Coaching College Women's Golf: Profiling an Emerging Profession

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Abstract

Intercollegiate athletics have struggled with the concept of same-sex coaches, asking the question of whether or not those who coach women or men should be of the same gender. With the advent of Title IX, the conversation has grown particularly acute in non-revenue sports, such as women's golf. The current national study profiles NCAA Division I women's golf team coaches and their attributes. The profile shows a highly educated, Caucasian group who are moderately compensated and have a wide range of coaching experience. The discussion concludes with several key recommendations for continuing to explore same-sex coaching in the NCAA.

Contemporary intercollegiate athletics have come a dramatically long way from their practices of even 20 years ago. The contemporary, major intercollegiate athletic program is more akin to a private sector business with a keen eye toward profitability, and the infrastructure to maximize this profitability (Sperber, 2000). Student support services have evolved from conceptualizations, to practical advising, remediation, study tables, and virtually every activity imaginable to keep student-athletes eligible to compete, and ultimately, to aid in the overall success of the athletic department (Gerdy, 1997). This is not to accuse all major intercollegiate athletic programs of being strictly opportunistic, but rather, illustrates that contemporary intercollegiate athletic programs are much less likely to support or tolerate moderate or non-winning behavior. There are, of course, what could be termed 'acceptable losses,' and these are particularly visible in historically non-revenue producing sports.

The current difficulty so many athletic departments are facing is that even the historically non-revenue producing sports are becoming more competitive, and through advertising rights, television revenue, and even ticket prices, are becoming more financially viable. A bottom-line result, then, is that athletic administrators are searching for the most qualified coaches who can win, and can operate programs that graduate student athletes.

The other pushing force on intercollegiate athletics is Title IX and need to find parity in offering male and female athletic opportunities and scholarships. Athletic departments are suddenly finding that women's sports can be effective tools for publicity, recruiting, fund raising, and generally, revenue production. Women's competitive sports

increased from two and half teams per school in 1970 to over eight in 2002 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2002).

In the midst of the growth of college athletics in terms of revenue production, they have generally faced a wide variety of challenges from a number of different sources. Incidents of cheating, illegal substance abuse, low graduation rates, violence, and even point shaving have all shared center stage in conversations about the role, mission, and intent of college sports. Although college sports in general have been tainted by the actions of certain individuals, widespread criticisms of women's sports programs have been relatively limited. This is especially true in women's golf. The lack of corruption reported in women's collegiate golf could be due to any number of variables, including the relative youth of the sport, failure to identify or report corrupt behaviors or practices, and possibly, the examples and role modeled behavior demonstrated by coaches. The sport also requires participants to self officiate, and this may be reflective of generally higher levels of integrity among the participants.

As an initial point of departure for a larger conversation about collegiate golf and women's athletics, this study was framed around the notion that the college golf coach is an important person in the development of student-athletes and is equally important in how programs are operated. The purpose for conducting the study was to profile the current NCAA Division I golf team coach. This level of competition was selected for consideration based on both the availability of information and resources, but also, these programs are the role models for other levels of competition, and is certainly the most tempted to deviate from acceptable behavior. The study also provides an exploration of the composition of Division I golf teams and financial support that these programs

receive. The findings are important for several reasons, first, to simply get the conversation started about women's golf and to paint an initial portrait of how these programs are operated. Second, the study illustrates the kinds of support mechanisms, from financial compensation to scholarships and graduate assistants that are in place. And third, study findings are important to athletic administrators who increasingly must search for benchmarks and processes that establish equity among athletic programs.

Women's Collegiate Golf: Then and Now

The myth that women have only recently begun to have an interest in golf can easily be dispelled by examining the development of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club at St. Andrews in Scotland, which was commissioned by over 500 years ago by Mary, Queen of Scotts (Ladies Professional Golf Association, 2003). Women's intercollegiate golf has a nearly 50 year old precedent in the US, as organized women's college golf programs first appeared in 1958.

With the advent of Title IX, the Association of Intercollegiate Women's Athletics (AIAW) was formed in the early 1970s to govern women's intercollegiate sports. As a result of conflict with the NCAA, the AIAW was discontinued and merged oversight responsibilities with the NCAA. The NCAA first sponsored a women's Division I golf championship in 1982 at Stanford University. The University of Tulsa won this inaugural competition that included 83 college and university teams. Over the past 22 years, the number of teams competing at this level has increased to 217, making it the second largest growth sport in the NCAA.

