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Rough first draft-LPGA’s Instagram

**Intro**

**Personal story**

I have been playing golf since I was 3 and a half years old. I started playing golf as a hobby and also since my family and I lived next to a golf course. My parents didn’t play golf and they didn’t force to play golf either. They put me in a tennis/golf academy for little kids, along with my childhood friends, so we would be active and burn energy. One day, Francisco Franco, who was a coach at the golf academy at my home course, saw me swinging my little plastic club and asked my parents if he could train me because I had a lot of potential. My parents were skeptical at first because they didn’t understand what he saw at me at age 3 and a half, also the academy started accepting kids after age 5. After some insistence from Francisco, my parents allowed him to coach me. Fate allowed me to be on that golf course that day at the right time to meet my first coach, Francisco Franco, brother to a senior PGA player from Paraguay, Carlos Franco. I am eternally grateful for that.

I won my first trophy at that age. I represented the National Paraguayan girl’s golf team at age 5 and came in 5th place in the U.S Kids World Championship that was held in the state of Virginia. I, then, started to play tournaments pretty much every other weekend in Paraguay, as well as in the U.S during vacation time, to get a more competitive mindset. By age 13, I had 80 trophies and 5 holes in one. I was also National champion in my age group for 5 years in a row.
Practicing is always necessary to keep improving your swing because golf is an “inches game”, but tournaments put the player under pressure and train the player’s mind to be calm and resilient no matter what kind of shot you have ahead of you or if we have been playing for more than 4 and a half hours. When I refer to golf as an “inches game”, I mean that an extra inch on what degree your club is at in the swing at impact, an extra inch on how much you hinge your wrist in your backswing, an extra inch on what plane your takeaway is, and so on, can alter your swing and cause for some unwanted shots on the course.

After age 13, my family and I went through some rough patches, and in result of these, we ended up moving to Florida when I was 16. I joined another golf academy in Florida, as an after-school program, and things got a lot better personally, in school and at golf. I made a lot of great friends at this academy and school, and these people helped rebuild me up and make me stronger.

About 19 years later and a long golfing career with ups and downs, I find myself at Southwestern University in Georgetown, TX., playing for the women’s golf team as a senior. Despite being a female golfer, I never truly experienced sexist comments in my entire life until about 2 years ago on a golf course. I had two incidents at the same course where I had elderly male members made these comments, and one of those incidents was directed towards me. As a collegiate player, we play a minimum yardage of 5,800 yards in 18 holes during a tournament, and as expected, we play from tee boxes further back (white or blue tees) than the “ladies’ tee” or red tee, which is all the way at the front of all the tee boxes. I was practicing by myself from the blue tees and the group behind me was compromised of these men. As I was getting ready to hit, they start saying comments like “this is the men’s tee”, “the ladies’ tee is all the way up there, the red one”, and so on to throw me off. I turned to them, politely said “Collegiate players,
like myself, don’t play from all the way up there in case you didn’t know”, and I hit my driver far and straight on the fairway, leaving them with them speechless.

This particular experience opened my eyes to the sexist people that still exist out there and made me realize how undermined and disrespected female golfers still are, even though we have proven to be just as good of players as the male golfers out there. Since this incident happened, I became determined to establish more respect for myself as a golfer both on and off the course as well as aid in the fight for more equality between the sexes in golf, at an amateur level and professional.

So What?

Growing up, I had the women on the LPGA (Ladies Professional Golfers Association) to look up to as role models and one of those ladies was also our good family friend Julieta Granada. Back at the time when I started playing golf, social media wasn’t a thing yet, and it was hard to keep up with the LPGA as their tournaments weren’t broadcasted very frequently. Throughout my years, I have grown up watching the LPGA grow not only as an institution and brand, but into a symbol of empowerment for young female golfers like myself. My project on the analysis of the self-branding and marketing of the LPGA’s Instagram is very relevant because of the effort of the LPGA to become as well known as the PGA and it is time for them to get the well-deserved attention they have been fighting for all these years.

My project is crucial to the scholarly world because there is not much talk about the LPGA or women’s golf in a positive light. There is much work done on other sports where women compete, such as tennis and soccer, but not enough in golf, as women playing golf is considered untraditional still after so many years. There is also a lot of scholarly work on sexism and discrimination towards women’s sports, but not a lot on ways that we can help diminish these
issues and fight back against them. I hope that my passion about this topic starts a much-needed conversation on where LPGA stands in our American society, what it represents to people across the globe, and how they will continue to impact the future of women’s golf.

Some questions I will attempt to answer in my capstone are: 1) How has the LPGA used “othering” to empower the messages behind their Instagram posts? 2) What brand is the LPGA creating? How does the LPGA interpellate the audience? 3) Do the “American Identity” and “Western Hegemonic Ideals” appear across their Instagram page? If yes, how so? 4) How is the LPGA making its brand stand out amongst the other female and male professional associations? What are they doing differently? 5) Will the LPGA be able to be considered a traditional sport in our Western society in the future? 6) Has social media been able to help them reach out to more fans across the globe and carry across their message of empowerment?

