



Sandy McDivot

Girl Power!

I do adore those old examples of a golf clubs ladies section, don't you? You know the ones, that old Ladies' Captain whose life belongs not so much in a different age but on a different celestial body.

I once was walking my dog (Duff McDivot) in a local village where the populace appeared to be made up almost exclusively of golf obsessed retired military hierarchy and their wives, when I was accosted by an old Seniors' Section President whose wife had recently vacated her seat as the Ladies' Captain.

"Come in Sandy" he said, "you must have a look at my lawn". And so we toured his estate before venturing into their palatial residence for a recently exhumed can of double diamond stamped "best before 1978". It was at this point that his wife walked in and asked, "Have you seen my husband's erection"? A disturbing question to which there appeared not to be an answer until I managed to quickly deduce that this was "Old Lady Captain's" speak for the recently constructed garden shed, which he had indeed shown me. "I am very excited by it," she went on to say, in even more embarrassing detail.

But the merriment of the Ladies' Section does not end with their eccentric use of the English language. I once worked at a club that regularly experienced the visual horror of a masked flasher who principally peddled his meagre wares on ladies day. It was during one of these exhibitions that the recipient of his proffering asked of the flasher "Are you a member?" A question that draws the further enquiry as to what the reaction would have been if he had replied, "Well yes madam, I am in fact the Chairman of the Green committee." Would the response have then been, "Well that's alright then. So long as you have paid your subscription on time."! When recounting the episode to the other members back in the clubhouse, she apparently stated that despite there being no answer to her question, she did not feel that this reprobate was a member. This then warrants another enquiry as to how she came to such a conclusion given that the traditional means of identification was hidden from view. Perhaps there is more to the Ladies' Section than we at first thought.

Another source of endless amusement to us greenkeeping folk is the quality of ladies' golf. Of course I am not one for condemnation and so must point out that not all lady golfers are atrocious at the game in fact many would give us a sound thrashing, but years of study have constantly resulted in the ritual asking oneself of the question, "Why on earth do they bother?" I am sure you can all recall your own examples of bewildering golfing standards but just recently I observed one of our regular lady exponents of the game reach the very edge of our 10th green (a short par four) in a mere five shots, but then without any intervening hazard betwixt ball and hole she somehow managed to end up seven shots later in a lost ball situation some 20 yards in an adjacent forest. Don't ask me how it happened, it just did. I managed to remain a distant observer on that one

but more recently I lived the horror that is, when you stand aside with the mower on tick over while they confront you with a display of golf at its most hideous. The episode in question was perpetrated by the one of the dignitaries of the Ladies' Section when faced with a shot of some ten yards over a bunker to a generous green. Where does one look when they then produce three consecutive complete duffs without the ball ever actually moving before shanking into the sand? She then went on to systematically circumnavigate the bunker with some ten further hacks each bringing with it another level of buttock clenching embarrassment to herself, her partner and me. Her partner meanwhile had seemingly made matters worse by saying to her "Bad luck" on the first couple of failed attempts

before realising that luck had nothing to do with it, at which point she ceased further comment and joined me in the painful pretence of not having noticed.

Then there is club selection as deployed by the lady golfer. I have never quite been able to fathom it out. I recall an episode recently where one of our regulars had a shot of about 70 yards to our 17th green. So what club would one take? A wedge, a sand wedge, or perhaps a subtle push with a nine iron. No the choice of the day was, you've guessed it, a three wood. In fact the 3-wood is generally deployed for all shots over 50 yards and the putter taken on all occasions when 30 yards or less of ground needs to be covered, which rather begs the question as to why they keep a full set of irons onboard the electric trolley. An old professional golfer once told me of how in a mixed foursomes, his partner was left to tee off on a hole requiring 90 yards of carry over a gorse filled rocky chasm. She turned to the Pro and came out with the classic confidence boosting line "I have never made this carry before in my life"! So the Pro not willing to engage in abseiling at this point in the round replied, "No problem. Just miss the ball all together and I'll take it from there." And her response to this brilliant stratagem? "But what club shall I use?"

Talking of which, have you ever experienced mixed foursomes golf? I did once, but never again. The problem is, one is suddenly thrown into a situation where etiquette moves from being simply desirable to totally critical. Now I don't know about you but when playing with fellow greenkeepers or ones mates, things such as breaking wind on the top of the opposition's backswing are not so much seen as appalling manners but more, a treasured skill to be envied by all. But I decided early in the round that applying this element of the game to our Lady Captain would not be a good career move. In fact one is forced to eliminate many facets of the game considered normal practice among the male species, such as swearing profusely, voluminous belching, scratching ones nether regions or

detailing ones drinking/puking achievements of the night before. The mixed foursomes situation I found myself in arose many years ago when I was an assistant at a posh London club and along with the first assistant, I was asked to join in the annual staff and ladies get-together. We rather naively agreed on the basis that we may be drawn to play with the one or two girl members of the club who happened to be quite attractive. Our totally pathetic reasoning behind our decision being, that at the end of the round one would get to kiss ones partner and that given our natural irresistible greenkeepers allure, this would inevitably progress to that ultimate erotic experience; the snog. But it transpired that our confidence was misplaced. I was partnered with the conventional battleaxe, but our first assistant got a member of the Ladies' Section that we referred to as 'The Major', a fairly elderly six footer whose real name was Judy. Not that terrible you may think but the reason we referred to Judy as 'The Major' was that she walked with a slight limp caused by an injury sustained in the last great conflict while serving on the front line. "But women did not serve on the front line" I hear you say. Exactly, at that point in her career, Judy was a 'man'. Of course from a competitive point of view, getting Judy as his partner was no bad thing as despite her advancing years she could still pump out those 250 yadders off the tee and unlike most women, the irons in her bag were given a full workout. However the first assistant, due to his rapid calculation that victory would result in not only the end of round kiss having to be administered, but also the compulsory one in full view of all of his peers during the prize giving ceremony, held competitive instinct distinctly in check. His performance levels were further lowered when early on in the round he slotted a 15 footer only for Judy to run across the green and plant a smacker on his right cheek. Needless to say that following this incident, all putts over two foot were steered well away from the target area. But to end my little sojourn through the Ladies' Section may I end on a positive note.

Yes the ladies have got so much more to offer than just entertainment. How about all those delightful little planting schemes they come up with. For example, I once remember being advised by a contingent of the women at an environmentally sensitive heathland course, to plant a nice collection of tulips in front of some selected teeing areas. Also, as their game is played principally along the ground, they are a great means of preventing the insertion of those stupid water hazards in front of greens that the alpha males of the club would like to put in so as to prove their virility.

But by far the biggest advantage the ladies have over their male counterparts is the complete lack of wear they impart on any golf course. After all, when have you ever seen a worn out ladies tee?

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