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**THEY ARE WOMEN, HEAR THEM ROAR:
FEMALE SPORTSWRITERS OF THE ROARING TWENTIES**

A Thesis in

Mass Communications

by

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ABSTRACT

Contrary to the impression conveyed by many scholars and members of the popular press, women's participation in the field of sports journalism is not a new or relatively recent phenomenon. Rather, the widespread emergence of female sports reporters can be traced to the 1920s, when gender-based notions about employment and physicality changed substantially. Those changes, together with a growing leisure class that demanded expanded newspaper coverage of athletic heroes, allowed as many as thirty-five female journalists to make inroads as sports reporters at major metropolitan newspapers during the 1920s. Among these reporters were the *New York Herald Tribune's* Margaret Goss, one of several newspaperwomen whose writing focused on female athletes; the *Minneapolis Tribune's* Lorena Hickok, whose coverage of a male sports team distinguished her from virtually all of her female sports writing peers; and the *New York Telegram's* Jane Dixon, whose reports on boxing and other sports from a so-called "woman's angle" were representative of the way most women cracked the male-dominated field of sports journalism.

While the careers of these three women exemplify the different types of sports reporting practiced by female journalists of the period, they also highlight the overall mood and tensions of the era. In particular, their writing illustrates the ways in which female sports journalists simultaneously accepted and challenged social and professional norms of the period. Goss, for example, earned a regularly appearing column in the sports section – a ground-breaking accomplishment for any female sportswriter at the time – but was restricted to covering female athletes. Hickok and Dixon, in contrast, were able to cover male athletes but were limited in other ways: Hickok's stories were typically confined to the news pages rather than being allowed in the sports section, whereas Dixon was steadily instructed to tailor her stories to the supposedly unique and superficial interests of female sports fans.

In sum, the work of these three women sheds light on the opportunities and obstacles that female sportswriters faced in the 1920s – and in the process provides a lens for understanding the wider gender and equality issues that underlay women's lives during the Jazz Age.

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Introduction

Writing in 1992, researcher Judith Cramer lamented that female sports journalists were “missing in action.” “With few exceptions,” she wrote, “women are missing from the pages of sports journalism history.”¹ A decade later, the landscape has hardly changed; while both scholars and non-scholars have extensively examined the working conditions and issues facing contemporary female sportswriters, few have attempted to piece together the history of women in this traditionally male-dominated field. Those who have sought to provide historical insight have primarily focused on the 1960s and 70s, an era when women legally challenged gender-based constraints in the media industry and forced the Fourth Estate to provide expanded opportunities to its female employees – in sports and other areas. Researchers who have dug back further frequently identify 1944 as a watershed year; that’s when Mary Garber began a forty-plus year career covering sports for the *Winston-Salem Journal-Sentinel* in North Carolina. Precious few scholars have traced the lineage of female sports journalists prior to the World War II era, however. And those who have usually jump all the way back to the late 1800s or early 1900s, identifying the same three or four women whose coverage of sports made them stand out as the rarest of exceptions. Meanwhile, the years between the turn of the century and World War II remain largely overlooked.²

Examining this gap, this dissertation argues that the 1920s deserves recognition as *the* decade when women began to make significant inroads in sports journalism. The contributions of the few late nineteenth and early twentieth century trailblazers notwithstanding, this paper asserts that the Roaring Twenties stands as the period when women began to make a recognizable mark in sports journalism, helping pave the way for the likes of Mary Garber in the 1940s as well as the female sportswriters who would crash down locker room doors and take a stand against sexual harassment in more recent decades. It was during the 1920s – particularly the mid-twenties – when the number of women producing by-lined sports stories became plentiful on the pages of major metropolitan newspapers. Indeed, the sheer number of these women – together with the obstacles they confronted, the variety of sports they covered, and the quality of writing they produced – demands that they be acknowledged as the preeminent pioneers among women in sports journalism. Making their contributions even more impressive is that they wrote during the Golden Age of Sports Journalism, when their stories had to stand beside articles and columns authored by such legendary sportswriters such as Grantland Rice, W.O. McGeehan, Heywood Broun, and Paul Gallico.³

In identifying the 1920s as a pioneering period for women in sports journalism, this dissertation answers several questions. It probes why the 1920s, in particular, were so ripe for the emergence of female sportswriters. In doing so, this research places women in a wider context, and so identifies the social and cultural forces that allowed for – and in some ways hampered – their contributions to sports journalism.

¹ Judith A. Cramer, *Missing In Action: Women Sports Journalists*, paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, August 1992.

² Research that has been done on the history of women in sports journalism will be treated in greater detail in the literature review section of this dissertation.

³ Among those who refer to the 1920s as the “Golden Age” of sports journalism are Bruce Garrison and Mark Sabljak, *Sports Reporting*, 2nd ed. (Ames, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1993), as well as Robert Lipsyte, *SportsWorld: An American Dreamland* (New York: Quadrangle, 1975), 170.

More specific to the journalism industry, the dissertation also identifies the attitudes and practices of the workplace these women entered. Thus, the dissertation ultimately identifies the ways in which women successfully challenged, and in other ways perpetuated, the norms and ideologies not only of 1920s society, but also of the newspaper industry of the period.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the dissertation looks at the writing of female sports journalists of the twenties to see how they fit into the Golden Age of Sports Journalism, an era known especially for its fanciful prose and highly stylized writing.⁴ Did women write like their male contemporaries? Did they cover the same types of assignments? Answers to these questions about the content and style of their writing shed further light on issues of power and equality, again by demonstrating how women contested, and in some cases fell in line with, the social attitudes and workplace practices that they encountered.

In sum, this research explores three questions: First, what factors contributed to the increased presence of female sports journalists in the 1920s? Second, what obstacles did these women face – within society in general and within the journalism industry in particular – and how did their responses to these challenges affirm or erode the societal and journalistic norms and ideologies of the day? And third, how does the content and style of their writing reflect their success or failure in overturning those traditional social and institutional practices? Three female sportswriters of the 1920s – Margaret Goss of the *New York Herald Tribune*, Lorena Hickok of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, and Jane Dixon of the *New York Telegram* – provide the lens through which these questions are ultimately addressed

⁴ Ibid. In a similar vein, Bruce Evensen refers to the period as “the age of ballyhoo”; see Evensen, *When Dempsey Fought Tunney: Heroes, Hokum, and Storytelling in the Jazz Age* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), xii.

Chapter 1: Literature Review and Methodology

Until the mid-twentieth century, writing about sports was traditionally left to journalists, who produced newspaper articles and books for a general audience. In fact, before 1960, only three scholarly books had been produced about the history of American sport.¹ The tide began to turn in the late 1960s. At colleges, history departments began to adjust their curricula to incorporate new subject matter and interdisciplinarity demanded by the emerging emphasis on social history; one byproduct was the establishment of the North American Society for Sport History, which in turn founded the *Journal of Sport History* in 1974.² In sociology, several journals emerged to take up the subject of sport; they included the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* and the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*.³ The field of communications also contributed to the growing acceptance of sports-related scholarship. Important in this regard was the *Journal of Communication*'s receptiveness to publishing research on sport, including its publication in 1977 of Michael Real's now classic essay on the cultural impact of Super Bowl coverage.⁴ Spurred by these developments, a "flood of high quality scholarship" had been produced about sports history by the late 1980s, some of it with an economic, political, or cultural twist that highlighted sport's relationship to issues such as class, gender, and race.⁵

Even so, "wide gaps in the literature" were evident in the late eighties⁶ and remain today. This is particularly true in the communications field, where despite an explosion of post-1990 sport-related research, the scope of the scholarship remains narrow. Communication scholars have largely restricted themselves to analyzing the messages behind contemporary media coverage of sports, the effects of mediated sports texts on present-day audiences, and the extensive marketing of today's athletes as endorsers of commercial products and ambassadors for their respective sports. Meanwhile, the history of sports journalism has been largely ignored, even among journalism historians themselves. The American Journalism Historians Association – which has subgroups for members interested in such topics as the early American press, international newspapers, and female journalists – has not had sufficient interest to maintain a sports journalism interest group. In fact, of the 270 AJHA members, only 15 list sports as an area of interest.⁷ And of the 47 paper presentations and research-in-progress reports given at the

¹ Steven A. Riess, ed., *Major Problems in American Sport History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 1.

² *Ibid.*, viii.

³ Lawrence A. Wenner, ed., *MediaSport* (London: Routledge, 1998), 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵ Riess, *American Sport History*, viii.

⁶ Marvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986), 1.

⁷ Information was obtained via e-mail correspondence with Carol Sue Humphrey, AJHA administrative secretary, on January 4, 2002, and September 29, 2003. AJHA members annually indicate their areas of interest when completing their membership dues forms. Humphrey noted that there had been one attempt to start a sports journalism interest group in AJHA, but that the effort fizzled without making much progress. This is especially meaningful because the 20-year-old AJHA considers itself – and is widely accepted as – the premier organization for journalism historians in the United States.

2003 American Journalism Historians Association conference, only two were sports-related, including one by the author of this dissertation.⁸

To overlook the history of sports journalism, however, is to overlook a large part of culture. If we fail to scrutinize the evolution of sports journalism, then we fail to understand how America has evolved into the sports-crazed nation it has become. After all, it is the media that has helped to create our sports heroes and steer our attention toward sports. And make no mistake, America is *obsessed* with sports. Analyzing the all-consuming nature of the U.S. sport scene in 1975, Robert Lipsyte concluded that sports had become “the most influential form of mass culture in America.”⁹ Sports, he said, served a myriad of roles, including “socializer, pacifier, [and] safety valve.”¹⁰ Writing in 1981, Richard Lipsky similarly concurred that sports dominate life.¹¹ Now, two decades later, the lofty status attributed to sports has only gotten loftier. If sports were a dominant part of life in the 1970s and 80s, they have now become so intertwined with life that the two are hardly separable. From offering escapism and shaping cultural values, sports have evolved to *dictate* the ways in which many Americans today think and live. “While the sanctum of sports still offers refuge, the world of sports is no longer other-worldly. It is at the crossroads of much daily commerce and provides the foundation to many of the shared cultural symbols that are left in what often seems a disjointed postmodern experience,” writes Lawrence Wenner.¹² Sport, continues Wenner, “has content that is more compelling to many than other artifacts and responsibilities of daily living.”¹³

Fueling sport’s increasing, almost mind-boggling cultural impact, has been the media. The “ESPN-ization” of society and the explosion of sports talk radio notwithstanding, newspapers continue to be a powerful promoter of sports.¹⁴ According to a recent study of American newspapers conducted by The Project for Excellence in Journalism, the percentage of total newshole devoted to sports rose from 16 to 21 percent during the past generation. Considering that the overall editorial space in newspapers doubled during that period, that increase in sports coverage is especially dramatic.¹⁵ Also, sports agate – the tiny-sized print that tells the story of league standings, statistical leaders, and player transactions – has jumped from an average of two columns to two pages during the last generation. Between this increase in

⁸ For a complete listing of presentations from the 2003 AJHA conference, see “AJHA Convention Schedule,” *AJHA Intelligencer*, 20, no. 4 (2003), 4-5.

⁹ Lipsyte, *SportsWorld*, xiv.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xii.

¹¹ Richard Lipsky, *How We Play the Game: Why Sports Dominate American Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981).

¹² Wenner, *MediaSport*, 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹⁴ ESPN, the all-sports cable network launched in 1980, has since grown to include spin-off networks ESPN2, ESPN News, and ESPN Classic, not to mention its forays into radio, print, and the Internet, with ESPN Radio, *ESPN The Magazine*, and ESPN.com, respectively. All-sports radio stations, virtually unheard of 20 years ago, have exceeded more than 200 in recent years. See Lewis M. Simons, “Follow the Ball,” *American Journalism Review*, November 1999 [on-line]; available at www.ajr.org.

¹⁵ Simons, “Follow the Ball.”

agate and the expanded newshole for sports, “the space devoted to sports today is nothing short of cavernous.”¹⁶ Further, survey data suggest that the sports section is the most widely read section of major metropolitan daily newspapers and that “more ink is devoted to sports than any other topic, including national and international news.”¹⁷ Moreover, both men and women newspaper readers report that they regularly read the sports section; 85 percent of men and 64 percent of women say they are regular sports page readers.¹⁸

As the above points suggest, the amount of time, energy and money devoted to sports today – both by members and consumers of the media – is mind-numbing. To this end, The Project for Excellence in Journalism heralded sports as “a genuine cultural phenomenon.”¹⁹ Similarly, though with more gravity, Wenner suggested that sports has cast a long “cultural shadow.” Sports, he said, has left a “large ideological footprint” on the American psyche.²⁰

Yet, however impressive the magnitude of mediated sports may be today, one must remember that this condition is not merely the product of recent years, or even the last few decades. Indeed, the cultural shadow that sports now casts – the ideological footprint that sports has left behind – can be traced to a much earlier time. Before The Project for Excellence in Journalism finished its study on the impact of sports on today’s newspapers, before Wenner coined the phrase MediaSport to describe the media-driven infiltration of sports into daily life in the late 1990s, even long before Lipsyte coined the term SportsWorld to capture the power and pervasiveness of sports he observed in the 1960s and 70s, the sports/media complex²¹ was taking shape. Obviously, it took shape first with newspapers and magazines, since these were the earliest forms of media that regularly transmitted sports news to Americans. The Penny Press of the 1800s began to include sports items to draw a broader readership; the early twentieth century newspapers of the Yellow Journalism era elevated sports to the front lines of their legendary circulation battles;²² and the press of the Jazz Age used sports as a vehicle to create heroes and myths, and of course, drive sales.²³ As one scholar noted, “each surge in the coverage of sport has taken place during a period in which the mass media have sharply increased their penetration

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Donald Sabo and Sue Curry Jansen, “Images of Men in Sports Media: The Social Reproduction of the Gender Order,” in *Men, Masculinity, and the Media*, ed. Steve Craig (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992), 169-184.

¹⁸ Simmons Market Research Bureau, *Study of Media and Markets* (New York: Simmons Market Research Bureau, 1991).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Wenner, *MediaSport*, xiii-xiv.

²¹ Much as Wenner uses the term MediaSport and Lipsyte offers the expression SportsWorld to capture the media-driven pervasiveness of sports in society, Sut Jhally uses the phrase “sports/media complex,” albeit with more explicit attention to the critical/cultural studies strains that underlie it. See Sut Jhally, “Cultural Studies and the Sports/Media Complex,” in *Media, Sports, and Society*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), 70-93.

²² Michael Emery, Edwin Emery, and Nancy L. Roberts, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, 9th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 102, 195.

²³ Evensen, *When Dempsey Fought*, xiv.

into the nooks and crannies of American social life.”²⁴ Clearly, society’s obsession with sports today owes much, whether for better or worse, to the role of sports journalism in earlier eras.

Thus, a fuller appreciation for today’s media-sports complex requires a more complete understanding of the history of sports journalism. Although unable to practically capture that entire history, this dissertation focuses on one slice: the role of women in sports journalism history. The emphasis, as previously stated, is on determining when women began to make their first significant inroads in the field, describing the climate in which they operated, and examining how their writing challenged and sustained the social norms of the day, as well as the institutional norms of the newspaper industry. For all the Grantland Rices, Damon Runyons and other legendary sports scribes whose careers are well documented, researchers have tended to overlook the role that female sports journalists played in cultivating America’s love affair with sports.

True, researchers have produced an abundance of material that combines the topics of women and sports journalism. But most of that material has focused on the depiction of female athletes by sports journalists – with little or no attention paid to whether the journalists behind the coverage are men or women. Best classified as content analyses, the majority of this research typically probes whether the amount and/or quality of coverage devoted to female athletes has changed over time (e.g., Bruce,²⁵ Francis,²⁶ Johnson,²⁷ and Schnirring²⁸); how the amount and/or quality of coverage compares to the media treatment of male athletes (e.g., Kohn,²⁹ Looney,³⁰ and McGinnis³¹); or how the media’s presentation of female athletes differs according to factors such as a publication’s target audience, circulation, or locale (e.g., Gniazdowski and Denham,³²

²⁴ Robert W. McChesney, “Media Made Sport: A History of Sports Coverage in the United States,” in *Media, Sports, and Society*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1989), 49-69.

²⁵ Virmell A. Bruce, “A Content Analysis of Women in the Sports Pages of the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* from January 1970 through June 1976” (M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, 1977).

²⁶ Susan Francis, *Coverage of Female Athletes in Women’s Sports Magazines: A Content Analysis*, paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Kansas City, MO, August 2003.

²⁷ Jill H. Johnson, “A Comparison of the Coverage Devoted to Male and Female Athletes in the Newsprint Media Between 1981-1985” (M.S. thesis, James Madison University, 1987).

²⁸ Jane M. Schnirring, “A Time Log Comparison of Print Media Coverage of Female Athletes in 1967 and 1987” (M.A. thesis, San Diego State University, 1987).

²⁹ Shaun A. Kohn, “Men vs. Women in Newspaper Sports Section Photographs” (M.S. thesis, University of Oregon, 2000).

³⁰ Marilyn Looney, “Difference in Newspaper Coverage Between Men’s and Women’s Basketball Teams at Kansas State University” (M.S. thesis, Kansas State University, 1977).

³¹ Mollie K. McGinnis, “A Survey and Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Women’s Professional Golf Compared With Men’s Professional Golf” (M.A. thesis, Marshall University, 1991).

³² Lauren A. Gniazdowski and Bryan E. Denham, *Still Photographs of Female Athletes Featured in “Sports Illustrated” Versus “Sports Illustrated for Women,”* paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Kansas City, MO, August 2003.

Bruce,³³ Mellen,³⁴ Sage and Furst³⁵). Moreover, the bulk of this research focuses on newspapers published during the last decade. While some of the scholarship does stretch back to examine the press of the 1960s and 1970s, very little of this kind of research extends to newspapers before the mid-twentieth century, with the exception of Linda Williams' analysis of the depiction of female athletes in two African-American papers, the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*, circa the 1920s, 30s, and 40s.³⁶

Other researchers also have focused on the depiction of female athletes in the press, but with a more explicit emphasis on the gender composition of the newspaper staffs that drove the coverage. Among the authors who have explored this relationship, either by content analysis or a combination of content analysis and survey research, are Bates,³⁷ Dick,³⁸ and Shain.³⁹ Again, however, the newspapers they examined are fairly contemporary, implying perhaps that many researchers are unaware of the presence of female sportswriters in earlier eras.

Moving away from research concerned with the depiction of female athletes, a good deal of published material has focused squarely on the experiences of female sportswriters – but mostly, this material has focused on one issue: locker room access. Hundreds of articles can be found that address this topic. Among the first wave of articles, several came in the wake of *Sports Illustrated* writer Melissa Ludtke's 1977 lawsuit against Major League Baseball⁴⁰; Ludtke and *Sports Illustrated's* parent company, Time Inc., sued baseball officials after she was denied access to the New York Yankee locker room during the '77 World Series. Publications that ran articles in reaction to Ludtke's lawsuit ranged from the *New York Times*⁴¹; to the newspaper trade journal, *Editor & Publisher*;⁴² to the popular literary magazine, the *New Yorker*.⁴³ Since

³³ Bruce, "Women in the Sports Pages."

³⁴ Robert G. Mellen, "Women at Play in the Field of the Word: A Content Analysis of Sports Coverage in Selected San Francisco Bay Area Newspapers" (M.A. thesis, University of Missouri-Columbia, 2000).

³⁵ Marta Sage and David M. Furst, "Coverage of Women's Sports in Selected Newspapers," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 78 (February 1994): 295-96.

³⁶ Linda D. Williams, "An Analysis of American Sportswomen in Two Negro Newspapers: The *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1924-1948, and the *Chicago Defender*, 1932-1948" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1991).

³⁷ Elise C. Bates, "The Patterns of Reader and Editor Interest in Sports News and Coverage of Sports News by a Daily Newspaper: A Systematic Study of Sports Pages Staff and Sports News Readers of the *Lansing State Journal*" (M.A. thesis, Michigan State University, 1979).

³⁸ Cynthia L. Dick, "Factors That Influence Female Sports Coverage in Newspapers" (M.S. thesis, James Madison University, 1994).

³⁹ Stacie Shain, "Gatekeeping, Gender Differences and Sports Editors at Six Daily Newspapers" (M.A. Thesis, Indiana University, 1997).

⁴⁰ Many of the writers mentioned in this dissertation have since moved on to other jobs; however, as is the case with Ludtke here, they are referenced in the context of the jobs they held at the time of the incidents under discussion.

⁴¹ For example, the *New York Times* covered the Ludtke case with consecutive-day stories in December 1977; see Deirdre Carmody, "Female Reporter Sues Over Locker-Room Ban," *New York Times*, 30 December 1977, sec. A, p. 17, and "Kuhn Reacts to Suit of Female Writer," *New York Times*, 31 December 1977, 13.

⁴² "Woman Sportswriter Sues to Open Locker Room," *Editor and Publisher*, 14 January 1978, 11.

then, Ludtke's lawsuit also has been chronicled in several academic treatments of female journalists.⁴⁴

Just as Ludtke's travails sparked reports and commentary on the locker room issue, so have other infamous locker room-related episodes. Take, for example, Oakland baseball player Dave Kingman's resentment over the clubhouse presence of *Sacramento Bee* reporter Susan Fornoff in 1986. Kingman, who made Fornoff uncomfortable with certain remarks in the locker room, sealed his dislike for the reporter in Kansas City when he sent a package to her in the stadium press box; wrapped in pink paper, the package contained a live rat.⁴⁵ The episode sparked a wave of national publicity and is regularly mentioned in academic and non-academic writings about the "locker room issue" and the working relationship between male athletes and female sports reporters.⁴⁶

Another particularly infamous locker room episode that has garnered national publicity and been cemented in the literature involved the *Boston Herald's* Lisa Olson, who was sexually harassed by several football players in the New England Patriots' locker room in 1990.⁴⁷ Olson's case probably remains the most extensively reported locker room incident involving a female sportswriter, with more than 200 articles appearing in newspapers across the country between September 17, 1986 – the day the incident occurred – and the end of that year.⁴⁸ The incident also attracted international attention, with reports about it finding their way on to the pages of the British and Canadian press.⁴⁹

⁴³ Roger Angell, "Sharing the Beat: Women Sportswriters in Locker Rooms," *New Yorker*, 9 April 1979, 46.

⁴⁴ Among the books that chronicle Ludtke's story are: Pamela J. Creedon, ed., *Women, Media and Sport* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 87-88, and Kay Mills, *A Place in the News: From the Women's Pages to the Front Page* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988; reprint, New York: Columbia University Morningside, 1990), 223 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

⁴⁵ According to Susan Fornoff, *Lady in the Locker Room: Uncovering the Oakland Athletics* (Champaign, IL: Sagamore, 1993), 84, the package contained a rat. However, media coverage immediately after the incident offered conflicting reports on whether it was a rat or a mouse. Even so, all agreed that the rodent was alive and had a tag that read, "My name is Sue," an apparent reference to Fornoff.

⁴⁶ Fornoff herself writes how the rat incident overshadowed the baseball game in next-day coverage in the Bay Area newspapers; see Fornoff, *Lady in the Locker Room*, 84-86. The story also attracted national coverage from the Associated Press and United Press International wire services as well as *Washington Post* syndicated sports columnist Tony Kornheiser. See Associated Press, 24 June 1986; United Press International, 24 June 1986; Tony Kornheiser, "Kingman's Rat: Just How Funny," *Washington Post*, 27 June 1986, sec. C, p. 1. Academic sources that mention the "rat incident" include Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 93, and Mills, *A Place in the News*, 219.

⁴⁷ Olson, who moved to Australia for a time following the incident, is back practicing sports journalism in the United States; she is a sports columnist for the *New York Daily News*.

⁴⁸ As a Lexis-Nexis search shows, not only did the story generate hundreds of articles, it also had an exceptionally long news life, with stories covering the original incident; the prolonged reaction to the event by the league, team owner, and other members of the press; and the eventual leveling of disciplinary action. The barring of a woman sportswriter from the Cincinnati Bengals' locker room two weeks after the Olson incident gave further life to the story, as did several year-end articles that reviewed the major sports events of 1990.

⁴⁹ Matthew Engel, "Sport in America: Peril in the Locker Room," London *Guardian*, 28 September 1990; Allan Ryan, "Harassment Case Big News in Boston," *Toronto Star*, 26 September 1990, sec. B, p. 3.

What's unfortunate, is that despite the volume of literature that chronicles these and similar episodes, the pages devoted to the locker room issue overshadow other aspects of the careers of female sports reporters, including their pioneering contributions that predate and transcend the locker room issue. The quality and character of writing by the early pioneering female sportswriters is similarly overlooked. As one author lamented, "The locker room. In every article about women as sportswriters, the question inevitably comes up."⁵⁰ Thus, much of the existing literature takes a narrow view of female sports journalists, examining them in light of the locker room issue instead of analyzing their writing or considering accomplishments other than their earning increased acceptance in male locker rooms. This is especially unfortunate since, by one female sportswriter's estimate, sports journalists assigned to a team beat spend as little as seven percent of their work week in a locker room.⁵¹

Yet, even the autobiography of the accomplished Fornoff (she of the Dave Kingman "rat incident") tends to take a narrow, locker room-centered view.⁵² While her autobiography does illuminate the day-to-day working conditions of female sportswriters in the 1980s, the impact of gender on credibility, and other non-locker room obstacles these women faced, her book unfortunately devotes much of its attention to the locker room issue and the questions that surround it. As a result, Fornoff's book, while in some respects a laudatory and insightful account of a female sportswriter, at other times borders on a kiss-and-tell tome that names the athletes who liked to flirt with women or give female reporters an especially difficult time.

Another woman who has written a book about her experiences as a Major League Baseball beat writer is Alison Gordon, who covered the Blue Jays baseball team from 1979 to 1983.⁵³ Unlike Fornoff, though, Gordon's book deals with the locker room to a lesser extent. In fact, Gordon's book is less about her own experiences, and more about the baseball team she covered and the nostalgic appeal of the sport in general. Ultimately then, it is Fornoff's book – despite its emphasis on locker room anecdotes – that gives a fuller picture of a female sportswriter's day-to-day experiences.

Whatever the differences between the two books, both focus mostly on the early 1980s, meaning that neither gives much insight into the early history of women in sports journalism. Fornoff, to her credit, acknowledges the adversity faced by several of her predecessors, circa the 1970s, and even reaches back to acknowledge the groundbreaking work that Mary Garber

⁵⁰ Mills, *A Place in the News*, 220.

⁵¹ Christine Brennan, who covered the Washington Redskins professional football team for the *Washington Post* for three years in the mid- to late 1980s, estimated that she spent only four hours, of a sixty-hour work week, in the team's locker room, either after games or at practice. See Christine Brennan, "Who is Christine Brennan and Why Are Jay Schroeder and Joe Theismann and Bobby Beathard and Jack Kent Cooke Always Yelling at Her? Covering the Redskins Is a Great Job, but Still a Job," *Washington Post Magazine*, 24 January 1988, 12-15, excerpted in Maurine H. Beasley and Sheila J. Gibbons, *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism* (Washington, DC: American University Press, 1993), 279.

⁵² Fornoff, *Lady in the Locker Room*.

⁵³ Alison Gordon, *Foul Balls: Five Years in the American League* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985). Although female sportswriters who wrote for the Canadian media are generally considered outside the purview of this dissertation, Gordon is included because she is one of only two North American print journalists who have written full-length books about their experiences as sportswriters. Those interested in the history of female sports journalists in the Canadian press should see M. Ann Hall, *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women's Sport in Canada* (Peterborough, ON, Canada: Broadview Press, 2002).

undertook at the *Winston-Salem Journal-Sentinel* beginning in the 1940s.⁵⁴ Gordon, meanwhile, provides less acknowledgment of her female predecessors, save for a nod to Melissa Ludtke and her groundbreaking 1977 lawsuit.⁵⁵ Given that these two books do little more than mention such forerunners, most of whom worked in the 1970s or 1980s, they underscore the point made earlier: that many of those who write about women in sports journalism are either unaware of – or uninterested in – women who covered sports in the early twentieth century, particularly prior to Mary Garber.

However, at least three sources – Ardell, Cramer and Sowell – do focus specifically on female sportswriters, without making the locker room the central issue. Even more significant, these sources also acknowledge the presence of female sportswriters prior to Garber in the 1940s. Ardell, for her part, traces the history of female baseball writers. Of particular significance, she identifies Ina Eloise Young of the *Trinidad (Colorado) Chronicle-News* as a woman who not only covered local baseball games circa 1908, but also traveled east to cover that year’s World Series between the Chicago Cubs and Detroit Tigers.⁵⁶

Cramer, despite being primarily interested in job satisfaction and salaries among female sportswriters and female sports editors in the 1990s, also devotes some attention to tracing the history of women in sports journalism.⁵⁷ In so doing, she mentions not only Garber, but also three women who preceded Garber in covering sports: Nellie Bly, who although most famous for chronicling her seventy-two-day race around the globe for the *New York World*, also occasionally wrote about prize fighting for that paper in the late nineteenth century; Middy Morgan, who covered horse races and cattle shows for the *New York Times*, also circa the late 1800s;⁵⁸ and Maureen Orcutt, who in addition to working as a secretary for the *New York Times*, was a championship golfer who wrote about the sport for the paper beginning in the 1920s.

Sowell, meanwhile, has produced separate treatments highlighting the pioneering sports writing contributions of Bly and Winifred Black. He notes that Bly interviewed boxers in the course of her reporting during the late nineteenth century – a prelude to her coverage of a prizefight years later, in 1919.⁵⁹ He contends, however, that Black was the first woman to cover

⁵⁴ Fornoff, *Lady in the Locker Room*, 28.

⁵⁵ Gordon, *Foul Balls*, 118-119.

⁵⁶ Jean Hastings Ardell, *Crashing the Press Box: What Happens When Women Write About Baseball*, paper presented at the annual conference of the Society for American Baseball Research, Boston, MA, June 2002. Ardell points out that a woman, Ella Black, was covering baseball as early as 1890; however, Black was writing for *The Sporting Life* rather than a daily newspaper and so falls slightly outside the scope of this dissertation.

⁵⁷ Cramer, *Missing in Action*.

⁵⁸ Morgan’s first name has also been spelled “Middie” by some authors. This dissertation alternates spellings, according to the source that is being referenced.

⁵⁹ Mike Sowell, *A Stunt Journalist’s Last Hurrah: Nellie Bly Goes Ringside to Report on Jack Dempsey Winning the Heavyweight Boxing Championship*, paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Kansas City, MO, August 2003. Jane Dixon, the subject of Chapter 5 in this dissertation, also covered this 1919 heavyweight title fight in Toledo between defending champion Jess Willard and challenger Jack Dempsey, as did at least two other women: Maria Blanchard of the *Toledo News* and Betty Brown of the *Toledo Times*. Blanchard and Brown covered the fight because it was a source of curiosity and excitement for their hometown of Toledo, not because they were sportswriters per se.

a prizefight for an American newspaper. Although best remembered for writing “sob sister”⁶⁰ stories at the *San Francisco Examiner* under the by-line of “Annie Laurie,” Black made history when she gained entry to an all-men’s club to report on a prizefight in 1892. She also covered other sports stories. Because Sowell argues that sports journalism was just emerging as its own genre in the 1880s and 1890s, he suggests that Black was among the first sportswriters – male or female.⁶¹

Relying on scholarship that focuses solely on female sportswriters, then, one is left with only a handful of names of women who engaged in sports journalism in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries: foremost among them are Black, Bly, Morgan and Young in the late 1800s/early 1900s, Orcutt in the 1920s, and Garber in the 1940s. Given that Orcutt’s writing was a byproduct of her renown as a champion female golfer, one might question her classification as a “journalist,” leaving just Black, Bly, Morgan and Young at the turn of the century and Garber in the World War II era. This creates a significant void between the turn of the century and the 1940s and prompts the question: were any female journalists writing about sports during the first few decades of the 1900s? To determine whether women were covering sports during that period – or whether Black, Bly, Morgan, Young and Garber represent the extent of early sports writing by women – one must cull other, broader sources for information. Such sources include the literature on sports journalism history, in general; anthologies of sports writing; research on women in journalism (where journalism is defined as including all types of newspaper reporting); reference compilations that provide brief biographical sketches of journalists; and survey histories of journalism, including classics such as Emery and Emery⁶² and Mott.⁶³

Literature on Sports Journalism History

On the history of sports journalism, relatively little has been written – especially when compared to vast histories that have been produced about political reporting, war coverage, and the personalities behind the Penny Press and Yellow Journalism. A recent assessment, in fact, suggests that serious study of the subject of sports writing “has been, at best, a marginalized field within American journalism history.”⁶⁴

Perhaps the best book-length treatment of sports journalism history is Jerome Holtzman’s *No Cheering in the Press Box*.⁶⁵ Holtzman, a former sportswriter who now serves as Major

⁶⁰ “Sob sisters” was the name given to female reporters who wrote melodramatic, soap opera-like accounts of tawdry courtroom testimony and other sensational news developments, circa the late 1800s and early 1900s. For an excellent book-length treatment of these female reporters, see Phyllis Leslie Abramson, *Sob Sister Journalism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

⁶¹ Mike Sowell, *A Woman in a Man’s World: An Analysis of ‘Annie Laurie’ as One of America’s First Sportswriters*, paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC, August 2001.

⁶² Emery, Emery, and Roberts, *The Press and America*.

⁶³ Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History, 1690-1930*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

⁶⁴ Dennis Gildea, review of *Sportswriter: The Life and Times of Grantland Rice*, by Charles Fountain, *American Journalism* 12, no. 3 (1995): 411-12.

⁶⁵ Jerome Holtzman, ed., *No Cheering in the Press Box* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973; 1st rev. edition, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995).

League Baseball's official historian, conducted interviews in the early 1970s with 18 fellow sports scribes whose careers spanned various eras within the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. In his book, Holtzman provides a short preface about each sportswriter, then allows the interviewee to reminisce. Collectively, these oral histories provide a sense of what it was like to be a sportswriter; they capture the mood of their respective eras and provide insight into the working conditions of sportswriters and the rapport they shared, not only among each other, but with the athletes they covered. None of the 18 sportswriters featured in Holtzman's book is a woman, however. Long-time Washington, D.C., sports columnist Shirley Povich is featured – but despite the first name, Povich, it should be pointed out, is not a woman. While those familiar with Povich may find it ludicrous to make this distinction, the erroneous listing of Povich in a book of great American women suggests the clarification is worthwhile.⁶⁶ Also, it should be pointed out that although Holtzman profiled 18 sportswriters in his book, he actually interviewed 44 sports journalists before paring down the number he would eventually include in his text. Still, even among the interviewees who did not make it into the book, there are again no women. Holtzman's book gives the impression, then, that women were historically absent from the sports writing scene – an impression that must be corrected.

Like Holtzman, Stanley Woodward also provides a history of sports journalism based on personal experience – in this case, his own. Writing in 1949, a quarter-century before Holtzman, Woodward admits that he was primarily concerned at the time with portraying the sports journalism field as “legitimate, constructive, and valuable.”⁶⁷ Although Woodward provides anecdotes from his own career, the result is not an autobiography. Instead, whether intentionally or not, Woodward constructs a history of sports writing through and including the 1940s. With respect to female sportswriters, however, Woodward's contribution parallels Holtzman's: Woodward makes no mention of women reporting on sports.

In contrast to Woodward and Holtzman, other authors have attempted to provide an overview of the evolution of the sports journalism profession, not through the eyes of sportswriters and sports editors themselves, but rather through a more analytical, third-person approach. Yet such historical research is mostly brief and superficial, and practically none of it examines the role of women in sports journalism. Take, for example, the overviews of sports journalism history compiled by Robert McChesney⁶⁸ and John Stevens.⁶⁹

McChesney's oft-cited essay, “Media Made Sport: A History of Sports Coverage in the United States,” provides a brief but valuable chronology of sports journalism, starting with the appearance of sports stories in magazines of the 1820s. McChesney continues by tracing the introduction of sports to newspapers during the Penny Press era of the mid-1800s, the debut of the first newspaper sports departments and sports sections at the end of the nineteenth century, the explosion of sports coverage during the 1920s, and the subsequent impact of radio and

⁶⁶ “Shirley Povich,” obituary, *Washington Post*, 5 June 1998, sec. C, p. 1. The obituary notes that Povich had been erroneously included in the 1962 edition of *Who's Who of American Women* (Chicago: Marquis, 1962). Amusingly, the obituary also notes that Povich once received an application to join the League of American Penwomen. Asked on the application, “How do you get along with the men in your office,” he wryly responded, “I just try to be one of the boys.”

⁶⁷ Stanley Woodward, *Sports Page* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949), x.

⁶⁸ McChesney, “Media Made Sport,” 49-69.

⁶⁹ John Stevens, “The Rise of the Sports Page,” *Gannett Center Journal* 1 (Fall 1987): 1-11.

television on sports reporting. Although he mentions some prominent sportswriters along the way – such as nineteenth century pioneer baseball reporter Henry Chadwick and 1920s wordsmiths Grantland Rice and Westbrook Pegler – he mentions no female sports journalists, either from bygone eras or the more contemporary periods that his essay also examines. In fact, the essay makes only two mentions of women at all; one is a reference to female sports spectators, the other to female athletes.⁷⁰ It should be noted, though, that McChesney does not purport to provide a detailed and comprehensive history of sports journalism as much as an overview. In fact, he makes clear that his primary objective is to highlight the symbiotic relationship between sport and mass media – that is, how media influenced the popularity of sport, and how sport also influenced the growth of sports coverage. A historical accounting of sports reporting is necessary to accomplish this, but is not the goal in and of itself. As a result, McChesney concedes that “some very important material must be ignored or dealt with in only a cursory fashion.”⁷¹ Whether consciously or not, the emergence of female sportswriters – in either earlier periods or more recent eras – is one of those aspects that was omitted.⁷²

In constructing a brief history of newspaper sports coverage for the Gannett Center for Media Studies, Stevens similarly overlooked the contributions of female sportswriters, from bygone eras through 1987, when his essay was published. In fact, he mentions only two newspaper sports scribes by name, both of whom were referenced by McChesney: Henry Chadwick, whose writing on baseball popularized the sport and made it a staple of emerging sports sections in the late 1800s, and the previously referenced Grantland Rice, whose purple prose was emblematic of the hyperbole-filled sports sections of the early twentieth century. Rather than focus on particular names of sportswriters, Stevens devotes much of his attention to examining the relationship between sports journalism and blue-collar, middle-class readership. This relationship, he says, has influenced several aspects of sports journalism throughout history, including: the amount of sports coverage newspapers provide, the types of sports they cover, and the kid-glove treatment they have typically afforded to athletes, even those with major character flaws. However provocative, his examination of these issues does nothing to highlight the role of women in the sports journalism field.

Bruce Garrison and Mark Sabljak⁷³, on the other hand, do pay some modest attention to the history of women in sports journalism – although they do so, surprisingly enough, in an instructional textbook that is primarily intended to help students understand the finer points of sports writing, such as crafting leads and conducting interviews. Nonetheless, their book devotes a chapter to the development of sports journalism in America. The chapter, which was found at the end of their book when it was first published in 1985, is more prominently placed toward the front of the most recent edition – perhaps signaling that sports journalism history is beginning to receive the increased attention it deserves. Garrison and Sabljak’s chapter is especially useful because it divides the history of sports journalism into distinct eras, starting with the Pioneer Era,

⁷⁰ McChesney, “Media Made Sport,” 61, 66.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷² McChesney’s master’s thesis, on which his essay draws, also fails to recognize the contributions of women sports journalists. See Robert McChesney, “Sport, Mass Media and Monopoly Capital: Toward a Reinterpretation of the 1920s and Beyond” (M.S. thesis, University of Washington, 1986).