**Literary framework**

In “Transnational Sport: Gender, Media and Global Korea” by Rachael Miyung Joo, reviewed by Jin-Kyung Park, Joo coins the term “media sport” as “competitive sports that are structured by commercial mass media and manufactured for mass consumption.” (481). She then goes on to call “media sport” a “transnational metacommodity” as “media sport exercises power to create spectatorship and thus sponsorship on a massive scale in the era of the new media (ex. Internet) and instant social mobilization of voluminous crowds that it mediates” (p.481). These two terms will be key in my research as the LPGA brand is being modified through the use of social media. The LPGA’s Instagram page has a variation of videos, pictures, tournament promotions, and so on, that both satisfy the sponsors and attract the audience’s attention into interacting with their social media.
The article “The Internet and the future of Sport History”, Holly Thorpe supports her arguments with fellow scholars’ previous observations. Her article’s main argument is talking about how our modern society is heavily impacted by the Internet and the way sports are being shared with the audience to help the audience feel more involved in the action (player stats, live tweeting, chat rooms, etc.). J. Patrick Williams and Heith Copes state “expressing subcultural identities online is part of the identity work individuals perform in their everyday lives, yet identity online is not separate from the face-to-face world…rather it complements and supplements it” (130). A struggle most athletes are having online is knowing where to draw the line on how many sports-related posts to make and how much of their personal lives they need to share. This will be helpful in analyzing the LPGA’s Instagram page because according to Tina Barnes-Budd, senior director of social media marketing and communication at the LPGA, they are working on “humanizing the brand” to make the audience feel closer to the players and like they are learning about them as athletes, but also as people.

“Defining a Theory of Genre” by Adena Rosmarin is a book chapter that explains the theory of genre. In a summarized version, genre has repetition and resemblance which at times reminds us of something else but has new details that make it unique. This theory aids me in noticing the trends arising in the LPGA’s Instagram that are similar to what other professional women’s sports are doing as well, as well as point out the differences that are making the LPGA attract people’s attention. In my analysis and conclusion of my paper, I will hypothesize if what they are doing with social media will be enough to be memorable amongst our society and will aid them in becoming a more stable entity.

Western hegemonic ideals and American Identity
In Jaime Schultz’s book *Qualifying Times: Points of Change in U.S Women’s Sport*, chapter 5 is titled “From ‘Women in Sports’ to the ‘New Ideal of Beauty’”. In this chapter, she discusses the “beauty myth” (a term coined by Naomi Wolf) which are the beauty trends that women should be aspiring to. Back in 1982, female athletes were starting to appear more on magazine covers, which was a step forward in the feminist movement; however, other magazines then started posting models on their covers because now “being fit was heterosex.” According to Schultz, “by converting a women’s quest for physical equality into a quest for physical perfection, public culture of the early and mid-1980s effectively diffused the forward momentum of women in sport” (126). In our society now, female athletes are still being judged by their appearance instead of their skill sets because fit is still heterosex and if you don’t satisfy the “fit, lean athletic” look then you aren’t good enough as an athletic, but in particular being you are an athlete. The LPGA has players challenging the supposedly “fit” appearance athletes should have and also have a different fashion taste in what is considered “feminine-looking.” The LPGA shows players from different races, countries, sizes, etc., on their Instagram to fight against this “beauty myth” and promote that being unique and different is a good thing. Tina Barnes-Budd mentions in her interview “Our players have their own brand to build, and our job is promoting the players and the Tour through our social media channels…Our players understand the power of social media and how they help not just themselves but the LPGA, as well” (151).

Sena Christian challenges the patriarchal society we live in in her article titled “The radical potential of women in sports”. “Every time a young woman participates in sports or displays her athleticism, she breaks down naturalized gender categories and expectations. The image of women who are not passive, weak, emotional, non-competitive and dependent on men shakes up society’s perceptions and assumptions about men and women. Bodies are signified
with meaning, and female bodies that are athletic, strong and muscular disrupt gender binaries and provide a foundation for deconstructing oppressions grounded in biological difference “(27). Though a lengthy quote, this quote shows that female athletes are caught in the definition of what it means to be “athletic” in the patriarchal society we live in. If they look different from what a stereotypical woman should look like according to men, then she is not feminine enough, but if she is too muscular, she is too masculine and threatens the patriarchy. The LPGA’s Instagram is constantly redefining the look of a female golfer and drawing attention to the fact that there is more to these players than simply being a pretty face or even an athlete.

“Textual Portrayals of Female Athletes: Liberation or Nuanced Forms of Patriarchy?” by Victoria Carty analyzes the way that men view women and if the way female athletes are actually fighting against patriarchy or encouraging the patriarchal standards for femininity and stereotypes of beauty. This article will be helpful because it will help me acknowledge how patriarchal norms keep appearing everywhere and keep an eye out to see if those norms appear on the LPGA’s posts on Instagram.

Brad Austin writes a chapter in his book titled “‘The Instinctive Urge to Compete’: Challenges to the Anticompetitive Model in Women’s Sports” where he talks about the history of the patriarchal narrative on how women were perceived as not being able to compete because of their bodies and how women have continued to challenge this false narrative. This will be relevant in my capstone because the LPGA keeps highlighting their players’ abilities and are constantly challenging this false narrative surrounding female athletes.

Padma Prakash writes an article on how female athletes are trying to get control of their bodies’ image in our patriarchal society and how they keep pushing the boundaries. At first, she goes into the societal belief across different cultures back in the early 19th century that stated that
women couldn’t work out or do any sort of physical activity because they wouldn’t be able to have kids; then, she segways to uncovering reasons produced by Popular Health movement as to why it is crucial for women to be active, and some these reasons contradicted the popular myths such as living longer and helping with childbirth. This is very closely knit to the article above and I plan to use this one to give me some history of women in sports struggling to fight of the Western ideals of what athletes’ bodies are supposed to look like.

