating with the sun, players enjoy an abnormally long and pleasant summer but experience a unique sense of dislocation.

Helen, still in her first season, is still grappling with her new-found sense of dislocation.

For me it's so new, the whole tour. Summer normally for me would consist of being at home and playing and seeing everyone and working on my game. Now it's like almost the fourth of July and I'm—I think I'm going to be in Toledo.

It's different, but I feel it more because I don't have any reference points to say "Oh, fourth of July I will always be in Toledo" or "Memorial Day is in Rochester." It's funny because all my previous reference points are related to being at home or in school or out of school. Everything is sort of changing for me right now. (Helen)

Cathy's caddy and life partner related some instances from his life which nicely illustrate the sense of timelessness one acquires on the tour.

I tell ya, when you get out here for months, there are no holidays. It's not a holiday. It is just one day of a tournament. Like Memorial Day, it was Memorial Day, I didn't even know (*laughs*). I knew it was a holiday, because I wanted to play golf but I couldn't because the course was full. It is funny like that.

I have no idea of the date, I spent time with my family this week. My brother came out and said "Happy June everybody." I had no idea that today was June first.

I called my home once, called my mom from California, to say "How are you doing?" She lives in New York, says "Oh, good, I played golf today." I said, "What do you mean you played golf today?" It was the middle of April and I had no idea. I just assumed that New York was still under snow. You just lose all conception of time, you have no idea. (Cathy's caddy)

The relatively solitary nature of the professional game further contributes to the isolation of the professional golfer. While the practice tee is peppered with conversation between swings, it is generally light banter about golf or tour life. Similarly, conversations with sponsors consist almost exclusively of "small talk" and "shop talk." The golfer is immersed in golf and thus insulated from other social worlds. National and world events often pass by unnoticed.

The most convenient means of gathering information from off the tour are not utilized by some players.

I'm not that much of a TV-watcher type person, sometimes I wouldn't even know what's happening in the outside world unless someone goes "Oh, did you know such and such happened?" And you know, most of the time, I won't even know. (Hattie)

Gerri, a long-time veteran, made this remark about players and current affairs:

I don't know how many of the girls out here read the paper. I read it religiously every day. . . . On a whole, most of the people I associate with read. So we at least have something else to talk about [besides golf].

I would say probably ten [players read]. It's terrible. Cause if they don't read the paper they don't know what's

going on in the world. It's a terrible feeling, but that's the feeling I get out here, is that we don't stay attuned to what's going on in the rest of the world. (Gerri)

The ability to understand world and national events requires that the reader or viewer follow the news. Periodic sustained attention is necessary to understanding the larger social worlds outside of professional golf. It is a luxury most golfers do not have time for. Even off-season attempts to get caught up can be futile. Denise, in an attempt to broaden her understanding of the world, attempted to read the *New York Times* during the winter break. She found, however, that her interest and skill in comprehending current affairs had atrophied, and she only had the desire to read the lifestyle section of the newspaper.

The most revealing example of the otherworldliness of the tour came in a discussion with a golfer's former college roommate. The roommate, now a medical doctor working in an emergency room, was in a gallery watching her friend. The evening before, they had spent some time catching up on each others lives. When the doctor tried to express the horrors of crack and gang wars, which she dealt with daily, the golfer's response was, "But isn't Barbara Bush doing a good job with this?"

In addition to being physically isolated by the relentless travel and insulated from the everyday reality of mainstream society by the all-consuming nature of their profession, the players lack control of and responsibility for themselves. On tour, players don't have to take responsibility for even their most basic everyday needs. The following quote from an LPGA staff member speaks to this aspect of tour life.

You know it is funny, it is like a little mini world. You are so sheltered, you are isolated out here. That is why some people lose their perspective on everything.

One of my favorite stories is of a player who retired from the tour, who told me her greatest adjustment to life after leaving the LPGA tour was buying her own hand lotion (*laughs*). I mean these players are given everything, every locker room is stocked. All their personal needs are met.

Theoretically, if these girls want to, they could never spend a nickel. You go into the locker room, there is food for breakfast, there are hospitality areas, there is lunch. If you want to eat after golf in the evening, there is usually a function.

This is a tremendously unrealistic world, you are in the ultimate, the finest country clubs in the country. People are

driving you around. You don't deal with any poverty. We shelter the players from every possible thing. All they've got to do is make their airline reservations and get there. (Staff member)

As a result of this sheltered existence, the players' ability to function outside of their "world" deteriorates. Players suffer from a sort of learned dependence which encourages them to turn to the tour and away from mainstream society for help with the day-to-day issues of getting by. As a result, some players lose their sense of their individual agency. Gerri expressed the tradeoffs of a life with limited responsibilities:

Our world is pretty good. We get catered to every day. Even our shoes get cleaned. The only thing that we have to do is our laundry and make a flight and make a hotel reservation or write a guy [a caddy] a check. There's not a whole helluva lot of responsibility except the responsibility to ourselves.