As with intercollegiate golf, women's professional golf has also increased dramatically over the past 50 years in both participation and visibility. 1950, 13 women, including Babe Zaharias and Louise Suggs established the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), and this body is currently the longest running women's sports organization in the world. One of the first documented women to receive a college golf scholarship that went on to a professional career was Joanne Carter, who received an athletic scholarship from Arizona State University, and in 1960 won the individual title at the collegiate national championship. She went on to become an LPGA Hall of Fame member (Arizona State University, 2002).

Although women's interest in golf has a long history, men's intercollegiate and professional golf competition have a much longer history of participation and organization. The first recorded men's collegiate golf championship was in 1897, consisting of the Ivy League schools. The first NCAA sponsored championship was in 1939, and there are currently 289 Division I men's golf programs. The Professional Golfers Association of America (the PGA) was established in 1916.

The profession of women's college golf team coach is relatively new, with the first association to represent women's college golf coaches, the National Golf Coaches Association (NGCA), established in 1983. The NGCA has 375 members across all of the NCAA divisional levels.

According to a 25-year longitudinal study by Acosta and Carpenter (2002) on women in intercollegiate athletics, the percentage of female coaches in all divisions in all sports in 2002 was 44%, the lowest percentage in recorded history. In the first year of their study, 1977, women coached more than 90% of all women's teams. In contrast,

approximately 2% of men's teams are coached by women. From 2000-2002, there were 361 new head coaching jobs for women's collegiate teams, of which women obtained only 35 of them. Men obtained over 90% of all of these coaching jobs for women's teams (Acosta & Carpenter, 2002).

In 2002, women's golf existed in 48% of universities offering women's teams in all divisions, an increase from 19.9% in 1977. The increase of women's golf in Division I in the past 10 years has risen from 41.1% in 1992 to 69.8% in 2002. The percentage of women's golf teams from all divisions coached by women in 2002 was 39.2%, as compared to 54.6% in 1978. In comparison to all sports in 2002, 44% of coaches were women, and in 1978, it was 58.2%. This illustrates that women coaching women's golf programs is about 5% under the overall percentage of women coaches in college sports.

In NCAA Division I, women's golf has had a 9.1% decrease in the percentage of female coaches in the last 10 years. In 1992, 61% of coaches were female, and in 2002, that percentage dropped to 51%. For comparative purposes, it should be noted that in 1992, 47% of all Division I coaches were female as compared with 45% in 2002, a 1.5% decrease. This raises very real questions about the substantial comparative decrease in women's golf coaches.

Although coaching is open to numerous applicants, the most likely labor pool from which coaches are drawn is from former participants (Everhart & Chelladurai, 1998). There is the possibility that there are not enough women interested in filing these coaching positions, or that there are simply not enough women with competitive playing experience. The 29% increase in golf programs in the last ten years would certainly reinforce the notion that there may not be a substantial enough pool of applicants to fill

these jobs. So the obvious question is whether or not supply from female applicants can meet the demand of the hiring economy.

And it should be strongly noted that not everyone wants to be a coach. Coaching collegiate golf has a different competitive structure than other sports programs, the season is longer than most other sports, the travel can be extensive, and the overall time commitment can simply be too overwhelming in relation to compensation to make it worthwhile. Consider, for example, the women's collegiate golf season. Golf season begins on the first day of classes or September 1 of each academic year, whichever comes first. The competitive season potentially plays through the third week in May, the date of the NCAA National Championship. Only 24 teams advance to the NCAA Championship and only 63 compete in Regional Championships, which are held in the second week in May. Considering there are 217 programs, 11% of Division I teams play a season that extend through the third week in May, and an additional 18% play a season that extends to the second week in May. The majority of Division I teams (71%) have a season that ends with their conference championship, typically during the second or third week in April. Hart-Nibbring and Cottingham (1986) reported that many women exit coaching because of the role conflict it causes, as they attempt to balance traditional stereotypes of mother, housewife, and teacher.