Othering

Edmund Husserl’s concept of “othering” is relevant in the world of a female athlete since sports were believed and are still believed, to a degree, to be a field that belongs to men. In her book chapter “Othering”, Valdivia describes “othering as a strategy that reinforces the mainstream by differentiating individuals and groups and relegating them to the margins according to a range of socially constructed categories” (133). Then in “‘Barbie Dolls’ on Pitch: Identity Work, Defensive Othering, and Inequality in Women’s Rugby” by Matthew Ezzel, he explains how “At times, members of subordinated groups may engage in defensive othering—reinforcing the power of stigmatizing labels by arguing that the label is true for other members of their social category, but not for themselves” (114). In other words, “Members of subordinated groups may use defensive othering to specially deflect resistance to their participation in dominant-identified industries” (114). Both of these sources will aid me in identifying how the LPGA comes off to their audience and demonstrate how they are creating their brand. In this paper, I am using “othering” to keep reiterating the idea of how men’s sports are normed, and women’s performance in the same sports and others are being othered.

“Cheering on Women and Girls in Sports: Using Title IX to fight gender role oppression” by Harvard Law Review, “Title IX and the allocation of resources to women’s and men’s sports”
by Amy Farmer and Paul Pecorino, and “Review: PRESSURE IS A PRIVILEGE: BILLIE JEAN KING, TITLE IX, AND GENDER EQUITY” by Susan Ware, reviewed by Amanda L. Paule-Koba, are articles discussing the way Title IX has helped and not helped female athletes.

Harvard Law’s article mentions how social backlash continues to happen towards women in sports for invading the domain of the “strong sex in the following manners”: 1) Women’s sports continue to be minimized and trivialized by unequal media coverage and community support; 2) women are increasingly sexualized; 3) female athletes increasingly portrayed as gaining sport opportunities only at the expense of funding for male athletes” (1629-1630). Harvard Law, just like the LPGA, says how playing a sport can help boost a woman’s and girl’s confidence in their abilities, in their looks, and the way they carry themselves in society. The LPGA is fighting to become a stable entity and have accessible social media outlets to all the way across the globe so young girls know that they can set their minds to whatever they want to, including becoming a professional golfer no matter your background.

Amy Farmer and Paul Pecorino created a model to understand what is truly going on post Title IX at institutions, and according to their research, “the model predicts that the total number of resources devoted to sports is unchanged and the increase in resources devoted to women’s sports is matched by a one-for-one decrease in the resources devoted to men’s sports” (142). In simpler terms, institutions need to cutback in men’s sports in order for women to have more sports, but institutions don’t want to do this because men generate revenue and women don’t. This can act as a form of self-fulfilling prophecy because even though we think that women’s sports are getting more equality, they are not and institutions by taking away one of the men’s sport reinforce the “lack of interest in women’s sports”. This is relevant to my project because
this will help me analyze and predict the LPGA’s success, as well as comparing it to the PGA, since it is said that the LPGA is living in the shadow of the PGA.

In the reviewed article of Susan Ware’s book, Amanda L. Paule-Koba talks about the way Billie King and second-wave feminism forever changed the world of women’s tennis and how soon after her famous match, in 1972, Title IX was passed. In predicting the future of the LPGA, Billie King’s story will be helpful in seeing if women’s golf needs a big moment in history such as hers to truly challenge the patriarchal society and give the PGA a run for their money.

In Katie Liston’s “Power at Play: Sport, Gender and Commercialisation”, she discusses the potential reasons why women in sports aren’t as appealing to the audience as men in sports. Creedon and Becker (1986) argue that three theoretical constructs can account for stated audience preferences for viewing male sports: people don’t like the unknown, female sports are perceived as inferior, and some sports are viewed as inappropriate for women” (257). This article aid me in helping the reader understand potential reasons why male-dominated sports may be more popular and highlight all the ways the LPGA is challenging these three constructs through their social media.

Similarly, in Cheryl Cooky’s book chapter “It’s Dude Time!: A Quarter Century of Excluding Women’s Sports in Televised News and Highlight Shows, the author mentions the reasons why men’s sports are prevailing over women’s sports in popularity even post Title IX (uneven change in sports broadcasting, actively building audiences for men, keeping silent on women’s sports, etc.) I will be using this article and complement it with Liston’s article to build my counternarrative.

Social modeling, imagery, and social environment
Interview with Tina Barnes-Budd, Senior Director of Social Media Marketing and Communication, Ladies’ Professional Golf Association by Wonyu Bae will be one of the most crucial articles in my paper. In this interview, Bae talks to Tina Barnes-Budd, getting insight into the way the LPGA is handling its social media, the way they determine what to post on what day and at what time, how to present sponsors without being overpowering, etc. This article will help me keep in mind the expectations of Barnes-Budd for the Instagram page and I will be creating my own “content buckets” based on my analysis of the account.

W. Douglas Evans’ article on “Social Marketing Campaigns and children’s media use” covers the basics of social marketing on social media and how they use “social modeling, imagery and social environment” to influence to the younger audience. Social modeling affects “the formation of knowledge, attitudes and beliefs” (185); imagery helps “exemplify socially desirable behavior and the attributes of those who engage in a behavior” (185), and social environment is just used to describe the associations kids make between the brand and their immediate social environment (186). These terms will be helpful in deciphering what image and message the LPGA is putting across to its intended youthful audience.

Relating to this article, Julien Cayla and Eric J. Arnould talk about the Western “imaginary” of marketing, also described as “social imaginary” by Taylor in 2004. They mention how despite other countries’ national culture, “international marketing’s focus on individualism may reveal more about Western roots than it does about the varying cultural systems Western marketers are trying to navigate” (89). This article will help me notice if the trends across the posts are closely tied with the Western ideals and American identity.
Barrie Gunter’s chapter of *Branding potential of online social media* discusses all the positive attributes to social media and online-branding, as well as pointing out things customers can get frustrated with like overzealous advertising. I will be using this chapter to pinpoint the things the LPGA is doing on its Instagram page in terms of marketing, whether positive or negative, and see if these will affect their brand.