⁷³ Garrison and Sabljak, *Sports Reporting*, 17-33.

which ranges from the European settlement of America to 1830, and continuing through to the present day. Along the way, the authors note cultural and technological advances that allowed sports journalism to develop in each time period, while also chronicling dominant sports, evolutions in reporting styles, and important sportswriters from the various eras. Mentioned among those sportswriters are nineteenth century journalists Nellie Bly and Middie Morgan.⁷⁴ Although the two are mentioned only briefly, Garrison and Sabljak help establish that women were writing about sports as early as the late nineteenth century, a point reaffirmed by the earlier cited Cramer and Sowell articles. In addition, Garrison and Sabljak discuss the opportunities and obstacles faced by female sportswriters in the modern sports journalism field.

Other instructional sports writing texts – such as Anderson’s *Contemporary Sports Reporting*⁷⁵ and Gelfand and Heath’s *Modern Sportswriting*⁷⁶ – shed less light on sports journalism history and the role of female writers. While Anderson does devote a section to tracing the historical evolution of the sports page from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, much of his contribution is simply a review of the earlier mentioned Woodward book, supplemented with a section on the expanding opportunities for female sportswriters in today’s era of greater locker room access. The only sense of history derived from Gelfand and Heath’s book, meanwhile, comes from their inclusion of writing samples by some legendary sportswriters; the stories are meant to highlight certain techniques for the students reading the text. Female sportswriters, however, are a non-factor.

So, having culled literature on the history of sports writing – even to the extent of searching instructional textbooks for possible nuggets about the evolution of sports journalism – one finds little additional information to determine whether women were actively engaged in sports writing between the late nineteenth century contributions of Black, Bly, and Morgan and the mid-twentieth century contributions of Garber. If anything, the exercise merely confirms the presence of some of these aforementioned women. And so the question remains: were women writing about sports in between the time of Black, Bly and Morgan and the later emergence of Garber; that is, were women a factor in the field of sports journalism during the first few decades of the 1900s?

Anthologies of Sports Writing

A review of several sports writing anthologies does little to answer the question. If anything, surveying such anthologies gives the impression that women were not covering sports in the early 1900s. Take Ron Rapoport’s collection of sports writing by women – the first, and so far, only anthology devoted to female sports journalists.⁷⁷ It contains 72 sports stories by female sportswriters; because all 72 were published in the 1980s and 1990s, his anthology seems to suggest that sports journalism by women is a recent development. He only furthers that impression when he writes in the preface that, “with only a few lonely exceptions women’s by-

⁷⁴ Cramer, who mentioned Bly and Morgan in an essay cited earlier in this dissertation, credits Garrison and Sabljak’s *Sports Reporting* as her source.

⁷⁵ Douglas A. Anderson, *Contemporary Sports Reporting*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1994), 4-18.

⁷⁶ Louis I. Gelfand and Harry E. Heath Jr., *Modern Sportswriting* (Ames, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1969).

⁷⁷ Ron Rapoport, ed., *A Kind of Grace: A Treasury of Sportswriting by Women* (Berkeley, CA: Zenobia Press, 1994).

lines began appearing in the sports section in the early 1970s.”⁷⁸ The only “exception” that Rapoport acknowledges is Mary Garber, whom he profiles in the afterward to his book. Considering that Garber began her sports writing career in the 1940s, Rapoport’s anthology leads the reader to believe that sports writing by women prior to Garber was essentially nonexistent.

Furthering this impression is the overall lack of female writers in other anthologies, such as Stanley Frank’s *Sports Extra*.⁷⁹ Billed as a collection of sports reporting “classics,” *Sports Extra* includes 48 sports stories written between 1888 and 1944, the year it was published. None of the stories is by women, suggesting that either women were not writing much about sports during that period, or if they were, that their writing was not worthy of “classic” status. Female sports journalists have fared only slightly better in the *Best Sports Stories* anthology, published annually since 1944.⁸⁰ The first woman was not included in the prestigious compilation until 1959, when the *Los Angeles Times*’ Jeane Hoffman cracked the annual collection of stellar sports writing.⁸¹ That was followed by a 17-year drought for women, after which their work began to appear in the collection more regularly. Even so, women sportswriters received scant attention in *The Best American Sportswriting of the Century*, compiled by David Halberstam in 1999 to highlight the most impressive sports writing of the preceding 100 years. Of the more than 50 stories included, only two are by women – and both date from the last twenty years.⁸² Meanwhile, Heinz-Dietrich Fischer’s *Sports Journalism at Its Best*, which catalogs Pulitzer Prize-winning stories on sports, also underscores the lack of recognition afforded female sportswriters. Since William H. Taylor’s 1934 series on international yacht racing became the first sports reporting to earn a Pulitzer, only a few of the prizes have gone to women writing about sports – all in the last two decades.⁸³ Cumulatively, the absence of female sports journalists from sports writing anthologies and similar collections – particularly the absence of women sports journalists prior to the mid-twentieth century – signals that women have just recently gained a recognizable presence in the sports journalism field.

Literature on the History of Female Journalists

Before concluding that women did not have much of an impact on sports coverage prior to the mid-twentieth century, however, one must also consider the literature on the history of female journalists, where journalism is broadly defined as including all types of newspaper writing. This literature valuably complements, and extends, the studies and articles already reviewed here. Probably the four most important survey works on female journalists are *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism*, by Maurine Beasley and Sheila

⁷⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁹ Stanley Frank, ed., *Sports Extra* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1944).

⁸⁰ Irving T. Marsh and Edward Ehre, eds., *Best Sports Stories* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1944).

⁸¹ Irving T. Marsh and Edward Ehre, eds., *Best Sports Stories* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1959).

⁸² David Halberstam, ed., *The Best American Sports Writing of the Century* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). The two stories by women are Diane K. Shah’s “Oh No! Not Another Boring Interview With Steve Carlton,” which appeared in *The Los Angeles Herald Examiner* during 1983, and Johnette Howard’s “The Making of a Goon,” which was published in *The National*, a short-lived sports daily, in 1990.

⁸³ Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, *Sports Journalism at Its Best: Pulitzer Prize-Winning Articles, Cartoons and Photographs* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1995).

J. Gibbons;⁸⁴ *Up From the Footnote*, by Marion Marzolf;⁸⁵ *A Place in the News: From the Women's Pages to the Front Page*, by Kay Mills,⁸⁶ and *Ladies of the Press*, by Ishbel Ross.⁸⁷

Beasley and Gibbons, in their book, trace the involvement of women in the journalism industry from the Colonial period through the modern era. The opening chapter provides a broad, valuable overview of this evolution. Subsequent chapters are devoted to a more extensive treatment of women's contributions in particular areas – for example, “the woman's page,” crusade journalism, stunt reporting, political coverage, and war correspondence. Each of these chapters also contains at least one excerpt that exemplifies the quality writing that has been produced by women in each of these areas. As for women and sports journalism, Beasley and Gibbons provide a brief examination of the topic in the chapter, “Women in Journalism Today.”⁸⁸ They quickly trace the struggle of female journalists to gain locker room access and acceptance starting in the mid-1970s; among the locker room-related “incidents” the book highlights are the Ludtke and Olson cases, both of which were documented elsewhere in this literature review. Beasley and Gibbons also include an excerpt from the *Washington Post Magazine*, in which Christine Brennan describes her three years as a beat writer covering the Washington Redskins professional football team in the mid- to late 1980s. The excerpt provides an insightful, firsthand account of the way in which male professional athletes can sometimes make a female journalist's job especially difficult by being hostile or petty. Yet because the Brennan excerpt and Beasley-Gibbons preface deal with female sportswriters of the 1970s and/or 1980s, neither does much to document the existence of female sports journalists in earlier eras. Thus, while the Beasley-Gibbons book does treat the issue of women in sports writing, it does not provide a historical perspective that stretches back beyond the last few decades.

Written roughly ten years before Beasley and Gibbons' historical survey of female journalists, Marzolf's book also traces the role of women in the newspaper industry, beginning with the Colonial era and extending through the latter twentieth century. However, Marzolf's text makes only a few scattered, mostly superficial, references to female sportswriters – perhaps because several of the more famous locker room incidents involving female journalists had not yet occurred and so had not pushed the topic of female sportswriters into the public's consciousness. Whatever brief references Marzolf makes to female sportswriters mostly highlight the low numbers of women engaged in the profession circa the mid-1970s as well as the informal “stag restrictions”⁸⁹ that made it difficult for women of that era to break into sports writing. In sum, Marzolf provides even less information about the history of female sportswriters than Beasley and Gibbons. Moreover, Marzolf's book is not as well documented.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Beasley and Gibbons, *Taking Their Place*.

⁸⁵ Marion Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote: A History of Women Journalists* (New York: Hastings House, 1977).

⁸⁶ Mills, *A Place in the News*.

⁸⁷ Ishbel Ross, *Ladies of the Press: The Story of Women in Journalism by an Insider* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936).

⁸⁸ Beasley and Gibbons, *Taking Their Place*, 267-288.

⁸⁹ Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote*, 105.

⁹⁰ Rather than pair particular sentences or paragraphs with their sources, Marzolf simply tacks a “Sources Consulted” list at the end of each chapter.

The result: Marzolf's contribution vis-à-vis female sportswriters is light. And like Beasley and Gibbons' book, Marzolf's work does nothing to affirm the presence of female sportswriters prior to the 1970s.

Not so for Mills. She mentions three, pre-1970s female sports journalists in her book, the overall character of which is similar to the Beasley-Gibbons and Marzolf offerings, but more strident in tone with regard to the indignities suffered by women journalists. The most notable of the three, pre-1970s female sportswriters that Mills mentions is Adela St. Johns – if for no other reason than her name heretofore has been absent in the surveyed literature, save for her mention as a “sob sister” reporter who covered sensational trials and other dramatic news stories for the Hearst papers. While Mills duly notes St. Johns' contributions as a “sob sister,” Mills also describes St. Johns as “one of the first women sportswriters.”⁹¹ Mills also confirms the sports writing contributions of Maureen Orcutt and Mary Garber, both of whom have been identified in other literature surveyed in this dissertation. Aside from acknowledging that trio of female sports scribes, Mills' “Forbidden Turf” chapter examines the obstacles encountered by female sports journalists (including photojournalists) in gaining locker room or sideline access.⁹² In the process, Mills incorporates the names of dozens of female sports journalists from the 1970s and 80s. Thus, despite mentioning some earlier pioneers, Mills' overall focus is on latter-day female sportswriters.

In sharp contrast to Mills – as well as to Marzolf, Beasley and Gibbons – Ross only considers female journalists who were working prior to the mid-1930s, because her book was published in 1936. Written as a firsthand recollection of women's experiences in the newspaper industry during the early twentieth century, Ross jumps from name to name as she reminisces about the female newspaper reporters she knew, or knew about, during a journalism career that spanned from 1919 to 1934. She also invokes the memory of some female journalists who worked before she broke into the business. Among the literally hundreds of newspaperwomen she mentions several dozen women who covered sports on a regular, semi-regular, or occasional basis. Thus, Ross' contribution to this dissertation is invaluable. Although anecdotal rather than scholarly, Ross provides affirmation that no other source has yet provided in this literature review – namely, that women actively and extensively reported on sports in the early twentieth century. Granted, Ross usually provides only brief treatment of the many women she reminisces about, making it difficult for the reader to ascertain how much of their writing was sports-related and, in some cases, the precise years when the women were writing or the newspapers for which they were working. Yet, by identifying these women, Ross provides the modern day researcher with a list of names that he or she can consider in trying to construct a history of female sportswriters and assess the contributions they made.

Ross' book becomes even more valuable when it is paired alongside Pamela Creedon's 1994 work, *Women, Media and Sport*.⁹³ Though focused primarily on insights about the construction and meaning of gender as it relates to athletics, the collection of essays compiled by Creedon does contain a less theoretical chapter outlining the history of women in sports

⁹¹ Mills, *A Place in the News*, 219; unfortunately, Mills does not elaborate on St. Johns' sports writing contributions.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 218-235.

⁹³ Pamela J. Creedon, ed., *Women, Media and Sport: Challenging Gender Values* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994); see Chapter 4, “Women in Toyland: A Look at Women in American Newspaper Sports Journalism,” 67-103.

journalism. Written by Creedon herself, the chapter draws on Ross, but also supplies some additional details about the women Ross has identified, and in many cases identifies pioneering female sports scribes not referenced by Ross or any other author surveyed in this literature review. On the other hand, Creedon also overlooks some of the female sportswriters who can be identified by a careful reading of Ross.

Regardless, Creedon's chapter should be regarded as the singular, most valuable source on the history of women in sports journalism for several reasons. First, it represents a consolidated source of information on the topic. Whereas Ross' recollections of female sports writing pioneers are scattered throughout her book, Creedon's text neatly collects information about female sports journalists in one chapter. Second, although just 36 pages in length, the chapter attempts an exhaustive history, starting with 1869 and continuing through the late twentieth century. Thus, although it devotes much attention to latter-day sportswriters and the locker room issue, it provides near-equal treatment of female sportswriters from earlier eras. So exhaustive is its scope, that Creedon says compiling the chapter was the most time-consuming part of the book project⁹⁴ – this, despite the fact that she also contributed three other chapters to the text and edited all of the other essays it includes. A final reason the chapter is so valuable is that it contains several reference lists, including a list of “significant firsts” for women in sports journalism. Spanning a nearly 120-year period, the list documents 22 “firsts” for female sportswriters. However, because she is aware that her research is in many ways seminal, Creedon invites challenges and additions to the list.⁹⁵ To that end, the author of this dissertation has looked through hundreds of newspapers from the early twentieth century and identified several more female sportswriters not mentioned by Creedon, Ross or any of the previously cited literature.

Marrying Creedon's scholarly research to both Ross' anecdotal history and the dissertation author's original research, this dissertation can safely conclude that 75 women were writing about sports between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Yet with a few exceptions, these women have not been recognized among the other literature surveyed to this point. Although this dissertation will ultimately concentrate on just three pioneering female sportswriters from the 1920s, this project also seeks to provide a springboard for additional research on the overall history of women in sports journalism. To facilitate such research, and to provide a better sense of the magnitude of Ross and Creedon's contribution, this dissertation includes an Appendix that catalogs the dozens and dozens of female sports writing pioneers identified by Ross and Creedon, in addition to the several women identified by the dissertation author's examination of early twentieth century newspapers.⁹⁶

As it relates to the research at hand, the work of Ross and Creedon is most valuable in establishing the importance of the 1920s to the growing presence of women in sports journalism. By meticulously combing Ross' anecdotal history and then combining those results with Creedon's work, one sees the 1920s clearly emerge as *the* decade when women began having a

⁹⁴ Ibid., vii.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 75.

⁹⁶ Specifically, the Appendix highlights newspaperwomen who covered sports, to varying degrees, between the 1860s and 1940s. Women who made contributions to sports journalism in the second half of the nineteenth century have been extensively chronicled by multiple sources (including Creedon's book) and so are not the focus of the Appendix.

significant, widespread impact in writing about sports. Even though neither Ross nor Creedon explicitly identify the 1920s as a watershed decade for female sports journalists, their research clearly points in that direction. Whereas Ross and Creedon identify only a smattering of female sports journalists from the late 1800s through the early 1900s, they highlight at least nineteen women covering sports on a somewhat regular basis during the 1920s – in addition to another ten women engaged in sports writing to other varying degrees during the decade. Although women clearly continued to have a presence on the sports page after the Roaring Twenties, Ross and Creedon’s work suggests that the decade was a particularly prolific period for female sports journalists – the most prolific, at any rate, prior to the widespread re-emergence of female sportswriters circa the 1970s and 80s.

Biographical Dictionaries and Survey Histories

The wave of post-1970 female sportswriters notwithstanding, a look back at all the literature surveyed here – combined with the dissertation author’s own examination of microfilmed newspapers – yields the names of nearly 80 women reporting on sports prior to the mid-twentieth century, the majority of whom were referenced by Ross and/or Creedon and whose sports writing contributions can be placed in the 1920s. Armed with the names of these newspaperwomen, it is possible to extend this literature review by scouring biographical dictionaries and other similar sources to see if any additional material has been written about these female journalists. Such sources include *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Joseph McKerns’ *Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism*, Sam Riley’s *Biographical Dictionary of American Newspaper Columnists*, and William Taft’s *Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Journalists*. A survey of these sources, however, shows that the nearly 80 female sports journalists – some of whom have been mentioned in the body of this dissertation and others who are mentioned only in the Appendix – are virtually absent from the pages of these biographical dictionaries and encyclopedias. This is further evidence that female sports journalists have been overlooked by scholars.

Perhaps most telling is the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*’s failure to highlight women who have written about sports. The *DLB*, a massive 285-volume undertaking that was launched in 1978 to chronicle the contributions of journalists, novelists, poets and other writers, has since issued two volumes dedicated to American sports journalists and other American writers on sport.⁹⁷ Of the nearly seven dozen writers profiled across these two volumes, not one is a woman – this despite the fact that the volumes include a mixture of early twentieth century writers, as well as more contemporary journalists. The point is: even if the compilers chose to ignore early twentieth century female sportswriters because of the difficulty involved in piecing together their careers, it seems that profiles of a few latter-day female sports journalists would at least be in order. After all, there are plenty to choose from: Susan Fornoff, Michele Himmelberg, Lisa Olson, Claire Smith, and other modern-day “pioneers” to name but a few. While no women were profiled among the *DLB* entrants, six African-American sports journalists were included, suggesting that the compilers were sensitive to the need for diversity, at least on one level. Why, then, the omission of women? Whatever the reason, the *DLB* confirms what

⁹⁷ Richard Orodnenker, ed., *Twentieth-Century American Sportswriters*, vol. 171, *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1996); Orodnenker, ed., *American Sportswriters and Writers on Sport*, vol. 241, *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Detroit: Gale Group, 2001).

earlier sections of this literature review have suggested: that the accomplishments of female sportswriters are not well documented in the scholarly community.⁹⁸

This conclusion is further strengthened by looking at McKerns' *Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism*,⁹⁹ Riley's *Biographical Dictionary of American Newspaper Columnists*,¹⁰⁰ and Taft's *Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Journalists*.¹⁰¹ Reviewing their contents, one finds that only seven "pre-1950" female sportswriters merited entries in these sources, and of those seven, only three are mentioned in connection to sport – and even then, their link to sports coverage is noted briefly.¹⁰²

Checking the *Notable American Women*¹⁰³ series for references to female sports journalists yields even slimmer results, as does a look at the *Notable Black American Women* reference collection -- the latter being consulted since six of the female sports reporters identified in this overall literature review worked for the African-American press.¹⁰⁴

Dead ends continue, even when consulting sources whose biographical entries are limited to female journalists. *Great Women of the Press*,¹⁰⁵ which contains biographical portraits of female journalists from the last three centuries, and *Brilliant By-lines*,¹⁰⁶ which combines biographical entries of nineteenth and twentieth century female journalists with excerpts of their writing, fail to highlight any women for their sports writing contributions. Women's

⁹⁸ Although the two volumes on sportswriters were of particular interest, a cumulative index of all 285 volumes was consulted to see if any of the 74 women sportswriters identified by this dissertation were included in other volumes. This turned out to be the case for three journalists: Winnifred Black, Nellie Bly, and Adela St. Johns. Even so, their entries made no reference to their sports reporting, but focused on their other journalistic contributions instead.

⁹⁹ Joseph McKerns, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).

¹⁰⁰ Sam G. Riley, *Biographical Dictionary of American Newspaper Columnists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995).

¹⁰¹ William H. Taft, *Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Journalists* (New York: Garland), 1986.

¹⁰² The seven women journalists who receive mention are: Winnifred Black, in McKerns, *Dictionary of American Journalism*, 48-50; Nellie Bly, in McKerns, 121-122, and Riley, *Dictionary of American Newspaper Columnists*, 295-296; Genevieve Forbes Herrick, in McKerns, 334-336; Lorena Hickok, in McKerns, 337-339; Inez Callaway Robb, in McKerns, 598-99, Riley, 266-267, and Taft, *Encyclopedia*, 286; Adela Rogers St. Johns, in Taft, 300; and Helen Worden, in Riley, 358-359, and Taft, 376. Among those entries, the only ones to mention sports writing are McKerns' profile of Hickok, Riley's sketch of Robb, and Taft's entry on St. Johns.

¹⁰³ Edward T. James, ed., *Notable American Women*, vols. 1-3 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1971); Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Greed, eds., *Notable American Women*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1980). Winnifred Black and Elizabeth Seaman (aka Nellie Bly) are profiled in volumes 1 and 3, respectively, while both Lorena Hickok and Inez Haynes Irwin are the subjects of entries in volume 4. None of the entries makes significant references to sports, however.

¹⁰⁴ Jessie Carney Smith, ed., *Notable Black American Women*, vols. 1-2. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1992 and 1996). None of the six women has an entry.

¹⁰⁵ Madelon Golden Schilpp and Sharon M. Murphy, *Great Women of the Press* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983).

¹⁰⁶ Barbara Belford, *Brilliant By-lines: A Biographical Anthology of Notable Newspaperwomen in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

contributions to the sports page are simply not a focus of these books -- although a war correspondent, a film critic, a photojournalist, and even an architecture critic are among those who do merit inclusion.¹⁰⁷

Classic and seemingly exhaustive surveys of journalism history – such as Emery and Emery’s *The Press and America* and Frank Luther Mott’s *American Journalism* – similarly ignore the contributions of female sports journalists and, in fact, virtually overlook sports journalism entirely.

From top to bottom, then, this literature review demonstrates just how much of a void exists with respect to scholarship on the history of sports journalism. Except for a few rare exceptions, quality sources on female sportswriters are especially lacking, particularly sources that focus on women who wrote about sports in the first half of the twentieth century. And so the literature review clearly affirms the need for research about female sports journalists.

Besides highlighting the need for more research and identifying the 1920s as an especially prolific period for female sportswriters, this literature review is valuable in yet another regard: it inspires a useful framework for classifying the writing of women who covered sports during the Roaring Twenties. Drawing on Ross and Creedon’s descriptions of women’s sports writing from the period, this dissertation proposes that sports stories written by female journalists of the twenties may be placed into one of three categories:

- Reporting on women’s sports. When women were assigned to cover sports, they were often limited to reporting on female athletes. Thus, they wrote stories about events such as women’s golf and tennis matches, as well as female college athletics such as swimming and basketball. Occasionally, these female sports reporters were also given a column to serve as a forum for further commentary on women’s athletics. Considering that sports columns were central to the so-called Golden Age of Sports Writing – male sports journalists of the twenties often elevated columns to highly stylized art forms by expertly combining opinion, wit, and verse – it was indeed an honor for a woman to be given her own sports column. One female sports journalist who covered women’s sports in addition to having her own column was Margaret Goss of the *New York Herald Tribune*.¹⁰⁸ Because evidence suggests that Goss was a forerunner among female sportswriters who could also lay claim to their own columns,¹⁰⁹ her work will be highlighted in Chapter 3.

- Reporting on men’s sports. Whereas Goss and several other female journalists reported about women’s sports on a consistent or somewhat consistent basis,¹¹⁰ female reporters who worked as beat writers covering male team sports were exceptionally rare. In fact, the research undertaken for this dissertation suggests that Lorena Hickok was perhaps the only 1920s-era female sports journalist who regularly reported on a men’s team over a period of several years. Hickok covered the University of Minnesota football team for the *Minneapolis*

¹⁰⁷ Both books do devote entries to Winnifred Black and Nellie Bly, but not for their sports writing contributions.

¹⁰⁸ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 468-472; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 75-76.

¹⁰⁹ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, mentions several female journalists who followed in Goss’ footsteps with their own sports columns – at the *New York Herald Tribune* and elsewhere – but credits Goss’ column as the “innovation” that set the tone for the others; see Ross, 469-470.

¹¹⁰ See the dissertation’s Appendix for names of other female sports reporters and/or columnists, along with limited details about the sports they covered, the years they worked, and the newspapers where they were employed.

Morning Tribune for parts or all of three seasons during the mid-twenties. Her close association with a male team sport makes her contributions especially noteworthy; she is the subject of Chapter 4.¹¹¹

- Reporting from a “woman’s angle.” While women of the era were hardly ever assigned to day-in, day-out coverage of male athletics, they were frequently sent to a football game, boxing match, or other male sporting event with instructions to cover it from a “woman’s angle.” In fact, such stories were often promoted with newspaper advertisements telling readers that they could expect a particular female reporter to provide them with her own womanly perspective in the next day’s edition. Frequently, the stories themselves were published alongside a more traditional article produced by a male writer; for example, a male journalist might provide the straightforward account of a prizefight, while a woman on the newspaper’s staff would provide a sidebar capturing the overall mood of the evening and making note of celebrities who were at ringside. Among the women who were especially prolific in this regard was Jane Dixon of the *New York Telegram*. Her sports writing contributions are examined in Chapter 5.

Having identified three types of sports writing associated with newspaperwomen of the twenties, and having chosen a woman who is representative of each category, this dissertation will carefully analyze the content and style of each woman’s writing. By considering the specific sports stories these women covered and the styles that they employed, the dissertation seeks to provide a greater understanding of the role and significance of female sports journalists circa the 1920s. In particular, attention is paid to the way female sportswriters upheld and/or challenged the institutional norms of the newspaper industry during the period, making this an exercise in media history.

However, because the research allows wider conclusions to be drawn about women’s place in society during the 1920s, this dissertation transcends media history. Indeed, by considering how the role of women in newspaper sports departments reflected, and contributed to, the social norms of the era, the research demonstrates an interest in the way cultural meaning is produced and/or reproduced. In this sense, the research owes a debt to anthropology, where culture has been defined to include not only “high art” such as classical painting and opera, but also more pedestrian artifacts such as newspapers and sports events. From nineteenth century scholar Sir Edward Tylor, who asserted that essentially *everything* is culture,¹¹² to contemporary researcher Arjun Appadurai, who examined the cultural meaning of the sport of cricket,¹¹³

¹¹¹ Prior to the twenties, Sadie Kneller Miller stands as perhaps the lone example of a woman covering a male sports beat; Miller covered the Baltimore Orioles baseball team for the *Baltimore Telegram* in the 1890s. However, because this dissertation focuses on the collective rise of female sports journalists in the 1920s, Miller’s contributions do not fit into the scope of this research. As a result, information about Miller is restricted to brief references in the literature review and the Appendix. See also Dawn F. Thomas, “Sarah Kneller Miller, 1867-1920,” in *Notable Maryland Women*, ed. Winifred C. Helmes (Cambridge, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1977).

¹¹² Edward Tylor defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Tylor, *Primitive Cultures* (1871); quoted. in Philip Bock, *Modern Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred and Knopf, 1979), 13-14.

¹¹³ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). Prior to Appadurai, C. L. R. James also looked at the cultural implications of cricket. However, James was not an anthropologist by training; rather, he was a novelist and a Marxist theorist. See C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary: Cricket and West Indian Self-Determination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963).

anthropologists have advocated a wide definition of culture.¹¹⁴ In between, English literature professors such as Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams also promoted an all-encompassing definition of culture and in the process helped establish the cultural studies movement.¹¹⁵

Communication scholars also have contributed to the cultural studies school, and James Carey, for one, is relevant to this dissertation. Of particular importance is his ritual view of mass communication, which suggests that the press provides a window to shared experiences that create and sustain a “particular view of the world” among readers.¹¹⁶ If the media indeed produce and confirm particular worldviews, then the number and prominence of women covering sports, as well as the types of sports and angles they are assigned to cover, reflect something about our culture. In particular, the place of women in sports journalism sends a message about the appropriateness of women’s association with physicality, their perceived competency in writing about the typically male-dominated sports realm, and their role in the power hierarchy of the newspaper industry. Because this dissertation explores the role of 1920s-era female sports journalists in challenging and affirming gender- and occupational-based notions, cultural studies must be acknowledged as an underlying influence that generally inspired many of the questions examined herein.

However, this dissertation does not purport to be a direct product of the cultural studies school, nor does it try to produce a study that will fit clearly under the “cultural studies” heading.¹¹⁷ Rather, this research, as alluded to earlier, is first and foremost historical in nature. As a work of history, this dissertation is particularly interested in determining why the 1920s was such a fertile era for the emergence of female sportswriters. Chapter 2, therefore, draws on both primary and secondary sources to identify trends, both in society as well as in the newspaper industry, that may account for the increased presence of women on the sports pages during the Roaring Twenties.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ For an excellent overview of anthropology’s rejection of “high art” as an acceptable definition of culture, and the field’s insistence on including items of popular culture among its scope of study, see Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 25-45 and 196-217.

¹¹⁵ See, for example, Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957) and Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

¹¹⁶ James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 20. Elaborating on the difference between the transmission and ritual views of communication, Carey writes: “If one examines a newspaper under a transmission view of communication, one sees the medium as an instrument for disseminating news and knowledge.” However, a “ritual view of communication will focus on a different range of problems in examining a newspaper. It will, for example, view reading a newspaper less as sending or gaining information and more as . . . a situation in which nothing new is learned but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed.”

¹¹⁷ Such an approach is consistent with that of many historians, who have observed the dangers of trying to fit history to specific theoretical outlooks. Consciously or not, a historian who is bound by theory runs the risk of drawing conclusions to coincide with the theory. And so it is best to be guided by theory only in a general way. See, for example, Barbara Tuchman, *Practicing History* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 58, and James D. Startt and Wm. David Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication* (Hillsdale, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989), xiii. Even so, Startt and Sloan do concede the usefulness of a theoretical framework – provided that it is loosely, judiciously, and responsibly applied; see *Historical Methods*, 38.

¹¹⁸ Considering how societal factors have affected the newspaper industry is an example of what historian Sidney Kobre calls “cultural history.” While most journalism historians have traditionally conceded the impact of the press on history, Kobre encouraged consideration of the opposite effect; that is, how society influences the media. See

Chapters 3 through 5, meanwhile, rely almost entirely on primary sources. These chapters – which study the newspaper writing of the aforementioned Goss, Hickok, and Dixon – draw largely on their by-lined stories, as collected from microfilm.¹¹⁹ Where available, other primary and secondary sources that inform the careers of these particular women are also consulted.¹²⁰ The goal is to not only chronicle the pioneering contributions of these three journalists, but to also recreate the mood of their era, with emphasis also on the obstacles that they faced. In sum, the lives and work of these three female sports journalists are intended to serve as a lens through which to understand issues such as gender and equality in 1920s America.

Sidney Kobre, “The Sociological Approach in Research in Newspaper History,” *Journalism Quarterly* 22 (1945): 12-22.

¹¹⁹ While Frank Luther Mott’s enduring counsel against accepting newspaper accounts as fact is always valuable, it is less pertinent in this instance since newspapers are not consulted here to assess the specific details of sporting events, but rather the style which writers employ in describing those contests. See Mott, “Evidence of Reliability in Newspapers and Periodicals in Historical Studies,” *Journalism Quarterly* 21 (1944): 304-310.

¹²⁰ Such an approach follows Startt and Sloan’s advice to “probe deeply into private personal records in order to discover evidence about the motive or actions that lie behind the public record (e.g., newspaper stories) to give the latter its full meaning.” See Startt and Sloan, *Historical Methods*, 137.

Chapter 2: Changing Times Change the Face of 1920s Sports Journalism

Women entered the twentieth century having already established themselves in the field of journalism. Many women had made contributions to newspapering as far back as the Colonial era, especially as printers.¹ Women furthered their contributions to journalism in the 1800s, when the rise of inexpensive, mass-circulated newspapers presented them with opportunities to work as stunt reporters, “sob sisters,” and women’s page editors.² Some women even managed to carve a place as news and feature reporters. In fact, by 1889, the trade publication *The Journalist* published a 24-page edition devoted to profiling the accomplishments of dozens of American female journalists – a development that researcher Agnes Hooper Gottlieb says “signaled recognition within the profession itself that women were there to stay.”³

Be that as it may, the preceding literature review illustrated that women had not yet penetrated all areas of the newspaper by the dawn of the twentieth century. This was especially true of the sports pages, where women were largely absent until the 1920s.

This dissertation argues that the growth of female sports journalists during the twenties was attributable to three primary factors. First, World War I and the suffrage victory thrust women into jobs and political positions typically reserved for men, thus priming society to more readily accept female writers reporting on the male-dominated world of sports. Second, the decade’s emphasis on women’s physicality, which was demonstrated in myriad ways, made the association between women and sports more natural – and thus, by extension, made the connection between women and sports journalism more natural as well. And third, the rise in leisure time, combined with the impersonal nature of the decade, elevated public interest in the personalities of athletes – a development that provided women greater opportunities to write about sports because the newspaper industry considered female journalists particularly suited to cover celebrities, including the new wave of sports heroes.⁴

¹ Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote*, 1-9, and Beasley and Gibbons, *Taking Their Place*, 51-55.

² With regard to stunt reporting, the *New York World’s* Nellie Bly helped pioneer the technique in 1887, when she feigned insanity to gain entry to an infamous mental hospital so that she could produce a first-person expose on the facility’s treatment of its patients. Bly’s 72-day race around the globe in 1889 was another example of stunt journalism, a practice that involved women becoming active participants in their stories. For more on Bly’s career, see Brooke Kroeger, *Nellie Bly: Daredevil, Reporter, Feminist* (New York: Random House, 1994). A concise overview of stunt journalism can be found in Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 17. The term “sob sister,” meanwhile, referred to a female journalist who infused her stories with drama and sentimentality. Such stories often involved the coverage of sensational murder trials. For a comprehensive treatment of the subject, see Abramson, *Sob Sister Journalism*.

³ “A Matter of Business,” *The Journalist*, 26 January 1889; Agnes Hooper Gottlieb, “Grit Your Teeth and Learn to Swear: Women in Journalistic Careers, 1850-1926,” *American Journalism* 18, no. 1 (2001), 53, 65.

⁴ Women’s educational advances are purposely omitted from this list of important factors since journalism degrees, though growing in popularity in the twenties, were hardly a prerequisite to landing a newspaper job. What’s more, of the three female sports journalists profiled in this dissertation, only one – Margaret Goss – was found to have had a degree, and it was not even in journalism. Also omitted as a factor in aiding the rise of female journalists is the increased availability of electrical appliances, which many historians cite as a key to freeing women from time-intensive house chores and so allowing their entry into the workforce. The fact is, many female journalists in the 1920s were single and so did not need to be freed from homemaking in order to pursue a career. Consistent with that, all three of the female sports journalists profiled in the remaining chapters were single when they launched their newspaper careers. Two of them subsequently married, and it was then that those two – Jane Dixon and Margaret Goss – left or otherwise reduced their involvement in the newspaper business. For more on the characteristics of

The remainder of this chapter examines these three trends in detail, starting first with women's entry into jobs that were typically thought of as male professions.

Women and Work: Moving Into "All Man's Land"⁵

Contrary to popular belief, World War I did not bring a significant number of new women into the workforce.⁶ In fact, by one estimate, 95 percent of women who worked outside the home during the war had already been employed there before America entered the conflict.⁷ Even over the longer term, the war did not have a dramatic effect on the number of working women. Granted, two million new women joined the labor force between 1920 and 1930; yet as impressive as that may seem, it represents only a single percentage point increase, from 23 to 24 percent, in the number of employed women over that ten-year span.⁸ What the war did, however, was increase the diversity of jobs that women held. In particular, the war catapulted women into traditionally male professions. With nearly three million American men drawn into military service, businesses were desperate to fill the newly created void. Thus, women who previously earned money by taking in boarders, doing piecework, or working as domestic servants suddenly found themselves in professions that had been largely closed to them before. In many cases, women gained status and responsibility that had been previously reserved for men. From factory work, to legal and medical practice, to civil service employment, women made inroads.⁹

Noticing these changes, one newspaperman predicted that the war's overall geopolitical impact would "probably prove . . . of minor importance compared with the evidence it provided of women's ability to do any old thing, whether she had ever done it before or not."¹⁰ He added that "no new day dawns on which you cannot read in the morning newspaper some new business field that woman has pre-empted."¹¹

journalists in the 1920s, including educational and marital status, see Fred Fedler, *Lessons From the Past: Journalists' Lives and Work, 1850-1950* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2000), 11-32.

⁵ The subhead borrows on a quote from early twentieth-century feminist Harriot Stanton Blatch, who talked of World War I- and suffrage-era women going "up the scaling ladder and out into All Man's Land." See Harriot Stanton Blatch, *Mobilizing Woman-Power* (New York: Woman's Press, 1918); quoted in J. Stanley Lemons, *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1973; reprint, Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1990, 15 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

⁶ For discussion of this myth, and the evidence that contradicts it, see Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 111-116, and Michael E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920-1940* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), 139-141.

⁷ Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 140.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁹ Although Dumenil's *Modern Temper* and Parrish's *Anxious Decades* suggest that women's employment advances have been overstated by earlier historians, their research nevertheless points to examples that underscore the progress of female laborers and professionals, circa the 1920s. An overview of women's employment advances during the twenties is also found in J. Stanley Lemons, *The Woman Citizen*, 3-40 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

¹⁰ John Kimberly Mumford, "Who's Who in New York," *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 December 1924, sec. 2, p. 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

World War I, then, had set the stage for additional employment advances by women. It created a momentum that allowed women to dive more aggressively and confidently into the 1920s, when they continued to open new doors to employment and reach new levels of acceptance in various professional fields.

Just as the world war provided a springboard for women's employment advances in the twenties, so too did the suffrage victory that women won at the dawning of the decade. Winning the franchise had been a priority of women's rights leaders since the early nineteenth century, when feminists such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton led the charge. They, and Lucy Stone, had even launched newspapers dedicated to helping women secure the right to vote.¹² The struggle continued through the early twentieth century, and even during World War I, albeit less vocally. When the war was over, women's rights leaders seized on the mood of the day; knowing that women had gained respect by proving themselves to be capable wartime laborers and patriots, suffragists reinvigorated their push for the vote. Although strong opposition remained, women's rights leaders – specifically the National American Woman Suffrage Association – were able to capitalize on wartime successes to secure passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted women the vote.¹³

Thus, women entered the 1920s particularly emboldened. Not only had they earned respect for their wartime contributions, but they had also garnered the franchise. The 1920s lay ahead as a land of promise, with many women intent on building upon the progress they had made. The time was ripe for women to seek further advances – and they seized the opportunity.

A survey of newspapers from the early to mid-1920s shows the wide range of breakthroughs made by women on the heels of World War I and the success of the suffrage movement. While the majority of working women at the end of the twenties were still clustered in traditionally female jobs such as nursing and teaching,¹⁴ enough women were crossing into previously sacrosanct male professions that headline writers throughout the decade were pressed to keep pace in trying to chronicle all the achievements. The *New York Telegram*, for its part, published a running feature in the twenties that chronicled the professional strides made by women. Called “What Women Are Doing Everywhere,” the column pieced together short blurbs about women who were distinguishing themselves in traditional male professions. Whether one woman or hundreds of women were entering any particular profession did not matter to newspaper publishers and readers; what mattered was that women were breaking barriers and were thus captivating the public.¹⁵

¹² Rodger Streitmatter, *Mightier than the Sword: How the News Media Have Shaped American History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 37-50.

¹³ Lemons, *The Woman Citizen*.

¹⁴ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 116, and Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 141.

¹⁵ Although Dumenil's *Modern Temper* and Parrish's *Anxious Decades* impressively incorporate statistics and academic sources, they do so largely at the exclusion of drawing material from 1920s-era newspapers. As a result, Dumenil and Parrish understate the energy and buzz that women's employment advances were creating among Americans in the twenties. Even if newspaper coverage paid undue attention to singular female achievements and thus made women's professional progress seem more than it was, the general readership of that era was unlikely to make this distinction. Rather, a public bombarded with news of women's workforce accomplishments was apt to be swept up by the frenzy. In other words, the perception of the public was, for all intents and purposes, their reality.