There is a rather important conversation that must take place from this question about hiring practices, and whether discrimination against women takes place in hiring for women's coaching positions. A component of that conversation must also be how important it is to have female coaches, and whether it is important at all (McClung & Blinde, 2002). Aside from equity concerns, the most compelling argument has been

echoed throughout higher education in recent calls for diversity and encouraging multi-ethnicity. Higher education institutions are different than profit-driven business, and have a social responsibility to students and their respective constituents to provide and demonstrate appropriate role modeling behavior. Gragg (2004), for example, recently noted how important the role modeling coaches exhibit to players in their success in the classroom and in life within the context of African-American student athletes, a commentary identified in previous research (Singer & Armstrong, 2001). Newman (1994) echoed the same message a decade earlier in discussing identity development and positive perspectives on student-athlete participation. The importance of a coach's commitment to both the sport and the student-athlete's best interests are of paramount importance throughout higher education (Kent & Sullivan, 2003; Laios, Theodorakis, & Gargalianos, 2003).

So although higher education institutions have a responsibility to financially solvent and responsible with the state subsidies and tuition revenues which they steward, they must also consider the value they add to a given community and group of students by behaving in a manner that breaks down stereotypes and empowers students (Gerdy, 1997; Shulman & Bowen, 2001). To some extent, and a dialogue certainly worthy of additional research, is the extent that female students who have same-sex coaches value their identity as a woman and whether or not that transcends different-sex coaching interactions.

Research Procedures

As an exploratory study attempting to establish baseline data, descriptive research procedures were employed. A 25-item categorical-response survey instrument was developed based on profiles of other athletic administrators and coaches in higher education, and from the often anecdotal reports in the literature base. This instrument was pilot tested with currently practicing administrators not included in the sample, revised, and deemed to be reliable and valid.

Of the 217 NCAA Division I women's golf programs, a random sample of 60 institutions was identified. The sample size was largely based on resource availability and the approximation available to the population from the 28% sample size. The institutions selected for the study were identified by using a table of random numbers, and once the institution was identified, the women's golf team coach was identified through a combination of various athletic directories and the internet. Data were collected during the spring of 2003.

Findings

Fifty-one coaches returned the survey (response rate=85%) but two surveys were incomplete and removed from the response pool, leaving 49 (response rate=79%) to be used in this study. Cross sections of universities from 30 states were represented in this response pool. Of those returned, 39 (73%) were from female coaches and 13 (27%) from male coaches.

As shown in Table 1, the race and ethnicity of the respondents was 98% Caucasian and 2% Hispanic. These percentages are congruent with the NCAA report on ethnicity of women's golf coaches. The NCAA student-athlete ethnicity report showed

that in 2001-02 season, 82% of the women collegiate golfers were White, Non-Hispanic (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2002).

The age range representation of women in the coaching ranks was distributed somewhat equally. The greatest percentage of coaches by age were males 46 years of age or older at 62%. There were no male respondents under 30 years of age.

Ninety-two percent of respondents held a college degree, including 71% with an undergraduate degree and 18 % with a graduate degree. One respondent did hold a doctoral degree and four had not completed their undergraduate course of study. More women (75%) than men (62%) held an undergraduate degree but men held slightly more (23%) graduate degrees than their female counterpart (20%).

The marital status of the respondents did show trends with relation to gender and age. Fifty-five percent of all respondents were married, 39% were single and 6% were divorced. As noted earlier, the profession of college coaching is not always conducive to a conventional life style. The fact that 62% of the male respondents were married compared with 53% of the women may substantiate that premise. Forty-six percent of the male respondents 46 years of age and older where married in comparison to only six percent of their counterparts.

Ninety-four percent of all respondents were employed on a full-time basis. Only two respondents were at 75% employment status as a head women's golf coach and one was at Half-time (50%). Years in current position varied between genders as demonstrated in the survey results. Sixteen percent (n=8) held additional positions inclusive of director of golf programs, head coach of both male and female teams, university instructor, and teaching golf professional.

Thirty-nine percent of the respondents earned above $51,000 annually, 22% earned $41,000-50,000, 30% earned $26,000-40,000, and 8% under $25,000. Of the four respondents who earned less than $25,000, three were not employed full time.

As shown in Table 2, 75% of programs reported having a full-time assistant coach and 63% of respondents had a part-time assistant coach or graduate assistant. Eighty percent of all programs that responded had fully funded scholarship programs affording six scholarships inclusive of tuition, books, and room and board to be distributed annually to the student–athletes on their rosters.

Only 4% of the respondents had recruiting budgets exceeding $15,000. The highest percentage of female coaches recruiting budget fell in the range of $9,999-$5000 at 42%. Of those programs coached by men, the recruiting budget range of $4,999-$1,000 had the highest percentage at 46%.