Sarah Arayess and Dominique Geer collaborated when writing their journal article “Social Media Advertising: How to Engage and Comply” which covers the way influencers are used in advertising and by which regulations they need to abide by with their sponsors. Nearly every single LPGA posts follows the guidelines mentioned in this article since they have a lot of sponsors and a large part of their revenue stems from ads and tags of the companies on their posts.

Lastly, Derek Shearer wrote his article “To Play Ball, Not make War: Sports, Diplomacy and Soft power” about how women need to start being acknowledged for their abilities and that men need to give them the space that they deserve in society, not feel threatened by them. This article will tie in closely with my research on “othering” by will hopefully give me some context on why men feel threatened by female athletes, especially in this case female golfers, and how the LPGA is fighting for their players’ rights.

**Object Context**

What is it?
The LPGA stands for the Ladies Professional Golfers Association, an organization that was founded in 1950. It is the female counterpart to the PGA or the Professional Golfers Association which is for only male golfers and was founded in 1916. The LPGA’s headquarters are located in Daytona Beach, FL., but they play all across the U.S. as well as around the world. The majority of the LPGA’s sponsors are international because in 2008, the economic recession hit them really hard since they weren’t a stable organization and they had to go outside the U.S. to catch more people’s attention.

In Chapter 1 “Developing a Critical Gender/ Sex Lens”, Palcewski et al. go into different areas of our Western Society such as socioeconomic class. “In the United States, socioeconomic class refers to the social position people enjoy as a result of their income education, occupation, and place of residency” (Palcewski et al. 19). The words “lady” and “gentleman” stem from the white upper-class status in society, and if one is called either one of these, it means that one is satisfying the “gentile norms of politeness and identity performance” (19), or in other words “one is performing ideally”. The word “woman” stems from the idea of lower-class women, whom according to upper-class people, are “sexually promiscuous, easily duped, and dependent on state assistance” (Palcewski et al. 20). Since golf is considered a “gentleman’s sport” and a sport of the rich and elite, it is fitting that the LPGA has “ladies” rather than “women” in its title. While playing golf, one must follow a certain etiquette code applicable to the outfits worn and attitude on the course. This is yet another factor that reemphasizes the idea that golf is a sport for the rich and one must follow the norms in order to fit into the upper-class world.

It is similar to other professional women’s athletic organizations such as WTA (Women’s Tennis Association), WNBA (Women’s National Basketball association, along with many others, because the ancestors of these entities all fought for their right to play their sports and
some of these are considered untraditional sports. This happens primarily because they feature female players. Sena Christian wrote “Every time a young woman participates in sports or displays her athleticism, she breaks down naturalized gender categories and expectations. The image of women who are not passive, weak, emotional, non-competitive and dependent on men shakes up society’s perceptions and assumptions about men and women. Bodies are signified with meaning, and female bodies that are athletic, strong and muscular disrupt gender binaries and provide a foundation for deconstructing oppressions grounded in biological difference” (27). In other words, the female athletes back then, fought for their rights to dedicate their life to something that wasn’t already predetermined as feminine, and the female athletes today continue to challenge the patriarchal society and fight for equal rights. In 1972, Title IX was established to protect these women because they cannot be discriminated based on their sex in “any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Office for Civil Rights).

The LPGA is similar to the PGA because they are both organizations that represent the professional golfers of around the globe, they play international events, have similar sponsors, and use the Opendorse company for marketing purposes. However, they differentiate on how much more importance the PGA receives worldwide and how many followers they have. The PGA receives more TV airtime, regardless of where they are around the world, whereas the LPGA has a contract with the Golf Channel that only covers their domestic tournaments in the U.S. when the majority of their tournaments are international.

I would characterize the LPGA as an untraditional entity, that decades later, is still fighting to become a more established, stable, respected and traditional entity. In the Historical context section, I go into depth about the LPGA’s and women’s golf history, and why they have been struggling a little more in comparison to other professional female athletes’ associations.
Historical Context

“Historically, women in the United States have been discouraged from participating in competitive sports and performing rigorous physical activity” (Williams and Fields 90). At first, it was believed by doctors and men at the time that if women did anything to rigorous with their bodies, that this would later affect their ability to give birth and take away energy from being a mother. Women, of higher class, were given the right to play sports beginning in the 1900s, since it was “deemed ‘necessary for improving the health of women as mothers of the race” (Williams and Fields 90). Unfortunately, for working class women and women of color, the same opportunity was not granted because their hands were “full” of all the physically they were already putting in and nobody wanted to put “extra strain” on their bodies. In the 1920s, women’s sporting events started making a name for themselves and getting attention from those in the American society. Women had a particular dress code, regardless, typically consisting of a very long skirt to the ankles, to not cause any “unwanted attention” or to “distract men.”

According to the LPGA’s website, in the 1950s, a group of 13 women founded the LPGA (Ladies Professional Golfers Association) in order to have the same opportunity of playing golf professionally. The women’s golf program continued to expand as the LPGA opened the LPGA teaching division in 1959 to encourage the dreams of other women to join the tour, as well as coaching them into becoming better players. In 1960, Shirley Spork and Barbara Rotvig opened the first LPGA National Golf School, whose motto was “teaching teachers to teach.” By the year 1962, the number of women playing golf in the U.S surpassed the amount of men by 3 or 4 times. Despite this, women were still restricted from playing on certain golf courses throughout the week due to society expecting them to be at home taking care of the kids. Women protested outside of these golf courses, demanding equal playing time and opportunity. Title IX, passed in
1972, finally allowed for women to be on the same playing field legally, but this didn’t save them from sexist and racist comments for the years to come.