This was true, for example, in the area of politics. The decade saw Miriam “Ma” Ferguson and Nellie T. Ross become the first female governors in U.S. history when they were elected to lead the states of Texas and Wyoming, respectively.¹⁶ Mary T. Norton, elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from New Jersey, became the first congresswoman east of the Mississippi, while New York Republican Florence Knapp trumped Governor Al Smith’s Democratic machine to win office as secretary of state.¹⁷ Other women, though not successful, also made headlines by tossing their hats into the political arena. In Massachusetts, for example, a woman ran for mayor of Boston as an independent, while another woman sought the governorship on the “feminist” ticket.¹⁸ Women also sought and secured non-elected governmental positions. For example, women served as civil service commissioner and director of the Agriculture Department’s Bureau of Home Economics circa the mid-1920s, underscoring a newspaper report that observed “a slow but certain widening of the field of women’s service in federal government departments.”¹⁹

With varying degrees of success that had state or federal ramifications, female political reformers meanwhile won the right to serve on juries, convinced legislators that citizenship should not be tied to marriage, and gained protective legislation for infants and expectant mothers. In particular, these gains were won by women working through a variety of newly formed organizations such as the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, and the Women’s Joint Congressional Committee.²⁰ Aligned with these and other organizations, social feminists also pursued causes such as education improvements and child labor laws. They also read a variety of newly emerging, progressive-minded publications, including *Woman Citizen*, *Independent Woman*, and *Equal Rights*. All of this contributed to a mood that propelled women forward throughout the 1920s. Most important to this dissertation, it eroded men’s near-total hold on politics, thus suggesting that women could meaningfully enter what was traditionally considered a male sphere. If women could be part of traditionally male interests such as politics and government reform, then it hardly seemed logical that they should be kept out of the male-dominated – and far less serious – realms of sports and sports journalism.

The idea of sex-segregated spheres was further weakened by women’s advances in a variety of other, non-political fields that were previously associated with men. In 1920, just a year after World War I had ended, one New York newspaper took notice of the many non-traditional jobs that women continued to hold, even after U.S. soldiers had returned home.

¹⁶ Both succeeded their husbands; Ferguson’s husband was impeached while Ross’ husband died in office. Even so, neither woman was appointed, but instead stood for election. Especially notable was Ferguson’s victory in the face of stiff opposition from the Ku Klux Klan.

¹⁷ Jeanette Rankin of Montana was the first U.S. congresswoman, having earned election in 1916, four years before women in the United States could vote. On Knapp, see Emma Bugbee, “Women Win Unprecedented Honors at Polls,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 November 1924, sec. 1, p. 1.

¹⁸ “Would-Be Boston’s Mayor,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 24 July 1924, sec. 1, p. 5; “Wants To Govern Massachusetts,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 3 February 1924, sec. 7, p. 2.

¹⁹ “Women Work Way Into Highly Paid Government Jobs,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 28 October 1926, 14, and Theodore Tiller, “Woman Chief of New U.S. Economic Bureau to Teach Nation How to Save and Spend,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 16 September 1923, 9.

²⁰ Not all women, of course, were eager to join these movements. Some female factions were wary of suffrage and other reforms and so resisted membership in organizations such as the LWV, AAUW, and WJCC.

“Many young women who did work of some sort during the war seem to shrink from dropping back into a life of ease and emptiness,” an editorial in the *New York Evening Telegram* observed in September of that year.²¹ Four months later, under the headline, “How The Girl of 1920 Has Invaded The Hitherto Sacred Sphere of Man’s Activities And Made Good,” the *Telegram* published several pictures, each depicting a woman asserting herself in a traditionally male profession. Pictured were a “feminine fireman” shoveling coal into a furnace; a shoeshine girl; a news photographer with her “cumbersome camera”; a “girl barber”; and a high-heel-wearing carpenter standing at her workbench.²²

As the decade continued, newspaper coverage continued to chronicle the diversity and novelty of women’s employment advances. Commenting in 1926, one female observer remarked: “One can hardly pick up a newspaper or magazine without seeing an account of still another ‘first woman’ who has made a successful invasion of a field traditionally sacred to men.”²³ Indeed, women in the mid-twenties made forays into jobs ranging from city dog catcher to top-of-the-ladder business executive. In Brooklyn, three women were hired as animal control officers by the S.P.C.A., a first in the organization’s 66-year existence.²⁴ In the bluegrass region of Kentucky, Claire Stinnes used her knowledge about equine bloodlines to produce enough thoroughbred winners to draw praise as “one of the most successful [horse] breeders in the country” – this, “in an activity that was long regarded as beyond the sphere of women.”²⁵ Back in New York, Gertrude P. Wixon, in three years’ time, worked her way up from assistant manager of the Gotham National Bank on Columbus Circle to become the youngest – and only – female safe deposit manager in the country.²⁶ Also in the realm of finance, Helen Varick Bowell became the first woman to be elected vice president of a bank in the East when she was voted VP of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers’ Co-operative Trust Company.²⁷ Another woman who earned a lofty position in the business world was Jane Martin, who became the first female vice president of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World.²⁸

Other fields where women distinguished themselves in the mid-1920s included real estate, health care, and transportation: A Long Island woman started her own realty company in 1923 when she developed 36 homes in the village of Maspeth, prompting one newspaper to applaud her for undertaking “a job that some experienced men would not wish to tackle, not to

²¹ “Women Crowding to the Universities,” editorial, *New York Evening Telegram*, 24 September 1920, 10.

²² “How The Girl Of 1920 Has Invaded The Hitherto Sacred Sphere Of Man’s Activities And Made Good,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 4 December 1920, 2.

²³ Genevieve Jackson Boughner, *Women in Journalism* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1926; reprint, New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1942), 214 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

²⁴ “S. P. C. A. Women Dog Catchers Delayed Till Uniforms Arrive,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 December 1924, 16.

²⁵ “A Bluegrass Career for Woman,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 22 November 1924, 12.

²⁶ “Who’s Who in New York,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 December 1924, sec. 2, p. 3.

²⁷ There was, at the time, also at least one female bank president in the West and in the South. “Woman as Bank Official Arouses Club Interest,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 January 1924, sec. 5, p. 2.

²⁸ Untitled photograph, *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 January 1924, 7.

mention a girl still in her twenties.”²⁹ New York’s Beekman Street Hospital in 1925 hired its first female superintendent, a move heralded as “an unusual honor for a woman.”³⁰ Syracuse that same year welcomed its first female taxi driver.³¹ And across the country, in South Dakota, a woman operated her own trucking line, a job that entailed everything from managing the finances, to hiring the help, to collecting freight deliveries.³²

As was the case with business, the arts also provided a forum for the advancement of women. Although already established as successful performers, women began carving different careers in film and theater. A motion picture house on Broadway, for example, made national headlines with its decision to hire only female employees – from the manager, to the ushers, to the orchestra members.³³ Female theatrical producers, meanwhile, made their presence felt on Broadway. As one report noted, women “have entrenched themselves more strongly in New York playhouses, as theatrical producers, than ever before. Invading a field which only a few years ago was monopolized by men, the outstanding feminine producers have achieved remarkable records.”³⁴ Music came under greater feminine influence as well. In Minneapolis, for example, a female violinist became the first of her gender to earn a spot in the Minneapolis Symphony orchestra, while on a larger scale, more than 100 New York City women organized a symphony under the direction of a female conductor and set their sights on touring the United States and Europe. This latter endeavor, according to one newspaper, was “a novelty, even in an age inured to novelties and schooled to the idea of woman’s participation in any line of work which she may wish to enter.”³⁵

Although roughly half of the aforementioned examples pertain to New York, the major metropolitan cities of the East Coast were, for all intents and purposes, the incubators for women’s post-war career ambitions. And as the most populous U.S. city, New York was particularly instrumental in the professional advancement of women. Reflecting on the situation in 1925, a letter-writer to a New York newspaper summed it up this way: “The plain truth is that New York can make no appeal to the boy because all the essentials of life here are feminine. There is hardly a position in New York city that a girl can’t fill better than a boy, and there isn’t

²⁹ “Girl Gives Up Nursing to Plunge Into House-Building and Starts with Row of 36,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 28 October 1923, 13.

³⁰ “First Woman Superintendent,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 30 September 1925, sec. 1, p. 16.

³¹ “Syracuse Has Woman Taxi Driver,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 30 August 1925, sec. 9, p. 2.

³² “S. D. Woman Denies Man Is Stronger Sex; She Operates Dray Line,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 21 October 1925, 11.

³³ “Gloria Gould’s Broadway Movie Theater Will Have Girl Ushers, Artistically Shaped, in Ballet Attire,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 30 July 1925, 16. Despite this headline, the tone of the story was not demeaning toward women, but instead complimentary of the professional acumen displayed by women in theatrical operations.

³⁴ “Women Succeed in Invasion of N. Y. Theatrical Field,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 23 October 1926, 18.

³⁵ “Woman Who Wins Place in Symphony Orchestra,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 4 October 1923, 4; Grace Overmyer, “A Women’s Symphony Soon for New York,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 3 February 1924, sec. 9, p. 11.

one thing that New York can offer masculine youth that the West can't more than duplicate. And as the boys are seeing this, more and more will go West as time goes on."³⁶

Women's achievements were gaining notice on the West Coast as well, however. A speech delivered to a women's club in Oakland, California, in 1924 referenced 667 distinct professions in the United States, all but thirty-five of which included female employees. Some women worked as bank presidents and railroad presidents, the West Coast speaker went on to point out.³⁷ Also out West, Yellowstone Park had appointed its first female park ranger.³⁸

Women were making so many strides, in fact, that exhibits were regularly arranged in major cities to display the various ways women were impacting the occupational landscape. In Chicago in 1925, women held their own "World's Fair," where 385 booths displayed various ways women could earn a living and contribute to society. As the event's organizer explained, the fair was intended to highlight "the fruits of women in industry and commerce, the professions, in civic and philanthropic fields, in music and the arts. . . We want to prove we have sound business sense as well as determination, talent, zeal, courage and other attributes of the earning citizen."³⁹ A Woman's Arts and Industries exhibit in New York the next year – the fifth such annual exhibition to be held in Manhattan – featured "women cattle raisers and sculptors, bankers and beauty experts, and all the other vocations in which the modern woman competes with men in the business world."⁴⁰ Detailing the exhibits further, publicity for the event said that exhibitors would include female "publishers, tea room managers, corporation presidents, photographers, home economists, actresses, musicians, sales managers, modistes, politicians, autograph collectors, insurance brokers, realtors and merchants."⁴¹

Organized under the Business and Professional Women's League and other similar associations, these professional women of the mid-twenties were represented in so many segments of the workforce that one writer suggested that working women were as much a part of the 1920s landscape as prohibition. It's "no wonder" men may think "their sex is declining. If old Mr. Volstead doesn't get 'em, the ladies will," the writer quipped.⁴²

Whatever jokes women's advances may have sparked, the fact of the matter is, women were penetrating previously male-dominated spheres like never before. The journalism industry was no exception. Although the number of female reporters and editors rose steadily in the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries – women accounted for 4 percent of all reporters and

³⁶ "Says New York Belongs to the Women," letter to the editor, *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 8 January 1925, 4.

³⁷ "Women's Field Is Unlimited," *New York Herald Tribune*, 7 September 1924, sec. 2, p. 5.

³⁸ "What Women Are Doing Everywhere," *New York Evening Telegram*, 9 July 1921, 7.

³⁹ Jane Dixon, "Senator's Wife Here to Boom Women's Own Big World Fair," *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 31 January 1925, 4.

⁴⁰ "Women of Many Vocations Exhibit at Astor Show," *New York Telegram*, 27 September 1926, 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² "Women Outnumber Men in New York State, Due to Ebb and Flow of Immigrants," *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1921, 4.

editors in 1890, 7.3 percent in 1900, and 12.16 percent in 1910⁴³ – the war helped to accelerate this trend even further. With more than 500 American newspapermen going overseas to work as war correspondents, and countless others leaving the newsrooms of America to fight in the trenches of Europe, an undetermined number of women “moved into newsrooms to replace men.”⁴⁴ The increased reliance that newspapers would have to place on women in the wake of America’s war involvement was exemplified by the 1918 graduating class of Columbia University’s vaunted journalism school: of the nineteen graduates, only eight were men. Although Columbia traditionally employed a quota system that graduated more male than female journalism students, the war forced the school to temporarily suspend the practice in deference to the expanded role women would necessarily occupy in the Fourth Estate.⁴⁵

Although some women surely surrendered their newspaper jobs to returning soldiers, the overall number of women journalists continued to rise during the twenties. Coming as it did on the heels of World War I and the suffrage victory, the decade saw newly empowered women flood the journalism field. In fact, it was during the Roaring Twenties that the number of female journalists shot from 5,730 to 11,924 – the first decade since the start of the century during which their number had more than doubled.⁴⁶ Moreover, the percentage of journalists who were women stood at nearly 25 percent by the close of the twenties, an all-time high to that point.⁴⁷

Shedding further light on the census data was the 1926 publication of a career guidebook for aspiring female journalists. The book suggested that women had become common in journalism by the mid-1920s – so common, in fact, that they should be considered for new beats that were previously reserved for men. Among the beats the book advocated for women was sports.⁴⁸

Such a suggestion seems perfectly in line with the developments that had been occurring throughout the decade. With women crossing into journalism and so many other previously male-dominated fields, an environment was created wherein it was more conducive for women crash down the barricade that had held the sports pages as the traditional territory of male writers. If women could be corporation presidents and bank officers, then it stood to reason that a portion of the growing number of female journalists could certainly be competent sports reporters.

⁴³ For 1890 and 1900 figures, see U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, S. N. D. North, Director. *Abstract of The Twelfth Census of the United States 1900*, Series No. 3 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 25. For 1910 figures, see U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, R. S. MacElwee, Director. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1920*, Series No. 43 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1921), 282.

⁴⁴ Emery, Emery, and Roberts, *The Press and America*, 258; Beasley and Gibbons, *Taking Their Place*, 13.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* Among that graduating class was Minna Lewinson, who became the first woman hired by the *Wall Street Journal*. She stayed with the *Journal* until 1923.

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1930*, Series No. 52 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1930), 60.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Boughner, *Women in Journalism*, 268-277 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

Women and Physicality: Work, Sex, and Sports

As some of the examples in the preceding section attest, many women in the twenties were entering professions that were physically demanding. Whether as carpenters, animal control officers, park rangers, or workers in munitions factories, women were performing jobs that highlighted their strength and physical capabilities. With society thus reminded of women's physicality, the public was arguably more prepared to accept the association of women with athletics – an inherently physical association that concurrently manifested itself in the growing presence of female athletes on the sports pages and in the emergence of female journalists writing about the physical world of sports.

Though not mentioned in the previous section, perhaps the most notable profession that underscored women's physicality during the twenties was police work. Mary E. Hamilton, who in 1917 became New York City's first female police officer, was by 1924 in charge of a growing division of women officers.⁴⁹ Hamilton's squad of 100 policewomen had duties that included patrolling subways for ne'er-do-wells and sweeping city hotels for pickpockets.⁵⁰ About to launch jiu-jitsu training for her female officers in the spring of 1924, Hamilton predicted that, "The slightest of my policewomen will be able to throw a 200-pound man over her shoulder like a sack of meal."⁵¹ Following New York's lead, Philadelphia enlisted Hamilton to train a squad of prospective policewomen for the City of Brotherly Love.⁵² Cleveland, Detroit, Minneapolis and Washington, D.C., were also among the 200 U.S. cities that employed policewomen by 1925, a national committee on prisons reported.⁵³

Conversely, a few bold women courted danger and captured headlines by turning to crime. Even though Victorian sensibilities were fading in the twenties, the idea of a female bandit was still so shocking that the exploits of money-robbing, gun-toting women regularly earned page-one coverage.⁵⁴ One particular woman, dubbed the "bobbed-haired bandit" by the New York press because of her modern haircut, created such a sensation that her robberies and eventual capture were covered in soap opera-like fashion for the better part of 1924.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ "'Scratch 'Em,' Is Policewomen's Masher Edict," *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 March 1924, 1, 7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* See also, "Sirens Flock Here to Prey on Democrats," *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 May 1924, 26.

⁵¹ "'Scratch 'Em,' Is Policewomen's Masher Edict," *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 March 1924, 1, 7.

⁵² "Butler's Policewomen to Come Here for Training," *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 April 1924, 1.

⁵³ Lillian E. Taaffe, "Keeping Police Women Out of Politics Urged," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 31 May 1925, sec. 1, p. 9. Although a few women worked as police officers as early as 1904, they mainly served as matrons, monitoring the safety and morals of women and children. In the twenties, the numbers of policewomen not only expanded, but their jobs became increasingly physical. One female law enforcement officer in a Philadelphia suburb boasted that she was no "mollycoddle . . . I have all the accoutrements of the office – badge, pistols, blackjack, and handcuffs – and I am not going to keep them as ornaments." See "Not Afraid of Riots or Fights, Declares New Woman Sheriff," *New York Evening Telegram*, 12 December 1920, 11.

⁵⁴ See, for example, "Armed Girl Robs Man of \$2, Dons His Clothes and Flees From House," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 13 October 1926.

⁵⁵ The woman, Cecilia Cooney of Brooklyn, was so successful at evading law enforcement that New York police enlisted the help of a physic to track her down and also formed a special "bob-haired girl bandit squad." See "Bobbed-Haired Psychic Takes Bobbed-Haired Bandit's Trail," *New York Tribune*, 26 February 1924, sec. 1, p. 7, and "Bob-Haired Squad Formed To Capture Girl Bandit," *New York Tribune*, 29 February 1924, sec. 1, p. 6.

Women who were not inclined to pursue a law enforcement career or to take up a life of crime could demonstrate their physicality and daring in other ways. They made parachute jumps, participated in airplane and boat races, explored deserts and jungles, and hunted big game in exotic places such as India and Africa.⁵⁶

If women were capable of being such daredevils, or police officers or bandits for that matter, then they were certainly capable of being newspaper reporters. The old nineteenth century and early twentieth century arguments that had kept the number of female journalists depressed – that newspaper work involved late-night assignments that were unsafe for women, that journalism would bring women into contact with drunk and cussing newspapermen, and that reporting would force women into police stations, courtrooms and other places where they would encounter unsavory characters⁵⁷ – did not hold up anymore now that some women were taking on other more dangerous, and in some cases death-defying, feats. In addition, while female cops, robbers and daredevils made the newsroom seem a comparatively tame place for women, they had the broader and more important effect of creating an environment that endorsed the association of women and physicality – and, by extension, the association of women with athletics. The leap from female police officer to female athlete is small, indeed. If a woman can carry a gun and confront male criminals, it hardly seems objectionable that she should play competitive, organized basketball or engage in some other athletic test of strength or physical skill. And if female athletes pose no real threat to social norms, then how much less the threat posed by a female sports journalist. After all, female sports journalists don't even participate in athletics; they merely watch and report on sports that involve female and/or male athletes. Social acceptance of women competing in and reporting on athletics, then, flows from society's acknowledgment of women's physicality, as demonstrated in part by their involvement in physically demanding professions and dangerous stunts.

The physical nature of women, however, also gained notice in other, vastly different ways during the 1920s. For example, women of the era were often presented as physical beings in terms of their sexuality. Employing images sharply different from that of the policewoman or aviatrix, newspapers published lingerie ads more liberally than in previous decades, with illustrations and pictures of previously unmentionables displayed for all to see. Ads for burlesque shows also became more common, as did press coverage of beauty pageants.⁵⁸ Plus, the burgeoning film industry began to incorporate more scenes and storylines about adultery and promiscuity, even if the movies themselves did not explicitly condone those behaviors.⁵⁹

Perhaps most instrumental in bringing women's sexuality to the fore was the emergence of flappers. With their short skirts and open sensuality, these women embodied the rejection of

⁵⁶ Examples of such exploits include: "Woman To Compete in Air Races," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 4 October 1925, sec. 9., p. 1; "Woman Stars As Motor Boat Racer," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 6 September 1925, sec. 8, p. 1; "American Woman Explorer Escapes Menacing Pygmies," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 22 October 1925, 1; Jane Dixon, "Fifth Avenue Diana Calls U.S. Fine Hunting Ground," *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 10 February 1925, 3; "Woman Back in U.S. After 12-Year Big Game Hunt," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 8 March 1925, 7; and "Society Girl, Big Game Hunter, Weds Ohio Man," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 12 August 1925, 1.

⁵⁷ Fedler, *Lessons from the Past*, 19-23.

⁵⁸ These observations are not attributable to any particular source, but instead reflect the overall impression gained by extensive examination of primary and secondary materials.

⁵⁹ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 134.

Victorian era mores that had dominated earlier decades. They wore more make-up and jewelry than women of previous generations. They danced suggestively. And they partook in petting parties. In short, flappers put women's sexuality – and thus their physicality – on display.⁶⁰

Ironically, though, the flappers' emphasis on feminine sexuality, while differentiating women from men, also served to blur distinctions between the two sexes. By smoking cigarettes and drinking Prohibition liquor, the flappers were essentially making a claim that they were entitled to the same enjoyments as men. The flappers' short hair and sometimes androgynous dress – which sometimes included binding their breasts to achieve a more boyish look – seemed to similarly suggest a sense of masculine empowerment.⁶¹ That this sense of empowerment propelled many flappers to penetrate the mostly male newsrooms of the 1920s is doubtful.⁶² But even if women journalists of the 1920s were not flappers themselves, they were surely aware of – if not indirectly aided by – the mood that the flapper had created. Just as the flapper challenged notions about “appropriate” hair style and dress, female reporters – particularly sports reporters – were challenging traditional ideas about the place of women in newspapers. More and more, women were moving out of the women's section, to the front page and the sports page.

Concurrent with the fashion-conscious flapper movement – and to some degree, because of it – women of the twenties became more intensely interested in meeting the fitness and beauty requirements demanded by the frequently changing and revealing styles of the Jazz Age.⁶³ As one historian put it, physical attractiveness became a “central component defining the new sexual woman.”⁶⁴ With flappers, *Ziegfeld Follies* girls and Miss America contestants as barometers against which they could measure themselves, women flocked to beauty parlors and turned increasingly to cosmetics. The number of beauty parlors swelled from 5,000 at the start of the decade to 40,000 in 1930, while cosmetics sales skyrocketed from pre-war sales of \$17 million to more than \$200 million by the close of the Roaring Twenties.⁶⁵ Women during the twenties also counted calories like never before. They experimented with various weight-loss techniques, including “reducing soaps” and “reducing garments.”⁶⁶ Other, more extreme devices included

⁶⁰ For more on flappers and the increased visibility of women's sexuality circa the 1920s, see Angela J. Latham's full-length study, *Posing a Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Brazen Performers of the American 1920s* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000).

⁶¹ Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 147-149, and Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 135.

⁶² No evidence was found to suggest that any of the three women sportswriters profiled in the next three chapters of this dissertation was a flapper. In fact, evidence speaks to the contrary. Also, historians tend to portray flappers as young, working-class women who made their living as secretaries, clerks, and entertainers; that is, no source examined for this dissertation points to an influx of flappers into the journalism field.

⁶³ The specific kinds of “scarves, jewelry and other accessories” worn by women during the twenties went in and out of style quickly, thus creating a short-life span for these fashions and a demand for the latest styles. See Latham, *Posing a Threat*, 30.

⁶⁴ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 141.

⁶⁵ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 141, and Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 151.

⁶⁶ “Graceful Slenderness Without Exercise or Diet,” advertisement, *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 4 January 1925, sec. 8, p. 6; “McCutcheon's Reducing Garments,” advertisement, *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 October 1924, sec. 1, p. 5.

“springshous” – bouncy coils that attached to a woman’s shoes for a workout that mimicked a hopping kangaroo.⁶⁷ It was enough to prompt one exasperated observer to declare in 1926: “It’s a mania, this reducing, that must be stopped.”⁶⁸ But the fact of the matter was, the trend had already taken hold, and a reversal was not in sight. Gone were the pre-war headlines that advised women to enhance their gracefulness by practicing to balance on one leg; in their place were stories that heralded “Exercise Is Necessary to Health and to Beauty” and instructed women on new ways to strengthen their arms and build stamina.⁶⁹

With fitness and exercise a more visible concern than before, women increasingly turned to competitive athletics as a means of staying in shape. Often, expanding colleges and high school athletic departments provided the forum for these increasingly popular female athletic contests.⁷⁰ Women who were past school age or who moved directly from high school to the professional workforce sometimes found an athletic outlet in leagues sponsored by companies who, in a post-World War I economy, counted more females among their employees.⁷¹ Many young girls not yet in high school or college, meanwhile, earned introductions to athletics through such new and increasingly popular organizations as the Girl Scouts of America, founded in 1917, and the Camp Fire Girls, which was founded in 1910 and by 1918 had established the first of its local Camp Fire Girl councils. Since both the Girl Scouts and Camp Fire Girls were committed to youth development programs that emphasized all facets of an individual – including her physical well-being – girls involved in these organizations were naturally exposed to athletics.⁷²

Thanks largely to organizations such as these, women’s physicality, *vis-à-vis* competitive athletics, had earned a prominent place in society by the mid-1920s. Commenting on the rise of women’s athletics, golfer Glenna Collett, one of the most famous female athletes of the 1920s, ascribed great importance to the development, putting it on par with no less an achievement than

⁶⁷ “Newest Freak Reducing Fads,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 19 July 1925, sec. 7, p. 4.

⁶⁸ Lillian E. Taaffe, “Reducing Women Likened to Emaciated Bellhops by Artist,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 10 November 1926, 17.

⁶⁹ Lydia Lopokova, “How To Be Graceful,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 20 April 1916, 9; “Exercise Is Necessary to Health and to Beauty and Is a Means of Recreation and Relaxation,” *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 15 January 1925, 11; “Stretching Exercises for Arm Beauty,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 1 February 1925, sec. 18, p. 7.

⁷⁰ On the rise of college athletics for women, see the seven-part series by Margaret Goss in the *New York Tribune* from 17 to 23 February 1924. This series is featured prominently in this dissertation’s next chapter, which focuses on Goss’ writing.

⁷¹ Boughner, *Women in Journalism*, 270 (page citation is to 1942 edition). Also, short accounts of such company-sponsored contests are found under Margaret Goss’ sports by-lines in the *New York Herald Tribune*, circa 1924 and 1925. Note, the *New York Tribune* adopted the name *New York Herald Tribune* on March 19, 1924. More on Goss and the *Herald Tribune* is provided in the next chapter.

⁷² News about athletic events sponsored by these organizations dot the news and sports pages of the 1920s. For specific commentary about the role that the Girls Scouts played in promoting athleticism, see a letter from a reader, published in Grantland Rice’s “The Sportlight” column, *New York Herald Tribune*, 26 April 1925, sec. 10, p. 2. Also, for more on the history and philosophy of the Girl Scouts and Camp Fire girls, see these organizations’ respective Web sites: www.gsusa.org and www.campfire.org.

women's suffrage: "American women in the first quarter of the twentieth century won two rights, that of suffrage and that of participating in sports. The second of these," Collett said, "seems at least as important as the first."⁷³ Whether or not one agrees with Collett's appraisal, her comment is important because it serves as a reminder that the rise of female athletics did not occur overnight; rather, this trend toward women's competitive sports evolved over the first couple of decades of the twentieth century. It was during the Jazz Age, though, that the notion of "woman as athlete" became firmly cemented – a contention borne out by comparing newspapers of the 1920s with their predecessors.

When newspapers prior to 1920 made references to women and sports, stories and photos were typically confined to the society pages. Further, the coverage, more often than not, was about tennis-playing debutantes and ladies riding horses – not women plying their physical skill in genuinely competitive contests.⁷⁴ In the twenties, however, articles and photos began to portray female athletes as more physically aggressive and capable. Most common was coverage of women participating in competitive golf, tennis, swimming, basketball and field hockey. While such coverage was admittedly sparse compared to coverage of male athletics, stories about female athletes began to transcend society page reports and began to find room on the sports pages themselves. Also, as the decade went on, some women's sporting events – particularly golf and tennis matches – earned more extensive coverage, sometimes with headlines spanning an entire sports page.⁷⁵ Such developments caused one frustrated male sportswriter to offer this commentary in 1925:

Having driven men out of a lot of jobs and grabbed nearly all the seats in our barber shops, the women have gone on a rampage which may write "Miss" and "Mrs" in front of the names of some of our sporting title holders. Before long we may find some husky Amazon challenging Jack Dempsey and a fleet footed Diana showing her pretty heels to the great [foot racer] Nurmi! Gosh, we don't know what's likely to happen!⁷⁶

With less hostility, a *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* editorial that same year remarked upon the "feminine invasion" of sport, which according to the paper, was recently "held to be a masculine monopoly."⁷⁷ Continuing, the editorial stated:

The athletic temperament, like the musical or literary temperament, is beyond any doubt distributed about equally over the two sexes. This, a heresy yesterday, is a commonplace today. The old notion that the world was divided between two sexes, the athletic males and the non-athletic females, is one which now only provokes a smile. The

⁷³ Boughner, *Women in Journalism*, 268.

⁷⁴ "Practical Costumes For Outdoor Wear," *New York Evening Telegram*, 21 April 1916, 9. This is a prime example of the genteel sports coverage afforded to women prior to the 1920s. Despite the headline about "practical" sportswear, the woman pictured here is wearing a cumbersome, albeit fashionable, outfit. Moreover, she is posed holding the tennis racquet over her shoulder instead of being shown actually playing tennis.

⁷⁵ This summarizes the dissertation author's observations based on his examination of microfilmed newspapers from before and during the 1920s.

⁷⁶ Daniel, "Dutch Girl Has Her Eyes on Hoppe's Cue Laurels," *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 30 January 1925, 16. Note, the male writer went only by the first name Daniel and was a regular contributor to the *Telegram*.

⁷⁷ "Women in Athletics," editorial, *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 26 August 1925, 10.

world has traveled a long way from the not distant era in which the most violent exercise proper for a young woman was playing a harp.⁷⁸

As more female athletes entered the traditionally male-dominated realm of sports, it simultaneously paved the way for female writers to find a wider place on the sports pages. In the words of 1920s-era college journalism instructor Genevieve Jackson Boughner, “the outdoor girl has made possible this new and interesting journalistic career” of the female sportswriter.⁷⁹ “There were women who wrote on sports before the present era of star [female] tennis players, swimmers, and golfers, but they were few and far between. . . Now that women have definitely established themselves in many branches of outdoor sports, many newspapers have women regularly attached to their sports departments.”⁸⁰

This supports the findings of the literature review in Chapter 1, which, despite identifying a handful of female sports journalists prior to the 1920s, pointed to the Jazz Age as the period when female sportswriters began to emerge in significant numbers.

That female sportswriters should emerge in step with female athletes is a logical development. After all, if women are up to the physical demands of sports and understand the rules well enough to compete in athletics, then why shouldn't they also enjoy watching sports – whether as fans, or more pertinent to this dissertation, as paid observers/journalists?

This applies not only to female journalists covering female sports, but also to female reporters covering male athletics. As newspaper ads of the period attest, many women – their gender more comfortably and openly associated with the enjoyment of physical pursuits than ever before – were avid spectators of many sports, including traditionally male sports in which they typically did not compete – sports, that is, such as football and baseball. A 1924 department store ad, for example, shows four women clustered around a man as the entire group looks down upon a college football field. The ad exhorts women to shop at Lord and Taylor for the “Fashions that Add Points to Saturday's Big Games.”⁸¹ Another mid-1920s advertisement, promoting Chesterfield cigarettes, shows a woman comfortably sitting among a group of men in the stands at a baseball game.⁸² An equal number of men and women, meanwhile, are among the six race fans enjoying Camel cigarettes as they stand near the rail at a horse track in a 1926 newspaper ad.⁸³ Still another advertisement, from 1927, shows a woman and two men sitting next to a radio as they listen to a prizefight; the entire “family” can “enjoy the fight at home,” the ad for radio stations WJZ and WEAf boasts.⁸⁴ If both men and women could mix as sports fans

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Boughner, *Women in Journalism*, 268 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ “Fashions that Add Points to Saturday's Big Games,” advertisement for Lord and Taylor, *New York Herald Tribune*, 20 October 1924, sec. 1, p. 4.

⁸² “Out of the lot!” advertisement for Chesterfield cigarettes, *New York Telegram*, 23 September 1926, 13.

⁸³ “All The World Is Saying ‘Have a Camel,’” advertisement for Camel cigarettes, *New York Telegram*, 23 September 1926, 15.

⁸⁴ “Tune In On WJZ Or WEAf And Enjoy The Fight At Home,” advertisement for WJZ and WEAf radio stations, *New York Telegram*, 22 September 1927, 7. As Chapter 5 of this dissertation points out, however, the appropriateness of women's interest in male athletics, particularly in boxing, was a source of debate throughout the decade.

– whether in a football stadium, at a horse race, or around the radio –there was little sense in segregating the sports pages as the domain of male writers only.

For all intents and purposes, then, gender-related athletic barriers fell together in the twenties: as women became more active in sports, they also became more visible as sports fans and as sportswriters. All of these developments, as illustrated in the preceding pages, grew out of the increasing association between women and physicality: an association cemented not only through athleticism, but also through female displays of sexuality and women’s entry into physically demanding employment and dangerous endeavors. In all these ways, women were asserting themselves as physical beings. With fewer women detached from the physical realm in the name of preserving their femininity, sports – and hence, sports journalism – became increasingly acceptable female endeavors.

Women Journalists and the Cult of Personality: Bringing Heroes to Life

While women’s growing association with physicality certainly complemented female advances in sports journalism, perhaps no factor was as important to the growth of female sportswriters as the decade’s preoccupation with personality and celebrity. Society’s obsession with personality was an absolute boon to women as they sought to carve a place on the pages of the newspaper – particularly on the sports page. The reason: editors at the time felt that women were particularly suited to write about famous personalities, including the many athletic heroes who dominated the sports-crazed landscape of 1920s America. That women should write about these sports icons and other celebrities was not necessarily a tribute to women’s journalistic skills, however. Rather, sexist attitudes drove the coverage. News and sports editors, almost all of whom were male, generally believed that personality-centered news was less substantive than breaking, event-oriented stories and that the former type of news was thus more in line with what were considered to be the limited capabilities of female journalists.⁸⁵ Perceived in this manner, many women were assigned to the major sporting events of the day with the expectation that they would illuminate an athlete’s personality, as opposed to his records and accomplishments, or that they would scan the crowds and make observations about the famous socialites they spotted. While the content of these stories may have been deemed inconsequential to hard-boiled male editors and reporters, newspapers nevertheless realized that the inclusion of personality-driven, female-by-lined sports stories stood to boost the industry’s bottom line. By expanding coverage of stereotypically feminine interests such as fashion and society beyond the women’s pages, newspapers sought to increase female readership⁸⁶ and thus lure additional advertisers intent on targeting the increasingly consumer-conscious woman of the twenties.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Specific examples of this attitude are highlighted later in this chapter.

⁸⁶ Consumption of newsprint in the United States rose from an average of three pounds per person in 1880, to fifteen pounds per person in 1900, to more than fifty pounds per person in 1923. Not coincidentally, this rise was accompanied by increased attention to “women’s news” – a topic first taken seriously by the Yellow Journalism sheets of Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst at the turn of the nineteenth century and then expanded upon through the 1920s, especially with coverage of women’s political involvement, employment advances, and interest in newly available consumer goods. For statistics on the consumption of newsprint, see “U.S. Newsprint Consumption Is World’s Largest,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 1 January 1925, 18. Underscoring the eager female readership that was waiting to be more aggressively courted by the media circa the 1920s was the phenomenal growth in women’s magazines, especially the meteoric circulation rise enjoyed by *McCall’s*, which saw its average net paid circulation shoot from 1.34 million in 1920 to 1.82 million in 1924 and which in 1925 became the first U.S. woman’s magazine to ever sell more than a million over-the-counter copies of a particular issue. See “McCall’s Continues Its Onward Sweep,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 10 September 1925, sec. 1, p. 40. For general

Whether women were assigned to write celebrity-spotting sports stories, or to write more substantial stories about the personalities of the athletes themselves, their presence on the sports page was tied to society's demand to become vicariously acquainted with the famous. Many historians who have studied the 1920s have identified and elaborated on this fascination with personality. Generally, they link this obsession to the rise of a leisure/consumer culture that stemmed from the "harshness," "impersonal quality," and "alienating nature" of work.⁸⁸ Labor had become increasingly routinized and empty in the early twentieth century, a distressing trend that became particularly acute by the 1920s. To compensate, workers in the decade turned to leisure – sports, movies, shopping – as a means of escape and satisfaction. This was the workers' "therapeutic ethos."⁸⁹

Along with the alienation felt by workers, other conditions made the decade ripe for the growth of leisure pursuits. For example, many laborers had seen the number of hours in an average work week decline while their earnings rose, thus giving them added time and money to pursue recreational and consumption activities.⁹⁰ The rise of the mass-produced, affordable car – together with the growing concept of paid vacations – also played into the equation,⁹¹ as did the expanded role of media and advertising in promoting leisure and consumption. Thus, in attending sporting events and movies, in reading about athletes and film stars, and in buying the products these celebrities endorsed, many Americans during the twenties found "an antidote to the modern world."⁹² By celebrating the professional and personal lives of sports figures, actors,

commentary on the newspaper industry's increased effort to attract female readers in the first few decades of the twentieth century, see Kathleen A. Cairns, *Front-Page Women Journalists, 1920-1950* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003) 11-12; Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote*, 208; and Mott, *American Journalism*, 598-599.

⁸⁷ Women's purchases accounted for an estimated two thirds of annual expenditures on consumer goods circa the 1920s. This was partly due to a shift whereby social and educational activities associated with the family were absorbed by outside groups, thus leaving consumption as the family's "main economic activity" and leaving the wife/mother as the person most logically responsible for making sure the family's consumer needs were satisfied. See Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 129. Also contributing to the rise of the consumer culture, among both married and single women, was the commercialization of sex by Hollywood and advertising agencies – a trend that emphasized physical attractiveness and so "intensified" the role of women as consumers of beauty products. See Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 157. For more on the advertising industry's increased targeting of women in the 1920s, see Jean Folkerts and Dwight L. Teeter Jr., *Voices of a Nation: A History of Mass Media in the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan College Publishing Company, 1994), 358.

⁸⁸ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 78.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 56-97.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 79. Production workers, according to Dumenil, saw their average work week decline from 46.3 hours in 1919 to 44.2 hours in 1929. More significantly, their wages rose 14.5 percent during the same period, she adds, citing Frank Stricker's article, "Affluence for Whom? Another Look at Prosperity and the Working Classes in the 1920s," *Labor History* 24 (Winter 1983): 5-33. Further evidence of declining work hours and rising wages can be found in the pages of 1920s newspapers themselves. For example, the New York Tribune cited the National Bureau of Economic Research as reporting a 36-minute decrease in the average American employee's work week between 1922 and 1924; see "Average Worker Does 50.3 Hours Weekly," *New York Tribune*, 3 February 1924, sec. 4, p. 3. Another newspaper report later that decade blared the headline, "Factory Workers' Pay Highest Ever" in reference to wages earned by factory workers in New York state; see *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 4 November 1926, 30.

⁹¹ Dumenil, *Modern Temper*, 77.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 92.

and other heroes such as aviator Charles Lindbergh, Americans reassured themselves that the individual still mattered; they reaffirmed their belief that a magnetic personality or extraordinary accomplishment was still worth something, even if the impersonal environment of the workaday world suggested otherwise.

Put another way, work-weary Americans of the twenties satisfied their “need for self-definition and expression” by forming a “cult of personalities” that they could tap to find “heroism or adventure in a land where the frontier had given way to the chain store and automobile.”⁹³ This meant that political and military leaders, captains of industry, and explorers – formerly the embodiment of American individualism – now “battled for public attention with a new array of social heroes who included matinee idols, tennis players, and running backs of the Chicago Bears.”⁹⁴

The psychological dimension underlying this trend becomes even clearer when one considers the popular literature from early twentieth century America – particularly the increasing volume and changing tone of self-help books. According to historian Warren Susman, such publications point to a society that was beginning to place greater emphasis on the self while at the same time ignoring, or de-emphasizing, the common good. Thus, whereas Americans had previously found heroes in persons of high moral character, the early twentieth century saw integrity become less essential to heroism; instead, Americans began to place a new, higher value on individuality and charisma. Rather than exalt political leaders and other public servants who embodied self-sacrifice, Americans by the 1920s saved their greatest admiration for men and women who exuded personality.⁹⁵ This underscores the fact that some “significant material change occurred in the period . . . Whether it is a change from a producer to a consumer society, an order of economic accumulation to one of disaccumulation, industrial capitalism to finance capitalism, scarcity to abundance, disorganization to high organization – however that change is defined, it is clear that a new social order was emerging.”⁹⁶ Because this new order rested on the creation of a mass society where the routines of people’s work often subsumed or eclipsed their individuality, Americans became enamored with personality. They experienced a “deep-seated anxiety about the problem of the individual in a mass society” and so assigned a new importance to “being different, special, unusual, of standing out in the crowd.”⁹⁷ Whether or not they were able to separate themselves from the pack, they revered those who did, notably entrepreneurs, movie actors, and record-breaking athletes.