So I say that it is very selfish, but it is not selfish because it is just what you have to do. If you don't have something to keep your mind [grounded in the world outside of golf] you can get a little lost out here. I don't like to think that I'm spoiled but I know I get spoiled.

I get tired of my dinner being bought every day and I get tired of beer being bought. I get tired of not being able to go in and make my own dinner. I get tired of somebody pampering me all the time.

The players' limited control and understanding of life outside their world is in direct contrast to the responsibilities and pressures they face as athletes. As competition between the LPGA membership improves, players become increasingly focused on golf. The overall level of competition on the tour ten to twenty years ago was qualitatively different.¹² Older professionals frequently noted that the younger professionals are better prepared as golfers, but infuriatingly less adept at life skills. Gerta in her interview suggested the rude awakening many of the players might suffer if and when they leave the tour.

I think most of the players, as a rule, do not appreciate what they have. They don't know what the real world is all about. They haven't had to go out and make a living or had to work and support themselves, as a general rule.

We are treated like royalty everywhere we go. People bend over backwards to make sure your every need is taken

care of. Like I said, I don't think they realize that this isn't the way the world really is. People don't kowtow to ya when you [retire]. When you get off the tour and have to go make your own way in the world and you say, I am so-and-so, a golfer, you are going to come across people who don't care, or could care less if they don't know what golf is. It is going to be a real shock if people ever have to do that. So that has been very interesting to observe.

The older players had to "rough it out" through the early years of the tour when players were responsible for more than a good golf game. The players of the fifties and sixties were responsible for event and tour management and thus more connected with the world outside of golf.

Taken in total, today's player experiences tour life as alienating from the rest of the world. But the separateness is not necessarily experienced as something bad. Unlike Gerta and Gerri, most players experience the insulation as a positive aspect of the tour. This freedom from responsibility allows the golfers to focus on golf. Ann's observations epitomized the general feeling of the players on tour. Her comments reflect the awareness of the insulation the players feel, their general acceptance of it, and the comfort that insulation affords the players.

Really the golf tour is out of touch with reality. You are out here and focusing so much of your attention on playing golf, making money out here, surviving out here, that you pretty much lose touch with reality. . . .

People that are close to us, who have an insider's perspective, often take issue with us. They say our life is so easy. They say we don't have to live in the real world. But I wonder what is so bad about that.

OUTSIDERS WITHIN

In her book *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins describes the position of African American women in our society as "outsiders within." As domestic workers, activists in the civil rights movement, and as intellectuals, African American women have witnessed mainstream culture from the inside without being fully incorporated. For Collins, the "outsider within stance" of African American women in the economic, social, and intellectual spheres serves as the basis of African American women's thought and activism. In many ways the

historic position of women golfers resembles that of African American women. Within the various social spheres in which the tour players move—the country club, the golf world, and mainstream society—they remain on the fringe. Although privy to the inside workings of these worlds, and at times even revered, they are not full participants.

The expression “out here” speaks to the players’ position in the world as outsiders within. They are outside, yet they are here, on the inside. Their world is arranged so that they are insulated from mainstream society. At the same time, they are part of mass culture. Their approach to the sport is different from the rest of the golf world. At the same time amateurs watch and listen to them when they discuss the fine points of the game. Finally, they are outsiders within the institutional base of their sport, golf, and country clubs on account of their sex. Yet, for a week each summer at many of the finest country clubs and resorts, they are honored guests.

The material reality of being an “outsider within” yields a unique perspective. Being privy to, but not invested in, a social world cultivates a critical eye. Such a stance does not generally inspire devotion. For Collins, this experience of so many black women fosters a shared critical perspective that she labels black feminist thought. While professional women golfers hardly represent a school of thought, they do seem to share a common perspective which can be traced to their position as outsiders within the upper-class, male-focused social world of golf.

Ironically, as sports entertainers, the members of the LPGA must appeal to (or at least not alienate) all the groups from which they seem segregated. Most sport or recreational subworlds and subcultures relish or celebrate their separateness. “Dropping out,” the height of commitment in surfing and sail-boarding circles, is not a cherished state on the women’s golf tour. Women professional golfers are reluctant outsiders. The tour as public entertainment must develop and maintain mass appeal. At the same time, women golfers are somewhat critical of these social worlds which they are able to observe from within.

Outside yet within the golfing world, the LPGA is never fully separate and alien from the broader culture. For the LPGA necessarily reflects the dominant culture. Indeed, professional golf—with its rigorous work schedule, highly competitive structure, and interaction with the political and financial elite—reflects mainstream and corporate ideals. At the same time, the essence of the tour—women playing sport in a serious fashion—seems culturally distinct from the mainstream. The tour simultaneously reflects social norms and presents an alternative to them. Willis, in a discussion of cultural production, refers to this rela-

tionship between mainstream culture and subcultures as the “dialectic of cultural life.” When framed in this light, the subworld of the LPGA is not an inconsequential social oddity or an isolated “bubble,” but is instead pregnant with social relevance. The LPGA and its members are unwittingly engaged in the transformation of our culture, the injection of political alternatives into the mainstream society, and stretching our notion of what is possible.