Societal and economic issues have been haunting the LPGA ever since Title IX has passed. Golf courses were considered “men’s space”, unofficially, as a place where they could go having a relaxing afternoon with their friends and get away from their responsibilities of home and work. When women were allowed to play on the course, “many of them felt that they were being singled out and stereotyped as being poor or slow players” (Gray 116), thus putting themselves in one of two positions: “feeling pressured to play like men to deserve being on the course or a sense of ‘role entrapment” (Gray 116). In other words, women are expected, by men, to be weak and delicate players, but whenever they display “un-lady like” behavior or present more “masculine” abilities (working out, hitting the ball further, etc.), men feel threatened and try to suppress women with sexist comments. Nowadays, women are accepted to play at golf courses, alongside with men; however, there is a particular dress code one must follow, which includes looking feminine. The particular dress code would be known by the country clubs where both men and women played due to them laying out what sort of outfits are acceptable and not distracting on the course.

**Audience interaction with Social Media**

The LPGA started their Instagram account back in 2012 and to this day have 195 K followers. They started their Twitter account in 2008 and they have 193K followers. Twitter was trending more than Instagram in the past because the audience would be getting live updates minute by minute of what was going on in the tournament, regardless if they were watching the live streaming of it or not. The Instagram account wasn’t as popular because it would only allow one to post pictures and nothing else. However, nowadays, Instagram allows you to have a story
which stays online for 24 hours. Along with this feature, one can now go live and post behind the scene looks, videos, interviews, and so on. This feature is great because one can be filming the tournament and be getting live feedback from the audience. The newest addition to Instagram is the Instagram TV (IGTV) which does the same as going live, as well as uploading pre-recorded content and one can keep the content on their account for as long as you want.

With this new technology, I would definitely say that the LPGA is interpellating to a younger audience (40 years old and below) and/or tech savvy adults because not everyone is familiar with using social media. Since social media started, things have advanced tremendously, and kids have an ability to pick up on these changes faster. I read throughout different articles that the LPGA is targeting the younger audience because they are the future generation, they want them to grow up with role models and feel like they can help make the world a better place. Tina Barnes-Budd addresses the target audience of the LPGA’s social media in her interview with Wonyul Bae:

“Bae: While social media is a prime tool to use for reaching a very large audience, it is mainly young adults. How do you intend to reach the majority of the older population, the ones who don’t really use social media?

Barnes-Budd: Surprisingly, our biggest demo segment on both Facebook and Twitter are the 35–55 range. We don’t have a problem connecting with them. It’s the younger generation we’re working on, and we hope to accomplish that more with Instagram and Snapchat.“ (153).

Analysis
In Tina Barnes-Budd’s interview with Wonyu Bae, Barnes-Budd shares what the LPGA is doing with their social media marketing and branding to attract a younger audience to women’s golf. Through their posts, the LPGA is “humanizing their brand” because they “have learned that humans connect with humans, not logos, so we strive to showcase the human side of the LPGA--the Tour as a whole and players individually” (150). They have created “content buckets” (ex. tournament news, teaching tips, photos, videos, player features, etc) and make sure there is the same amount of content for each bucket so “fans aren’t overwhelmed with one type of content” (150). Another important comment made in her interview was that “Our players [LPGA players] have their own brand to build, and our job is to promote the players and the Tour through our social channels. We do, however, rely on our players to be “ambassadors” of the Tour through their social channels. Each tournament week, players are given a 1-pager that gives them all the facts about that week’s tournament sponsor that includes their products and services, what they’d like the players to say when being interviewed, to all the correct hashtags and handles to use when Tweeting about the event” (151).

While conducting my own analysis of my object, I couldn’t help but notice key themes arise such as performing “femininity”, lack of seriousness and professionalism in the Instagram posts, and Western ideals of beauty represented through most of the posts. All of these themes end up trivializing what the LPGA is doing as well as de-emphasizing the importance of women’s golf.

An important observation right off the bat is the difference in content between the LPGA’s and PGA (Professional Golfers Association-men’s tour)’s Instagram accounts, and how this could contribute to the lack of respect many have towards the LGPA. The LPGA has only one Instagram account that covers everything from tournaments to social functions to personal
information about the players on the tour. On the other hand, the PGA has two separate Instagram accounts, one for the tour (PGA Tour), where they feature only golf related news, analytics, footage from tournaments, and the other one (PGA) covers their social functions, activities, interviews, and non-golf related news. By keeping these sides of the sport separate, it shows that the PGA Tour wants their audience to take them seriously and only come onto their account if the audience is seeking golf information, while also having that alternate account for those interested in non-golf related news that the PGA forms a part of. The LPGA has one account to provide the fans with all the news at once, so they feel super connected to everything going on with the LPGA both on and off-the course, which also means the LPGA assumes their audience is interested in all their content buckets. There is a fine line with over-sharing information with the fans because it makes their Instagram seem like a general lifestyle influencer’s account, instead of a news feed forum for a professional athletic association.

