



Let All Things Be Equal

By Rob Schultz

Some of the finest folks in the world work at golf courses. Some work hard, tell a good story and can drink and swear with the best. Those are four good reasons why sportswriters like folks who work at golf courses.

But many golf courses, like many newspapers, still have a management style that is better suited to when Grover Cleveland was president — during his first term.

Now I can't chase after newspaper management. I'd like to, but I'll get fired and that would upset my wife, who wants to tile the kitchen floor this summer.

But I'd be remiss — even though I may lose some good drinking buddies because of this — if I didn't chastise many of this country's, and this state's, fine private courses for continuing the archaic practice of banning women from the course at certain times of certain days.

The main reason why this absolutely ridiculous practice is still invoked today is history. Ask any pro. They'll tell you that's the way courses always have done it. It goes back to the days of our friend, Grover Cleveland. It's the "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" theory.

Wake up, fellas. It is broke. You'll notice that after you're subpoenaed by some hotshot woman member who files a lawsuit against your club. Her lawyer will make you wish you had sold life insurance for a living. Count on that happening. It's already started at many courses around the country and is sure to be a hot national issue by the end of this summer.

Private clubs are a bit like Iran and the Ayatollah. In the south, we still have problems with blacks getting accepted on some courses. For instance, Wade Houston, the new coach at Tennessee, is not being allowed to join Knoxville's exclusive Cherokee Country Club allegedly because he is black. Everyone is aghast. They should be.

Discrimination just seems to be par for the course at many private courses. The country clubs in the Midwest have come far enough to allow blacks, but they still put the clamps on women.

Hey Mack, just keep 'em barefoot and pregnant and off the course. And if a few women sneak through and want to play a round of golf, well, the men say it's OK if they play when they're not there. The main quote heard around the clubhouse goes like this: "When I'm there, they better be home. I don't want to see any broad on the course when I'm playing."

That is, in simple terms, a private club's attempt toward equality. Create a men's day and a women's day. Just make sure men's days are better and that the men get Saturday morning, too.

Such bent-noodle logic may have worked back in the days of Grover. . . OK, let's say Eisenhower, even Kennedy. Those were the days when the men worked and the women stayed at home with the children. Call it the June Cleaver Era.

But what many men have failed to come to terms with in these days of equality is that many women have good jobs now. Some women are actually executives with quality businesses. Some are doctors and lawyers. Some have enough money to join a private club without the help of a rich, sugar-daddy husband. Some have handicaps less than 63. And some, many of whom aren't married, want their private clubs to be like most every other place in their lives; a place where men and women are treated equally; a place where they can play golf whenever they want.

Clubs argue that women know the rules before they join. That's one argument in the clubs' defense. But don't blame the women when they target those discriminatory clubs for boycotts. Such boycotts could force corporations to take their business lunches and outings elsewhere. The bottom line will be a bad bottom line.

Golf is no longer just a man's game. Women are taking it up in record numbers. We have to make room for them. If care is taken when women learn to golf, they'll understand etiquette and will respond to requests to play in four hours or less. I may sound sexist here,

but women seem to understand stuff about etiquette better than most men.

I'll admit, I've shuddered at the thought of playing behind a foursome of women, especially when I'm in a hurry. But when I think of the slowest rounds of my life, men are always to blame. And in recent years, as more women play golf, I've seen fewer slow women.

It once took me 7½ hours to play 18 holes at The Springs in Spring Green.

There were no women in sight.

At that time, I wished there were some around.

— JOB OPENING —

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