Although some historians do not explicitly address society’s preoccupation with personality and the related popularity of sports, they nevertheless affirm that the twenties were a time of transition when conditions could easily lend themselves to a fascination with, and admiration of, individual success and charisma.

⁹³ Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 158.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 159. For specific examples and a more complete analysis of the “cult of personalities,” see Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 158-182.

⁹⁵ Warren Susman, *Culture as History* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 271-285.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 263-277.

Richard Hofstadter, for his part, argues that Americans entered the twenties tired of the idealistic and high-minded rhetoric that the Wilson administration had invoked in the face of America's participation in World War I and the subsequent peace process. Feeling that the participation in the war and peace process had fulfilled "American responsibility for the world,"⁹⁸ Americans turned inward, not toward isolationism as much as individualism. Simply put, the "pressure for civic participation was followed by widespread apathy, the sense of responsibility by neglect, the call for sacrifice by hedonism."⁹⁹ This argument – particularly the idea that self-sacrifice gave way to hedonism – squares with Susman's appraisal of the twenties as a period when Americans became less impressed with selflessness (i.e., character) and more enamored of personality. The only difference is that Hofstadter attributes this shift in values to a repudiation of the noble, Progressive impulse that drove the war, whereas Susman sees the shift as a reaction to unsettling economic conditions that threatened individuality in the name of mass production. That difference aside, the twenties are clearly portrayed as a time ripe for the adulation of individual achievement that is divorced of the public good.

Conversely, historian Robert H. Wiebe sees the dawn of the twenties as a time when the public good *was* a priority among Americans – at least for a new middle-class of administrators, specialists, and other bureaucrats. According to this argument, the middle class was impressed with how the emerging bureaucratic system had helped steer America through World War I and so optimistically committed itself to extending and improving the bureaucratic character of the country during the twenties.¹⁰⁰ This newly prized bureaucratic orientation rested on "common assumptions" and a "common language" that supported objectives such as "predictability," "regularity," and "continuity."¹⁰¹ While Wiebe does not extend his study to assess the effects of this bureaucratization on 1920s America, it is reasonable to project that the common assumptions, predictability and control associated with a bureaucratic order would have left some Americans feeling stifled. Such Americans, even if they embraced bureaucratization, could have predictably and simultaneously sought relief from its impersonal order by fixing their sights on those things that were antithetical to the system of departments, associations and regulatory agencies. And so while prizing the cooperative element of bureaucracy, these Americans would have felt a greater need than ever for the balance brought by individuality. Accepting this argument, one sees the twenties as a decade when conditions favored the rise of sports and screen heroes – athletes and entertainers who stood apart because of their singular and unprecedented accomplishments.

And so, whatever the differences or similarities in their appraisals of the period, historians generally set forth the twenties as a time conducive to the rise of larger-than-life personalities who could capture the attention of the burgeoning leisure class.

Newspapers, of course, were the perfect vehicle to deliver the heroes to their adoring fans. As Americans wondered who they were in the increasingly impersonal and consumer-driven society of the 1920s:

⁹⁸ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York: Random House, 1960), 281.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁰⁰ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), 293-294.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, xiv, 295.

The mass media – radio, motion pictures, magazines – answered part of this question by helping to market a new product: celebrities, men and women who both represented and transcended their culture, whose feats remained out of the ordinary, yet whose lives somehow manifested the fears, hopes, and anxieties of everyman and everywoman struggling for recognition in a cold universe. It was [the media] who kept the myth of American individualism alive and well in an age of collectivism.¹⁰²

Since many of these media-spun heroes were athletes, sports journalism played a key role in this process. Indeed, many of the most renowned sportswriters in American history – such as Grantland Rice, Heywood Broun, and Paul Gallico – made their greatest and most memorable contributions chronicling the careers of baseball slugger Babe Ruth, heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey, football standout Red Grange, and the many other sports heroes of the 1920s. The decade, according to many sports journalists who covered it, was the “Golden Age” of sport. “Never before, or since, have so many transcendent performers arisen contemporaneously in almost every field of competitive athletics as graced the 1920s,” wrote a pair of former sportswriters reminiscing in 1948.¹⁰³

Most important to this dissertation, however, is that the emergence of athletic heroes in the twenties – and the intense appetite among readers to learn more about the personalities of these sports figures – helped to open the sports page to more female journalists. As noted earlier, this argument rests on the fact that editors of the period generally considered women ill-suited to report hard news but had significantly fewer reservations about assigning women to produce the personality profiles and soft human-interest angles increasingly demanded by celebrity- and sports-smitten readers of the Jazz Age.

Stanley Walker, a prominent New York City newspaper editor of the 1920s and 1930s, summed up the general prejudice against female reporters in his 1934 overview of the journalism industry:

Most complaints against women in journalism have arisen because of their lack of versatility as general workmen: that is, many types of assignments, no matter how persuasively ambitious disciples of the New Freedom may argue, simply cannot be done as well by a woman as by a man. There are few women who can handle an important, involved murder mystery competently. Few have distinguished themselves on police news. Ship news is covered by men, and women are used only on special interviews with particular individuals who may be arriving.¹⁰⁴

For some editors, the reluctance to assign women to breaking stories was attributable to their belief that women could not be trusted to get facts straight. These editors thought that women had a biological tendency toward “sloppiness and carelessness in their writing.”¹⁰⁵ City editor Walker, while cautioning against blanket assumptions, admitted that female journalists of the period were commonly perceived as “slovenly in their habits of mind, and in workmanship.

¹⁰² Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, 159.

¹⁰³ Allison Danzig and Peter Brandwein, eds., *Sports Golden Age: A Close-Up of the Fabulous Twenties* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), xi. It should be noted that Allison Danzig, despite the first name, was a male sportswriter for the *New York Times*.

¹⁰⁴ Walker, *City Editor*, 250.

¹⁰⁵ Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote*, 52.

They won't look up names and facts."¹⁰⁶ There was also the popular belief that women would "go to pieces under the strain of a big story on deadline."¹⁰⁷ A 1935 journalism textbook by a male city editor and a male journalism professor claimed that the "general tempo – with the deadline-fighting element always present – is such to bar many women because of nervous temperament."¹⁰⁸

These discriminatory and sexist attitudes caused many editors to keep female journalists away from traditional news and to instead steer them toward features and other human interest stories. Case in point was Roy W. Howard, of the Scripps-Howard chain. As one of his contemporaries recalled, Howard had "mental reservations about the accuracy of women reporters on straight news," but had "no doubt of their value in the feature field."¹⁰⁹

Thus, women's supposed shortcomings in the field of hard news put them on the front lines of feature writing at a time when society's growing preoccupation with personality made features an increasingly important part of the newspaper. In particular, women were seen as adept at reading people and mining the fascinating nuggets that bring human-interest stories to life – a view that aided women's entry into sports journalism.

A prime example can be found in the instruction that a female reporter received upon being assigned to interview heavyweight champion Dempsey in 1920. The female journalist recalled the instruction this way:

Said the sporting editor—

"Go up and take a look at Dempsey. Tell what you think of his looks today, as compared with the Fourth of July, a little over a year ago, out in Toledo.

"There has been a lot of talk about his softening up under the easy life. A good part of the public suspect [sic] the white lights of the moving picture studio have played hobs with the punching propensities of our champion. A woman is generally pretty keen about such things. See if you can detect any change."¹¹⁰

Away from sports, the belief that female journalists had a keen and different eye than their male counterparts was highlighted by events that occurred in the newsroom of Maine's *Portland Press* in 1917, when, following a disaster at sea, all the men of the newspaper's staff were assigned to go out and interview a train-load of survivors due to pass through Portland:

Just before [the male reporters] left, the managing editor appeared and asked who were assigned. The city editor told him.

"Isn't Helen [Havener] going?" he demanded.

"No," said the city editor.

"You're mistaken," said the managing editor. "A woman is likely to dig up something that a man wouldn't see. Take her along too."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Walker, *City Editor*, 248.

¹⁰⁷ Marzolf, *Up From the Footnote*, 53.

¹⁰⁸ Philip W. Porter and Norval N. Luxon, *The Reporter and the News* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935), 8.

¹⁰⁹ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 25.

¹¹⁰ Jane Dixon, "Jack Dempsey Looks as Good as Ever, Says Jane Dixon," *New York Evening Telegram*, 13 August 1920, 7.

¹¹¹ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 529.

As the managing editor predicted, Havener managed to secure an interview with an unassuming passenger whose assessment of the disaster was much different from that of the other survivors.

While women's supposedly unique perspective provided them with work as feature writers, their assignments often came with a caveat. Many newspapers, partly in an attempt to lure more female readers and also in deference to the era's sexist attitudes, assigned women to write features from a "feminine point of view," or woman's angle.¹¹² This approach, which had also been employed in earlier decades, essentially meant that stories by women would incorporate observations about stereotypically feminine interests – such as beauty, fashion and high society. One female journalist-turned-educator saw merit to the formula. Commenting on what she said was the "lighter, more delicate touch" of female journalists, she wrote in 1926:

While there always will be women who prefer and are specially equipped to compete with men in newspaper work, there remain a great majority who can succeed more quickly and be of more service by making a distinctly feminine contribution – one in which they may capitalize their tastes and instincts rather than oppose them. . . .¹¹³

Not all female journalists of the period were so amenable. Genevieve Forbes Herrick, who wrote a variety of material for the *Chicago Tribune* circa the 1920s and 30s, declared that female journalists should be allowed to write as they wish rather than be restricted to a feminine viewpoint that she said was invented and defined by male editors. "Let her write the way the world says a man writes; not the way a man says a woman writes," Forbes Herrick railed at a 1933 meeting of the Chicago Woman's Club.¹¹⁴ The woman's angle, she lamented was "hopelessly enmeshed in silk and chiffon"¹¹⁵ – a reference to the emphasis on fashion embedded in many such stories.

Whatever might be thought of them, stories written from the so-called woman's angle did provide female journalists with a way of expanding their presence in newspapers of the 1920s, as did the increasing emphasis on human-interest stories generally.

These developments, however, did not occur in a vacuum. As earlier portions of this chapter highlighted, many other factors were also at work in the 1920s, making the sports pages more accessible to female writers. The trio of women profiled over the next three chapters surely owes their ascendancy in the traditionally male field of sports journalism to the progressive spirit of the decade. Coming on the heels of women's successful wartime contributions, and marked by developments ranging from suffrage-inspired reform to flapper-inspired consumerism, the 1920s provided a forum in which women could challenge the limits previously placed on their gender. Beyond that, however, it is also important to realize that the three female sports journalists took advantage of conditions unique to their circumstances and writing styles. Margaret Goss, the subject of Chapter 3, seized on the explosion of women's competitive athletics – a byproduct of society's increasing acceptance of women's physicality – to establish herself as a sports columnist dedicated to the coverage of female sports. Lorena

¹¹² Mott, *American Journalism*, 599.

¹¹³ Boughner, *Women in Journalism*, viii (page citation is to the reprint edition).

¹¹⁴ Walker, *City Editor*, 262.

¹¹⁵ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 541.

Hickok, who is profiled in Chapter 4, capitalized on the college football mania of the twenties, as well as society's obsession with larger-than-life personalities, to earn a steady beat writing page-one features about the University of Minnesota gridiron team. Jane Dixon, the focus of Chapter 5, also benefited from society's preoccupation with personality, specifically the public's fascination with heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey; unlike Hickok, however, Dixon produced her stories from a woman's angle, thus paying greater attention to the handsomeness of the athletes and the fashions worn by fans at ringside.

Thus, these three women represent three very different types of sports journalism practiced by women in the 1920s. Writing about sports from the woman's angle, as Dixon did, was most common. Less prevalent, but still common, were women writing about female athletes – although Goss, as far as this research can determine, is one of only a handful of women to have her own column. Hickok, meanwhile, stands virtually alone, emerging from this research as the rarest of all female sportswriters: a female beat writer for a male sports team circa the 1920s.

Whatever the differences among the three women, though, all were pioneers in the field of sports journalism. They overcame many obstacles, including the unflattering stereotypes of female journalists mentioned earlier in this chapter, as well as obstacles specific to their situations, all of which is highlighted in the pages that follow.

Chapter 3: Margaret Goss Reports on Female Athletics

As New Yorkers climbed out of their beds on February 17, 1924, they were greeted by a bitterly cold Sunday morning: temperatures were in the teens and were not expected to eclipse the freezing mark; in fact, snow was in the forecast for the upcoming work week.¹ New York was in the grip of winter, all right – a winter made even harsher by the passing two weeks earlier of Woodrow Wilson, the former president who was widely beloved for leading the United States through the Great War.

For readers of the *New York Tribune*, Wilson's death came as little surprise. The paper had kept a "death watch" for days, with extra editions providing updates about the former president's slipping health.

Perhaps the cold and snowy mid-February weather should not have come as a surprise to *Tribune* readers, either. After all, when the month began, the *Tribune* duly reported that the weather-forecasting groundhog – who by the mid-1920s was beginning to carve a page-one niche as a not-so-scientific forecaster – had seen his shadow and predicted six more weeks of wintry weather.²

Unlike the anticipated cold weather, however, the page-one story that greeted *Tribune* readers on the wintry Sunday morning of February 17 was not quite so expected. There, occupying a prominent two-column space at the top of page one, was a story by Margaret Goss, a new name to the pages of the *Tribune*.³ True, the presence of a woman's by-line on page one of the *Tribune* was not unheard of; Ishbel Ross, for one, had made a name for herself with many page-one stories in the paper. But it was the content of Goss' story that quickly distinguished her. She was writing about sports. And on page one, no less.⁴

Only careful readers of the *Tribune* could have had the slightest inkling that Goss was to make her debut this particular morning. They would have noticed that on the two preceding days, the *Tribune* ran a modestly sized ad – once on page four and once on page fourteen – calling attention to an upcoming series of articles aimed at answering the question: "Should Women's Colleges Have Intercollegiate Athletics?" As the ad went on to say, "A women's sport writer for the *Tribune* has investigated the subject and has written a series of articles that will challenge every one interested in college athletics. The first will appear in the Sunday (Feb. 17th) *New York Tribune*."⁵

¹ "The Weather Report," *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 3, p. 24.

² "Ground Hog Won't Stay Long Outdoors To-Day," *New York Tribune*, 2 February 1924; "The Original Nature Fake," *New York Tribune*, 3 February 1924, sec. 2, p. 6.

³ Margaret Goss, "College Girls' Growing Activity in Sports Forcing Schools to Broaden Out Athletic Codes," *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 1, p. 1.

⁴ Even male sportswriters rarely left the confines of the sports section to claim a page-one by-line. Only monumental stories – such as the World Series, a change in Major League Baseball's administrative power structure, or a much heralded college football game of national interest – could land a male sportswriter on page one. See, for example, John Kieran, "Ban Johnson Dethroned as Ball Power; Landis 'Czar,'" *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 December 1924, 1; Grantland Rice, "Notre Dame's Cyclone Beats Army, 13 to 7," *New York Herald Tribune*, 19 October 1924, sec. 1, p. 1. This latter is Rice's famous story in which he compares the members of Notre Dame's football backfield to the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

⁵ "Should Women's Colleges Have Intercollegiate Athletics?" advertisement, *New York Tribune*, 15 and 16 February 1924, 4 and 14.

Those who took notice of the advertisement, then, may have been expecting – perhaps even looking forward to – the investigative series. But what they did not – and could not – have expected was that Margaret Goss, a woman, would be providing the reports. Remember: the ad itself said only that “a women’s sport writer” would be producing the series. At that point in history, reference to “a women’s sport writer” hardly implied that the author was a woman. To clearly distinguish the author’s gender, the *Tribune* would have had to make a slight, albeit important distinction – altering the ad to refer to “a woman sport writer” instead of “a women’s sport writer.” For that matter, the *Tribune* could have simply included Goss’ name in the ad, leaving no doubt that the series was to be produced by a woman. Instead, the *Tribune* advertisements, for whatever reason, remained ambiguous. And so readers on Sunday, February 17, 1924, were undoubtedly surprised to see the name of Margaret Goss atop a page-one sports story.

Even Goss herself had reason to be surprised. Fresh out of college and with no journalistic training – nor, it would seem, journalistic aspirations – she found herself writing for the *Tribune* thanks to an offhand suggestion by Helen Reid, whose mother-in-law, the matriarch of the Reid publishing family, happened to employ Goss’ sister Eleanor as a private secretary.⁶ More startling, Goss’ page-one debut was soon followed by the appearance of her by-line in the sports section, where Goss was subsequently assigned a column dedicated to covering female athletics. Her column was a groundbreaking achievement – the first regularly appearing by-lined sports column by a woman as determined by this research.⁷

This mid-twenties foray into sports journalism was in many ways the next logical step for the women of the Fourth Estate, who were continuing to draw attention and gain stature even though they were not yet widely accepted as sportswriters. Just days before Goss’ debut, for example, The New York Newspaper Women’s Club had expanded into new headquarters at 53 West Forty-Seventh Street.⁸ Also that same month, another professional association made up of New York’s female journalists, the Woman’s Press Club of New York City, celebrated its 35th anniversary.⁹

In addition, many individual women were making a mark in the newspaper industry. Many of the strides made by female journalists, in fact, were visible in the *Tribune* on the day Goss debuted with her page-one story about female college athletics. In that February 17th edition of the *Tribune*, no fewer than a half dozen women claimed their own by-lines. One of them, Norah K. Thompson, reported from London about the way British women had muscled into virtually all male-dominated professions, from barrister and zoo curator to undertaker and chimney sweep.¹⁰ Another female journalist, Anabel Parker McCann, wrote about electrical

⁶ The association between the Reid and Goss families is explained in greater detail later in this chapter.

⁷ A few New York-based female journalists – including Nan O’Reilly, Janet Owen, and Theodora Sohst – earned sports columns in the 1920s, but theirs came in the wake of Goss’ success. Likewise, Dorothy Greene’s sports column for the *Washington Post* did not surface until the latter part of the decade.

⁸ “Newspaper Women Open New Clubhouse Here,” *New York Tribune*, 11 February 1924, 2.

⁹ “35th Birthday Observed By Women’s Press Club,” *New York Tribune*, 24 February 1924, 16.

¹⁰ Norah K. Thompson, “British Women Give Men Run For Their Jobs,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 2, p. 10.

energy production and its effects on the U.S. economy.¹¹ Other female journalists that day tackled less serious subjects, such as women's adoration for Rudolph Valentino.¹² But regardless of the topics covered, their presence in the newspaper was undeniable.

This widespread presence of women in the newspaper field came at a time when traditional gender roles were being challenged in many walks of life. While one professor advocated encouraging young boys to play with dolls – an idea so startling it attracted prominent media attention¹³ – girls were becoming more physical and athletic. During the very month Goss made her debut for the *Tribune*, the girls' branch of the city's Public Schools Athletic League reported a burgeoning interest in sports among female students in New York's public schools. According to the PAL, 75,000 girls in New York public schools were participating in some form of school athletics – as compared to “a mere handful of girls [who] were interested in athletics” in the city just two decades earlier.¹⁴ Similarly, as Goss' debut story itself suggested, interest in athletics was also exploding among female students at the college level.¹⁵ Yet even though female participation in athletics was increasing – and even though women had already established themselves as journalists – these factors had not yet combined to make female sportswriters at all common. This was particularly true in the sports sections of newspapers, where male by-lines were the rule.

In fact, when the first installment of Goss' series about female college athletics debuted on page one of the *Tribune* on that February morning, the *Tribune's* sports section consisted strictly of male by-lines. Grantland Rice penned two columns that day, “The Sportlight” and “Tales of a Wayside Tee,” both of which were Sunday staples.¹⁶ W. B. Hanna contributed his “Gleaned From the Field of Sport” column; Joseph Val wrote about billiards; and John Kieran reported on men's golf.¹⁷ Not only were women's by-lines absent from the sports section, but coverage of female athletes was characteristically sparse on the sports pages as well. There was a two-paragraph snippet about an international field hockey match, a four-paragraph blurb about

¹¹ Anabel Parker McCann, “Big Saving to Country Seen in Superpower,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 2, p. 2.

¹² Harriette Underhill, “Valentino Back To Work Again With Famous,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 6, p. 3.

¹³ “‘Give Your Boys Girl Dolls,’ Advises Harvard Professor,” *New York Tribune*, 3 December 1923, sec. 1, p. 2.

¹⁴ “75,000 Schoolgirls Take Part in Some Form of Athletics,” *New York Tribune*, 29 February 1924, 13.

¹⁵ Goss, “College Girls' Growing Activity in Sports Forcing Schools to Broaden Out Athletic Codes,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 1, p. 1.

¹⁶ Rice, “The Sportlight,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 3, p. 23; Rice, “Tales of a Wayward Tee,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 3, p. 21. Rice's reputation as a sports expert and clever wordsmith rested largely with his “Sportlight” column, which included commentary on virtually all sports, amateur and professional, while also incorporating verse and other entertaining elements. His “Tales of a Wayside Tee” column, though often humorous, was restricted to golf and was not as widely responsible for his popularity. It was generally shorter than “The Sportlight” and usually received less prominent placement.

¹⁷ W. B. Hanna, “Gleaned From the Field of Sport,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 3, p. 23; Joseph Val, “Willie Hoppe Stands Almost Alone Among Champions,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 3, p. 22; John Kieran, “Metropolitan District Holds Corner on Professional Class,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 3, p. 21.

a women's golf tournament in California, and a somewhat longer story about a woman's success in entering her three collies in a Connecticut dog show.¹⁸

Female athletes received more coverage in the society section – although the athletes featured here were not professionals or even members of organized amateur clubs, but socialites. For example, two photos that day depicted Northeast socialites, vacationing in Florida, playing tennis at a resort.¹⁹ Stories, meanwhile, included an account of several New York women participating in a golf tournament at a South Carolina country club.²⁰ Socialites who traveled north for the winter were also covered. One story meticulously recounted the performances of New York ladies who, while vacationing at upstate Lake Placid, participated in “winter sports” ranging from a ski-jumping competition to a tug-of-war contest and a “blind-fold race.”²¹ These, and other sports stories in the society section, all lacked by-lines.

Clearly, female sportswriters were not part of the staff at the *New York Tribune* in mid-February 1924.²² Nor was coverage of female athletics a high priority. Margaret Goss' emergence changed all that. Although her journalism career only spanned parts of two years – she left the *Tribune* to marry – her writing on sports would challenge the practices of the newspaper industry while also reflecting the broader societal changes occurring at the time.

As already noted, Goss' first story for the *Tribune*, although about sports, appeared not in the sports section, but on page one. More specifically, it appeared under a three-deck, italicized headline that stretched across two columns on the top of the page.²³ It was one of only two by-lines that appeared on page one that day. The other, belonging to veteran political reporter Carter Field, was attached to an account highlighting the latest twist in the simmering Teapot Dome scandal.²⁴ With similar prominence, Goss' story stood to the immediate right of the Teapot Dome account. Under the headline, “College Girls' Growing Activity in Sports Forcing Schools to Broaden Out Athletic Codes,” Goss began her story by posing a question: “What is to be the future of athletics for women in our colleges and universities?” The question might just as well have read: “What is to be the future of sports journalism for women in our newspapers?” – for, in an unspoken way, the presence of Goss' by-line suggested that the emergence of female sports journalists, like the expansion of female athletics, would be a development worth monitoring.

¹⁸ “Ulster Women Defeat U.S. Girls at Hockey,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 3, p. 23; “Miss Cummings Shuts Out Opponent, 10 and 8,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 3, p. 21; “Mrs. Florence Ilch Scores at New Haven With Three Collies,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 3, p. 23.

¹⁹ “The Social World,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 5, p. 1.

²⁰ “Camden Stages Series of Golf Tournaments,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 5, p. 8.

²¹ “Jolly Crowds at Lake Placid Enjoy Days of Winter Sports,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 5, p. 1.

²² Harriette Underhill, best known for her “On Screen” film column in the *New York Tribune* (later renamed the *Herald Tribune*), occasionally produced sports copy at the paper prior to Goss' arrival. See Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 470.

²³ Goss, “College Girls' Growing Activity in Sports Forcing Schools to Broaden Out Athletic Codes,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 1, p. 1.

²⁴ Carter Field, “Pomerene Is Confirmed as Oil Counsel; Vote 59-13,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 1, p. 1.

In and of itself, however, this first story by Goss was rather plain and straightforward. Despite jumping to parts of two other pages in section one, the lengthy story was not particularly substantive. It outlined the pros and cons of extending female college athletics beyond intramural competition – intramural matches were then the common practice among Eastern schools – to include a more commercialized and arguably less beneficial form of athletic exercise against women from other universities. The account included no quotes. And it spoke only in the most general terms, serving as a primer for the remainder of the series in which Goss planned to relate the climate of opinion at several Eastern women’s colleges.

While mostly unremarkable in its substance, Goss’ debut was not without significance. First, as alluded to earlier, the mere presence of a woman writing about sports on page one of a major metropolitan newspaper was, by itself, a noteworthy accomplishment. Second, although Goss’ writing was mostly pedestrian, it did contain some flashes of the grand, inventive and stylized writing that was a hallmark of many of the era’s most popular male sportswriters.²⁵ For example, at one point in her story, Goss reflected on how female athletes had advanced in recent years – from playing only genteel games such as croquet, to playing rough-and-tumble sports such as field hockey. In particular, she speculated about how the founder of a particular college known for its women’s croquet program would have “had the shock of his life if he could have beheld the tender charges of his institution tearing down a hockey field, legs unencumbered by hampering skirts, brandishing sticks with a sublime disregard for shins and ankles, and no idea at all of the maidenly gentleness.”²⁶ The use of such lively language hinted at Goss’ capacity for the kind of flashy writing that was a staple among so many male sportswriters of the era.

Finally, her debut story was significant because it provided an early glimpse into what would become characteristic in much of her sports writing: a concern that the purity and enjoyment of competition could be compromised if athletics were taken too seriously. Nearing the end of her debut article, she manifested this concern when she allowed some of her own opinion to creep into her writing. She wrote: “The responsibility for the future of women’s athletics lies, without a doubt, at the doors of schools and colleges. To what other sources can we look for the inspiration of all that is finest in sports? Good sportsmanship, the spirit of friendly competition, a true love of exercise for exercise’s sake?”²⁷ In this regard, Goss was not

²⁵ Stanley Walker, former city editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, sized up male sportswriters of the 1920s and 30s by dividing them into two main camps: the Gee-Whiz school exemplified by Grantland Rice’s exaggerated prose that cast athletes as larger-than-life heroes, and the Aw-Nuts camp, characterized by W. O. McGeehan’s cynical writing that resisted hero worship but nonetheless gave athletes their due; see Walker, *City Editor*, 123-28. For all the wonder manufactured by Rice’s famously verbose lead that compared members of the 1924 Notre Dame football team to the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, a more direct writer such as McGeehan found other ways to manipulate the English language and thus inject style into the sports pages. McGeehan, for example, constantly would refer to boxing as the “cauliflower industry,” a snide reference to the cauliflower ears of fighters and the way in which promoters treated pugilists like sellable produce. He would even go so far as to call boxing the “manly art of modified murder.” Yet whatever their differences – that is, whether sportswriters fell clearly into one of the two camps as Rice and McGeehan did, or resided somewhere in between – this much is certain: virtually all of them exercised greater latitude with their use of the language than their counterparts in the news department. Indeed, sportswriters of the era made full use of the English dictionary and, when they could not find a particular word, it was not uncommon for them to incorporate or even invent jargon. They were wordsmiths, through and through.

²⁶ Goss, “College Girls’ Growing Activity in Sports Forcing Schools to Broaden Out Athletic Codes,” *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 1, p. 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

unlike her contemporary Grantland Rice, the famous male sports columnist who repeatedly reminded sports fans that winning or losing did not matter nearly as much as how their teams conducted themselves during competition.²⁸ Considering that Goss would soon be assigned to write a sports column that some envisioned as the female answer to Grantland Rice's highly successful "Sportlight" column,²⁹ it is interesting to note that her insistence on good sportsmanship was already evident in the first by-lined sports story that she wrote.

However noble her sentiments about sportsmanship may have been, though, it was clear that Goss' entry into the male-dominated world of sports reporting was an uphill battle. The very day she debuted on page one of the *New York Tribune*, the paper published a section-one story in which an elderly Wall Street tycoon – profiled as the city's "richest strap-hanger" because he preferred the subway over a limousine – was asked for his opinions about society on the occasion of his 83rd birthday. Commenting on women's expanding and changing roles, octogenarian businessman John E. Andrus made clear his preference for clearly delineated lines between the male and female sexes:

. . . [W]hen a woman bobs her hair, there is a screw loose somewhere. If girls wish to bob their hair let them cut it like men and then take the next step and wear pants. A girl's principal ambition should be the wish to be queen in a home with a number of children upon whom to pour love and affection. The home is the center of civilization, and anything that detracts from it is not good for our society.³⁰

No doubt, Andrus was not alone in his opinions. His comments, however politically incorrect by today's standards, serve as a reminder that the 1920s was a period of discomfort for many about the evolving role of women. If women were to stay at home, as Andrus expressed, then surely they did not belong in a newsroom. And more surely than that, they had no place writing about the mostly male world of sports. Yet just as the opinions of Andrus found a home in the paper on the same day that Goss' name was attached to a page-one sports story, other unflattering comments about the "new woman" would also find their place in the very same newspapers where Goss and other female writers pushed the boundaries of common newspaper practice by striking out a place for themselves as sports reporters.

By the same token, newspaper content of the period often affirmed, and even encouraged, the expanding role of women in 1920s society. For example, on the second day of Goss' seven-day series – when she wrote about Vassar College's opposition to intercollegiate sports³¹ – the *New York Tribune* carried a full-page advertisement promoting what was to be the first annual \$5,000 award for "the American woman judged to have made the greatest contribution to human progress during the preceding year."³² The award was being offered by *Pictorial Review*, a

²⁸ William A. Harper, *How You Played the Game: The Life of Grantland Rice*, Columbia (MO: University of Missouri Press, 1999). It was Rice who penned the memorable lines, "For when the One Great Scorer comes to mark against your name, He writes – not that you won or lost – but how you played the game."

²⁹ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 469. See also Goss, "Women in Sport," *New York Herald Tribune*, 23 March 1924, sec. 4, p. 5; Goss here recalls being advised to emulate Rice's style in her columns.

³⁰ "Richest Strap-Hanger Becomes Radio Fan on 83rd Birthday," *New York Tribune*, 17 February 1924, sec. 1, p. 18.

³¹ Goss, "Vassar Definitely Opposed To Intercollegiate Sports, but All Students Play at Home," *New York Tribune*, 18 February 1924, 4.

³² "\$5,000 prize each year for the American woman judged to have made the greatest contribution to human progress during the preceding year," advertisement, *New York Tribune*, 18 February 1924, 20.

magazine that in 1924 boasted “the largest monthly circulation in the world.”³³ The advertisement itself featured generic illustrations of women who represented female achievement in a wide range of esteemed fields. One woman carried a microscope, an indication of her role as a scientist; another carried a violin, to underscore achievement in music; another was dressed in a cap and gown, to signify advances in higher learning; and another carried a painter’s pallet to highlight strides made by women in art. In addition to the advertisement for the contest, the *Tribune* that day also carried its “On the Screen” column, by the paper’s own Harriette Underhill.³⁴ The appearance of Underhill’s column, a regularly published critique of motion pictures, reminded readers that women of the era had made advances in journalism too.

But while Underhill regularly wrote about film – and other newspaperwomen of the day frequently reported on news, fashion and society – sports journalism was one aspect of the newspaper business that was largely unconquered by women. Hence, Goss’ series that week took on special significance.

From February 17 to February 23, Goss contributed a daily article that highlighted the varied opinions of Eastern colleges on the issue of intercollegiate athletics for women. With the exception of the tone-setting first article, each installment of the weeklong series incorporated interviews from athletic department officials and other administrators at schools such as Wellesley, Bryn Mawr and Radcliffe, while also providing an overview of the current intramural and interclass athletic offerings made available to female athletes at these colleges.³⁵ Because the stories also included a fairly thorough description of the athletic facilities at these schools, they suggest that Goss traveled the New York, Philadelphia, and New England regions to collect her information.³⁶ The result was a series of rather basic articles, largely devoted to examining the logistical, financial, and philosophical concerns about allowing female athletes to compete against women from rival colleges. Although the stories jumped around the newspaper – appearing on page four one day, and on page eight the next – they never crossed from the news pages to the sports section.

Within a matter of days, though, Goss would break that barrier also. On February 28, she made her debut on the male-dominated sports pages with a six-paragraph account of a women’s basketball game between Hunter College and alumnae from Vassar.³⁷ The story itself was rather bland, perhaps owing to the lopsided 51-23 score, but also attributable to the lack of quotes and the uninspired descriptions that Goss employed: Hunter’s captain, for example, scored some

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Underhill, “On the Screen,” *New York Tribune*, 18 February 1924, 8.

³⁵ Interclass competitions might pit the freshmen against the juniors, for example. All competitors in such a case were from the same school.

³⁶ Ishbel Ross, a contemporary of Goss at the *Tribune*, recalls that Goss did indeed tour the colleges to produce her series; see Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 469. However, because none of the stories include datelines, it seems plausible that she could have gathered much, or all, of the information via telephone and college publicity materials. In fact, one story incorporates a quote from Burges Johnson, publicity director of Vassar College; see Goss, “Vassar Definitely Opposed To Intercollegiate Sports, but All Students Play at Home,” *New York Tribune*, 18 February 1924, 4.

³⁷ Goss, “Hunter Quintet Is Victor, 51-23, Over Alumnae of Vassar,” *New York Tribune*, 28 February 1924, 18.

“very pretty baskets.” Hunter’s players, meanwhile, displayed “some fine pass work.” And despite the final score, “play throughout the second quarter was nicely divided.”³⁸ The story read like the work of an inexperienced sportswriter. And in her defense, Goss was exactly that. In fact, until this story and her preceding seven-part series, she had never even worked at a newspaper, let alone as a paid sports observer.³⁹

But she had cracked the sports pages, and that was a milestone. No matter how plain the story, it shared the same page with a Jack Lawrence boxing story.⁴⁰ In fact, their by-lines were virtually side by side. What’s more, she shared the section with several other impressive by-lines as well: most notable, of course, was Grantland Rice, but there was also Fred Hawthorne, the tennis writer, as well as Sanford Jarrell and W. J. Slocum, who wrote about boxing and baseball, respectively.⁴¹

Having gained entry into the “old boys’ club,” she spent the rest of her time at the newspaper – a little more than a year and a half – maturing as a writer and becoming a fixture on the sports pages. She had to prove herself quickly, though; the *Tribune* wasted no time in throwing Goss into the deep end of the pool to see if she could swim. By March 1, just two weeks after she began writing for the *Tribune*, she already had a column.⁴² Alternately called “The Sportswoman,” “The Sportswomen,” and “Women in Sport,” the column finally adopted the last of those names and became a regular part of the Sunday sports section. As the title of the column suggests, it was devoted strictly to female athletics.

While the increasing number of women participating in athletics undoubtedly influenced the *Tribune*’s decision to bring Goss on board, she also benefited from her sister’s association with the Reid family, the wealthy clan that controlled the *Tribune*.⁴³ Goss’ sister Eleanor, in addition to being a nationally recognized tennis player, was Mrs. Whitelaw Reid’s private secretary, a job she held from 1919 to 1926⁴⁴ and which apparently gave Margaret Goss reason

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 469.

⁴⁰ Jack Lawrence, “Garden License Will Be Revoked Unless Ticket Speculation Ends, Warns Boxing Board,” *New York Tribune*, 28 February 1924, 18.

⁴¹ Fred Hawthorne, “Mrs. Mallory Triumphs Easily Over Miss Cassel in Florida,” *New York Tribune*, 28 February 1924, 17; Sanford Jarrell, “Political Case Of Tex Rickard Interests Lord,” *New York Tribune*, 28 February 1924, 18; W. J. Slocum, “Unsigned Yanks Receive Club’s Final Offers,” *New York Tribune*, 28 February 1924, 17.

⁴² Goss, “The Sportswoman,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 March 1924, sec. 3, p. 21. Only the Sunday editions of the *Herald Tribune* were divided into distinct sections. Sports frequently occupied the third or fourth sections, but at other times comprised section ten. These factors account for the seeming inconsistencies in citation style throughout this chapter.

⁴³ The remainder of this paragraph draws on a variety of sources in an attempt to reconstruct the circumstances surrounding Margaret Goss’ hiring by the *New York Herald Tribune*.

⁴⁴ A *New York Times* article that reported on Eleanor Goss’ decision to take a job with the U.S. Mortgage and Trust Company in 1926 provides background about her association with the Reid family, including the years she worked as private secretary to Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, matriarch of the publishing family. See “Miss Goss With Mortgage House,” *New York Times*, 4 November 1926, 41.

to sometimes visit Camp Wild Air, the Reid's thirty-acre leisure compound in the Adirondacks.⁴⁵ On one occasion, when Margaret was visiting the camp shortly after her graduation from college, she entered into conversation with Mrs. Whitelaw Reid's daughter-in-law Helen, who was married to *Tribune* publisher Ogden Reid, a man not averse to extending opportunities to women journalists. Helen Reid, a suffragist-turned-*Tribune* executive, was herself a particularly strong advocate for the expanded role of women in the professional workforce and asked Margaret Goss about her post-college plans. Although Margaret had no journalism experience, Helen Reid suggested that Margaret consider working at the *Tribune* – a suggestion that led to a meeting between Margaret and managing editor Julian S. Mason.⁴⁶ Mason, like his progressive-minded publishing bosses, supported women's advances in journalism and suggested that Goss try her hand at writing sports.⁴⁷ It didn't hurt, either, that the *Tribune* was close to finalizing a merger with the *New York Herald* – a business marriage that would result in an expanded sports section that could more easily accommodate the weekly inclusion of a woman columnist writing about sports.⁴⁸

Although Goss' column was limited in scope to female athletes, it was a landmark achievement. As far as this research can determine, Goss' "Women in Sport" marked the first time that a newspaperwoman could lay claim to her own, regularly appearing by-lined sports column. Also noteworthy is that Goss' column, which began as a weekly enterprise, eventually evolved into a daily exercise. This put her into exclusive company since only one other *Herald Tribune* sportswriter had a year-round, daily column – and that was Grantland Rice.

Landing her daily column, however, took time. During her first year at the *Herald Tribune*, she produced the column only weekly. She was also turning in by-lined sports stories with regularity. In a typical week, readers of the sports pages could find at least one or two stories under Goss' name.

Like her weekly column, however, her stories during the week were restricted in terms of their content; they covered only female athletic contests, most notably basketball, field hockey, tennis, and golf.⁴⁹ What's more, the stories – especially during the early stages of her career – were usually tame and formulaic. They rarely exceeded four or five paragraphs and were

⁴⁵ Richard Kluger, *The Paper: The Life and Death of the New York Herald Tribune* (New York: Random House, 1986; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 215 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

⁴⁶ The conversation between Helen Reid and Margaret Goss is recreated in Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 469.

⁴⁷ In steering Margaret toward sports writing, managing editor Mason was probably influenced by the athletic reputation of Margaret and her five sisters. Most notably, Eleanor Goss, during the time she worked as a private secretary for the Reid family, was also a nationally ranked tennis player. See Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 469, and Kluger, *The Paper*, 215. For more on Ogden and Helen Reid's proactive role in expanding opportunities for female journalists, see Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 135-141.

⁴⁸ The first issue of the combined *New York Herald Tribune* was published on 19 March 1924. For more on the merger, see "The Tribune Buys the Herald," *New York Tribune*, 18 March 1924, 1. Also see Kluger, *The Paper*, 207-218.