In brief, an influencer is someone with a big social media following that advocate for topics they are interested (ex. Fashion, makeup, travelling, etc.), while at the same time being sponsored by at least a few different companies. “Influencer marketing is now the most effective form of advertising. Influencers have a loyal following, authenticity and trustworthiness making them so effective in persuading consumers to buy a product” (Ward 2017). Ward wrote 10 tips on his Forbes article on how to become a successful influencer: 1) Find your Niche, 2) Do something unique, 3) Pick your channels (social media outlets), 4) Create a social media strategy, 5) Create great content, 6) Be consistent, 7) Promote, 8) Collab, 9) Engage with your Audience, 10) Look at the data. I noticed that the LPGA follows a lot, if not all these tips and apply them to their Instagram page. More evidence will be provided for the previous sentence through the rest of the analysis.
While keeping the “content buckets” Tina Barnes-Budd mentioned in her interview in mind, I created some “content buckets” of my own based on my observations of the posts made since the beginning of 2019. The “content buckets” are 1) Tournaments, 2) Non-golf related news (including trends, fundraisers, etc.), 3) Features on Players 4) Interactions with fans, 5) Pro-Am, and 6) History related. I organized these “buckets” in order of what contents are most popular on the Instagram feed.

**Tournaments**

From the beginning of 2019, the LPGA has had 4 tournaments and 1 tournament in their off season. The first tournament of the season was a fundraising, co-ed (men and women), pro-Am, (professionals playing with amateur players) that took place at the St. Andrews CC (country club) in South Florida in January. The fundraising tournament was for the Morgan Pressel and Friends Foundation, which was founded by LPGA player Morgan Pressel to raise money for breast cancer research and cancer hospitals. Her mom who is a breast cancer survivor was the one who inspired this foundation. The amateur players were all men, ranging in different ages, as well as just being a club member or a celebrity like Alfonso Ribeiro. The amateurs would be paired with LPGA players and all groups are capped off at 4 players. While for the amateurs this tournament was just for fun (playing music on speakers and drinking beer), the LPGA players were actually competing to win the tournament and had to focus in what could have been considered a distracting environment at a competitive level. This is significant because there are never any female amateur players at any pro-Am tournaments, whether in the LPGA or PGA, and in this case, a lot of the wives of these club members showed up to the tournament to watch them play, as well as attend the social functions such as the auction.
The second and first official tournament of the season was Diamond Resorts and it happened between January 17th and the 20th. This tournament was also co-ed, had social functions (banquets and auctions), and was at a more competitive level. The men playing in the tournament were in the amateur category, while the LPGA players were competing at a professional level and to win the tournament. Within the tournament, there was a long-drive contest where both men and the LPGA women got to participate in. Although won by a man, it was refreshing to hear that both sexes got placed in the same category to compete and were giving the same opportunities on an equal field. LPGA player Eun-Hee Ji came out victorious for the tournament.

The following tournament was the VIC Open on Feb.7-10 in Australia. Both PGA and LPGA competing in this but were each in their own categories. A positive remark about this tournament as that the prize money for both sexes was the same and also the cut for the tournament (if one does not perform equal or better than the goal score, they will not be moving on to the next round of the tournament).

The next tournament, the Australian Open, was also held in Australia from Feb.14-17. At this tournament, the AON Risk Reward Challenge started happening for the year of 2019. From what I understood, the challenge is applicable to both PGA and LPGA and AON Bank picks challenging holes from different courses throughout the year and whatever player shoots the best scoring average on those chosen holes, will win $1 million.

The most recent tournament was the Honda Classic in Thailand and this occurred between February 21st through the 24th. A lot of none golf related events occurred at this tournament and these will be further discussed in the next section.
The majority of the posts on the LPGA’s Instagram were related to tournaments. Some were clips from the TV coverage of these events, but the majority were clips or pictures of specific players that were playing well at that tournament with some sort of trivial captions with emojis like “this way to the weekend”, followed by the tournament hashtag and link to the Instagram page of the tournament itself. This is super important because the LPGA is trying to appeal to a younger audience by trying to see hip, catchy and “with the times”, to a degree it draws attention away from the tournaments and the seriousness of what is going on as well. As seen above, women golfers are playing golf with men at different levels of competitiveness in golf to draw in more sponsors, more audience, as well as challenging the idea that men and women cannot compete in the same field. Another thing to be analyzed is that even though women and men are playing in the same field, the LPGA only plays in the same field as the amateur men, but do not play in the same field with the PGA. This is troublesome because even though women and men are starting to play more in the same field, by pairing the LPGA players with the amateur male golfers, it’s almost a way of saying that they can only ever compete with men who play golf badly or in a non-caring way but can still not get close to competing with the professional male golfers. I, also, am really frustrated by the fact that there are no women amateurs playing at any level of tournaments either in the LPGA or the PGA. I am very well aware that there are a lot of female golfers of all different ages and why are they not given a chance to perform and be showcased at tournaments. I think having female amateurs on TV more would be a huge advancement in the feminist movement in golf, as well as inspire more young players to pursue their dreams playing golf and they will be as successful as men.

Non-golf related news
Under this category, there were a lot of videos providing “behind the scenes” looks on what goes on at an auction, before or after a golf round, into the players’ personal lives, etc. The purpose of these videos, as mentioned by Tina Barnes-Budd, is the LPGA’s attempt “humanize the brand” by reminding their audience that they are not only professionals, but they are approachable and just like any other woman in the world. I find these videos problematic because by combining them in the feed with the golf-related news, it makes the Instagram feed less about the sport and the association and more about the “human side” of these female athletes since there is just as many non-related golf posts as there are golf posts. Our society is constantly trying to break down the identity of a female athlete by keeping her female identity up and her athlete identity separate from each other and we have to constantly be performing our femininity on and off the course.