The highest average number of student-athletes on rosters for the past three years was 9-8, at 47%. Only one out of the 49 responding coaches averaged 12+ on a roster, and 53% of all respondents averaged 1-2 international students on a roster annually. One program did average 5-6 international student-athletes annually.

Table 3 provides the data related to the responding coaches experiences and professional attributes, including 75% of respondents indicating that they were in their first head coaching position, and 55% percent had experience as an assistant coach. Fifty-three percent of the respondents had no affiliation with the Professional Golfers' Association of America (PGA) or the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). Fifty-four percent of the male respondents were members of the PGA while only 39% of

the female respondents were members of the LPGA. Sixty-five percent of both the men and women respondents played at a professional level.

The frequency of golf participation by male coaches was a greater percentage than by female coaches. Fifty-four percent of men played at least once a week while only 22% of women participated at that frequency.

Eighty-four percent of respondents participated on a college golf team. The percentage of female participation was higher at 89 % than their counterparts, which was at 69%. All 32 women who played college golf were members of a NCAA Division I program and 81% of those women competed for the maximum four years and were on athletic aid. Sixty-seven percent of the men that competed in college played for a Division I program and 56% participated for four years. Sixty-seven percent of those who played college golf were on some form of financial aid. Of the 41 coaches who participated in collegiate golf programs, 34 used all of their four years of eligibility. Thirty-three of those 34 graduated with an undergraduate degree.

Discussion

The present study was performed to develop a profile of coaches of division one women's university golf teams. While there was no intention to determine specific trends or statistics, a number of findings did offer curious insight. There are a number of factors indicated in the responses that would lead to potential directions to the profession and sport that would warrant further study.

The first finding of interest was that there were no male respondents under 30 years of age. This may suggest that athletic administrators are less likely to hire younger

males to coach young women. The fact that more male coaches, by percentage, were married than women may also show a hiring profile, as well. The profession of coaching women's collegiate golf may also not be the first choice of profession for men. The number of men associated to a professional affiliation (PGA) was 15% higher than women, which could suggest that a position as a club or teaching professional was the first choice of young men after their collegiate playing experience.

The premise that collegiate coaching is not conducive to a conventional family lifestyle has been addressed throughout this study. That premise also may be reflected by the high level of golf participation of men as compared to women. Seven out of the eight married men who responded to the survey played golf a minimum of 24 times per year. Twelve of the 19 married women who responded played at that same frequency. The number of dependents each coach had was not asked but could give a perspective and insight into this statistic.

Many university athletic programs today are struggling financially. The fact that 80% of the responding programs are fully funded supports that the idea that Title IX is assisting the responsibility of departments to fund women's sports programs. The number of international student athletes having the opportunity to participate during these financially difficult times may decrease at public state funded institutions. Out-of-state fees at these public institutions are, in many instances, double that of in-state fees. These private institutions that have greater recruiting resources due to tuition structure might have an advantage.

Another fact that supported Title IX's impact on college athletics was the statistic that the women coaching women's college golf are making more money than their

counterparts. When comparing income with other statistics such as educational completion, age, professional affiliation, gender, professional playing experience, etc., no one classification had influence on earnings except gender.

Eleven of the respondents competed in the 2002 NCAA Championship. Of those 11, nine (82%) earned over $51,000 in their coaching position and ten were fully funded in scholarships. One interesting comparison was that of the 11 schools that responded and participated in the 2002 NCAA Championship, five maintained 3-4 international players (45%) as compared with the overall response percentage of 22%. Two of those five programs that averaged 3-4 international students represented private institutions. The recruiting budget breakdown of those championship participants was as follows: $15,000+ (1), $14,999-10,000 (2), $9,999-5,000 (6), $4,999-1,000 (2).

One area of future change may be the race and ethnicity landscape of the coaches of women's college golf. The number of Caucasian coaches is already a greater percentage than that of the players. The number of minorities participating in golf and junior golf programs has increased substantially in the past five years (Golf 20/20, 2002). The coaching ranks will need to mirror that of the players. The NCAA has been working diligently to bridge the gap so that the coaching minority percentages mirror that of the student-athletes populous in sports such as football and basketball. This situation will reach the sport of golf and should be anticipated and addressed prior to arrival.