⁴⁹ On the rarest of occasions, Goss might make mention of a male athlete or athletic contest in a story or column – but even then, it was not her primary focus. Examples include a story that covered a figure skating competition that featured both female and male participants, and a column that made reference to an international walking race for males. See "New Yorkers Take Honors in Figure Skating Tourney," *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 February 1925, 14, and "Women in Sport," *New York Herald Tribune*, 1 February 1924, sec. 1, p. 31.

typically followed by a box score summary. The fact that Goss nevertheless received by-lines on these stories suggests that the *Herald Tribune* was trying to cultivate a following for Goss – to highlight the presence of a woman on the sports staff. After all, virtually every other *Herald Tribune* story that bore a resemblance to Goss’ work – a straightforward game summary, averaging around four to six column inches in total length – appeared without a by-line. It seems as though the *Herald Tribune* wished to call attention to Goss – a conclusion also supported by its decision to establish her column as a supplement to her frequent by-lined stories.

Paradoxically, though, the *Herald Tribune* did not go out of its way to promote Goss via other means. For example, while page-one Sunday teasers would call attention to Rice’s column, they never made mention of Goss. Nor did the paper promote Goss through “house ads,” as it occasionally did for Rice and fellow male columnist W. O. McGeehan.⁵⁰ While the *Herald Tribune* was bold enough to blaze a trail by including a woman columnist/reporter on its sports staff, it did not seem willing to go the next step by touting her as it did several of its male reporters. Perhaps outwardly promoting Goss as a female sportswriter would have pushed the envelope a bit too far. In short, Goss could be a regular and positive contributor to the sports section, even to the point of having her own column. But she wasn’t going to cross over to cover male sports. And she wasn’t going to be used as a promotional centerpiece either.

Consistent with her awkward status as a pigeonholed trailblazer, Goss was a largely tentative writer during her first several months on the staff. Her stories, accounts of female athletic contests, ranged between timid and ordinary. And her early columns, while expectedly longer and more creative than her stories, were often mild. Sometimes, those early columns were little more than game summaries or lackluster feature stories dressed up under the boxed and italicized “Women in Sport” heading. When her columns did go so far as to offer pointed insight, they often relied on the opinions of others, through quotes, rather than providing the opinion of the author herself. This was especially true during March of 1924, Goss’ first month as a columnist.

For example, in a March 9, 1924 column about the disappointment felt by U.S. field hockey fans following the dismal performance of an all-American field hockey team in England, Goss wrote that she was “assured by those who know the situation” that such a reaction by U.S. fans was “not the proper [one] at all” because the American players had actually made positive strides despite the outcome.⁵¹ With similar deference, another Goss column from March of 1924 compared the lagging performance of American field hockey players to their superior British counterparts by suggesting that “there is hope for us, we are told . . .”⁵²

Still, examples from even her first month of columns did show flashes of the skilled writer and impassioned advocate for women’s athletics that she would become. This is evident even in the field hockey columns. For example, one of the columns, reflecting her potential as a wordsmith, offered a lead that played off France’s reputation for fine cuisine: “France, too, is developing a taste for field hockey – a taste that is as typical of the French way of doing things,

⁵⁰ A house ad is an advertisement that a newspaper places in its own issues to promote a particular author, feature, or special section. See for example, the following house ads from the *New York Herald Tribune*: 26 March 1924, 8; 29 March 1924, 14; and 5 September 1925, sec. 9, p. 7.

⁵¹ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Tribune*, 9 March 1924, sec. 3, p. 23.

⁵² Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Tribune*, 16 March 1924, sec. 3, p. 25.

and as different from the English or American method, as roast beef is from filet mignon.”⁵³ The other column, meanwhile, sounded approval for the advancement of women athletes with a sarcastic reference to “the good old days” of field hockey “when a girl might wear her skirt as short as six inches from the ground, provided she had on spats.”⁵⁴

Clearly, Goss’ early columns reflect a writer trying to find her way – a writer who wanted to make waves on the sports page, but who, at the same time, recognized her lack of expertise and did not want to rock the boat so vigorously as to invite contempt or ridicule.⁵⁵ Consider the following passage, which highlights this contradictory tension, especially since the words come on the heels of Goss’ swipe at the lengthy and constricting field hockey skirts formerly required of women:

After having spent most of our life being neutral upon the subject of whether girls should play basketball by girls’ or boys’ rules, a little closer observation of the game, done by both rules, has cured us. We are definitely convinced that girls should be girls first, last and all the time. This is apt to lay us open to charges of being too lady-like, as well as to being laughed at. . . .

. . . [But] basketball, played by girls’ rules . . . is neither sissified nor stupid . . . It is a game full of thrills, far better adapted to the players, and every bit as good to watch as the men’s version.⁵⁶

As this passage highlights, Goss’ situation mirrored the circumstances of the athletes she was writing about. Like them, she was trying to be aggressive while remaining feminine by 1920s standards. Whereas female athletes of the era sought to reconcile this tension on the field, Goss worked to strike this balance on the sports pages, where she had to consider how forceful and assertive her writing should be if it was going to advance, but not hinder, the cause of women. In this way, Goss was emblematic of the wider struggle that marked the decade: the 1920s, remember, was a time of confusion and transition when women’s employment opportunities, educational options, and fashion choices challenged feminine stereotypes that society – many women included – was not entirely willing to surrender.

The confusion and transition, as personally experienced by Goss, is illuminated in her March 23, 1924 column. Devoting part of the column to a poem she wrote entitled “Lines on Starting a Women’s Sports Column,” Goss provided a glimpse of the wide-ranging instruction

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Tribune*, 9 March 1924, sec. 3, p. 23.

⁵⁵ Exactly how much sports expertise Goss had is a point of confusion. As one of six sisters who have been characterized as “athletic,” she was seemingly well acquainted with sport, both as a participant and an observer of her siblings. Ross, in *Ladies in the Press*, lends further credence to this assessment when she notes that Goss’ “sound background in sports” meant that she “did not have to grope for technical knowledge”; see Ross, 469. On the other hand, Goss’ deferential writing style early in her career, coupled with her own statements, suggests that Goss had a more humble assessment of herself. In one column, for example, Goss described her athletic skill as ordinary, evidenced by her “tagging at the heels of a long list of Amazonian sisters who did everything rather discouragingly well”; see Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 11 May 1924, sec. 4, p. 4. In other columns, Goss wrote about the learning curve she encountered in covering sports; see, for example, Goss, “Women in Sports,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 13 September 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

she had received from her bosses and colleagues upon joining the sports staff a few weeks earlier:

“See here,” they said, “just take it
And see if you can make it
Go. The field is new, you see. Pray
Give us something nice.
Adopt a style that’s easy,
That’s chatty and that’s breezy,
A little on the order, shall we say,
of Grantland Rice.”
Suggestion on suggestion
Was offered in the question
Some recommended humor, slang, and
scintillating wit.
Said others, “Please be solemn.
Let’s have a women’s column
That takes our action seriously and
makes no joke of it.”⁵⁷

With all kinds of advice aimed at her, and from all directions, it is no wonder that some of Goss’ early writing – in her columns and her stories – was uneven. As a female sportswriter, she was undertaking something that was, for all intents and purposes, brand new.⁵⁸ She was crossing into uncharted territory, and so understandably at times, her writing may have seemed timid or contradictory – even if at least one person supposedly instructed her to aspire to write like Grantland Rice.

Ironically, this March 24 column, because of its inclusion of verse, brought Goss closer to Rice’s column style than anything she had done previously. Rice was well known for penning verse; it was a hallmark of his column, incorporated here and there to break up, or sometimes illuminate, his observations about the sports world.⁵⁹

Although Goss rarely incorporated verse into her columns, she did, in short time, approximate Rice’s writing style in other ways. In April, just her second full month as a member of the sports department, she boldly offered the following column lead, which mirrored Rice’s affinity for verbosity and melodrama – writing traits that are frowned on today, but were often welcome in the 1920s sports sections.

Spring is the season of beginnings, but it has a number of endings laid to its account, although it may be heresy to say it. Consider, for instance, the sad case of the badly-treated basketball, cast aside, with air oozing out of it, just because buds are bursting and

⁵⁷ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 23 March 1924, sec. 4, p. 5.

⁵⁸ A contemporary called Goss’ work “an innovation” and notes that the idea was later “taken up elsewhere.” See Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 469.

⁵⁹ Commenting on his fondness for verse in his autobiography, Rice wrote: “While sport has been a big part of my life, I must admit that verse has meant even more. . . . Verse and sport together make up the menu perfectly. Nothing else is needed where brain and brawn, heart and ligament are concerned. Rhythm, the main factor in both, is one of the main factors in life itself.” See Rice, *The Tumult and the Shouting* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1954), 352.

birds are twittering and green fields [are] calling fair weather sports to golf and tennis and field hockey and the great outdoors.

Yes, spring has come officially, in spite of a misplaced, and to our mind, poorly stage-managed snow storm or two, which, being perfectly aware of the untimeliness of its appearance, tries in an unapologetic manner to mix itself up with thunder and lightning in a vain effort to rectify the mistake. Spring has come, and with it has come the end of the basketball season.⁶⁰

Such literary effusiveness – while admittedly a matter of personal taste – nonetheless showed that Goss was beginning to have confidence in her writing; she was willing to experiment with different writing techniques. Her increasing confidence was also portrayed in that very same column in yet another way: her selection of a New York City girls' all-star basketball team – a bold step because she admittedly relied on her own observations rather than the input of coaches or fans. Using the first-person plural to refer to herself, Goss elevated herself from novice to expert when she wrote: “We have seen more [basketball] matches in the space of the last few weeks than we ever saw before in our whole life. . . . [W]e decided it was high time for New York to have a girls' [all-star] basketball team all its own, and we thought no one was better qualified to pick it than ourselves.”⁶¹ Proceeding to name her all-stars, Goss further conveyed a sense of expertise with short, but insightful, comments on each of the players – the kind of “take my word for it” observations that were common in the writing of her male counterparts of the day. On top of that, her synopses of the players highlighted some clever turns of phrase and artful comparisons, heretofore largely absent in her writing. For example, Goss quipped that Hunter College's Olive Huber “is nearly as tall as the Woolworth Building and has springs in her feet.”⁶² Of another Hunter College pick, Dorothy Hule, Goss wrote that a basketball “in her hand is worth two in the basket.”⁶³ Such matter-of-fact assessments were in keeping with the kind of short, authoritative observations that Grantland Rice and W. O. McGeehan consistently offered to their readers.⁶⁴

Subsequent columns by Goss did not always exhibit such confidence and flair, however. Some, in fact, reverted to a staid story-like format that was clearly more aimed at imparting information than offering opinion or analysis. For example, Goss columns provided a history of the National Amateur Athletic Foundation and its women's division; an overview of female “industrial” teams sponsored by New York-based companies; summaries of women's golf

⁶⁰ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 April 1924, sec. 4, p. 4.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ For example, Rice, in considering the best second basemen who had played professional baseball, flatly concluded that, “For all-time second base honors, Edward Trowbridge Collins is still the premier, the mandarin.” See Rice, “The Sportlight,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 4 May 1924, sec. 4, p. 5. With similar self-assuredness, Rice and McGeehan would also predict the results of college football games, boxing matches and the like, as well as passing judgment on the comparative skill of athletes. Aware that his righteous-sounding assertions sometimes riled readers, McGeehan joked in one column that he would adopt for daily reflection the question, “Have I made somebody indignant to-day, or have I failed?” See McGeehan, “Down the Line,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 31 October 1924, sec. 4, p. 5.

tournament results; and updates on the development of women's athletic programs at regional colleges.⁶⁵

Whether a particular week's column was informative or opinionated, though, Goss' very presence on the sports pages did not take long to elicit a negative reaction from some readers. She documented their objections in May of 1924, just her fourth month on the job. "Criticism of a number of things have come to the writer in a somewhat brief career," Goss led off her column. Complaints, she said, included "the mere fact of [her] being a woman at all and being on the sporting page – a spot, it would appear, sacred to masculine opinions alone whether the subject be feminine or otherwise."⁶⁶ Goss responded with admirable pluck, dismissing such criticisms in a single sentence. "There is no come-back to this . . . rather medieval outlook," she wrote.⁶⁷

Ironically, uncomplimentary remarks about women were not only submitted by readers, but even by some of the very journalists who were employed with Goss at the *Herald Tribune*. A particularly damning assessment of the "new woman" appeared on the editorial page, under the non-by-lined "Lantern" column, a popular feature that combined verse with commentary on political affairs and public trends. With Goss already entrenched on the sports pages for nearly a year – and as many as half a dozen female by-lines appearing throughout the *Herald Tribune* on a given day – "The Lantern" nevertheless saw fit to portray modern, working women as frivolous and dumb because of their emerging, and supposed fleeting, interests:

Interpretive Dancing, Interior Decoration,
Birth Control and Girth Control and Arctic Exploration,
Culinary Science, Theosophies and Freuds, and How to Teach the Slums
to Drop Their Vulgar Adenoids,
Expressionistic Poetry and Sublimated Sin and how to lift the Masses up
above a taste for Gin.

.
[Such] causes rise and causes fall – (consult your current journal) – but,
blithely vibrant overall, the Dumbbell is eternal.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, Clare Briggs – the male cartoonist whose work was a staple in the *Herald Tribune* sports section despite content that often had nothing to do with athletics – regularly used his large, one-panel comics to poke fun at women and their progressive attempts. Frequently, he showed women to be nagging, indecisive, incompetent and an all-around headache for men. More often than not, he gave the impression that the "new woman," with her bobbed haircut and career aspirations, was plain silly.⁶⁹ Granted, there were times when he depicted working

⁶⁵ See "Women in Sport" columns by Goss in the following issues of the *New York Herald Tribune*: 20 April 1924, sec. 4, p. 4; 4 May 1924, sec. 4, p. 3; and 27 April 1924, sec. 4, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Goss, "Women in Sport," *New York Herald Tribune*, 11 May 1924, sec. 4, p. 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ "The Lantern," *New York Herald Tribune*, 12 November 1924, 16. The capitalization pattern in the excerpt, though seemingly inconsistent, mirrors the original.

⁶⁹ For example, see the following Briggs cartoons in the *New York Herald Tribune*: "It Happens in the Best Regulated Families," 18 April 1924, 16; "Second Honeymoons," 29 April 1924, 17; "Oh! The Women," 16 May 1924, 15; and "How to Start the Day Wrong," 19 June 1924, 14.

women favorably, or as having the last laugh at men's expense. But overall, his portrayal of women was far more negative than positive.⁷⁰

That Goss' column could find a place in a sports section that allowed Briggs' demeaning depictions of women makes her column all the more impressive. Even more impressive – and ironic – is that her column sometimes appeared directly underneath these daily Briggs cartoons.

Then again, this was the twenties, that mixed-up decade when such juxtapositions were hardly uncommon. Such incongruity was reflective of the wider controversy surrounding the role of women at the time. The landscape was dotted with passionate feminists, staunch chauvinists, and a silent majority caught in between – people who were supportive of women's advances in certain arenas but not quite sure how to react to every circumstance involving the “new woman.”⁷¹

Fortunately for Goss, she knew she had some readers and colleagues on her side. Ishbel Ross, a news reporter at the *Herald Tribune* in the 1920s, recalled Goss' column as a “success” that prompted its share of “letters of commendation.”⁷² What's more, Goss' writing had the approval of male counterparts Rice and McGeehan, the two most prominent members of the *Herald Tribune* sports section. As Ross remembered, Rice was “enthusiastic” about Goss' column and even “offered suggestions from time to time,” while McGeehan, the “shyest and most silent of men, stopped Miss Goss one day and observed in his absent-minded manner: ‘Your stuff is good. Keep it up.’”⁷³

Rice and McGeehan's favorable reaction toward Goss' endeavor also shone through in their own writing from time to time. Although they did not necessarily reference Goss in their columns, they would occasionally incorporate a favorable comment about a female athlete, or the advances of women in general. For example, it was not uncommon for Rice – who wrote primarily about male athletes – to devote a few column lines to lauding swimmer Gertrude Ederle, golfer Glenna Collett, or tennis champion Helen Wills. Writing about all three in one

⁷⁰ That is not to suggest, however, that Briggs was ever personally hostile to Goss, or any other female journalist for that matter. Indeed, for all the jabs he took at women in his cartoons, he was a friend of Nellie Revel, who in the earlier part of the century had blazed ground as a female news reporter, especially in the area of entertainment reporting but also with an occasional sports story. Testament to their friendship was his contribution of a cartoon to her autobiography, *Right Off the Chest* (New York: George H. Doran, 1923). In light of all this, there is no doubt that Briggs' cartoons were not meant to be mean or offensive as much as they were meant to be funny, in much the same way that “The Lockhorns” comic might be looked upon today. Still, the fact remains: such negative depictions of women, appearing on the sports pages as they did, would not have benefited Goss in her attempts to be taken seriously by male readers.

⁷¹ The terms feminist and feminism are used in this dissertation in much the way they would have been understood in the early twentieth century. To that end, self-described feminist Marie Jenny Howe's 1914 definition is a useful starting point. Organizing a mass meeting of “feminists” to consider an appropriate definition for the word “feminism,” Howe in 1914 said the term encompassed women's efforts to gain access to the wide range of activities enjoyed by men; see Rosalind Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 63-65. Newspapers of the period tended to use the term “new woman” as much as, if not more than, the word “feminist” – but with the same general meaning. Thus, when the press of the 1920s referred to the “new woman,” the phrase was suggestive of women whose employment gains, political involvement, educational advances, athletic accomplishments, and/or sexual attitudes challenged traditional Victorian notions of femininity and “ladylike” behavior.

⁷² Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 469-470.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 470.

column, he flatteringly proclaimed that the trio had “reached the loftiest of heights.”⁷⁴ Rice also supported the proposal of leading female golfers to wrest control of their tournaments from the United States Golf Association and govern the matches themselves. “Why not?” Rice asked, adding, “If the U.S. G. A. uses standard judgment it will give the women golfers what they want.”⁷⁵ McGeehan, for his part, went so far as to suggest that he could sometimes find a purer joy in watching female athletics, given how keenly competitive and uncommercialized they were.⁷⁶ And as the decade progressed, he even praised female athletes for “setting the standards of sport and adventure in recent years.”⁷⁷ McGeehan, who sometimes used his column to make observations about society in general, also endorsed the growing participation of women in politics, as evidenced in the following item he penned about the 1924 national Democratic convention: “The opening of the second day was auspicious. ‘The convention recognizes the Lady from South Carolina,’ said Chairman Walsh. The convention surely did, as she was not hard to recognize. Either was Mrs. Leroy Spring. It was a happy thought . . . Other states ought to follow suit and send delegates as easy to recognize.”⁷⁸

While sexism is evident in the passage, one must remember that this was the 1920s – when many men saw women’s political involvement as absolute meddling in what had always been the dominion of males. For McGeehan to suggest that the presence of female delegates was a “happy thought” – even if it also implied a fondness for their physical appearance – was still, by some measures, progressive. Combined with the encouragement he directly relayed to Goss in the newsroom, McGeehan must at least be counted among those who did not oppose the evolving role of women in 1920s society.

Most importantly for Goss, her supporters inside the *Tribune* also included those who carried the most clout. As alluded to earlier, managing editor Julian Mason was positive and open-minded when it came to incorporating women into his staff. And publisher Ogden Reid, with the encouragement of his wife Helen, allowed his newspaper to become a place where female journalists could test the limits imposed by the traditions of the Fourth Estate.

Ironically, though, even the leadership of a seemingly progressive publishing company did not preclude editorial content that included less-than-flattering sentiments aimed at women. For every positive editorial or story about women, “The Lantern” column, the Briggs cartoons, or some other editorial or story was apt to chide women as foolish. Ultimately, then, the *Herald Tribune* sent a mixed message, yet one consistent with the decade’s confused attitudes toward women.

Faced with this mix of support, resentment and indifference that was characteristic of the twenties, Goss forged ahead. Throughout the remainder of 1924 and the first half of 1925, she continued to churn out at least one or two by-lined sports stories in a typical week, in addition to

⁷⁴ Rice, “The Spotlight,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 29 April 1924, 8.

⁷⁵ Rice, “The Spotlight,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 January 1926, 19.

⁷⁶ McGeehan, “Down the Line,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 August 1924, 12. Wrote McGeehan: “. . . [I]t strikes me that a tennis match between Miss Wills and Mlle. Suzanne Lenglen would be more of a thrill than the return bout between Dempsey and Firpo. But I do not wish to be quoted to this effect in the region of the Gas House. The boys might misunderstand me.”

⁷⁷ McGeehan, “Down the Line,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 30 January 1926, sec. 1, p. 15.

⁷⁸ McGeehan, “Down the Line,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 26 June 1924, 20.

producing her Sunday column. Her stories, on the one hand, showed an impressive, but mostly modest evolution in terms of her writing style. Her columns, on the other hand, eventually rose above their earlier inconsistencies to demonstrate a sharply honed style that incorporated clever turns of phrase, effective humor, and pinpoint metaphors.

Consider first her sports stories. Unlike many of the men on staff, she continued to write stories that featured direct leads, relatively short sentences, and rather concise summaries of individual and team performances. While such a style would fall in line with today's style of sports journalism, its tone and compactness in the 1920s was uncharacteristic of most metropolitan sports pages of the era, especially the *Herald Tribune's*.⁷⁹ The May 14, 1924, issue of the *Herald Tribune* typifies the way her stories were less flashy than those of her male counterparts. On that day, three by-lined stories appeared on page sixteen and were displayed with almost exact prominence: each featured a three-deck, one-column headline at the top of the page, followed by body copy that ran approximately five to nine inches in length. Goss, writing about the results of a women's golf tournament, produced this very basic lead paragraph that clearly emphasized adherence to the "Five Ws" formula:

A field of fifty women golfers gathered yesterday at the Hudson River Country Club, Yonkers, for the one-day meet held under the auspices of the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association. Mrs. S. F. Dribben, of Fairview, tied with Miss Marie Jenney, of North Hempstead, for low net score with a total of 88 strokes. Mrs. Henry Blumenthal, also of Fairview, took the honors for low gross with her score of 96.⁸⁰

The subsequent paragraphs used similarly plain language. The effect? The spotlight rested on the athletes' performances, not the author's vocabulary.

Compare that to the first three sentences of Kerr N. Petrie's story about a male golf tournament. While his story starts off tamely enough, by the time the reader reaches the third sentence, Petrie's use of forced and overdrawn language sharply contrasts to Goss' style. Wrote Petrie:

Members of the New York Real Estate Board, to the number of 125, journeyed yesterday to the Westchester Hills Country Club for a session at golf. The tournament was featured by a hole-in-one during the afternoon, the hero being John M. Stoddard, known real estate lawyer.

It was out upon the sixteenth, of 145 yards, a punchbowl affair, that Mr. Stoddard gave the rubber-core a jab with his mashie that made the pesky little thing squirm and dance.⁸¹

The third by-lined story on that page, Jack Lawrence's account of French boxer Georges Carpentier's arrival in New York for a prizefight, builds in even more drama and verbiage:

⁷⁹ Perhaps one could argue that Goss was a trailblazer not only because of her gender, but because she stuck with a straightforward style that would later become the standard in the sports journalism field. More likely, though, her straightforward stories and direct, concise sentence structure were indicative of a writer who was finding her way and was therefore content to restrict her innovation to her columns. Besides, some sports reporters, especially at papers other than the *Herald Tribune*, did already favor a direct, less verbose writing style. An example is Walter Trumbull of the *New York Evening Post*, circa the mid-1920s. The *New York Evening Post* even placed an ad in the rival *Herald Tribune* portraying Trumbull as an appealingly unorthodox sports journalist who "writes briefly, in short paragraphs"; see *New York Herald Tribune*, 9 September 1925, 5.

⁸⁰ Goss, "Women Golfers In Tie for Low Gross Honors," *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 May 1924, 16.

⁸¹ Kerr N. Petrie, "R. Estate Golf Meet Produces Gladsome Ace," *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 May 1926, 16.

Gorgeous Georges Carpentier, a fistic idol of yesteryear, now somewhat shattered, arrived yesterday on the White Star liner Majestic – still smiling, still debonair and still bubbling over with the vivacious gallantry of France. Georges is here to fight – perhaps his last battle.

Mr. Carpentier, accompanied by his almond-eyed manager, Francois Descamps, appeared, as scheduled, on the deck of the good ship Majestic.⁸²

The same kind of contrast can be seen in a later pair of stories, this time with Goss reporting the results of a women's golf tournament and male writer W. J. Slocum recounting a baseball match between Yale and Harvard. Whereas Goss began her story with a simple sentence addressing most of the Ws – “The first round of competition in the second annual championship of the Women's Westchester and Fairfield County Golf Association was held yesterday at the Greenwich Country Club” – followed quickly by the names of the day's leaders,⁸³ Slocum opted for a circuitous and verbose lead that obscured the results of the baseball contest he covered:

If Yale is to be counted completely out of the “Big Three” baseball series this season, the counting will take place at the Polo Grounds in New York next Saturday. This much was assured this afternoon, when the Elis, twice conquered by Princeton, turned on Harvard, with two victories to her credit over the Tigers, in the Commencement Day game at Yale field.⁸⁴

Unlike Goss, who devoted most of the remainder of her golf story to providing scores and describing the play of the participants, Slocum continued his meandering approach, postponing further details of his baseball game to provide unnecessary, long-winded observations about the crowds. In an extremely long and ornate second paragraph, he wrote about “all the music, color and spectacular features of Commencement Day” including the “old grads in conservative dress befitting long absences from classrooms . . . It was a colorful parade,” he went on to write, still keeping the details of the game cloaked in mystery, “with nary a hue from the rainbow missing.”⁸⁵

Clearly, Goss' male colleagues, for better or worse, were much more creative and expressive in their stories. Goss' stories, during her nearly two years at the *Herald Tribune*, never evolved to match that style of writing. Nevertheless, a few significant improvements in Goss's stories must be acknowledged.

First, she grew more comfortable incorporating analysis into her articles, interspersing her own brief opinions among the basic information and quotes that dominated the stories. For example, in sizing up a women's golf tournament, Goss suggested that one player had the edge because she would be “playing on familiar ground under conditions to which she is perfectly well accustomed” but warned that another, despite losing her championship status the past two

⁸² Jack Lawrence, “Pomp Missing as Carpentier Arrives Here,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 May 1926, 16.

⁸³ Goss, “Favorites Win In Golf Play at Greenwich,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 June 1924, 16.

⁸⁴ W. J. Slocum, “Yale Is Victor Over Harvard By 3-2 Score,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 June 1924, 16.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

years, was “always a potential champion and will surely hold her old position again,” especially after rediscovering her swing with help from a renowned golf instructor.⁸⁶

Second, Goss also became more adept at providing detail; as a reporter, she admittedly became a more careful and knowledgeable observer of the games and matches that she covered and consequently grew more skilled at relaying her observations to her readers.⁸⁷ Reflective of this was her description of a long rally during a women’s tennis match between Molla Bjurstedt Mallory and J. Dallas Corbiere: “. . . Mrs. Corbiere showed an amazing ability to cover court and Molla kept her running. Mrs. Corbiere dashed madly from right to left and returned a difficult backhand shot that no one thought she could get, only to have Mrs. Mallory rise up and finish it, with a well-placed cross-court drive.”⁸⁸

Perhaps most significant with respect to her role as reporter, Goss began drawing story assignments that held wider interest. Whereas her stories during her first several months on staff often recapped women’s games featuring company-sponsored teams or school-affiliated squads, her later stories more frequently dealt with women’s golf and tennis tournaments that featured individual athletes of greater renown. This shift began in earnest in June of 1924, when she found herself in Boston, filing daily stories on a week-long golf tournament then capping it off with her Sunday column.⁸⁹ Because the tournament featured Glenna Collett, one of the better known female athletes of the day, Goss’ readers on such an occasion were certain to include men as well as women.⁹⁰

Granted, those assignments – however plum – paled in comparison to many of the assignments her male colleagues enjoyed. While Goss might get to cover an occasional out-of-state tournament in the Northeast, the *Herald Tribune*’s baseball writers got to crisscross the country via train for the better part of a year, with some road trips taking them as far west as St. Louis – a big deal at a time when cars were so new that many New Yorkers considered drives to New Jersey or Pennsylvania an adventure. And if Goss needed any other reminders about her restricted mobility, all she had to do was look at some of the datelines on Grantland Rice’s stories; Rice got to go to Paris in 1924 to cover the Olympics.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Goss, “Glenna Collett Off To-day for British Crown,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 12 April 1925, sec. 10, p. 2. Another example of analysis is found in an account of a tennis match, where Goss asserted that a particular player had “made for herself a unique corner in the tennis playing world. The shots she plays are not like any taught by a professional,” but rather are part of a “trick assortment” marked by uncanny speed. See Margaret Goss, “Mrs. Roeser Gains Tennis Final With Miss Alice Francis,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 28 February 1925, sec. 1, p. 12. Meanwhile, in a story about a victory by the NYU women’s basketball team, Goss credits the squad’s vast improvement over the prior season to the school’s hiring of a female coach: “It takes a woman who has played the game and has a thorough knowledge and understanding of it to develop the best kind of game”; Margaret Goss, “N.Y.U. Girl Varsity Easy Winner Over Upsala College, 34-5,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 17 December 1924, 23.

⁸⁷ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 13 September 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Goss, “Mrs. Mallory Is Victor in Hard Tennis Battle,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 February 1925, 27.

⁸⁹ See *New York Herald Tribune*, 3-8 June 1924.

⁹⁰ The road trips continued throughout the summer, with Goss covering major women’s golf events in Stamford and New London, Connecticut.

⁹¹ As an example of his Olympic coverage, see Rice, “Yale Oarsmen Win Easily in Olympic Heat,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 16 July 1924, sec. 1, p. 1.

Yet however geographically anchored Goss may have been, it did not stop her from evolving as a columnist. While her story assignments may have been limited to the Northeast, and the writing style within those reports may have remained somewhat stagnant, her column took a decidedly different tack. Indeed, it was as a columnist that Goss shone most brightly. Overcoming early temerity and inconsistencies, her column grew to reflect the work of a skillful, maturing journalist intent on injecting some pizzazz of her own into the sports section. In many ways, her “Women in Sport” column grew to be on par with the sports columns of her male counterparts. While this was borne out by the column’s frequently prominent placement in the sports section,⁹² as well as its elevation from a weekly to a daily column in the late summer of 1925,⁹³ the real proof was in the writing: that is, in the words, the sentence structure and the overall tone that Goss employed to make the column a success.

Eventually, she could turn a phrase with the best of her fellow male columnists, summoning apt similes and attention-grabbing metaphors. In her parlance, women golfers who were confounded by a particularly challenging golf course “saw the anticipated birdies and eagles flapping one by one out to sea.”⁹⁴ Female golfers who “lost themselves in the maze of sand dunes and beach grass” were “like distracted fiddler crabs” who “scuttled hither and yon, begging to be shown the hole.”⁹⁵ Gertrude Ederle’s bid to swim the English Channel deserved praise because “most of us . . . will never feel the urge to try our talents beyond the boundaries of our bathtubs.”⁹⁶ A printed program, filled with intricate diagrams of figures that ice skaters were expected to replicate, was so crammed with the complex “tiny pictures” that it could have passed for “the maps of teeth one sees in the dentist’s office.”⁹⁷ An exceptionally proficient cross-country skier went “speeding away . . . like a hunted jack rabbit”; and along the ski trail, “what was in summer a tumultuous waterfall [was] now the world’s largest icicle.”⁹⁸

Her ability to spice her columns with humor also made her comparable to her male counterparts. An example of her dry wit can be seen in a column where she hinted at sympathy

⁹² During her first full month as a columnist, Goss’ column shared the same page as Rice’s famous “Spotlight” column on two of the five Sundays during the month; see the *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 March 1924, sec. 3, p. 21 and 16 March 1924, sec. 3, p. 25. While “Women in Sport” and “The Spotlight” did not consistently share the same page, they did so frequently over the next year and a half. In fact, for a short time in the spring of 1925, the *Herald Tribune* placed all columns by its male journalists – and Goss’ column – on the same page, billing the collection as “The Round-Up.” On still other occasions, Goss’ column would actually precede Rice’s or McGeehan’s in the sports section (for example, perhaps her column would appear a page or two earlier). While page number may be indicative of prominence to some extent, a mitigating factor must be acknowledged: namely, that Rice and McGeehan’s columns were often printed in type that was two-columns wide, while Goss’, no matter what the page, was typically assigned a one-column width layout.

⁹³ Despite an occasional appearance on a weekday, Goss’ column was essentially a Sunday-only feature of the sports section until summer of 1925, when it began to appear daily.

⁹⁴ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 4 September 1925, 15.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 September 1925, sec. 9, p. 7. Notice the skillful use of alliteration in this example.

⁹⁷ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 February 1925, 30.

⁹⁸ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 28 December 1924, sec. 4, p. 25.

for female athletes suffocated by fans and fame, only to add that she has “heard of well known women golfers and tennis players being presented with roadsters and felt that this was a hardship with which we could very easily put up, provided it were endowed in perpetuity.”⁹⁹ On another occasion, Goss praised a female golfer for her record-setting tee shots, only to contrast those impressive wallops to the duffer’s scattershot play on the fairways: “Once out on the fairway, Miss De Lott showed the amazing versatility of her game . . . She never missed a tree or a bunker, and was in every bit of water on the course,” Goss wrote.¹⁰⁰ Other times, Goss’ humor took on a self-deprecating charm. About an occasion when she tried her hand at golf, Goss writes that she managed to take home the smallest trophy “in existence” – so small, that “you have to take a magnifying glass to read the words upon it.”¹⁰¹

Despite her occasional use of humor, Goss could consistently use her column to assert opinions about the athletes she covered. This was especially the case by 1925, when she had clearly gained her sea legs. With an authoritative voice, she flatly said in one column that a particular female golfer, if at her best, would not find “a soul to threaten her supremacy” while later dubbing another female duffer “too erratic to be counted on.”¹⁰² She demonstrated similar comfort and self-assuredness chiming in as an expert on other sports: Writing about tennis, she concluded a column with this bold proclamation: “It is the lack of a net game that halts Mrs. [Molla] Mallory. In present day tennis, mere driving ability and strength, however great, in the deep court are not enough. It leaves too many openings for a Kathleen McKane or a Helen Wills.”¹⁰³ Another tennis column included this stern warning to the U.S. women’s national team, which had been permitted numerous excuses for its disappointing performances: “No matter what may happen in the future, alibis about strange courts, too much heat and difference in climate are outlawed.”¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Goss gave little slack to female figure skaters when she wrote of an upcoming national championship tournament that, “In this sport, men and women take the ice as equals.”¹⁰⁵

As a columnist, then, Goss evolved into a skilled, sometimes witty wordsmith who freely exercised her opinion. While she may not have been as popular a columnist as Rice or McGeehan, she was nevertheless approximating elements of the writing style that her male counterparts employed. However, Goss the columnist offered an important and unique dimension: unlike Rice, McGeehan and other male sports scribes who typically produced “notesey” columns that drifted from one subject to another in order to accommodate a hodgepodge of “inside” information and predictions, Goss frequently devoted her entire column to just one or two topics. This allowed her to develop a particular topic more fully, giving her

⁹⁹ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 9 September 1925, 24.

¹⁰⁰ Goss., “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 22 February 1925, 25.

¹⁰¹ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 13 July 1924, sec. 4, p. 5.

¹⁰² Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 26 April 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 1 September 1925, p. 19.

¹⁰⁴ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 September 1925, 16.

¹⁰⁵ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 February 1925, 30.

the ability to conjure moods, recreate experiences, and bring the personalities of athletes to life in ways that male sports columnists of the day typically did not pursue.

Whereas male columnists invited readers to eavesdrop, Goss invited them to experience. She used descriptive, evocative language that took readers to different places and different times – allowing them, in effect, to become part of the action and pandemonium of the sports scene. For example, she took readers courtside at a championship basketball game, where the fans were so loud that the “shrill peep of the [referee’s] whistle sounded feebly” as it strained to signal a foul.¹⁰⁶ She placed readers in the shoes of an overmatched tennis player who was “bewildered by the fierce onslaught of chopped drives” continually speeding at her.¹⁰⁷ More elaborately and imaginatively, she placed readers in the chair of the tennis line judge, whose eyes must be simultaneously glued to the whizzing tennis ball and the white court lines: The ball “comes bouncing coyly at you about six inches from your line, on the inside, and you become breathless; it strikes a foot on the other side of it and your heart takes a drop of at least fifteen feet.”¹⁰⁸ Then, when the time comes for you, the linesman, to make a close decision, “you announce in tones far louder than you had intended, that the ball was out. Instantly, you realize that you are alone in your conclusion, for there are furtive looks and whispered exclamations.”¹⁰⁹ She also took readers along for an invigorating winter stroll where “you revel in the soundless whiteness of the woods . . . as each fresh step on what appears to be solid crust buries you up to your waist. Cheerfully, you plow your way along, loving all of it – the silence, broken only by little frozen sounds in the stream that follows your trail, the exertion of blazing the path, the sun, the cold, even the bit of snow that has found its way down your neck.”¹¹⁰ Goss could even transport readers back to childhood, taking them “ringside” to an episode of horseplay that passed for boxing “lessons” among her and her siblings: “Here was the big brother dancing lightly hither and yon in the most approved style, punctuating his revolutions about his victim with airy stabs, which he called ‘feinting’ . . . at nose or head or chin.”¹¹¹

With similar effectiveness, Goss could use her column to illuminate the personality or motivation of an athlete. Rather than get wrapped up in ballyhoo, statistics and “who’s better?” arguments like so many male columnists did, Goss, for example, would use her column to delve inside the mind of nineteen-year-old Gertrude Ederle. In response to a reader who dismissed Ederle’s bid to swim the English Channel as a desperate plea for publicity, Goss recounted an episode that showed Ederle was actually averse to the limelight. Goss, recalling a time when she cornered Ederle in a hotel lobby, wrote that the swimmer “hadn’t the least desire in the world to

¹⁰⁶ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 12 April 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 12 September 1925, 15.

¹⁰⁸ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 July 1924, sec. 4, p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 28 December 1924, sec. 4, p. 25.

¹¹¹ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 December 1924, sec. 4, p. 41. Only the Sunday editions of the *Herald Tribune* were divided into sections. The Sunday edition vacillated between starting each section with a new sequence of page numbers, or simply continuing the pagination from one section to the next. Although the former practice was more common, the failure to adhere to one format explains the seeming inconsistencies in the footnotes, such as the reference to p. 41 here.

talk to a newspaper reporter. She was shy. She was reserved.”¹¹² Although initially reluctant to grant the interview, Ederle shared enough information that Goss felt “conclusively” convinced that “whatever this nineteen-year-old girl wants to swim the English Channel for, it isn’t the publicity she may get out of it. Gertrude Ederle is not that kind.” Rather, Goss painted the picture of a young athlete “who loves to swim in the same way that other people love to eat candy. All her life she has heard about the Channel swim, the greatest test known – almost – to the swimming world, and she had a very natural longing to see if she could put her unusual strength and power against” it.¹¹³ Thus, Goss gave readers insight into Ederle’s disposition and psyche.

Bringing to light the personality of another female athlete, Goss portrayed championship golfer Glenna Collett as insecure about her reputation. In particular, Goss highlighted the golfer’s concern about being misperceived as arrogant. Goss recounted a conversation she had with Collett, who feared that a statement she made about being unbeatable sounded “dreadfully conceited” when in fact she “didn’t mean that at all.” Goss’ column also went on to dispel notions that Collett was obsessed with golf excellence at the exclusion of other pursuits. To convince readers that Collett was not so single-minded, but indeed had a multi-dimensional personality that transcended golf, Goss talked about Collett’s love of tennis and swimming, and especially her enjoyment of dancing: “She is crazy about dancing,” Goss wrote of Collett, continuing with an anecdote about a particular evening “when there was a dinner for the golfers and the women were supposed to do the cutting in, [and] Glenna kept several people on the hop.”¹¹⁴ The effect: Goss allowed readers to experience the thoughts and feelings of a champion athlete; she reminded them that a golfer, despite her commitment to her game and the lofty pedestal she had been placed upon by her fans, had a very human side to which readers could relate.