As for on-course segments, they have had brief interviews with random players about “who inspired you to play golf?” “If you weren’t playing golf, what would you be doing?” “what is your favorite club in your bag?” and “would you rather? (golf edition)”. These videos are filmed probably before or after a round or on the practice round day of the tournament. These videos are filmed in a casual manner, just like two girlfriends are talking to each other. These sorts of questions really remind me of when influencers film Q&A videos on their YouTube channels. This goes back to Barnes-Budd comment of wanting to appeal to the younger audiences because by making the content expressed in a casual matter, kids attention spans will be drawn in, and make the players not seem like they are goddesses and unreachable. It gives the younger audience, in particular young ladies, to look up to LPGA players and think that they can also be like them one day, while not taking into account how much of a commitment and hard work there is to become a professional golfer.
They have some inspirational videos about female empowerment and giving back to the community. The Morgan Pressel & Friends had a video informing the audience of what the foundation stands for, how it begun and what it does for the community of South Florida. This video is a prime reminder that the LPGA cares about their community and giving back to the community with events they hold and the money they raise. This makes the audience reflect on what they can do to help their own community, raises awareness on how many women suffer from breast cancer, and to a degree hold us accountable for the things we do and don’t do.

#Score1forSt.Jude’s is charitable challenge where for every hole-in-one is made at a tournament, the CME Group will donate $20K to St. Jude’s Hospital. There was also a charity night at the Honda Classic, where a lot of players some of their old clubs and gear and the money goes towards different fundraisers. All these fundraisers use the ethos of the LPGA and of each of the players to encourage others to engage in the same kind of behavior and actions.

As for female empowerment, there were two videos, one titled the “Next wave” and one for International Women’s day. The “Next wave” video looks like a sort of commercial that Nike produced specifically on the LPGA. Lexi Thompson, LPGA player well known for her fashion and great athletic skills, narrates the video that highlights a lot of the newer generation of LPGA players and she mentions how the “new generation” is younger, stronger, more competitive and are redefining what it means to be a woman golfer (working out, more fashionista, etc.) The video for International Women’s day was a video showing how far the LPGA has come since its beginning, how much TV coverage has increased and how the LPGA has gone international, both in international players, sponsors and tournament locations. Both these videos give the fans incentive to want to follow the LPGA and their social because it is a growing movement and gives female golfers a platform to defend our rights on the course.
Another big theme I picked up within the non-golf related news was tourism and sightseeing done at tournament locations. In Australia, the LPGA made videos on coffee-making tutorial, and on the wombats/koalas found on the golf course and their interaction with the people at the tournament. In Singapore, they had videos displaying the cityscapes, as well as trying fish skins and fried lizards. It was interesting to see that in the video where they tried the food only the Asian LPGA players were shown. This could be inferred as a bit racist because supposedly in Asia they eat random animals (insects, cats, dogs, etc.) and thus made the Asian players try the food, even though clearly some of them were either disgusted by the sight of the food or didn’t show the interest to want to try it.

Continuing with non-golf related news, there was a behind-the-scenes video posted of a photoshoot where seven or eight LPGA players posed in Thai dresses by a designer prior to playing in the tournament. The video was made to seem like a commercial for the brand/designer itself, while still being a sort of ceremony for embracing Thai culture and fashion industry. The players are stripped from their golf side and professionalism to become models in a photoshoot. Paula Creamer was also the only white and American in the shoot amongst the other Asian LPGA players, making her stand out above the rest and showing her as a beauty that Asians should also look up to. This video also serves as a reminder of what these athletes look like when they are acting “feminine” and show their “true” selves of the course. I see these videos as more a sort of promotion campaigns as well as a way of gaining more sponsors to continue to endorse the tour.

The final portion of this “bucket” I wanted to bring attention to was personal events in the player’s lives off the course. There are a lot of pictures on the Instagram account that encourage the audience to celebrate birthdays with the players and shower them with birthday wishes both
on the LPGA account, as well as their own personal Instagram accounts. The LPGA also congratulated Michelle Wie on her recent engagement and shared the video of player Brittany Lincicome’s baby gender reveal. The engagement and baby gender reveal are events that the LPGA assumes their fans are interested in knowing about them and because we are so “connected” with the players, we need to share their happiness in events of their private life. This encourages the LPGA players to play into the idea of Western hegemonic ideals as well as performing femininity because of the idea that women have to get engaged, be in a straight relationship, and have a baby (in that order), and interpellates the audience, as if it is exciting that they are fulfilling their role as a woman and mother in our Western society, and not forgetting her “true responsibilities” just because they are an athlete.

**Features on Players**

Players will get several posts posted about them especially after having won a tournament. Pictures will get posted of them hoisting up their trophies and also how they get sponsored luggage from TUMI after winning. An example of how the players’ personal life follows them on to the course is when Stacy Lewis returned to play on the LPGA after giving birth. The caption was: “welcome back to new mother Stacy Lewis at the Diamond Resorts LPGA.” Again, this idea of social reminder for athletes that they are women with responsibilities first and athletes second.

There is a new small mini-series on the LPGA’s Instagram called “What’s in my bag?” which serves the function of sponsoring some of the things that these athletes eat, brands used, and so on. Even though the players don’t really give out the name of the brands they use, but the camera still zooms in to focus on the products. Four out of the eight ladies featured on this mini-series are American, white and blonde players. three of the remaining were Asian and 1 was an
Indian player. In all of these interviews, the ladies were asked if they carried beauty products or makeup with them in their bag, and only two players mentioned sunscreen.