A similar study of coaches of men's collegiate golf programs would offer comparatives in employment data, educational history and professional background. Athletic directors should look at women as viable candidates for head coaches for men's

college golf teams as they have in affording men to have the opportunity to coach women's programs.

Future areas of study would be needed to assess and determine further development of the golf coaching profession. Questions that would assist in program assessment could concern fundraising requirements, program budgetary responsibility, roster requirements, practice facilities and competitive success. Similar queries that would aid in coaching assessment would be contractual status, professional and personal educational development and institutional support. The comparative newness of the profession, coupled with very limited research and historical documentation available, suggests that further study would be of great benefit to coaches, athletic department and universities that support women's college golf.

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Table 1.
Personal Profile of Respondents

Characteristic/Variable	Female(%) n=39	Male (%) n=13	Overall (%) N=52
Marital status			
Married	53%	62%	55%
Divorced	3%	15%	6%
Single	44%	23%	39%
Age			
25-30	19%	0%	14%
31-35	19%	15%	18%
36-40	25%	8%	20%
41-45	22%	15%	20%
46+	14%	62%	27%
Race/Ethnicity			
Caucasian	97%	100%	98%
Hispanic	3%	0%	2%
Highest Degree Earned			
Associates	3%	0%	2%
Bachelors	75%	62%	71%
Masters	17%	23%	18%
Doctorate	3%	0%	2%
Employment*			
Full Time	94%	92%	94%
Years in Current Coaching Position			
0-3	39%	8%	30%
4-6	11%	62%	25%
7-10	28%	15%	25%
11-15	8%	0%	6%
16+	14%	15%	14%
Annual Salary			
Less than $25,000	8%	8%	8%
26,000-40,000	25%	46%	30%
41,000-50,000	22%	23%	22%
51,000+	45%	23%	39%

**Two respondents were employed at 75% and one at 50%.*

Table 2.
Institutional/Coaching Characteristics of Respondents' Institutions

Characteristic/Variable	Female(%) n=39	Male (%) n=13	Overall (%) N=52
Full-time Assistant Coaches			
0	75%	77%	75%
1	25%	23%	25%
Part-time/Graduate Assistant Coaches			
0	64%	62%	63%
1	36%	38%	37%
University Classification			
Public	81%	85%	82%
Private	19%	15%	18%
Scholarship Funding Level			
Fully funded	83%	69%	80%
95%-75%	5%	0%	4%
74%-50%	8%	15%	10%
49%-25%	0%	8%	2%
Below 25%	3%	8%	4%
Recruiting Budget			
$15,000+	3%	8%	4%
$14,999-10,000	14%	0%	10%
$9,999-5,000	42%	15%	35%
$4,999-1,000	31%	46%	35%
Below $1,000	11%	31%	16%
Average Number of Athletes on Roster			
12+	3%	0%	2%
11-10	28%	15%	24%
9-8	38%	69%	47%
7-6	31%	15%	27%
International students on roster			
5-6	3%	0%	2%
3-4	19%	31%	22%
1-2	61%	31%	53%
0	17%	38%	22%

Table 3.
Attributes of Responding Coaches

Characteristic/Variable	Female(%) n=39	Male (%) n=13	Overall (%) N=52
First Head Coaching Position			
Yes	75%	69%	73%
No	25%	31%	27%
Assistant Coaching Experience			
Yes	56%	54%	55%
No	44%	46%	45%
Professional Affiliation			
LPGA	39%	0%	29%
PGA	3%	54%	16%
Both	3%	0%	2%
No affiliation	55%	46%	53%
Professional Competitive Experience			
Yes	67%	62%	65%
No	33%	38%	35%
Frequency of Rounds Played			
6 times per year	25%	15%	22%
Once a month	17%	0%	12%
Twice a month	36%	31%	35%
At least once a week	22%	54%	30%
Collegiate Golf Participation			
Yes	89%	69%	84%
No	11%	31%	16%
Collegiate Golf Participation Level			
Division I	100%	67%	93%
NAIA	0%	33%	7%

table continues

Table 3, continued.
Attributes of Responding Coaches

Characteristic/Variable	Female(%) n=39	Male (%) n=13	Overall (%) N=52
Number of Years Competed			
4	81%	56%	83%
3	0%	33%	7%
2	9%	0%	7%
1	0%	11%	3%
Collegiate Scholarship Recipient			
Yes	91%	67%	85%
No	9%	33%	15%