Just as she stirred such empathy with depictions of athletes, Goss also let readers into her own world; Goss, on occasion, would give readers insight into the experiences of a female sports journalist learning the ropes of the profession. A classic and humorously candid example came when Goss, using first-person plural to refer to herself, shared with readers the utter embarrassment she felt when she was admonished for standing in the middle of a fairway during a championship golf match:

We had perched ourself Napoleonicly on a little mound the better to observe. The lady swung back and stopped on the uptake. She peered back from under her hat; she looked annoyed, although it was impossible to see her face. It was more her attitude. She held the pose. Her indignation was catching and we found ourself becoming righteously irritated with the dumb one who, wittingly or unwittingly, was so bothering her and impeding the progress of the all-important match.

The silence became impressive, not to say oppressive, and, with steadily rising wrath, we tried to locate the resting place of those accusing eyes. The ex-champion dropped her club to save a cramp in her shoulder and waved her hand. There was no mistaking the

¹¹² Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 September 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 3 August 1924, sec. 4, p. 6.

direction. “Will you kindly move?” she asked, wearily, as if speaking to a child. The retreat from the mound was hardly Napoleonic.¹¹⁵

Goss’ skill in allowing readers to experience a particular moment or meet a particular athlete – as illustrated by the column excerpts on the last several pages – calls to mind an observation made in Chapter 2 of this dissertation: namely, that female newspaper writers have frequently been considered more adept than male journalists at bringing people and experiences to life. Fairly or not, many journalists and scholars – now and in the 1920s – have believed female journalists to be particularly well suited to produce feature-style writing that incorporates elements of human interest. Whether Goss was instructed to take this direction with so many of her columns, or simply undertook this approach on her own, is not clear. Nor does it entirely matter. For even though the subject matter and overall style of Goss’ columns frequently matched this supposed gender-appropriate role, she by no means restricted herself in this regard. As noted earlier, she frequently used her columns to express opinions. Indeed, for all its personal reflections, bucolic nostalgia, and recreated experiences, Goss’ column also served as a forum in which she regularly voiced opinions about the athletes and teams she covered. However, she saved her most impassioned and strident tone to encourage the overall acceptance of, and participation in, female athletics: a subject touched upon in this chapter, but heretofore not fully developed.

Her promotion of a female athletic agenda is significant because it further separated her from her male sports writing colleagues who, despite giving occasional kudos to a particular female athlete, did not expend a great deal of energy advocating the expansion of women’s athletics. They simply did not make it a priority to use their columns as vehicles to vigorously promote women’s athletics. But Goss did. And she did it well.

Among other things, she used her column to insist that women aggressively organize to control their own destinies with regard to sport. For example, she lobbied that more women be placed on the United States Lawn Tennis Association’s women’s committee – a committee, that despite its name, consisted largely of men.¹¹⁶ And she reminded women to resist too many rule changes in field hockey, where the steady stream of altered regulations threatened to allow officious minutiae to overshadow the game itself: “Rules are made for the game, not games for rules,” she wrote.¹¹⁷

Also in her columns, she repeatedly exhorted women – not just college athletes or seasoned golfers – to exercise and participate in athletics, for health of both mind and body. Sometimes, she made specific suggestions: for example, for young businesswomen who could not afford country club memberships or extended vacations outside the city, she recommended the Inkowa Club, which offered an assortment of female athletic programs at city gymnasiums, tennis courts, and other public golf courses.¹¹⁸ Other times, Goss sought to allay concerns that too much exercise, especially outdoors, could strip a woman of her beauty by damaging her skin.

Some people say that too much open air and exposure to the sun make feminine skins leathery and their faces hard. We have known outdoor exercise to do feminine figures a

¹¹⁵ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 27 July 1924, sec. 4, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 April 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 December 1924, sec. 4, p. 7.

¹¹⁸ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 11 September 1925, 19.

world of good, but if being out is responsible for tough, leathery faces, then may we die tough and leathery. This may not be moderate . . . but it is the way we feel like preaching.¹¹⁹

Still other times, Goss went so far as to suggest that female athletes could fairly compete with men in some sports; she suggested that increasing competitiveness of female golfers had set men to “figuring the best method to keep from being beaten by daughters, wives and mothers” and she lobbied for tennis tournaments to incorporate more mixed doubles matches because such contests would provide “the greatest thrills.”¹²⁰

In short, Goss was an impassioned advocate of women’s exercise, including organized competitive athletics. She sought to encourage female athletes and instill confidence in them.

Yet, however insistent Goss was about the benefits of female exercise and the competitiveness of women athletes, she could not resist invoking an occasional cautionary tone – essentially to remind women that certain types of athletic behaviors were simply unladylike. On more than one occasion, Goss wrote disgustedly about female athletes who tarnished their reputations by arguing with referees. To argue with a referee or linesman, Goss suggested, was to “stoop” to unladylike extremes and “forget” that, as a woman, one should comport herself accordingly.¹²¹ Similarly, Goss contended that an interest in boxing, even as a spectator, eroded a woman’s femininity. Goss herself claimed in one column that the closest she ever got to a prizefight was “over the radio” and added that the image of a woman sitting ringside to shout at the boxers was “disallusioning.”¹²²

Other times, she went even further, reflecting even more stereotypically feminine concerns in her columns. It was not uncommon, for example, for Goss to comment on the fashions worn by athletes. While such columns sometimes took a practical perspective – considering whether some clothes were too constricting to allow for maximum performance by female athletes – others were clearly more interested in fashion for fashion’s sake. Taking stock of women’s tennis apparel in one column, Goss mused about the way “white has become the color of the courts.”¹²³ In another column – a rare column in which Goss commented on a male sporting event, in this case an international walking race – Goss called attention to “the azure shirt” worn by the “snappy” Italian competitor.¹²⁴

Similarly, Goss also manifested a stereotypically feminine interest in the physical appearance of women. Here, she did not comment on sexual attractiveness, as most men might be inclined to, but about hair style, youthfulness, and general attractiveness – topics more typically associated with women’s interest in cosmetics and overall beauty. One Goss column called tennis player Evelyn Colyer, “as pretty a little blond-haired thing as ever appeared on a

¹¹⁹ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 September 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

¹²⁰ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 9 July 1925, 17; Margaret Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 2 November 1924, sec. 4, p. 6.

¹²¹ See, for example, Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 20 July 1924, sec. 4, p. 7, and 30 November 1924, sec. 4, p. 30.

¹²² Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 7 July 1925, 16.

¹²³ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 3 September 1925, 17.

¹²⁴ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 1 February 1924, 31.

tennis court” while marveling that Helen Wills’ hair, “no matter how hard the match,” stays “neatly coiled under that baffling eyeshade.”¹²⁵ About female ice skater Beatrix Loughran, Goss gushed that the “tiny and pink cheeked and unusually pretty” skater was “so young looking that one would never dream that she could hold any title as imposing as that of second woman champion skater of the world.”¹²⁶ Elsewhere, she referred to a particular female golfer as a “startling blond-haired girl.”¹²⁷ Clearly, Goss did not think it objectionable to refer to a female in terms of her stunning looks. Nor, apparently, did she think such comments were apt to undermine her overall aim of having readers appreciate women for their athletic skill.

Be that as it may, Goss fueled still another traditionally feminine stereotype when, in one column, she portrayed herself as a compulsive shopper, incapable of resisting the lure of the city department stores. Noting that women seeking exercise in the city could always take up walking if they found the Central Park tennis courts too crowded and the city’s private athletic facilities too costly, she conceded that female walkers could face distractions when coming across an attractive window display. “We ourselves acknowledge a weakness for turning aside to shop windows,” Goss wrote, the humor evident in the stereotype she suggested.

Taken together, these last several paragraphs – paragraphs that illuminate a traditionally feminine interest in shopping, beauty, cosmetics and ladylike comportment – affirmed that even Goss, that ardent supporter of women’s athletics, was herself unable, or unwilling, to assert herself as a feminist so radical as to be blind to the physical distinctiveness and unique proclivities of women. Ultimately, then, Goss, this bold champion of women athletes, could not completely transcend the leftover mores of the pre-World War I, pre-suffrage, and pre-Jazz Age periods. Female involvement in athletics notwithstanding, there were still certain behaviors and interests which Goss unapologetically saw as feminine. And for this she can hardly be blamed. After all, she was a product of the early twentieth century, a woman who herself was coming to grips with the emerging opportunities afforded to women – opportunities she helped to cultivate even as she struggled to discern whether they posed a threat to any indispensable notions of femininity.

What’s most important amid all of this is to understand that Goss, despite an occasional column that bespoke femininity, was first and foremost an impassioned and pioneering advocate of female athletes. For every column that may have insisted on ladylike behavior or complimented a female athlete’s womanly beauty, ten or more columns encouraged women to move beyond traditional feminine limitations to participate in competitive athletics. “Tennis or golf or swimming never ruined any woman’s beauty as far as we have observed,”¹²⁸ Goss wrote, typical of her indignation over some women’s excuses for avoiding vigorous exercise and competitive athletics. Throughout her columns, one message was sounded with particular clarity: female athletes deserved the same respect as male athletes, and in some cases, could compete at the same level. Such an assertion, given the era, was especially progressive. Indeed, there is no denying that Goss was an incredibly strong advocate for female athletes of the twenties. She was, without doubt, a pioneer.

¹²⁵ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 3 September 1925, 17.

¹²⁶ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 23 March 1924, sec. 4, p. 5.

¹²⁷ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 19 April 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

¹²⁸ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 September 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

As she penned her last column for the *Herald Tribune* in September of 1925, however, her modesty prevented her from assessing herself as the trailblazer she was. Leaving newspaper work to marry and raise a family,¹²⁹ she reminisced about her journalism experience, speaking of herself, as usual, in the first person plural: “We have had an opportunity to see all kinds of stars in action and the experience has been thoroughly beneficial to us, at least, although we are probably the only person to have benefited from it.”¹³⁰

Her assessment was proven hollow almost immediately. The very next Sunday, the *Herald Tribune*’s “Women in Sport” column appeared again – this time under the by-line of Theodora Sohst, a tennis player-turned-writer.¹³¹ Clearly, Goss had paved the way for Sohst. Had the *Herald Tribune* not felt that Goss’ column was a success, the paper would have felt no compulsion to continue the “Women in Sports” column, without interruption, under a different author. The fact that Sohst took up the column, albeit only on a Sunday basis at first, suggested that “Women in Sport” had become a popular feature that the *Herald Tribune* wished to keep as a fixture of its sports section.

Moreover, the tone Sohst employed in her writing, right from the start, is testament to the path that Goss had carved for her successor. Beginning with her first column and continuing with hardly any let-up, Sohst wrote with as strident and urgent a tone as Goss ever had. While Goss’ start at the paper was marked by tentative writing and sometimes tempered opinions, Sohst hit the ground running at full speed. No doubt buoyed by the forcefulness that Goss’ column regularly displayed by the time she was ready to leave the *Herald Tribune*, Sohst picked up right where Goss left off. In the lead paragraph of her first column, Sohst demonstrated that she would not be shy about asserting opinions in the name of female athletics: “The brilliancy of so many other important championships has all but overshadowed the girls’ national [tennis] tournament; but it really deserves a strong spotlight because of its vital importance. America needs more champions, and Helen Wills is not sufficient to carry on.”¹³²

Subsequent columns by Sohst elevated the rhetoric even further. She called female fishermen “fisherwomen” – a feminist construct that has yet to be specifically endorsed in the pages of the Associated Press Stylebook and rarely appears in today’s sports pages.¹³³ She called on women to learn the rules of the increasingly popular sport of ice hockey, so they would no longer embarrass their “sex” by asking “dumb” questions.¹³⁴ Claiming that “what’s good for the goose must still be good for the gander,” she chided the National Collegiate Athletic Association for failing to provide specific mention to female sports at its meetings.¹³⁵ And she

¹²⁹ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 470.

¹³⁰ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 13 September 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

¹³¹ Theodora Sohst’s background is known because Goss made passing reference to her tennis playing in a column. See Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 September 1925, 11.

¹³² Sohst, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 20 September 1925, sec. 10, p. 2.

¹³³ Sohst, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 January 1926, 25; Norm Goldstein, ed., *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2000).

¹³⁴ Sohst, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 17 January 1926, sec. 10, p. 2.

¹³⁵ Sohst, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 8 January 1926, 20.

implored young women to reject the warmth of southern climates and instead “go north” for exercise-rich winter vacations; “The bigger the blizzard and the stronger the gales, the better you will enjoy it,” she wrote, adding “Don’t think you can’t ski because you never tried it.”¹³⁶

Just as Goss’ earlier success paved the way for Sohst, it also seems to have convinced other New York papers to hire their own female sports journalists. Whereas most newspapers previously used female writers to cover only an occasional sports story,¹³⁷ Goss ushered in an era where New York papers hired women to work exclusively – or at least primarily – as sportswriters. For example, New York’s *Journal*, *Post*, and *World* all employed female sports journalists in the wake of Goss’ emergence at the *Herald Tribune*. And at least two of these female sports scribes earned their own sports columns: Janet Owen at the *World* and Nan O’Reilly at the *Journal*.¹³⁸

In sum, Goss’ legacy is indeed an important one: as one of the first female journalists to write a regularly appearing, by-lined sports column, she paved the way for other women to earn a regular place on the sports pages.

Also impressive, Goss was strictly a sportswriter. Although several women had written about sports prior to Goss, they typically covered other subjects as well; sometimes their stories appeared in the news section, other times on the society pages, and still other times in the sports section. But Goss, in her one and a half years at the *Herald Tribune*, never wrote about anything but sports. And her by-line, once she formally joined the sports staff, never left the pages of the sports section.¹³⁹ Furthermore, her column grew from a Sunday feature to a daily fixture, putting her in the company of the legendary Grantland Rice as the only daily sports columnists at the *Herald Tribune* circa 1924 and 1925. And, like Rice, Goss also wrote sports stories to complement her column. She was, in short, a major contributor to the *Herald Tribune* sports section for a year and a half.

Granted, both her stories and columns were essentially restricted to female athletics. And so in this respect, she could not entirely overcome the dominant ideology of a period that saw

¹³⁶ Sohst, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 26 January 1926, 24.

¹³⁷ Recall, for example, that Harriette Underhill, best known for her “On the Screen” column in the *Herald Tribune*, occasionally produced sports copy before Goss’ arrival at the paper.

¹³⁸ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 470-471.

¹³⁹ The exception, of course, is the week-long series of stories about female collegiate athletics that appeared in the news section of the *Herald Tribune* in February of 1924, when Goss had joined the paper but was not yet a part of the sports section.

sports, and the sports pages, as the primary domain of men. If Goss were going to crash on to the sports page, she would have to cover women's sports. That was the extent to which she would be able to challenge the established gender roles and newspaper practice of the period. Fortunately for her, women's athletics were growing in popularity at the time; the circumstances were ripe for her emergence as a sportswriter. What's more, even with her writing limited to female athletics, her impact as a female sports journalist is indisputable. Her efforts resulted in many landmark achievements in their own right, as highlighted throughout this chapter. And, as also noted, she paved the way for the emergence of other female sports journalists in the Roaring Twenties, helping define the decade as the period when female writers first emerged on the sports pages in significant numbers.

Chapter 4: Lorena Hickok Tackles a Male Sport

Writing in the mid-1920s, a syndicated columnist commented that America had become a nation of “faddists.”¹ Virtually everyone, he wrote, was inclined to follow some fad or take up some hobby. Indeed, it seemed that Americans – buoyed by victory in World War I and perhaps influenced by the Great War’s reminder that life was short – spent their increasing leisure time and post-war financial prosperity on good times, chic fashions and new gadgets.²

Newspapers played an important role in delivering news of the latest trends, while also promoting many newly popular items. Papers dedicated pages – even entire sections – to the latest developments involving radio.³ Around the same time, newspapers also opened their pages to yet another new leisure device: the crossword puzzle. Outmuscling the Chinese tile game mah jong for supremacy among gamers, the crossword puzzle became so immensely popular that some observers wondered whether the consuming nature of the puzzles was causing people to ignore spouses and children and thus driving apart families.⁴

As they had with crosswords and radio, newspapers also provided a forum for the nation’s new-found obsession with college football. Granted, college football had been popular for decades, with match-ups between the glamorous Ivy League schools of the East stirring much of the interest. But in the 1920s, college football expanded its popularity westward. With the famed “Four Horsemen” running amok on the Notre Dame gridiron and the emergence of “Galloping Ghost” Red Grange at the University of Illinois, college football found even greater acceptance in the heartland. And while baseball may have remained America’s “national pastime,” it was clear by the mid-1920s that college football was a serious rival for the hearts and minds of the American people.⁵

¹ Bugs Baer, “Bug-A-Boos,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 27 September 1925, sec. 4, p. 4.

² Some historians have sought to deconstruct the image of the “Roaring Twenties” as a prosperous and carefree period; see, for example, David J. Goldberg, *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). While the decade did have its share of tension and controversy, caused by issues such as prohibition and discrimination, an examination of 1920s newspapers conducted in the course of this research finds that an undeniable sense of merriment nevertheless emerges from the pages of the popular press.

³ The *New York Tribune* (later the *New York Herald Tribune*) introduced an expansive radio section, called its “Radio Magazine,” in January 1924. This stand-alone section often exceeded 20 pages and was packed with stories, photos, intricate diagrams, and advertisements. To understand the important societal value that the paper placed on radio, see the explanatory advertisement heralding the debut of its Radio Magazine: “A New Radio Magazine,” 12 January 1924, 14. Many other papers, such as the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, did not devote a separate section to radio news, but did regularly publish two or three pages of news about the medium.

⁴ “Cross-Word Creatures,” letter to the editor, *New York Herald Tribune*, 3 June 1924, 14, and “How Briton Views Cross-Word Craze,” *London Times*, as quoted in *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 7 January 1925, 14. Similarly, radio was sometimes blamed for disintegration of the family; see, for example, “‘Radio Widow’ Says Husband Enforced Quiet Entire Time,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 16 October 1925, 6.

⁵ A Chicago-based survey of 10,000 playground leaders and child caregivers projected that for every boy who wished to follow in the baseball footsteps of Ty Cobb, there were “scores of hopeful Red Granges”; see “Amateur Element Is Big Appeal in Football – Griffith,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 8 November 1925, sec. 4, p. 6. The president of the University of Michigan, meanwhile, went so far as to suggest that major universities field two varsity football teams, so that every week, both a home and away game could be played to satiate the unrelenting appetites of the tens of thousands of spectators who regularly flocked to college football game on any given Saturday; see “Michigan ‘U’ President Suggests Two Grid Teams for Every Big Ten School,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 21 November 1926, sec. 4, p. 3.

Amid this college football craze – there, delivering news that would help elevate this sport to the title of King Football – was Lorena Hickok. Although she would gain greater notoriety later – as a wire service writer assigned to such front-page stories as the Lindbergh baby kidnapping and as a confidante of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt – Hickok in her early 30s carved a place for herself as a *Minneapolis Tribune* reporter covering the University of Minnesota football team for three seasons: 1924, '25 and '26.⁶ As a woman covering a violent game that pitted two squads of eleven men against one another in a hard-hitting battle for yards and inches of grass and dirt, Hickok emerges from this research as the lone female sports journalist of the Roaring Twenties who covered a male sports team fairly consistently over a period of several years.⁷ Having started with a few stories in 1924, she was, for all intents and purposes, a full-fledged football beat writer by 1926, producing weekly previews of the games as well as next-day coverage that recapped the contests. She even traveled with the team – once in 1925, and to every away game in 1926.

Granted, Hickok had to watch the games from a grandstand seat that her newspaper would purchase for her; the press box, home and away, was off limits to women.⁸ Moreover, her stories rarely found their way into the sports section; instead, her stories were intended to supplement the game previews and recaps written by male journalists in the sports section. Yet even so, her coverage should not be considered some ornamental accessory to the *Tribune's* football coverage. Far from being a lightweight or a novelty for novelty's sake, Hick – as she was known by friends and peers – produced first-rate stories that held a place of prominence; they typically appeared on page one of the paper, distinctly displayed above the fold and under her boldface by-line. Hickok's weren't stories meant to provide a "woman's angle," either. While many female sportswriters of the 1920s were occasionally assigned to cover men's sports from a feminine perspective, Hickok, especially as she became more experienced, wrote game accounts that could be appreciated as just that – game accounts – and that could be enjoyed by male and female readers alike.

What's more, her stories brought an entirely new style of sports writing to the pages of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. While the *Minneapolis Tribune's* male sportswriters consistently employed a serious and informative style that rarely used quotes,⁹ Hickok instead delivered conversational pieces that spoke to her readers and allowed them to tap the mood of the fans, the

⁶ Although Doris Faber has written a full-length biography of Hickok, she devotes only two pages to Hickok's football writing. Instead, Faber's primary focus is on Hickok's work with the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration and her relationship with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. See Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok: E.R.'s Friend* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1980). Maurine Beasley also has written several pieces about Hickok, but again, the emphasis has been on aspects of Hickok's career not related to her sports writing.

⁷ This claim is based on the literature review, which encompasses Chapter 1 and the Appendix. In addition, the author's formal and informal viewing of microfilmed newspapers from the 1920s uncovered no other women journalists who meet these criteria.

⁸ Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 67. Even so, contextual clues in Hickok's football stories – especially in her coverage of the 1926 season – suggest that Hickok also watched games from the sidelines, and perhaps even did gain access to the press box. The matter is further discussed later in this paper, when Hickok's coverage of the 1926 season is examined in detail.

⁹ The only notable exceptions, circa the mid-1920s, were sports columns produced by *Minneapolis Tribune* journalists or syndicated writers, or World Series stories written by a syndicated journalist such as Damon Runyon.

atmosphere of the stadium, and the personalities of the players. Rather than use the long, information-packed paragraphs typical of her male colleagues, she expertly used short, punchy paragraphs, sometimes even employing direct address and rhetorical questions. She was most certainly a trail blazer – because while her style of writing was hardly typical of the Minneapolis sports pages of her day, a look at today’s sports sections reflects the regular inclusion of breezy, feature-like stories that either act as, or supplement, the main story of a particular game.

As revolutionary as her sports writing style turned out to be, she apparently did not impress anyone as a football writer in-the-making, at least not during her early newspaper career. Not counting a brief interruption shortly after she joined the *Minneapolis Tribune* in 1916, Hickok had been working for the paper for seven years before she finally drew a page-one football assignment – and ten years before she covered a full season’s worth of games. Until then, her responsibilities had shifted around, including stints at night rewrite and even as Sunday editor, before she finally settled into a role as a jack-of-all-trades writer – a role that would open eyes and later help propel her to her football beat. In her role as the *Tribune*’s most versatile reporter, she could easily flip between poignant profiles, sarcastic features, and traditional hard news. Indeed, her demonstrated versatility had to be a key reason why *Minneapolis Tribune* editor-in-chief Thomas J. Dillon finally plucked her to try her hand at football. After all, she had proven adept at writing everything else that had been thrown her way.

Consider the versatility she demonstrated in the fall and winter of 1923, almost a year before she would be tapped to write about football: A sampling of her stories from a six-week span included a report on a visit to the U.S. by Dame Margaret Lloyd George, wife of British war premier David Lloyd George; a story about Minneapolis’ chief prohibition agent, Ole P. Olson; and a Thanksgiving preview that took stock of holiday preparations around the city. Not only did the stories represent a wide variety of topics, but the specific angles developed by Hickok were equally as diverse. For example, Hickok used Dame Margaret’s presence at a Minneapolis luncheon as an occasion to highlight the stark differences between Mrs. Lloyd George and Mrs. Lloyd George’s 21-year-old daughter Megan. Rather than simply recount Dame George’s speech – as most writers might have – Hickok put off the speech until later in her story, instead using her keen observation skills to seize on Dame George’s unaffected manner and contrast it to the smile, vivaciousness and wardrobe of Dame George’s 21-year-old daughter Megan.¹⁰ Hickok took a decidedly different tack with her story about Minnesota’s “dry sleuth,” incorporating dialogue that she had either witnessed or recreated, so as to take readers along on bootlegging busts made by Olsen. The story also showcased some of the stylized writing that would be typical of her football coverage. For example, suggesting that New York’s chief dry agent was no match for Minneapolis’ Olsen, she wrote in a conversational, rhetorical style, “Izzy Einstein of New York? Bah! Merely a blundering neophyte. . . when you stand him up against Minnesota’s own. . .”¹¹ Later, recounting the way in which bootleggers had tried to foil Olsen, Hickok turned to alliteration and rich description: The bootleggers, she wrote, have

¹⁰ Lorena A. Hickok, “Statesman’s Wife Is Friendly, Unaffected, Club Women Find,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 16 October 1923, 15. Despite the headline, the story was not included on the “society” pages. In fact, Hickok did not hide the fact that she abhorred the social pages as a forum for her writing; see Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 49-53, 67 and 74. Perhaps because of this, the author of this dissertation, after looking at hundreds of issues of the *Minneapolis Tribune*, found only one Hickok article that appeared in the society/women’s section.

¹¹ Hickok, “Guileless Grin and Unfathomable Disguises of Dry Sleuth Lure Bootleggers to Doom,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 18 November 1923, sec. 2, p. 1.

targeted Olsen with “all their meanest stuff – from bullets to beer bottles, from bribes to butcherknives. [But] Ole P. Olson smilingly strokes his steel-wool chin whiskers and goes quietly about his business – getting bootleggers.”¹² Meanwhile, in her story about Thanksgiving Day preparations, Hickok chose to focus not so much on the collection of foodstuffs for needy Minnesotans – although she did address that toward the end of her story – but instead led off by expressing tongue-in-cheek sympathy for turkeys. Borrowing from the canons of literature, she began with the clever lead: “Now is the winter of Mr. T. Gobbler’s disintegration.”¹³ She followed by imbuing “Mr. T. Gobbler” with personality and making morbid fun of his amiable and unsuspecting walk toward the “guillotine” – before finally turning attention to food drives, church services and the other more serious business of the holiday.¹⁴

These stories represented just part of Hickok’s wide-ranging writing abilities. Earlier in 1923, she had written, with equal parts respect and sentimentality, an award-winning story about the seventy-six Honey Creek, Iowa, residents who had stood near the railroad tracks at 4 a.m. to catch a glimpse of the funeral train carrying the body of fallen President Warren G. Harding.¹⁵ The story was said to have especially impressed editor-in-chief Dillon, who felt that too many young reporters failed to strike a tone appropriate to the stories they covered.¹⁶ Hickok, with her patriotic and respectful account of the funeral train’s passage through the small Iowa town, had shown that she could cast aside her witty and conversational style when warranted.

Clearly, Hickok’s ability to write what the situation demanded – from somber or sensational news, to sentimental or flippant features – made her well suited for the challenge of producing lively page-one football stories.

Although no one may have realized it, signs from the start hinted that Hickok would be the ideal woman for such a groundbreaking venture into the traditionally male realm of sports journalism. As far back as high school, her yearbook had predicted that she would find fame as a suffrage orator,¹⁷ correctly suggesting that she had the mettle to challenge gender restrictions of the day. And while she may not have ultimately made her mark as a suffragist, she did quickly prove that she would not allow herself to be intimidated by men or the notion of “gender appropriate” roles. Not long after high school, in fact, she served a short stint as an auxiliary policewoman responsible for separating girls from sailors at a Navy pier.¹⁸ Also, while bouncing around at different newspapers prior to settling at the *Minneapolis Tribune*, Hickok strained to break free from writing wedding announcements and “society” news by aggressively inserting herself into situations where she could learn the kind of news reporting that had been

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hickok, “Day of Doom Approaches for Unsuspecting Mr. T. Gobbler,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 25 November 1923, sec. 2, p. 1.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Hickok, “Iowa Village Waits All Night For Glimpse At Fleeting Train,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 7 August 1923, 1.

¹⁶ Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1980), 64-65.

¹⁷ Ibid., 54.

¹⁸ Ibid., 57.

traditionally dominated by men and was just now beginning to open to women in appreciable numbers. For example, during a year she spent as society editor at the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, she frequented the back room of a coffee shop where she could listen to the police reporters and City Hall beat writers talk shop. Inspired, she lobbied the *Sentinel* city editor to assign her to stories that transcended the “women’s news” she considered so trite.¹⁹ Perhaps to quiet her, or perhaps to test her desire, the city editor finally caved, assigning Hickok to interview opera star Geraldine Farrar, who unbeknownst to Hickok, had a policy against granting interviews. Hickok returned with a page-one story.²⁰

The story reflected Hickok’s tough, “never let obstacles get in the way” attitude – the kind of attitude that she would need later to succeed as a woman in the male-dominated field of sports journalism. Of more immediate consequence, however, the story about the opera singer earned Hickok additional news stories at the *Milwaukee Sentinel* and soon after propelled her to a job with the *Minneapolis Tribune*. There, she won over hardboiled editor-in-chief Tom Dillon, who was reputed to have thrown his own city editor into a wastebasket when he was a reporter.²¹ Having first put Hickok through stints at night rewrite and copyediting, Dillon eventually removed Hick from the desk and returned her to the kind of news and feature writing assignments that she had begun to win in Milwaukee. This time, however, her role as reporter grew to include a steadier output of material, much of which resulted in “Lorena Hickok” by-lines on page one of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. This, of course, provided the springboard for her foray into sports writing at the *Tribune* a few years later.

Although her skill as a writer was clearly evident, it’s reasonable to expect that Dillon took careful measure of Hickok’s personality before eventually assigning her to report on college football. After all, this virtually unheard-of assignment – a female journalist covering college football – would not only require a good writer, but a unique and strong individual who would be undeterred by the negative reaction that the experiment could elicit. For one thing, there was no telling how much resistance a female football reporter might face from coaches, players, and even male sportswriters. Similarly, and perhaps most importantly, there was no way to predict how readers would react to a woman covering University of Minnesota football. Accustomed to male sportswriters, readers might reject a female journalist, especially if she could not produce stories that met their standards for entertainment, insight, and detail. And because Hickok would be producing football stories for page one, her success – or failure – would be laid bare for all to see.

Indeed, it was with his readers that Dillon was taking the biggest gamble. Dairy farms aside, football was the real sacred cow in Minnesota, and its coverage could not be entrusted to

¹⁹ Ibid., 47, 49, 74.

²⁰ Ibid., 50-53. With blissful ignorance, Hickok went to visit the diva at the private railroad car that had brought the singer into town, only to be rebuffed. Dejected but not defeated, Hickok returned to write a humorous story about the way she had been turned away by the “prima donna” singer; the story incorporated a few terse comments by the opera star, as well as relating the way Ms. Farrar’s hairdresser, and even her dog, kept the writer at bay. In the end, what Hickok provided readers was a tongue-in-cheek “interview” with Ms. Farrar’s dog – a story that effectively exposed the singer’s haughty nature more than anything else. For the story, as it appeared, see Lorena Lawrence, “Geraldine Proves She’s Prima Donna,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 19 November 1915, 1. Why a pen name was used – and whether it was chosen by the editor or Hickok herself – is unclear.

²¹ Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 59.

just anyone. With few Minneapolis theaters running first-run shows,²² and no major league professional sports teams to speak of in the state, Minnesotans in the 1920s were obsessed with college football, specifically University of Minnesota football. To be a Minnesotan was to eat, sleep and breathe Golden Gopher football.²³

Football's lofty status in Minnesota was reflected in the *Minneapolis Tribune's* commitment to reporting football news on a year-round basis, even if it meant supplying readers with mind-numbing minutiae about the "45 miles" of adhesive tape ordered by the University of Minnesota team each fall, the wedding plans or summer road crew employment of a University of Minnesota gridder, or the whereabouts of Minnesota football alums.²⁴ Even an unexpected period of cool temperatures in the middle of summer was enough to spark a headline proclaiming that the "first faint whiff of football weather" was in the air.²⁵

Dillon was convinced that Hickok was the right woman to satisfy this football-hungry readership, not only because of her obvious writing talent, but also because of her personality. As he no doubt noticed in her writing over the years, Hickok had a streak of feminism. She displayed this in several ways. While covering news and features, for example, it was not uncommon for her to seize on the accomplishments of women. Once, after taking note of the many "distinguished" male scientists who were attending a national astronomer's convention held in a Minneapolis suburb, Hickok went on to write with feigned incredulity: "And here at the meeting are two full-fledged women astronomers – Dr. Anne S. Young, director of the observatory at Mount Holyoke college, and Dr. Alice Farnsworth of Yerkes observatory, at Lake Geneva, Wis. – who speak the mysterious argot of the planets and the stars as a Chinaman speaks Chinese."²⁶

Less dramatically, but perhaps just as effectively, Hickok on occasion interjected herself into her stories – a subtle way of reminding readers that they were reading the work of a female

²² The *Minneapolis Tribune* frequently bemoaned the lack of art and culture available in the city, or more specifically, the citizenry's lack of interest in such events. See, for example, the editorial, "Minneapolis and Its Theater," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 28 October 1926, 18.

²³ In that regard, Minnesotans were similar to most residents throughout the Midwest. As one observer put it: "[W]e are. . . frontier states, battling it out. The descendents of the finest stock in the United States are. . . out there on the field. Their grandfathers were pioneers of the sturdy frontiersmen who built up this middle west, and from them, these boys playing football. . . have inherited the finest athletic spirit there is in this country." See Hickok, "Gibbering Fans Pack Madison for Game Today," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 30 October 1926, 2.

²⁴ "45 Miles of Adhesive Tape Purchased Each Fall for Gopher Grid Team," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 25 October 1926, 9; Arnold C. Oss to Wed Stillwater Girl; 'U' Romance," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 2 August 1925, sec. 1, p. 1; "Herb Joesting, 'U' Grid Star, Works With Paving Crew to Keep in Shape," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 3 September 1925, 22; "Ossie Solem, Former Gopher Football Star, Named Drake Director," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 25 July 1925, 21; George Barton, "Sports Graphs," 28 July 1925, 10. If news about the Minnesota team was in short supply, some tidbit about another school would be used to fill the void; for example, the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* on one occasion saw fit to publish a mid-summer blurb that itemized the shipment of 120 footballs, 242 shoulder pads, 350 pairs of football shoes, and 309 pairs of football pants to the University of Missouri. See "Missouri 'U' Lays in Heavy Athletic Equipment Supply," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 26 July 1925, sec. 4, p. 6.

²⁵ "First Faint Whiff of Football Weather Visits Middle West," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 22 August 1925, 1.

²⁶ Hickok, "Astronomers Shoot Millions of Miles Into Space on 'Sun Trip,'" *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 10 September 1925, 1, 16.

journalist.²⁷ Other times, she was not so subtle about promoting the competency of female reporters. On one occasion, when her sports writing resume was still largely blank, she was assigned to do a news section feature on Bob McGraw, a popular Minneapolis baseball player whose minor league contract had just been sold.²⁸ Seemingly miffed that the player presumed a female reporter would be short on baseball knowledge, she used the occasion to loudly and sarcastically announce that women were indeed capable of understanding and writing about sports:

“Let’s see, McGraw,” the interviewer began patiently, how much is it [manager and part-team owner Mike] Kelley is going to get for you? Fifty thousand dollars and two left-handed pitchers? Or three left-handed pitchers and \$25,000? Or—”

Mr. McGraw looked shocked this time. Something was wrong. Oh, if it were only cross-word puzzles he did, or mah jong – anything that a lady reporter knows something about!²⁹

“Mr. McGraw did not say it was the first time he had ever been interviewed by a lady reporter,” Hickok added dryly, “but any lady reporter would have known it.”³⁰

Besides being able to gauge Hickok’s personality and attitudes from her writing, *Tribune* editor Dillon got to know the reporter away from the newsroom. He sometimes shared drinks with Hick at an establishment across the street from the newspaper offices – occasions that doubtlessly allowed him to assess her temperament more completely and to conclude, ultimately, that she had the disposition that would allow her to succeed in the rarest of journalistic roles: a woman covering college football.

Her football debut came on Sunday, Oct. 5, 1924, when the University of Minnesota opened its season – and its new football stadium – with a tight victory over North Dakota.³¹ Unlike later stories, where she would combine her news and feature talents to write expertly about the game itself, the primary focus of this story was the new stadium. Even so, she used a metaphor – comparing the new stadium to the Roman Coliseum – that not only allowed her to convey the magnitude and impressiveness of the new stadium, but also allowed her to incorporate some general impressions about the quality of play she witnessed by Coach Bill Spaulding’s Minnesota team. This is clearly reflected in the first two paragraphs of her story:

Sixteen thousand football fans journeyed over to Minneapolis’s new Roman circus Saturday afternoon to see North Dakota thrown to the lions – but the lions weren’t biting very well.

²⁷ Sometimes, Hickok would refer to herself with gender-specific pronouns; for example, when covering a convention of shoe salesmen, Hickok used the occasion to inventory the footwear in her closet and announce to readers that “she” had seven pairs of shoes; see Hickok, “Northwest Retail Shoe Men to Open Style Show Monday,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 25 January 1925, sec. 1, p. 6. Even when Hickok would generally refer to herself as “the writer” or “the reporter,” the effect was the same: the practice called attention to her by-line.

²⁸ This was one of the few times Hickok ever covered a sport besides college football.

²⁹ Hickok, “M’Graw Describes Feeling Sale for \$50,000 Inspires,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 22 July 1925, 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Hickok’s biographer, who devotes only two pages to Hickok’s sports writing, erroneously asserts that Hickok’s “first try” at a football story did not come until November 16, 1923; Faber, 66. Hickok, in fact, had already produced three other football stories by that time.

They did wake up enough, in the salad and dessert courses, to nip a 14 to 6 score out of the hides of their victims, but they never got down to the bones at all, and there's at least one fan in Minneapolis who has a hunch that Keeper Bill Spaulding is going to put 'em through a good stiff course of treatments before they tackle the Haskell red meat next Saturday.³²

Moving on to comment about the seating capacity, entrance gates and acoustics of the new stadium, Hickok then returned to her metaphor when she compared the oval track around the edge of the field to a chariot race track.³³

Hickok went on to cover three more games that season – all home games, and all resulting in front page by-lines. And although the three stories were longer accounts that paid greater attention to providing statistics, detailing key plays, and identifying the stars of the game, Hickok also managed to keep her stories infused with metaphors and other clever turns of phrase. When running sensation Red Grange failed to lead his Illinois team past Minnesota, for example, Hickok reached into early nineteenth century American history to pull out a lead that evoked War of 1812 hero Oliver Hazard Perry: “We have met the enemy,” Hickok wrote of Grange, “and he is ours.”³⁴ Continuing to use first personal plural to refer to the Minnesota team, she went on to paint Grange thusly: “On his shield, with injuries that may put him out of the game for the rest of the season, we sent him back to Illinois Saturday night – “Red” Grange the Incomparable, football's hero of heroes.”³⁵ A week later, when Minnesota hosted Vanderbilt, Hickok could not help but cast the Tennesseans as “young gentlemen” who had come North to “exchange courtesies” with Minnesota before politely administering a 16-0 beating to the Gophers – all “without ever getting ruffled [and] without ever forgetting their manners.”³⁶ Compared with the dry way in which sports editor George Barton generally reported the games in the sports section, Hickok was proving to be an ideal complement.

Take, for example, the Michigan game, the other game she covered that season. When Minnesota failed to reclaim the famous “little brown jug” trophy that changes hands according to the outcome of the annual Minnesota-Michigan rivalry, Hickok offered this simple, yet perfect lead: “It was homecoming day,” she wrote, “but not for the Little Brown Jug.”³⁷ In contrast, sports editor Barton offered a more direct and information-packed lead, save for the quick word play at the outset: “Outplayed, outgeneralled, and outsmarted, the Minnesota football team

³² Hickok, “New ‘U’ Football Stadium Scene of Mild Revival of Roman Circus,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 5 October 1924, sec. 1, p. 1.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Hickok, “Red Grange Carried Home on His Shield; Imported Runner Loses on Gopher ‘Track,’” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 16 November 1924, sec. 1, p. 1

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Hickok, “Dixie Gentlemen Administer Polite Trimming to Gophers,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 23 November 1924, sec. 1, p. 1.