Ariya Jutanungam’s response to this question was “I don’t need beauty products, I am already pretty” and followed by saying “that’s cocky” with a big grin on her face. Here, she stood up against this social construct that female athletes need to wear make-up (Western ideals of beauty and performing femininity), but then she contradicted herself by calling herself out for being “cocky” for being confident in herself. This also comes down to the idea that women, even if they know they are pretty, have to conceal that information because if they show an ounce of self-confidence, they come off as conceited and pretentious. Another thing that bugged me in her interview is that this was the only interview you could actually hear the interviewer asking her questions as well as repeating her responses regardless of the fact that Ariya speaks perfect English with a small accent. Although the interviewer’s job here was to make sure the audience of the video could understand what Ariya was saying, it was completely unnecessary in this case and could be seen as a discriminatory act.

Lydia Ko had content unlike the other players in her bag because she was the only one who had Invisalign “teeth”, toothbrush, toothpaste and floss with them. She was well-known for not perfectly aligned teeth and I am 100% positive that her manager or someone told her she needed to get her teeth fixed in order to become more popular in building her own brand and scoring more sponsors. However, I believe that her teeth are what made her unique and could have helped break down the barriers that professional athletes are just like the celebrities that spent thousands of dollars in “enhancing their beauty” and need to look a certain way to attract marketers’ attention, but she complied to societal norms.

Interactions with fans
Some of the posts show some of the players and celebrities from the Pro-Am tournaments (ex. Alonso Ribeiro) interacting with the fans, especially the kids younger than 10 who were trying to get autographs from them. There was one post-tournament round video that showed Lydia Ko interacting with a girl fan and her mom, where the girl’s mom complemented Lydia’s hair and that she was letting her hair grow out again. This is another example of how the content shown on the LPGA’s Instagram account tries to make the players of the LPGA seem approachable and more like the girl-next-door instead of a respected athlete and the fact that the LPGA chose this video to display on their feed keeps encouraging the separation of identities of a female athlete.

Pro-Am

There were some pictures and videos posted from the Pro-Am tournament at Diamond Resorts that mostly highlighted the male amateurs that were a part of the event, instead of highlighting all of the participants, including the LPGA players themselves. This is relevant because although this was an LPGA event and was on their Instagram, men still managed to take over for the coverage of that tournament. There was a concert by Lee Brice prior to the tournament and a Champions Pro-Am Draft party as well. A draft party to me sounds more like a football related event and the fact that no one was getting drafted anywhere and everyone was dressed formally, didn’t really make a lot of sense. The money from this party was donated for the UF Health, which once more, highlights the humanitarian side of the LPGA. As I mentioned earlier in the “Tournaments” bucket, this tournament was way more informal to golf standards and honestly was more like men going out to play golf with their buddies on the weekend, sipping on beer and blasting music. This was reflected on a hole where we see Alfonso Ribeiro
putting his ball into the whole, while pop music is blasting in the background, and when he makes the putt, he celebrates by doing the iconic “Carlton” dance.

**History related**

The only posts I saw history-related were 4 and 3 of these were to celebrate Mickey Wright’s (player), Judy Rankin’s (player), and Alena Sharp’s (Olympics golfer and veteran LPGA) birthdays. The captions for these posts didn’t go into depth about these ladies or showcase why they are so important to the golfer community or even why should be celebrating their birthday. What makes them more special than everyone else and why should we celebrate their birthdays more than other people’s? The LPGA is assuming that the audience knows about golf history and who these ladies are, and don’t provide any information for those who aren’t aware or are too young to know who these ladies are, thus prompting the audience to go Google them.

The one un-related birthday post I saw was a picture of Jan Stephenson talking to in an interviewer about her induction to the Hall of Fame. Jan Stephenson is a retired LPGA player who won 16 tournaments and 3 of those being majors (super important tournaments and super difficult to do) who is best-known for the one time she posed for a magazine nude in a bathtub full of golf balls. In an interview she had, Stephenson said that “we have to promote sex appeal. The people who watch are predominantly male, and they won’t keep watching if the girls aren’t beautiful” (Golf.com).

The one and only post about Jan Stephenson’s induction and instead of helping her be acknowledged for golf accomplishments and not for that sexy article that came out about her, the LPGA didn’t help her out. The PGA, on the other hand, shared pictures of her induction as well
as a short description of her accomplishments of an athlete and encouraged all their fans to celebrate her.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the key themes I picked up on were performing “femininity”, lack of seriousness and professionalism in the Instagram posts and Western ideals of beauty. The latter is particularly seen with Lydia Ko’s Invisalign because she is a Korean-born, New Zealand player who we see is conforming to the Western standards of beauty.

The LPGA says that “they are proud of their past and that is what moves them towards a better future” (LPGA.com) yet they don’t really post about the LPGA’s past, that they have gone international yet only showcase particular players (especially those that have complied to Western ideals of fashion, beauty and those who speak better English). They are promoting a younger and a healthier generation of female athletes, that work out and watch what they eat, while trivializing their posts with emojis and meme-like captions.

Some clear absences/ silences in their Instagram posts are lack of international diversity and little to non-history posts. There are no Latina, European, African or racially-mixed American players displayed on their feeds, and only really see Americans and Asians. I understand that a lot of the LPGA’s sponsors come from Asia so that is why Asians are showcased so much and Americans are showcased because of American pride and national identity. On the other hand, Michelle Wie, who is one of the most popular LPGA players, has a growing Instagram account, and is a Hawaiian native, is not present in any posts since the beginning of 2019. There are no real history-related posts which I think is necessary to promote the seriousness of the association and the respect of how far women golfers have come.