³⁷ Hickok, “Dope Won’t Upset, So 43,000 Grads and Fans See Wolverines Carry Off Little Brown Jug,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 2 November 1924, sec. 1, p. 1.

crumbled before Michigan, 13 to 0, Saturday afternoon in the Memorial Stadium, thereby turning the University of Minnesota's home-coming into a dismal event."³⁸

Besides providing a foil for Barton with her coverage of those four home games, Hickok also drew one other football assignment that season: a preview story that was published on page one on the morning of the Minnesota-Illinois clash. This, too, highlighted the way she differed from Barton, who produced a preview story that was published in the sports section in that same edition. Whereas both writers focused on star halfback Red Grange, Barton's story again featured a no-frills lead: "Some 40,000 spectators are expected to brave the wintry weather in order to give Red Grange the critical once-over in the football game between Minnesota and Illinois in the Memorial Stadium this afternoon."³⁹ Barton then proceeded to omnisciently assess Grange's play and overall impact on the sport, before delivering the obvious hype: that Minnesota football followers "desire to see Grange do his stuff . . . It's 'Red' they wish to see and the flashy player is due for a mighty ovation when he trots onto the field."⁴⁰

Hickok, meanwhile, redefined the pre-game story as *Tribune* readers knew it. Unlike Barton, she mined an angle that brought Grange to life, unseating him from his mythic perch to paint him as an ordinary fellow. She did this in the simplest way: she revealed to readers that "Red" Grange, whose name rolled off the tongue in a way that befit a hero, was really "Harold" Grange – and that even his coaches and his teammates called him by his given name. The first several paragraphs of her story recounts the revelation while also showing off Hickok's impressive conversational writing style:

Perry, don't you ever let 'em kid you again.

And all you Clarences and Algernons take notice.

For that young gentleman whom somebody – it must have been a sports writer – has christened "Red" Grange isn't called "Red" by his own gang at all.

From Coach Bob Zuppke down to the subbiest young sub, he's "Harold," that's what he is. Harold, doggone it, is the boy's real name.⁴¹

Later in the same story, Hickok also described her attempt to interview Grange, and related how the dazzling runner's shyness prevented him from summoning anything more than a few grunts and clichés in response to her questions.⁴²

³⁸ George A. Barton, "Minnesota Is Crushed By Michigan, 13-0," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 2 November 1924, sec. 4, p. 1.

³⁹ Barton, "Huge Throng Will Greet Red Grange," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 15 November 1924, 29.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Hickok, "Grange, Illini Gridiron Terror, Still Called Harold by 'Gang,'" *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 15 November 1924, 26. Although her sports writing career was almost entirely restricted to college football, Hickok, a month earlier, had done a feature story on baseball slugger Babe Ruth's visit to Minneapolis for an exhibition game. As with the Grange story, she produced a lively feature that incorporated some quotes – as opposed to Barton's quote-free, detail-laden account that concentrated on Ruth's offensive and defensive prowess. See Hickok, "Babe Shows How It's Done as He Clouts 'Em Over Fence Amid Cheers of Fans at Nicollet," and Barton, "Two Home Runs, Pair of Singles Round Out Day's Work for Ruth," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 15 October 1924, 1 and 20, respectively.

⁴² Hickok, "Grange, Illini Gridiron Terror, Still Called Harold by 'Gang,'" *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 15 November 1924, 26. The context of the story suggests that Hickok interviewed Grange after he and his teammates disembarked from the train that brought them to Minneapolis and/or at the practice field later that day. Either way, this much is clear: Hickok did not have – or at any rate, seek – locker room access. This remained the case even two

Taking stock of Hickok's limited contributions in the 1924 football season, then – four game stories and one game preview – it is evident that she was bringing a new style to sports writing, at least where the *Minneapolis Tribune* was concerned. While some of her metaphors may have been overdrawn – more appropriate perhaps, for the big city East Coast sportswriters whose writing often oozed drama and gimmicks – she had certainly done what editor-in-chief Dillon had asked her to do: to interject excitement on to the *Tribune* front page, especially on Sundays, with a few stories on college football.

Clearly, the *Tribune* needed enlivening. Serving an agricultural area, the newspaper was obliged to fill its pages with farming news. And because such content directly affected the livelihood of so many readers, the newspaper had little latitude to experiment with stylized writing when reporting these topics. Thus, pages and pages of each edition were filled with serious, straightforward reports on such things as wheat prices and hog values, plus news of farming co-ops, butter production, and cheese pasteurization thrown in from time to time for good measure. While some of the agricultural news was confined to the daily business pages, much of it was scattered throughout the paper. Take, for example, the following headlines: “Natural Corn Husking Title Won by Iowan”; “Single [Butter] Bean Grown in Minneapolis Provides Meal for Five Persons”; “Jamestown Will Observe Alfalfa Day Next Week”; and “Inventor of Butterfat Test Celebrates Eightieth Birthday.”⁴³ They represent a sampling of the kind of agricultural news that could be found throughout the *Tribune*, both before (and even after) Hickok began reporting football. On yet other occasions, agriculture news provided fodder for page-one headlines, such as when Wisconsin cheese producers requested a higher tariff or when the former head of the Minnesota Creamery was charged with grand larceny in connection with the creamery's operation.⁴⁴ The *Tribune* even sent its own agricultural reporter halfway across the country, to Syracuse, New York, to file a front page story about the national dairy show.⁴⁵ While such news obviously was important to many Minnesotans in the mid-1920s, it is easy to see why editor-in-chief Dillon looked upon page-one football reports, crafted with Hickok's unique touch, as a way of diversifying and invigorating the newspaper's content.

Since Hickok had succeeded on that count with her limited football coverage in 1924, it came as little surprise perhaps that she was back to writing about football even before the next season had started. When the University of Minnesota hired Dr. Clarence W. Spears as its new

years later, as evidenced by an occasion when Hickok waited at the entrance to the practice field in order to interview a University of Minnesota football star; see Lorena A. Hickok, “Pieces of Clothesline Hold Up Joesting's Aged Collegiate Car,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 16 November 1926, 1. This concurs with the assessment of Hickok's biographer, who suggested that “it probably never occurred to [Hickok] to seek admission to the team locker room”; see Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 67.

⁴³ “Natural Corn Husking Title Won by Iowan,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 18 November 1926, 15; “Single Bean Grown in Minneapolis Provides Meal for Five Persons,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 5 October 1923, 4; “Jamestown Will Observe Alfalfa Day Next Week,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 16 November 1926, 5; “Inventor of Butterfat Test Celebrates Eightieth Birthday,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 28 October 1923, sec. 6, p. 4. The headline in this last case spanned the entire page, and the story was accompanied by five photos – such was the importance assigned to the discovery of the test that determined the percent of butterfat in milk and cream.

⁴⁴ “Wisconsin Cheese Men Ask Increase in Tariff,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 29 October 1926, 1; “Arrest Former Creamery Head,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 24 October 1926, 1.

⁴⁵ Charles F. Collisson, “Dairy Congress Is Welcomed to Syracuse Show,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 6 October 1923, 1.

football coach in July of 1925, a series of stories followed: sports editor Barton provided the straightforward account of the announcement, including the specifics about the selection process, the university's negotiations with Spears, and the new coach's experience at West Virginia and Dartmouth;⁴⁶ Hubert Dustin, also writing in the sports section, discussed the new practice techniques that Spears planned to employ;⁴⁷ while Hickok, garnering a page-one spot, profiled Spears upon his arrival to campus. Of the three stories, only Hickok's included direct quotes. Writing in her usual breezy style, Hickok seized on Spears' size to start off her story. With the delicate touch that the subject matter required, Hickok got Spears – whom she had presumably just met – to talk about his 260-pound, bulky frame: “Sure, go ahead and write me up as a fat man,” Spears told Hickok, “but look out for my wife.”⁴⁸ Hickok followed that with some conversational editorializing that was becoming her hallmark, advising readers: “. . . [S]ure, go right ahead and call him ‘Fat’ Spears too – if you carry plenty of accident insurance.”⁴⁹ Shifting away from the weighty topic, Hickok then wrote about the new coach's family, their search for a house, and his reputation as an innovator with football equipment. Of the three stories, only Hickok's allowed readers to get to know the new coach beyond his previous won-lost records or plans for fall scrimmages.

Certainly, a story such as that had to put Hickok in line to draw even more football assignments when the 1925 season would start three months hence. In the meantime, though, she used her news writing to enhance that likelihood all the more. In the months between Doc Spears' July appointment as coach and the start of the 1925 season in October, Hick gave editor-in-chief Dillon even more reason to place his confidence in her, as she distinguished herself with a string of news features that showcased her uncanny ability to find an angle where one scarcely seemed to exist. Given what would appear to be the most boring and ordinary news assignments, Hickok consistently returned to put a lively or sarcastic spin on the story, very often earning it a spot on page one, or at the very least, a prominent headline in the news section.

Sent to a photographer's convention, for example, she came back, not with some mundane story about new tinting techniques, but with an enjoyable yarn about the frustrations that photographers experience in trying to coax smiles from babies.⁵⁰

Asked to write about the new tokens required of Minneapolis trolley car riders, she turned the piece into a humorous essay on ways to avoid mistaking dimes for tokens when hunting in one's pocket or purse. Encouraging readers to take advantage of the hole that had

⁴⁶ Barton, “Dr. C. W. Spears Is Appointed New Football Coach at Minnesota,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 4 July 1925, 9.

⁴⁷ Hubert M. Dustin, “Dr. Spears to Shelve Traditional Training Tactics of Gophers,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 23 July 1925, 14. Although Dustin would have obviously talked to Spears to learn of the coach's intentions, he does not use any quoted material in the story, instead relying on paraphrase. This is consistent with the *Minneapolis Tribune's* style of sports coverage – and is what allowed Hickok, in using quotes, to distinguish herself from most of those journalists in the sports section.

⁴⁸ Hickok, “260 Pounds of New Football Coach Arrive at ‘U’ Armory,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 23 July 1925, 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Hickok, “Modern Infants Are Not Cajoled By Birdie Trick,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 29 September 1925, 21. The college football season, at the time, did not begin until October.

been punched in the middle of the dime-sized tokens, she wryly suggested “stringing your tokens on a safety pin and pinning them inside your handbag, or across your waistcoat, like a row of medals.”⁵¹ Obviously dissatisfied with the new token system, she further quipped that readers could wear tokens on a string around their neck, “like those flower wreaths the Hawaiians present you with when they come down to the boat to see you off for San Francisco.”⁵²

Sent to the aforementioned astronomers’ meeting, she returned with a story that cut through the scientific jargon to give readers a light, enjoyable story – regardless of their interest in the solar system. Her knack was plain to see from the first several paragraphs of that account:

From a drab, quiet classroom at Carleton College here today, a small group of men and women traveled 93,000,000 miles right straight out into infinite space.

They brought the sun back with them, pinned him up against the blackboard, measured him, took his temperature, pulled his whiskers, and announced that, as suns go, he’s not so much, after all.

He’s only a little yellow star, they coolly declared, neither so large nor so hot as millions of other suns in our universe, and he’s on the decline – although it is going to take him millions of years to die.⁵³

If Hickok could find such angles while working all these different kinds of stories, it stood to reason that she would not be overmatched in tackling the football beat once more, even if two sportswriters – sports editor Barton and staffer Dustin – would be cranking out University of Minnesota football stories on a regular basis in the sports section. Despite the presence of one or two sports section stories previewing and/or recapping each game, all angles were not exhausted – at least not where Hickok was concerned. Her non-sports writing between the 1924 and 1925 seasons had confirmed her ability to put her own stamp on the story with a unique angle or, at the very least, her unique style. And so, an expanded role during the 1925 football season certainly seemed to be in order.

Be that as it may, Hickok actually sat out the first three games of the season, continuing to report news and features without adding football to her mix of assignments. Throughout the first several weeks of the season, the football coverage was left to Barton and Dustin – and relegated to the sports section. Then, in week four, Hickok was called into action to cover the Minnesota-Notre Dame match-up. The assignment was prime; not only was it homecoming for Minnesota, but Notre Dame was coming off an upset loss to Army – a development that further stirred the victory hopes of a very talented Minnesota squad. The excitement throughout the state of Minnesota was at such a fever pitch, that sports editor Barton suggested that public interest in a Golden Gophers football game had not been so great since the memorable Minnesota-Michigan duel of 1903.⁵⁴ For Hickok to draw such an assignment was indeed impressive. On consecutive days leading up to the Notre Dame contest, Hickok’s name appeared

⁵¹ Hickok, “Tokens Prove to Be Bigger Problem Than 8-Cent Fare,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 2 August 1925, sec. 2, p. 2.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Hickok, “Astronomers Shoot Millions of Miles Into Space on ‘Sun Trip,’” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 10 September 1925, 1.

⁵⁴ Barton, “Rooters Wildly Excited Over Minnesota-Notre Dame Game Today,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 24 October 1925, 31.

on page one of the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*: On Friday, the day before the game, she was prominently mentioned in a large advertisement. The page-one ad assured readers that they would “find a big kick” in the paper’s Sunday football coverage, promising that football fans would find not only “an expert story” by Barton on the Minnesota-Notre Dame clash,” but also “Lorena Hickok’s impressionistic sketch” of the contest.⁵⁵ In between the Friday ad and her Sunday game story, she produced a by-lined preview for the Saturday edition.

Overall, Hickok did a commendable job on both the Saturday preview and the trumpeted Sunday “impressionistic sketch” – although both fell a bit short of her late-season writing the year before. Yet, whatever rust may have shown in her Notre Dame stories, they did have their moments: she sprinkled in some quotes, from Coach Spears in her preview story and from some fans in her game-day account, and she spun some catchy phrases of her own in both stories, referring to Coach Rockne’s Notre Dame team as “Rock and his pebbles” in her preview and likening the hometown Gopher offense to a “Minnesota prairie fire” when it suddenly swept down the field for a game-day score.⁵⁶ Most notably, she maintained her snappy and conversational style of writing in both stories, again separating her from the style of her male counterparts in the paper’s sports department.

Meanwhile, some of the non-football content that appeared in the newspaper on that same Sunday when Hickok reported the Notre Dame outcome serves as a reminder that Hick’s sports knowledge supposedly made her an exception among her sex. A non-by-lined item in the sports section, for example, ridiculed a female baseball fan who surmised that a pitcher was spitting on the ball for luck – when, of course, he was applying saliva to enhance the movement of his pitches. Her appraisal brought such laughter from the fans seated around her that it took several minutes before “quiet was restored,” the story noted.⁵⁷ The underlying message: women were out of their league when it came to understanding sports. This message was further emphasized by another non-by-lined article, this time in the society section; the article detailed the “gay entertainments” that sororities had planned as part of a post-football game celebration, giving the impression that women were perhaps more properly interested in the festivities than in the game itself.⁵⁸ That same season, the one-panel “Oh! Margy!” cartoon – a regular *Tribune* feature that often poked fun at the modern woman – depicted a football player hugging the main character Margy, who reacted by expressing confusion over “why a football man should be penalized for holding.”⁵⁹ Based on such content, and the general mood of the era, Hickok was no doubt aware

⁵⁵ “You’ll Find A Big Kick in The Sunday Tribune’s Football News,” advertisement, *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 23 October 1925, 1.

⁵⁶ Hickok, “‘Rock’ and His ‘Pebbles’ Roll Up Avalanche of Grid Fever,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 24 October 1925, 1; Lorena A. Hickok, “Irish Greyhound Replaces Horsemen as Notre Dame Runs Down Gophers,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 25 October 1925, sec. 1, p. 1.

⁵⁷ “Female Baseball Fan Thought Hurler Spit on Horsehide for Luck,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 25 October 1925, sec. 3, p. 8.

⁵⁸ “Football Game Is Followed by Gay U Entertainments,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 25 October 1925, sec. 6, p. 3. Although the story also notes the role of fraternities in planning post-game festivities, the fact that the article appeared in the society section – which was primarily devoted to reporting on women’s activities – suggests that sororities were the greater focus.

⁵⁹ John Held Jr., “Oh! Margy!” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 23 November 1925, 18.

that much of society still subscribed to the stereotype that women, if interested in sports at all, were casual and uninformed sports fans at best.⁶⁰ But to her credit, she defied the stereotype.

Assigned to cover the next three Minnesota football games – home contests against rival Wisconsin, pushover Butler, and powerhouse Iowa – Hickok used the opportunity to demonstrate her ability to understand and cover football. In her coverage of the Wisconsin game, she confidently assessed the style of play employed by both teams, noting that the game was dominated by forward passes. “A battle of the clouds,” she called it.⁶¹ There were so many passes, she added, that “the ball went cavorting around the field like a Mexican jumping bean.”⁶² Even so, she also astutely observed that the two teams relied on their passing attacks to varying degrees:

If you liked the aerial type of play – the graceful, artistic stuff – you got it from Wisconsin. Also now and then from Minnesota.

If you liked the hard, plunging scrimmage stuff, you got it from Minnesota. Consistently.⁶³

Such short, perceptive sentences continued to set Hickok apart from the long, breathless sentences favored by Barton and Dustin. Not only that, but Hickok’s overall writing also remained more creative than that of her male counterparts. Whereas male writers in the *Tribune* sports section focused on imparting game details to readers with what seemed like a sense of urgency – a mission they would not compromise by using too many metaphors or other writing “gimmicks” – Hickok was more experimental and flexible in her approach. Noting how Minnesota had been in control of the Wisconsin game for the first 45 minutes before allowing Wisconsin to tie the contest, Hickok, for example, invoked metaphors that made effective use of the two teams’ animal nicknames, the Minnesota Gophers and the Wisconsin Badgers :

Up to the last quarter, it was the Gophers’ own little birthday party. It looked as though they had that game won, salted down, cached away on ice down in their hole for the winter. The score was 12 to a nice round 0. The Badgers were cornered.

Cornered – but not tamed.⁶⁴

Her coverage of the Butler game the following week featured similarly stylized writing, while also paying sufficient attention to game particulars. But more than that, it highlighted her ability to place a game in a wider context. Aware of what Minnesota’s win against Butler meant – and how it was impacted by other college football games played that day – Hickok led off her story with a statement that, while technically true, seemed to defy common logic: “With a standing of exactly .000, Minnesota Saturday night found herself sitting right on top of the world

⁶⁰ Despite this prevailing mindset, it is interesting to note that the research for this dissertation uncovered no criticism directed toward Hickok or the newspaper because of her football coverage; for example, the research found no letters to the editor doubting Hickok’s suitability to write about football. This may well be a testament to her writing skill.

⁶¹ Hickok, “Tie Grid Game Wrecks Nerves of 40,000 Fans,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, sec. 1, p. 1.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

– including the Big Ten football conference.”⁶⁵ It meant that Minnesota actually had a chance to win the conference title if it could win its last two games, both of which were conference tilts, she explained.

Continuing to expound on Minnesota’s dumb luck to find itself in such a position, Hickok then became more conversational with her readers than perhaps ever before:

As you read this item over your Sunday breakfasts, fellow citizens, fill your cups with coffee and drink ‘er down, drink ‘er down! Then go out and find yourselves some pieces of wood to knock on.

Today, Minnesota leads the conference – with nothing to do till next Saturday.⁶⁶

Trying to explain to readers the confusing dynamics that put Minnesota in this enviable position, Hickok explained how a long-shot scenario had unfolded among the other conference teams that day, as well as in previous weeks. “Figure out (just try to) this little crossword puzzle on your radio,” she joked, then ran down the outcomes of seven key games that had put Minnesota in position to win the conference title.⁶⁷

Readers barely had time to digest the particulars and scratch their heads before the *Minneapolis Tribune* began hyping the Gophers’ game against Iowa, scheduled for the following Saturday.

True to form, Hickok produced a snappy, quote-filled preview story for publication the morning of the Iowa game.⁶⁸ Yet as the story rolled off the presses, the pressure was already on her to follow her preview article with another of her consistently entertaining game stories; after all, the *Tribune* and its readers were counting on her. As was becoming its wont, the paper had run a “teaser” earlier in the week promoting the Iowa game-day coverage that would appear in Sunday’s edition. But this time, Hickok was singled out for special recognition: “To cap” the coverage, the ad proclaimed, “Lorena Hickok will ‘do’ a feature on the Iowa-Minnesota game as only ‘Hick’ can do it.”⁶⁹

And so it was: in less than two partial seasons of covering University of Minnesota football, Hickok had carved a name for herself with her inimitable style. While this research uncovered nothing to document exactly how her colleagues or readers felt about her, the tone of the “teaser” suggested that her writing must have been earning praise and acceptance from all parties.

Such high regard seemed appropriate, as Hickok delivered a superb, albeit overly dramatic, account of the Iowa game. Seizing on a nickname that a rival coach had bestowed on Minnesota running back Herb Joesting sometime earlier, Hickok crafted the following lead to highlight Joesting’s star performance in leading Minnesota over Iowa:

⁶⁵ Hickok, “Gophers Hold Top of Football World With Standing of .000,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 8 November 1925, sec. 1, p. 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Hickok, “Pollyanna Ingwersen and Sunshine Spears Mourning,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 14 November 1925, 35. Unlike most of Hickok’s football stories, which appeared on page one or two of the paper, this one was on p. 35. Considering that the sports pages this day concluded with p. 33, Hickok’s p. 35 story brought her closer to inclusion in the sports pages than ever before.

⁶⁹ “First on Sunday As Well as Daily,” advertisement, *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 13 November 1925, 1.

Minnesota's "human tank" just went out and rolled all over Iowa Saturday afternoon. In a kind of methodical fury, he rammed [Iowa's] fortifications, sent chunks of masonry flying in all directions, and ground her tall corn down into a shapeless mass of silo stuffing.⁷⁰

Making sure to give other players their due, and to dissect the game in order to highlight several key plays, Hickok later circled back to provide further comment on Joesting's performance. Summing up his skill at slithering for additional yardage after he was seemingly stopped, Hickok wrote that Joesting would "rush through for a yard of two – and fall for five or six more. There is said to be a rumor going around in enemy camps that Joesting wears roller skates on his stomach."⁷¹

Aside from writing about Joesting's athleticism and the contributions of other players, Hickok also captured the flavor of the day by weaving several telling anecdotes into her story. The following is just one example: "And when the game was over, and the Minnesotans were trooping out of the Stadium unable to speak above whispers, taxi drivers out on University avenue [sic] jammed their fists down their horns and held them there until the police cried, 'Stop!'"⁷² That anecdote – impressive because it is so short, yet allows the reader to feel the energy and enthusiasm of the day – is made even more effective because Hickok introduced it in her seventh paragraph rather than waiting until the end of the story. While the horn-blowing traffic jam may have indeed occurred at the end of the game, Hickok's skill in weaving the information into her story at an earlier stage reflects the work of a deft writer. Not beholden to a chronological accounting of events, Hickok was comfortable shifting between details of the game and descriptions of the atmosphere, even if it meant jumping out of a safe, ordered sequence.⁷³ That she was able to do so without confusing the reader is further testament to her skill.

Hickok's brilliant writing, coupled with the Minnesota win, put both team and writer in an unaccustomed position: Minnesota would be playing for a conference title the next week in Michigan, and Hickok – for the first time in her two seasons covering football – would be traveling to report on a game. Being assigned to a road game suggested that Hickok had climbed yet another rung on the ladder of respect and acceptance, an assessment furthered by her elevation to the status of "star" reporter in that week's page-one "teaser" ad. Headlined, "The Supreme Thrill of the Football Season," the ad previewed upcoming coverage of the battle that Coach Spears' Minnesota team would face in Michigan:

Saturday's Minnesota-Michigan game at Ann Arbor decides the fate of the battling Gophers.

⁷⁰ Hickok, "Minnesota 'Human Tank' Rolls Over Iowa; Jubilant Homecoming Hosts Storm Loop," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 15 November 1925, p. 1

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁷³ This is not meant to imply that Barton and Dustin adhered to a strict chronology in their stories. They did not. Rather, the point here is that Hickok, even though an inexperienced sportswriter when compared to Barton and Dustin, was able to resist the chronological comfort that other beginning sportswriters might be inclined to use as a safety net.

Every loyal Minnesotan will be with the gallant Spearmen in spirit. George A. Barton, noted sports editor of *The Tribune*, and Lorena Hickok, *Tribune* star feature writer, will be with them in person.

Read Barton's authoritative report of the game in Sunday's *Tribune* together with Miss Hickok's rollicking sketch of the contest and the crowds.⁷⁴

As the tone of the ad suggests, this was one of the biggest stories Hickok had ever been asked to cover. Indeed, Minneapolis was making extensive preparations for the game. Residents were assured, in the pages of the *Tribune*, that radio announcer H. A. Bellows, "The WCCO Man," would be receiving a "detailed story of the game by a direct telephone connection from Ferry Field, Ann Arbor" and then relaying the news "into a microphone" for the listening audience.⁷⁵ Those who needed a visual depiction of the game, but who could not travel to Ann Arbor, were welcome to come to the University of Minnesota Armory, where "two men, adorned with ear phones," would draw "a graphic picture of the plays, almost simultaneously as they were being executed" in Michigan.⁷⁶

But before the game itself was played, both Hickok and Barton produced preview stories for the Saturday edition. Barton, predictably, wrote about topics such as the betting line, injuries, and the performance of Minnesota in its last pre-game scrimmage. He also went on to speculate about coaching strategy and remark on Minnesota's depth, before concluding with some tacked-on paragraphs about the anticipated crowd and the weather.⁷⁷ Conversely, Hickok, as was usually the case, wrote more with an eye toward effect, and less with a concern for detailed game-based content. Make no mistake: reading her story gave a fan some sense of how the two teams matched up in terms of talent and determination – but this was a secondary concern for Hickok, whose primary objective was to set the mood. She did this by conjuring a picture of the Little Brown Jug making its way back to Minnesota after a Gopher victory. She also attended a Michigan pep rally and quoted Michigan Coach Fielding Yost, who except for a "couple of damns, was calm tonight."⁷⁸ She even hopped a ride with a "loquacious taxi driver," so that she could see how the campus was decorated for the big game and gauge the pulse of Ann Arbor fans by the livery driver's comments.⁷⁹

The next day, when it came time to report the game, both Barton and Hickok conceded that Michigan had earned the victory and the conference championship by soundly outplaying Minnesota. Barton did this by calling the Michigan victory "decisive" and anointing the winners

⁷⁴ "The Supreme Thrill of the Football Season," advertisement, *The Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 20 November 1925, 1.

⁷⁵ "Tells the Story, Play by Play," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 22 November 1925, sec. 4, p. 2.

⁷⁶ Approximately 3,000 fans took advantage of the illustrated broadcast; "3,000 Fans 'See' Game in University Armory," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 22 November 1925, sec. 4, p. 3.

⁷⁷ Barton, "Michigan Rules 10 to 8 Favorite," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 21 November 1925, 30.

⁷⁸ Hickok, "Calm Prevails at Ann Arbor; Dubious Pep Seems Omen Gophers Will Get Brown Jug," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 21 November 1925, 1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

“one of the greatest football teams that ever strode a western gridiron.”⁸⁰ He also called Michigan “a team without a single weakness,” adding “There are no alibis to offer for Minnesota. . . Michigan today had everything a championship team should have, and then some.”⁸¹ He went on, of course, to detail the scoring and to dissect the quality of play.

Hickok’s story struck just as gracious a tone. But unlike Barton, who spoke authoritatively *to* the reader, Hickok spoke unpretentiously *with* the reader. Put another way, Hick’s writing was more casual than reportorial; it was as if she were the reader’s friend and just happened to have information to share. This approach, which she was continuing to perfect (or stretch, depending on the reader’s taste), is vividly illustrated in the first five paragraphs of her recap on the Michigan game:

Michigan won the war, 35 to 0, on Ferry field this afternoon.

To the victor goes the championship. Also the Little Brown Jug and all the compliments in the sports page vocabulary.

About all we can think of to say on this inauspicious occasion, kind friends, is this:

If you had seen that Michigan team in action on Ferry field this afternoon, you wouldn’t feel quite so bad about it.

Which may be scant comfort, but you’ll have to take it if you take anything at all. It’s all there is. There isn’t any more.

Poor old Michigan, as they say when they want to be funny. There may have been some football stuff [Michigan] did not have out there on Ferry field this afternoon. If there was, the telescope of this humble astronomer failed to find it. And if there was – whatever it was – it wouldn’t have been worth a wooden nickel to any team that ever scored a touchdown.⁸²

Although Hickok also went on to break down the game’s individual and team performances, she maintained her conversational style throughout her story. Then, just as quickly as it had started, her conversation with Minnesota football fans ended. Having spent the 1925 season covering more than half of Minnesota’s football games – while at the same time continuing to cover other news and features as well – she now returned full-time to the news side.⁸³

When she took up coverage of University of Minnesota football again in 1926, her gridiron coverage expanded significantly. Hickok no longer covered only a portion of the season. Rather than simply draw the “big games” or most home games, she covered the entire eight-game 1926 schedule, including all home and away dates.

This ascension to what was, for all intents and purposes, a full-fledged football beat, certainly owed much to Hickok’s impressive writing. But her personality cannot be discounted

⁸⁰ Barton, “Minnesota Smothered by Michigan, 35 to 0,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 22 November 1925, sec. 4, p. 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Hickok, “Michigan Wins War, Jug, Title N’ Everything Else,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 22 November 1925, sec. 1, p. 1.

⁸³ With rare exceptions, Hickok did not draw non-football sports stories. With college football the most popular sport in Minnesota, the *Tribune* could probably justify pulling her off some news features to cover a few football games. However, over the course of a full year, the paper needed her touch too much on the news side and so could not afford to divert her attention with a consistent diet of sports assignments.

as a factor in elevating her to this expanded role. As the paper's week-in, week-out college football feature writer in 1926, Hickok had to hit the road three times: for games in Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa. By all accounts, Hickok on these occasions shared the University of Minnesota football team's special train, stayed at the same hotel, and mixed easily with the coaches, players, and male sports journalists.⁸⁴ The professional nature of these associations notwithstanding, Hickok would have needed a special temperament to earn acceptance among the male coaches, athletes and writers who comprised the traveling party. After all, mixed travel by men and women was not casually accepted circa the mid-1920s. In the Midwest, schools such as the University of Minnesota made a strict practice of assigning chaperones to trains and buses that carried a mixed population of female and male students to "away" football games – a practice that also required the female students to register with the dean of women days in advance of the trip.⁸⁵ Even among adults, travel that put men and women in close quarters was at times resisted or rejected. Back in the East, a region that was arguably more progressive and open-minded than the country's heartland, the Pennsylvania Railroad around this time was operating "stag sleepers" to accommodate male passengers who refused to share a night train with women.⁸⁶

Not only did Hick flout the taboos that were associated with mixed travel, but she also seemed particularly suited to the challenge. Because she was more easygoing and sarcastic than she was prim and proper, Hick likely gained acceptance among the football team's traveling squad more readily than a more traditionally feminine reporter would have.⁸⁷ A husky-voiced chain smoker who sometimes traded her Pall Malls for a pipe or cigar, Hickok was known to engage in "blasphemous banter" and take an interest in poker.⁸⁸ While she was not a heavy drinker, she was not a teetotaler either.⁸⁹ And she was certainly not short on confidence. The confident attitude she had demonstrated years earlier when she departed Battle Creek, Michigan,

⁸⁴ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 5th ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), 207, and Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 67.

⁸⁵ See, for example, "All U. of N. Co-eds Must Be Chaperoned on Trip to Wisconsin, Says Dean," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 28 October 1926, 12.

⁸⁶ "'Stag' Sleepers for P. R. R.," *New York Tribune*, 22 February 1924, 1.

⁸⁷ That Hickok was more easygoing and sarcastic is the general impression gained from Faber's *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, as well as Hickok's own reporting style. Hickok's acceptance among the traveling squad, meanwhile, would have mirrored the friendly treatment Hickok engendered among her male colleagues at the *Minneapolis Tribune*. Ishbel Ross, who worked as a female journalist during the same era as Hickok, says Hick "was treated exactly as a man" by her peers at the *Minneapolis Tribune*, while biographer Faber adds that Hick was accepted as "one of the boys" in the newsroom. See Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 207, and Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 59.

⁸⁸ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 207, and Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 58-59, 67. Smoking was not readily accepted as a "ladylike" practice in the twenties. Colleges debated whether smoking was proper for female students, while in prisons, even smoking among female inmates was a source of controversy. See "Five Eastern Women's Colleges Oppose Stand Favoring Girls' Smoking," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 27 November 1925, 9, and "Flouts XIXth Amendment," editorial, *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 October 1923, 8.

⁸⁹ Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 60. When she did take a drink, Hickok would have been well advised to stay a step ahead of "Alky, the hootch [sic] hound" a whiskey-sniffing bloodhound that the city of Minneapolis enlisted in the mid-twenties to identify flask-carrying citizens who violated the prohibition laws; see "Hootch [sic] Hound Is Latest Recruit to Trail Hip Flasks of Scofflaws," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 15 July 1925, 3.

following high school graduation – “I’m going out and make a name for myself in the world!”⁹⁰ – remained with her into her 30s, as she asserted herself in the male-dominated world of sports journalism aboard trains that carried her to college football stadiums across the Midwest.⁹¹

Hickok’s impressive football coverage in 1924 and 1925, as detailed earlier in this chapter, proved Dillon was correct to put her on the football beat for the entire 1926 college football season. Covering every University of Minnesota game, she showed an increased understanding of the finer points of football. Her preview stories, meanwhile, wove clever themes throughout, and overall, her writing showed more flair than ever.

Consider her previews. During week two of the season, Hickok actually wrote two previews of the Notre Dame-Minnesota game: one for Friday’s edition and another for Saturday. This, in itself, marked a departure from her usual routine of producing one pre-game story and signaled the expanded role she would play throughout the ’26 season. The first of her two Notre Dame-Minnesota previews captured the tenor of the intrasquad practice scrimmages that the two teams held in preparation for the game. Unlike the previous two years, when observations about Minnesota scrimmages were usually left to the *Tribune’s* male sports staffers, Hickok’s writing now gave the impression that she had complete access to the practice drills. Testament to this was her rich description of the session, which because of all the yelling, “sounded rather like a hog-calling contest.”⁹² But the hollering, Hickok added, was mostly positive, with only a few harsh remarks directed from the Minnesota coach to his players. Instead, comments such as “Good work!” and “Fine tackle!” dominated the session, leading Hickok to conclude that the team was well prepared.⁹³ Although Hickok had not been in South Bend, Indiana, to watch Notre Dame’s drills, she nonetheless managed to comment on Notre Dame’s preparedness as well. For this, she relied on the “dope” she had heard through the grapevine – suggesting that she was perhaps now networking with sports reporters from other cities – as well as her familiarity with Notre Dame Coach Knute Rockne’s general disposition. Thus, she wrote with confidence of Notre Dame: “All week [Rockne] has been hard at work with a hammer on the skulls of his cheerful boys, beating out a rhythm to the effect that this game up here [in Minnesota] Saturday isn’t going to be any [easy] set-up.”⁹⁴

The next day, Hickok’s preview highlighted the personalities of the two coaches, noting their propensity to downplay their respective team’s chances. Combining quotes with observations about the coaches’ general dispositions on the eve of the contest, Hickok presented the cunning tactics of two coaches who desperately tried to paint their respective teams as the underdog in hopes of keeping their players sharp and ultimately gaining an advantage: “It’s going to be an awfully pathetic affair, really. Both teams are going to get licked. Both coaches say so,” Hickok wrote playfully.⁹⁵ She also amusingly referred to Rockne as “Gloomy Knute,”

⁹⁰ Ibid., 48.

⁹¹ Although extremely confident about her journalistic ability, Hickok did seem to lack self esteem about her physical attractiveness – a recurring point in Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*.

⁹² Hickok, “‘Gloomy Knute’ Arrives Today With 3 Squads,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 8 October 1926, 2.

⁹³ Ibid., 1.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Hickok, “‘Gloomy Knute Outglooms ‘Doc’ Spears; Both See Defeat,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 9 October 1926, 1.

repeating the moniker time and time again as she concluded that the Notre Dame coach was more outwardly pessimistic than Minnesota's Coach Spears, who despite the praise he laid on his team at practice the day before, was now spinning his own prediction of doom and gloom.⁹⁶

As the season progressed, and Hickok interviewed other rival coaches, she built upon this same theme.⁹⁷ At least twice more, she portrayed the rival coach as another stick in the mud, afraid to give his team the slightest public compliment lest he jinx the squad or swell the players' heads. This "woe is me" attitude favored by most coaches amused Hickok as overdone and more or less pointless. Therefore, rather than accept the coaches' doomsday quotes at face value and churn out preview stories that repeated the same trite, cautionary assessments, she effectively turned the tables on the coaches and had fun at their expense. About the Michigan coach's "mournful" assessment of his team's chances, Hickok quipped, "Original, isn't he?"⁹⁸ Iowa's coach was so pessimistic that Hickok sarcastically referred to him in print as "Sunshine" Ingwersen and the "Pollyanna of the cornfields."⁹⁹ She wrote that Ingwersen "would have draped the stands around the Iowa field with crepe for this game tomorrow if he could have got an appropriation out of the athletic funds to buy the crepe."¹⁰⁰ Relaying Ingwersen's concerns about his team's line and backfield, Hickok even took it upon herself to snidely supplement the coach's sob story: "The Iowa cheerleaders have all got laryngitis, too, and there's a hole in the big bass drum," she wrote.¹⁰¹

Hickok was so used to the weekly dirges sung by coaches that when Wisconsin Coach George Little broke from the mold and expressed some optimism about his team's chances against Minnesota, Hick was incredulous. Recounting a 50-minute interview she conducted with the coach, she wrote that Little "never said a word about how rotten his team was – not a doggone word."¹⁰² Continuing to express amazement, Hickok wrote that Coach Little "even went so far as to say that his young men might – just might, you understand – stop 'the Golden Tornado,' Minnesota's star runner Herb Joesting."¹⁰³

⁹⁶ Ibid, 1-2.

⁹⁷ Based on the contextual clues within Hickok's stories, it appears that her interviews with coaches typically occurred at train stations, in hotel lobbies, or in the coach's hotel suite (where Hickok would be joined by male reporters in questioning the coach). On one occasion in 1926, she interviewed Michigan coach Fielding Yost in his Ann Arbor home; see Hickok, "Yost Pours Out 'Sob Stuff' for Poor Michigan," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 15 October 1926, 1. Most significantly, there is no evidence to suggest that any interviews occurred in locker rooms.

⁹⁸ Hickok, "Yost Pours Out 'Sob Stuff' for Poor Michigan," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 15 October 1926, 1.

⁹⁹ Hickok, "Burt, Pollyanna of Cornfields, Will Forgive All If Iowa Wins," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 6 November 1926, 1-2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Hickok, "Gibbering Fans Pack Madison for Another 'Historic' Game," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 30 October 1926, 1-2.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Whatever fun Hickok had in seizing upon the coaches' idiosyncrasies, she did not focus on these traits at the exclusion of pursuing other interesting angles. Perhaps her best feature came on the Tuesday before Minnesota's season finale against Michigan. It was to be the second meeting between the two teams that season, and with Minnesota in a position to celebrate its homecoming by spoiling Michigan's title hopes, Hickok produced a feature every day of the week leading up to the big contest.¹⁰⁴ Among those was a story that provided fans a glimpse into the life of Gopher star running back Herb Joesting by taking them through a day in the athlete's life. Rather than focus on the humdrum after-school job or post-graduation plans, Hickok illuminated his character by focusing on the gridder's unique mode of transportation. Waiting for Joesting to arrive for practice one afternoon, Hickok had heard the sick sounds of Joesting's battered car as he pulled up to the field.¹⁰⁵ Taking close inspection of the vehicle – or flivver, as autos were sometimes called in the twenties – Hickok mined the moment for material that would provide a major portion of the descriptively rich feature she wrote: "Along about 4 p.m. every weekday, except Saturday, all the infants in southeast Minneapolis are awakened from their afternoon naps by a loud noise traveling down University avenue. It sounds like an army tank with the whooping cough on the Fourth of July," she wrote to open her story.¹⁰⁶ The noise, she explained, was the car driven by Herbert Joesting, "the only man on the Minnesota football squad who comes out to practice in an automobile."¹⁰⁷ At least that was the case a few days ago, she wrote, adding that it would still be true only "if the pieces of clothesline that hold together what was a collegiate flivver back sometime before the war haven't given out."¹⁰⁸

Hickok gave the impression that Joesting wanted to drive a car and wear flashy clothes as status symbols that separated him from his teammates. Yet the fact was, he could not afford a respectable automobile and apparently lacked fashion sense, if not common sense. And so, as Hickok's writing so brilliantly demonstrated, the star player was a kind of parody unto himself. First, she took further aim at the car:

Bare-headed and bare-handed, in a lumberjack shirt of one-inch green and yellow checks, he sat bolt upright behind the wheel of one of the funniest-looking flivvers that ever spouted steam like a teakettle on a cold day.

It didn't have any top, nor any hood. The ice-coated radiator was sending out great puffs of steam. The stuffing was trailing out of the seats, and bits of rubber were flying in all directions from the tires.

Closer inspection revealed that it had no floor. From the wheel you could look right down past the rusty engine to the ground.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ This was her steadiest and most prolific output during her three years covering the University of Minnesota football team.

¹⁰⁵ The fact that Hickok waited for Joesting at the entrance to the field again suggests that she did not have – or seek – access to the locker room.

¹⁰⁶ Hickok, "Pieces of Clothesline Hold Up Joesting's Aged Collegiate Car," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 16 November 1926, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 2.

More hilarious description of the car followed before Hickok turned her attention to Joesting's attire: ". . . This year he has gone in for flannel shirts. . . And from wearing the kind of felt hat that you'd expect to see on his father, Herb has taken this year to cowboy headgear. That is – until it got cold. Then he started going bareheaded."¹¹⁰

As unflattering a portrait as this was, Hickok apparently felt that she was within her bounds and that the story poked only harmless fun at the young athlete. If Joesting disagreed, he could take some solace knowing that he was not the only "colorful" Gopher gridder whose foibles Hickok had laid bare that season. And besides, who could get mad at Hick, anyway? She was "Miss Goofer" to the players – a mispronounced variant of "Miss Gopher," which had been bestowed upon her as a nickname earlier that same season.¹¹¹

It would seem that Hickok had indeed earned acceptance by 1926. Not only did she go by "Miss Goofer," but unlike her male colleagues, she also liberally assigned herself an array of other nicknames in her stories – names that seemed to suggest she was a part of the team, or at the very least, a loyal mascot. Steadily interjecting herself into both her previews and game accounts, she referred to herself by names that ranged from "the Gophers' auntie" – probably the most frequent – to monikers such as "the Gophers' poet laureate," "the Gophers' war orphan," "the Gophers' chaperone and social secretary," and even "the Gophers' press agent."¹¹² Other times, she used the word "we" when referring to the team, again suggesting an association that contrasted the more distanced approach typically taken by her male sports writing colleagues. An example of the way Hickok used the first person plural to identify herself with the team can be found early in the 1926 season, when a somewhat inexperienced Gophers team suffered growing pains that portended greater success later: "Yes, we're licked – 20 to 6," she wrote following a Minnesota defeat at the hands of Michigan. "But we're getting educated, folks. And you just watch us learn!"¹¹³

By the time Minnesota capped its season a few weeks later – with a second loss to Michigan – Hickok portrayed herself as more of a rooter than ever:

The Gophers' Auntie is going to buy herself a pair of galoshes and a gun this week and hike out into the vicinity of Gopher Prairie.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ There are conflicting stories about the origin of the nickname. Although Hickok's biographer suggests that a member of Minnesota's backfield christened Hick with the name after she ran into the end zone to celebrate a Gopher touchdown, Hickok herself, in a story from the 1926 season, flatly states that Michigan coach Fielding Yost bestowed the name on her. See Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 67, and Hickok, "Yost-Men Frolic on Eve of Battle; Minnesota Grim," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 16 October 1926, 1.

¹¹² For examples of stories that used these various nicknames, see the following features by Hickok: "Yost Pours Outs 'Sob Stuff' for Poor Michigan," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 15 October 1926, 1; "Gophers Run and Run and Run Through Wabash in 67-7 Race," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 24 October 1926, sec. 1, p. 1; "Gibbering Fans Pack Madison for Another 'Historic' Game," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 30 October 1926, 1; "Burt, Pollyanna of Cornfields, Will Forgive All If Iowa Wins Today," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 6 November 1926, 1; "Thundering Herd' Officially Renamed 'Galloping Gophers,'" *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 10 November 1926, 23.

¹¹³ Hickok, "Yells Echo Admiration as Game Gophers Start Home," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 17 October 1926, 2.

When she returns she is going to have enough rabbits' feet to make for each member of next year's Gopher football squad a necklace like those mufflers of bear claws the Indians used to wear.

For it seems that that is the only way Minnesota is ever going to beat Michigan.¹¹⁴

However inappropriate by today's newspaper standards, such writing on the part of Hickok was tolerated – and likely encouraged – for two reasons. First, because the population of Minneapolis had not yet eclipsed a half million people, the *Tribune* was a large-city paper, but not so large that it had to completely sacrifice the hometown feel of a smaller news sheet.¹¹⁵

Thus, the *Tribune* could sponsor – and report on – events such as its annual Dog Derby, a race in which children mused teams of dogs around a snowy city track, or a “Matching Twins” contest that enticed more than 20,000 readers to submit entry forms trying to match 23 sets of twins based on 46 photos of area residents that the paper had published.¹¹⁶ In light of such contests, Hickok's football coverage was merely an extension of the “folksy” formula the *Tribune* already employed. Plus, Hick's coverage allowed the *Tribune* to take a topic – college football – that was usually treated with great seriousness on the sports pages, and give it a lighter treatment in the news section.

Even so, Hickok's treatment of University of Minnesota football never became so light or folksy that it overlooked the key elements of the game itself. Thus, even in 1926 – when Hickok's frequent Auntie Gopher and Miss Goofer observations stretched the bounds of objectivity beyond anything she had done in her previous two seasons of football coverage – her writing commanded respect from serious-minded fans. In fact, however playfully biased her 1926 writing may have been in some regards, it was also her most insightful in terms of dissecting games and giving readers insight into strategy, key plays, and momentum shifts. Put another way, Hickok's 1926 game stories conveyed a level of expertise not seen in her previous football reporting. This was evident right from the season opener, when she confidently wrote about an offside penalty that had nullified a running gain, only to set up a trick play that resulted in a score.¹¹⁷ The next week, she showed an impressive understanding of football rules and strategy when she credited a Minnesota opponent for reaching up into the air and grounding a

¹¹⁴ Hickok, “58,000 See Gophers Lose, 7-6,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 21 November 1926, sec. 1, p. 1. While this dissertation in no way purports to be a psychoanalytic study, Hickok's almost family-like attachment to the team may have been a response to her childhood, which was marked by loss, abuse, and separation. For more on Hickok's early years, and the fragmented family life she endured throughout much of her childhood, see Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 13-57.

¹¹⁵ For information about population, see “The Growth of Minneapolis,” editorial, *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 18 November 1926, 14, and George Akerson, “425,435 Set as Population of Minneapolis,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 12 October 1925, 1. The *Tribune*'s circulation circa mid-decade was approximately 132,000 daily and 175,000 on Sundays; see “Anywhere in Minneapolis,” advertisement, *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 25 January 1925, sec. 8, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ “100 Boys Race Today in *Tribune* Dog Derby,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 24 January 1925, 1; “Minneapolis Woman in First in ‘Matching Twins’ Contest,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 23 August 1925, sec. 1, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ Hickok, “New Idol Climbs to Pedestal in Gopher Football Pantheon,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 3 October 1926, sec. 1, p. 1.

punt that would otherwise have crossed the goal and resulted in a touchback. “That was a smart piece of work,” Hickok astutely wrote after describing the play.¹¹⁸

She wasn’t above second-guessing coaching strategy or leveling criticism, either. Reporting Minnesota’s first loss to Michigan in 1926, she wondered aloud if the outcome might have been different had the Gophers incorporated running back Herb Joesting into the offensive game plan more extensively: “Minnesota gained 143 yards by plunging and running in the game – against Michigan’s 135. If they’d started Joesting on his way in the first half instead of the second half, goodness knows where he’d be by now. Probably in Buffalo,” she wrote.¹¹⁹ About the Gophers’ inability to score despite repeatedly drawing close to Wisconsin’s goal line in a late-season match-up, Hickok wrote in her game story that Minnesota “had developed one of the most wonderful football teams the world ever saw for marching right up to the enemy goal line – and then, losing the ball.”¹²⁰ During another game that season, when a ballyhooed but largely unproductive Minnesota runner finally lived up to his billing, Hickok gave him credit, but used her game recap to remind readers that the player’s break-through performance was long overdue: “Bob Peplaw, a Connecticut Yankee in the Minnesota backfield, who has been going to get started for some two years now, finally did Saturday afternoon,” Hick wrote.¹²¹

Such perceptive observations notwithstanding, Hickok in 1926 continued to resist the *Tribune*’s usual practice of restricting game reports to the summary and analysis of individual and team performances. Rather than get bogged down in those details, as her male colleagues did, she balanced game-specific information with the inclusion of quotes from the coaches,¹²² comments from fans in the stands, and the kind of descriptive and witty phrases she had introduced to readers during the previous two seasons.

However, in contrast to the previous two seasons – when Hickok’s observations about the excited gestures and comments of fans seemed to confirm that she was in the stands, watching the games along with legions of rooters – her reports of the 1926 season suggest that she may have begun to cover games from the sidelines, and may even have gained entry to the press box on an occasion or two.¹²³ That she roamed the sidelines in 1926 seems certain; after all, she said as much in her account of the 1926 season opener when, commenting about running back Herb Joesting’s performance against North Dakota, she wrote: “There’s something positively inspiring

¹¹⁸ Hickok, “Flanagan’s Flying Circus Goes Barnstorming All Over Minnesota in 20 to 7 Victory,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 10 October 1926, 1.

¹¹⁹ Hickok, “Yells Echo Admiration as Game Gophers Start Home,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 17 October 1926, sec. 1, p. 2.

¹²⁰ Hickok, “Yes Sir! That Boy Nydahl Ran 65 Yards to Gopher Triumph,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 31 October 1926, sec. 1, p. 1.

¹²¹ Hickok, “Gophers Run and Run and Run Through Wabash in 67-7 Race,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 24 October 1926, sec. 1, p. 1.

¹²² During the three seasons that Hickok covered University of Minnesota football, her male colleagues in the sports section rarely included quotes in their game stories. This was true even of coaches’ quotes. More often, a box headlined “Coach’s Comments” would appear next to the sports section game story and include one-paragraph quotes from each of the two coaches.

¹²³ This challenges Faber’s contention that Hickok spent all three seasons watching games from the grandstands; see Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 67.

about being down on the sidelines and hearing North Dakota players yell at each other, ‘Get that fullback.’”¹²⁴ The following week, her game report alluded to a conversation that Notre Dame’s star player had had with his teammates as they carried him off the field – again suggesting that Hickok was in close proximity to the field, most likely on the sidelines.¹²⁵ In yet another game story that season, she noted the excessive number of fumbles committed by the two teams, then added, “A former player down on the sidelines explained that this was due to the cold.”¹²⁶ Indeed, the evidence seems to point to her presence along the sidelines.

Whether she gained access to the press box is more debatable. Twice in the last two weeks of the 1926 season, Hickok alluded to goings-on in the press box. The first time came in her story about Minnesota’s 81-0 blowout of Butler, when so many third- and fourth-string players got into the game, that “the announcer in the pressbox [sic] was spelling the names of the subs for the sportswriters,” she wrote.¹²⁷ The next week, this time in a nip-and-tuck contest, Michigan’s decision to replace an ineffective player prompted Hickok to similarly observe that “sportswriters in the press box had to make a frenzied scramble through their programs to find the name” of the substitute player.¹²⁸ Because such confusion among sportswriters would have been utterly predictable under the circumstances she described, Hickok’s observations may have been hyperbole rather than true reflections of her presence in the press box. But regardless of whether Hickok actually stepped foot in the press box, she did step into the male-dominated world of sports writing. And she did so in a manner unlike any other female sportswriter of the 1920s.

While the majority of women who covered sports in the decade either wrote strictly about female athletes – or produced occasional stories about a variety of sports events from a “woman’s angle” – Hickok wrote regularly appearing sports features about an all-male team, with her stories holding appeal for male and female readers alike. In effect, she was a beat writer for a college football team. Moreover, Hickok did this at a time when – despite the increasing acceptance of women in nontraditional roles – the challenge of traveling with an all-male athletic squad and gaining acceptance among coaches, players and male sportswriters, could not be overstated. Yet in the face of the obstacles, Hickok not only succeeded in producing quality stories, but she brought a new, conversational style of sports journalism to the pages of the *Minneapolis Tribune* – a style that relied on quotes and color to distinguish her work from the writing of her male colleagues.

Her contribution to the field of sports writing – her style is widely mirrored in sports sections today – is especially remarkable when one considers that it represented such a small portion of her life. Hickok had written about football over the course of just three seasons when

¹²⁴ Hickok, “New Idol Climbs to Pedestal in Gopher Football Pantheon,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 3 October 1926, sec. 1, p. 1.

¹²⁵ Hickok, “Flanagan Flying Circus Goes Barnstorming All Over Minnesota in 20 to 7 Victory,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 10 October 1926, sec. 1, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Hickok, “Gophers Run and Run and Run Through Wabash in 67-7 Race,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 24 October 1926, sec. 1, p. 2

¹²⁷ Hickok, “White Paint All Worn Off Butler Goal by Heavy Gopher Traffic,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 14 November 1926, sec. 1, p. 1.

¹²⁸ Hickok, “58,000 See Gophers Lose, 7-6,” *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 21 November 1926, sec. 1, p. 1.

in late 1926, ill health prompted her to move West. Together with her friend Ella Morse, the 33-year-old, diabetes-stricken Hickok left Minneapolis for San Francisco, where she traded in the deadline pressure of the newspaper business to work on a novel. Within a year, Hickok was frustrated by her literary attempts and Morse had eloped with a Minneapolis man who had relocated to San Francisco. Hick thus decided to leave the West Coast for New York, where she briefly wrote for the *New York Mirror* before joining the Associated Press at the age of 35.¹²⁹ As an AP writer, Hickok gained national recognition with her coverage of stories such as the Lindbergh baby kidnapping and the sinking of the steamship *Vestris*. Her coverage of the *Vestris* disaster was so impressive, in fact, that it earned Hickok the distinction of being the first woman to have her name atop a page-one story in the *New York Times*.¹³⁰ She later went on to work in the Franklin Roosevelt administration, writing internal reports about public welfare programs while also becoming an intimate friend of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.¹³¹

These achievements and associations that followed Hickok's tenure at the *Minneapolis Tribune* have constituted her legacy. But as this study of her sports writing for the Minneapolis paper shows, the time she spent as a college football reporter demands that she also be recognized as a pioneer in the field of sports journalism.

¹²⁹ Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 69-71.

¹³⁰ The *Times* chose to use Hickok's AP account over the copy turned in by its own staff. Hickok's distinction of being the first woman with a page one *New York Times* by-line comes with one caveat, however: at the insistence of the AP, she shared the by-line with a male passenger she had interviewed. As a result, the by-line read, "By Paul A. Dana, As Told to Lorena Hickok, Associated Press Staff Writer." See Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 81.

¹³¹ Faber, *The Life of Lorena Hickok*, 91-325.

Chapter 5: Jane Dixon Covers Sports From a “Woman’s Point of View”

Jane Dixon, according to one of her peers from the 1920s New York press corps, was “probably the calmest practitioner of her craft.” Dixon, her fellow female journalist remembered, could “turn out her copy with plaster falling on her head,” if that’s what the situation demanded.¹

On September 14, 1923, it wasn’t plaster that Dixon was forced to dodge, but the hulking frame of heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey, who came hurtling toward the *New York Telegram* reporter’s ringside seat after being knocked through the ropes by Argentinean challenger Luis Firpo, the “Wild Bull of the Pampas.”² Fortunately for Dixon, she and her typewriter were spared injury when *New York Herald Tribune* writer Jack Lawrence caught the champ and, with the help of a Western Union operator, pushed him back into the ring.³

The incident came in the middle of a nine-year run during which Dixon covered most of Dempsey’s championship bouts.⁴ It was also emblematic of the brutality that, in the eyes of some observers, made the boxing arena an inappropriate place for women.

That Dixon covered these bloody and bruising bouts made her a pioneer among female sports journalists. Granted, other women – notably Winifred Black and Nellie Bly – had written about prizefighting previously. And female contemporaries of Dixon covered bouts as well.⁵ But the primary and secondary sources reviewed during the course of this research suggest that none of these women wrote as steadily or prolifically about boxing as Dixon did in her career.

When she did cover Dempsey’s fights, however, Dixon always produced her stories from a “feminine viewpoint,”⁶ as did the majority of women who earned sports by-lines in the twenties. In other words, Dixon left the technical details of the bouts to her male colleagues, while instead concentrating on the personal idiosyncrasies of the fighters, the socialites and celebrities who attended the fights, and the fashions that were in vogue among the spectators.

¹ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 192.

² Ibid.

³ Exactly who broke Dempsey’s fall has been the source of myth and debate. Both Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 192, and Evensen, *When Dempsey Fought Tunney*, 46, agree that it was Lawrence. Amusingly, Evensen’s research shows that at least 18 different persons, including sportswriters and celebrities, claimed credit for catching the champ. Among them was comedian Milton Berle, who according to Evensen, wasn’t within 20 yards of the ring.

⁴ In all, Dempsey fought eight heavyweight title bouts. Careful examination of “sporting final” editions of the *Telegram* leads the author of this dissertation to conclude that Dixon covered six of the fights, while skipping the September 6, 1921, bout against Billy Miske in Benton Harbor, Michigan, and the July 4, 1923, match against Tommy Gibbons in Shelby, Montana. This finding contradicts statements, made elsewhere, that suggest Dixon was at seven, or even all eight, fights. Ross, in *Ladies of the Press*, 193, erroneously states that Dixon covered “every Dempsey bout except the one in Shelby.” Meanwhile, a 1926 promotional ad in the *Telegram* misleadingly boasted that Dixon had “covered every world’s championship bout for *The New York Telegram* since the [1919] Willard-Dempsey contest,” thus ignoring the fact that she did not travel to the Michigan or Montana fights. See “*New York Telegram* Experts Who Will Cover Dempsey-Tunney Fight,” *New York Telegram*, 22 September 1926, 15.

⁵ For more on Bly, Black and other female sports writing predecessors and contemporaries of Dixon, see the literature review encompassed in Chapter 1 and the Appendix of this dissertation.

⁶ “*New York Telegram* Experts Who Will Cover Dempsey-Tunney Fight,” *New York Telegram*, 22 September 1926, 15.

In a word, Dixon was a paradox. By covering boxing as steadily as she did, and using her forum to defend and encourage womanly interest in prizefighting, she pushed the boundaries of female sports journalism and set herself forth as a feminist.⁷ Yet by writing about boxing from the so-called woman's point of view, she showed herself to be amenable to gender-based stereotypes that newspapers, and society, had inherited from previous decades, and so was not unlike many other female journalists of the 1920s who drew assignments to cover major sporting events from a "woman's angle."

The headstrong, independent, feminist side of Dixon's personality was evident from her youth; her mother wanted her to be a nurse, but Dixon insisted on a career in journalism.⁸ A native of Ohio, Dixon cut her journalistic teeth for a few months at the *Marion Daily Star*, published in the Buckeye State by future U.S. president Warren Harding. Although some townspeople balked at a woman writing for the local newspaper – "A girl reporter was something new in Marion"⁹ – the strong-willed Dixon persisted, aided along the way by the encouragement of Harding's wife Florence, the *Star's* business manager. Later, Dixon went on to a stint at the *Poughkeepsie (New York) Star*, but by late 1918, her determination and assertiveness led her to a job at the *New York Telegram*. Recalling the circumstances of that move, Dixon contemporary Ishbel Ross wrote that Dixon:

. . . traveled to New York [City] one day and dropped in at the *Telegram* office. She knew no one there, but she was told to take the woman's page and write her opinion of every story on it. She was to send in the result at her leisure. She sat down in the outer office and did the job on the spot. That was on a Thursday. On the following Saturday she got a wire asking her to report for work on Monday. She went in on Sunday, fearing her benefactor might change his mind over the weekend.¹⁰

Once at the *Telegram*, Dixon began contributing to the women's page regularly, in addition to interviewing New York notables and visiting celebrities for feature stories in the news section. Having impressed editor Andy Ford in that role, she was soon assigned to do a series of preview stories on the 1919 Jess Willard-Jack Dempsey fight. This was her introduction to New York sports journalism and set her on her way to nine years of fairly steady sports coverage at the *Telegram*, where she covered not only boxing, but all kinds of major sporting events, including the World Series, horse races and tennis matches. She continued to write non-sports stories for the women's page and news section as well, while also serving a stint as a top officer in the New York Newspaper Women's Club.¹¹

⁷ As pointed out earlier in this dissertation, the word feminist is used as it would have been understood during the 1920s; that is, to describe the "new woman" who sought to enjoy the same activities and entertainments as men of the period. Such women were generally associated with career aspirations, political involvement, educational advances, athletic competitiveness, and/or sexual mores that rejected traditional, Victorian notions of femininity and "ladylike" behavior.

⁸ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 193.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Dixon was one of the club's two vice presidents in 1924, when it expanded into new headquarters at 53 West Forty-Seventh Street. The following year, when the club was dispossessed of its new home, Dixon assumed the presidency and spearheaded a fund drive aimed at raising \$75,000 to build permanent headquarters for the association. See "Fourth Estate Women," *New York Tribune*, 28 January 1924, sec. 1, p. 7; "Newspaper Women

One of the biggest news stories she covered for the *Telegram* came toward the end of her tenure with the paper, when in the spring of 1927, she reported on New York's sensational Ruth Snyder-Judd Gray murder trial.¹² It was also around this time that Dixon married military officer Major Walter H. "Cappy" Wells. Dixon and Wells were subsequently forced to delay their honeymoon several weeks as the Snyder-Gray trial took longer than expected.¹³ Perhaps realizing that the daily grind of the newspaper business complicated marriage, Dixon left the *Telegram* after returning from her honeymoon. However, she remained very much involved in the journalism industry, taking wire service and newspaper syndicate jobs that provided her more flexible assignments. Working for outlets such as the United Press, the North American Newspaper Alliance, and the Bell Syndicate, Dixon's post-*Telegram* career included the coverage of select major stories, such as the Lindbergh baby kidnapping and trial, as well as serialized fiction and a nationally syndicated column.¹⁴

Given the focus of this dissertation, Dixon's writing for the *New York Telegram* is the primary point of interest here. Of particular interest, of course, is her sports writing for that paper. Yet to best understand how her sports reporting embodied the contradictory pulls of progressive feminism and traditional femininity, it is helpful to first examine her women's page columns and news stories she produced at the *Telegram* during the twenties, since these represented the lion's share of her work for the newspaper and give direct insight into the paradoxical views of womanhood that underlay so much of her sports journalism.

In many respects, Dixon's women's page columns and news features reflected a bold feminism that was ahead of its time. In sharp contrast to women's page writers of the era who were waxing about the "possibilities of parsley" and the doings of debutantes, Dixon used her platform on the women's pages to encourage her sisters to take up challenging careers and seek financial independence. In particular, she chided women who dared to enter a loveless marriage for the sake of financial security, instructing them to reject the "flabid old tradition about the clinging vine and the sturdy oak" and to instead take stock of their talents, secure in the knowledge that "no woman who has tried and kept trying has failed to carve her niche."¹⁵

Also, while many outspoken women's page writers were championing laws to protect mothers and children, Dixon not only joined this fight, but went further by challenging reform-minded women to look outside the home by seeking ways to help prostitutes and other women

Open New Clubhouse Here," *New York Tribune*, 11 February 1924, sec. 1, p. 2; and "Newspaper Women Seek Fund For Home," *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 5 February 1925, 7.

¹² Because it was rare for a woman to face the death penalty, Ruth Snyder's 1927 murder trial generated sensational press coverage. It is probably best remembered because of the grisly execution photo that the *New York Daily News* published on its front page. The photo of Snyder, taken as electric currents ripped through her body, boosted the *Daily News* press run by 120,000 and is often used today to prompt ethics discussions among college journalism students. For information about the increased press run at the *Daily News*, see Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 267.

¹³ It took roughly two weeks just to fill a jury.

¹⁴ Walker, *City Editor*, 258-59; Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 191-94.

¹⁵ For such sentiments, see the following Dixon columns from the *New York Evening Telegram*: "Rich Poor Women," 15 August 1920, 16; "Kisses," 24 August 1920, 4; "We Can Do It," 19 January 1925, 9; "Quitters," 11 August 1921, 7; "Steam Up," 5 June 1923, 9; "Earn Your Own," 28 October 1920, 11; "Drugged," 7 June 1923, 7.

on the fringes of “respectable” society.¹⁶ The forward-looking Dixon also wrote a news story railing against sexual harassment in the workplace and advising women to resist their bosses’ unwanted advances – this, despite the fact that the term sexual harassment was not even in use yet.¹⁷ And, as if that were not progressive enough, Dixon on one occasion even mused cheerfully about the prospect of a female president.¹⁸

On more than one occasion, she also displayed a feminist attitude by using her column to defend the oft-maligned flapper lifestyle. For example, when a flapper in San Francisco created a national stir by shooting to death her mother, Dixon scoffed at those who blamed the murder on the young girl’s preference for parties and jazz music. “Matricide existed long before the first saxophone moaned its invitation to light feet,” Dixon pointed out.¹⁹

Given all this evidence, it would appear that Dixon was a feminist in the strongest sense of the word. Yet, from one women’s page column or news story to the next – and sometimes even within a single column or story – Dixon contradicted the very feminist ideas she espoused.

For example, despite her vigorous promotion of women’s financial independence, self-reliance, and career pursuits, Dixon also stressed repeatedly that marriage and family, not work, must be a woman’s ultimate goal and priority. “Generally speaking, the workaday world is his province just as the home is her province,” Dixon wrote in explaining what she considered to be the proper spheres for man and woman.²⁰ Writing in another column about a high school graduation class of 309 girls, Dixon lamented that only one of the students hoped “to get married and have a home” whereas the remaining 308 had ambitions ranging from acting and writing, to medicine and law.²¹ “Certainly the home instinct seems to be a bit blurred,” Dixon chastised, before adding hopefully that, “when the right time and the right man come along,” the graduates will trade in their career ambitions for “the highest mission of their kind,” namely marriage.²²

On the matter of politics, Dixon seemed similarly conflicted. Reform-minded though she was, Dixon ignored the legislative agenda of women when she covered New York’s 1926 state Republican convention, instead focusing on the fashions worn by the female delegates. The result? A piece of puffery about hats and gowns, with a remark about a “corsage of magenta orchids” thrown in for good measure.²³

¹⁶ Dixon, “Four Strolls in the Primrose Path,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 2 June 1919, 3. Similar sympathy for wayward women is expressed in Dixon, “The Guilty One?” *New York Evening Telegram*, 1 July 1923, 7, and Dixon, “Environment Is Stronger Than Heredity, Says Judge,” *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 4 February 1925, 4.

¹⁷ Dixon, “Problems of the Working Girl: Dinners, Diamonds, and the Boss’ Limousine Lead to Heartaches and Divorce Court, Says the Stenographer,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 June 1919, 3.

¹⁸ Dixon, “Puritans Yoked Women, Declares Mrs. Normanton,” *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 8 January 1925, 3.

¹⁹ Dixon, “Why Blame Jazz?” *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 26 January 1925, 9.

²⁰ Dixon, “Stay Put,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 11 September 1923, 9.

²¹ Dixon, “What’s a Husband Worth?” *New York Evening Telegram*, 14 June 1923, 9.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Dixon, “Smartly Dressed Women Make Republican Gathering Colorful Fashion Parade,” *New York Telegram*, 27 September 1926, 2.

Away from the state convention, fashions were also on Dixon's mind. She wrote on the general subject frequently,²⁴ with flapper style her most common inspiration. Her aforementioned defense of flapper music and parties notwithstanding, she regularly assailed flapper fashion for threatening feminine values. Underneath screaming headlines such as "Get the Flapper!" and "The Vulgarians," Dixon chastised flappers for wearing "bizarre clothes and crass imitation jewels" that defamed "gentle, wholesome, honest femininity."²⁵ Rather than revel in mascara and peacock feathers, Dixon suggested that women turn their attention to cooking, in anticipation of marriage; after all, "a goodly number of broken homes could be blamed on an unvaried menu of dry scrambled eggs and over-done toast for breakfast," Dixon contended.²⁶

As contradictory as Dixon might seem – writing as a militant feminist at one moment and as the guardian of fashion sense and domesticity the next – the fact is, she herself gave no indication that she was bothered by, or even recognized, the tension that existed. In fact, she once wrote that a woman "wears her intellectual [and] social mantle for the world" but then at night, "she slips it off" for the man in her life "and reveals her fluffy, feminine, altogether desirable self."²⁷ That comment is a perfect window on Dixon's convictions: she believed that women should be progressive, particularly in relation to society and the workplace, but also traditionally feminine, especially in terms of marriage and the home. In short, she believed women should be able to do it all – that they should be able to strike a balance in the face of the tensions posed by the dissolution of the Victorian age and the emergence of the modernist era.

It was precisely this kind of mindset that permeated Dixon's writing on sports. She was at once a progressive feminist and yet stereotypically feminine. For example, she saw women's attendance at boxing matches, baseball games and other male-dominated sporting events as both their right (a feminist view) and as a vehicle by which women could share their husbands' interests and so strengthen marriage and home (a feminine view).

Dixon illustrated the point in a 1926 woman's page column, when she made a two-pronged argument in defense of women's attendance at prizefights. On the one hand, "Any event which can draw to itself the personal attention and the presence of the biggest and best minds in the nation, not to mention the cream of the country's power, wealth and artistry, merits the serious consideration of every citizen, regardless of sex," Dixon wrote with matter-of-fact feminism.²⁸ But, in deference to a more traditionally feminine attitude, Dixon quickly pointed out that female attendance at prizefights also suggests that women have "sufficient interest in

²⁴ See, for example, Dixon, "Build 'Em Longer," *New York Evening Telegram*, 19 December 1920, 13, and Dixon, "Opens Free Beauty Clinic to Aid Girls Seeking Jobs," *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 3 February 1925, 3.

²⁵ See the following by Dixon, "Get the Flapper!" *New York Evening Telegram*, 21 December 1920, 5; "The Vulgarians," *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 7 January 1925, 9; "Captain Cupid, Page The Firing Squad," *New York Evening Telegram*, 7 December 1920, 5.

²⁶ Dixon, "Change," *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 14 January 1925, 11.

²⁷ Dixon, "The Chameleon," *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 5 January 1925, 9.

²⁸ Dixon, "She's My Pal," *New York Telegram*, 22 September 1926, 10.

their menfolk.”²⁹ And so, taking in a boxing match “at the side of a husband” or beau was a perfect occasion for “sweethearting,” she suggested.³⁰

Even as early as 1920, Dixon had used one of her women’s page columns to suggest that a shared interest in sports was a pathway to marital bliss. She described the happiness of the female sports fan – she “is never left to spend lonely hours while [her] husband is in the open getting full of health and enjoyment”³¹ – and then promptly challenged wives who lacked a sporting interest to attend a baseball game:

Cease railing at the head of the household because he likes his bit of excitement.
Put on your bonnet and join in the fun.
Be a “good sport” instead of a killjoy.
Make home happy.³²

These previous two excerpts notwithstanding, Dixon rarely addressed sports on the women’s page. Instead, her sports coverage generally appeared on the sports pages or as part of the news section, sometimes on page one.

The start of Dixon’s career as a sportswriter for the *Telegram* was announced in June of 1919, when a story on the sports pages alerted readers that two of the newspaper’s writers – Dixon and sports editor Bill Wathey – would be traveling to Toledo to report on preparations for the upcoming heavyweight bout between champion Jess Willard and challenger Jack Dempsey. Wathey, the story explained, would keep readers posted on developments from the two training camps. Dixon’s role, however, required a more elaborate introduction. The paper explained its decision to assign a woman to report on boxing this way:

While it would appear that much of a fighter’s life is serious, there is a lighter and really human element in the makeup of two such prominent figures as Willard and Dempsey.

Character is pronounced in every one, and the Evening Telegram believes that the mental makeup of the rival heavyweights may have a bearing on the outcome of the title mill.

The Evening Telegram is fortunate in having so able a character reader as Miss Jane Dixon, who also will visit the training quarters of Willard and Dempsey and in her own inimitable style sum up the advantages and maybe disadvantages of the two gladiators.³³

The next day, another blurb on the sports page further clarified Dixon’s role. She is “long on the sort of ability which ‘sizes’ up things and humans as they are” and will therefore be “depended upon to give a feminine twist” to the coverage, the story explained.³⁴

In effect, Dixon would be writing human interest features to complement Wathey’s more straightforward reports. She would do this with an eye toward reporting items that would be of particular interest to women – a strategy that newspapers of the period adopted as a means to

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Dixon, “Are You With Or Against?” *New York Evening Telegram*, 10 October 1920, 22.

³² Ibid.

³³ “Two *Telegram* Writers Visit Toledo Arena,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 20 June 1919, 16.

³⁴ “Work of Boxers To Be Reviewed by Jane Dixon,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 21 June 1919, 10.

increase female readership.³⁵ At the same time, Dixon's boxing coverage would be a convenient way for the *Telegram* to expand its already extensive coverage of sports. As one of the few evening papers in a New York market dominated by a.m. papers, the *Telegram* took great pride in delivering late sports results to its readers. While morning papers went to press too early to include some horseracing results or extra-inning baseball scores, the *Telegram* proudly displayed those results on its front page, often with complete statistical summaries. In fact, sometimes, page one of the *Telegram* resembled a sports page more than a news page – this, despite the fact that the paper also had dedicated sports pages inside.³⁶ And so it was that Dixon found herself in Toledo, where she would file reports from the Dempsey and Willard boxing camps on a daily basis, over a ten-day stretch, before finally writing her own account of the fight to accompany sports editor Wathey's bout recap.

Although it was a supporting role, the assignment put Dixon in a position to relate the events of one of 1919's most celebrated spectacles. In the words of the *Telegram* itself, the Willard-Dempsey fight figured to be the "greatest of present day sporting stories."³⁷ With a new 80,000-seat arena built in Toledo to host the fight, there was speculation that the bout could bring a million-dollar gate.³⁸ Twice that dollar figure was expected to be wagered on the fight.³⁹ Excitement swirled because fans were curious to see how Willard, following a three-year layoff, would fare against the up-and-coming Dempsey, a former Colorado hobo whose rise to the cusp of athletic glory had caught widespread attention.⁴⁰

In contrast to Wathey – who mostly stuck to predictable topics such as the fighters' training progress and favored strategy⁴¹ – Dixon provided several insightful stories that did indeed humanize the champion and challenger.

³⁵ See the discussion in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

³⁶ Aside from its almost tabloid-like treatment of sports, the broadsheet *Telegram* had many other distinctions. It was one of the first daily newspapers to regularly publish political cartoons, a practice it started around 1870. It was also known for publishing several of its pages on pink paper, a distinction that gave way to World War I-imposed restrictions on raw materials such as paper and dye. More relevant to Dixon's tenure at the paper, the *Telegram* during the 1920s underwent a series of ownership changes amid the newspaper merger frenzy of the decade. Publishers during Dixon's run included the estate of James Gordon Bennett Jr., newspaper magnate Frank Munsey, and the Scripps-Howard company. This contributed to the many names changes that the paper underwent; it was referred to at different times as the *Evening Telegram*, the *Telegram and Evening Mail*, and just the *Telegram*, before ultimately becoming part of the *World-Telegram* in 1931. For the purposes of this dissertation, the newspaper is referred to simply as the *Telegram* in the text. However, footnotes provide the precise name that the newspaper was using at the time of the cited material. Also, readers will notice that the headlines cited in footnotes sometimes fluctuate between down and up style; this, too, is a reflection of the newspaper's many different faces. For more on the history of the *Telegram*, see Emery, Emery and Roberts, *The Press and America*; Folkerts and Teeter, *Voices of a Nation*; and Mott, *American Journalism*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Roger Kahn, *A Flame of Pure Fire: Jack Dempsey and the Roaring '20s* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1999), 54-62. Kahn's book makes no mention of Dixon.

³⁹ Evensen, *When Dempsey Fought Tunney*, 27.

⁴⁰ Boxing promoter Tex Rickard's savvy manipulation of the press spurred the hype. *Ibid.*, 25-26.

⁴¹ Occasionally, Wathey did mine some interesting human interest angles. A particularly good example was a story that contrasted Jess Willard's outwardly nonchalant attitude with the worrisome tendencies that interfered with his

Having observed both fighters in their respective camps, Dixon, in one of her first stories from Toledo, sought to highlight for readers the differences in their personalities. She did so with an effective string of metaphor and comparison: “Dempsey is a sizzling sparkling glass of champagne. Willard is a tall seidel of cool light beer. Dempsey works until his trainers have to force him to play. Willard plays until his trainers force him to work. Dempsey laughs without smiling. Willard smiles without laughing. Dempsey says it is a knockout. Willard says it is a pushover.”⁴²

Elsewhere, she sought to illuminate their personalities by recording their reactions to specific topics, as when she asked the fighters if they had any superstitions. While both boxers initially said they relied on skill instead of luck – “My faith is in my fists,” Willard resolutely declared⁴³ – Dixon pressed Dempsey to rethink his answer. With Dixon insisting to Dempsey that he must “surely” take comfort in “some good luck piece,” the fighter finally admitted that “there may have been occasions when I suspected a ghost of a banshee was looking out for the Irish part of my makeup. I’ve never seen the funny little lad. He has no voice, so he cannot talk to me, but now and then I have made decisions without knowing why.”⁴⁴ Expressing hope that his “pal” will be hovering on his shoulder the day of the fight, Dempsey had given Dixon plenty of fodder to hold up a headline proclaiming that “Dempsey Has a Banshee Guarding Him.”⁴⁵

On other occasions, Dixon explored the boxers’ relationships with significant persons in their lives. For example, one story highlighted the strong friendship between Dempsey and his trainer Jack Kearns. Recounting how they had met in Utah eight years earlier, Dixon called the friendship between Dempsey and Kearns “as loyal a palship as two fellows can form and keep.”⁴⁶ Because the two had risen to prominence together and endured their share of tribulations along the way, Dixon characterized their friendship as one that had “been fused and fixed in the fiery furnace of time and tide until for Jack and Jack, it is as firm, as true, as supple, as the pet blade of an expert swordsmanship. It will bend double, but it will not break.”⁴⁷

The same story also explored Dempsey’s relationship with his mother. Such was the fighter’s devotion to his mom that, “No matter what important business is going on at the camp, there is one inalienable right with which it must not and cannot interfere – Jack’s daily letter to his mother,” Dixon wrote.⁴⁸ Dempsey, in fact, planned to send his mom a wire right after the

sleep and drew concern from his friends. See Wathey, “Worry Sets Its Mark on Jess, Who Cannot Sleep,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 26 June 1919, 13.

⁴² Dixon, “Old Mr. Psychology Leans to Dempsey in Figuring Winner of Coming Battle,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 27 June 1919, 14.

⁴³ Dixon, “Dempsey Has a Banshee Guarding Him; Willard’s Faith Is in His Fists,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 28 June 1919, 10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Dixon, “Dempsey Got His Chance at Start of His Career in Kearns’ Durango Gym,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 1 July 1919, 12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

fight, Dixon revealed in a follow-up story. “She’ll be waiting,” Dixon quoted Dempsey as saying about his mother, “and her dear old heart will be fluttering from the moment she figures I will be in the arena until she gets that message. I hope I will have good news for her.”⁴⁹

Finding yet another angle that exposed the fighter’s soft side, Dixon wrote about Dempsey’s rapport with his youngest rooters. She noted how he did not shoo away the “cloud of children” who followed him around his training facility, but instead playfully engaged them.⁵⁰ In particular, Dixon astutely noticed that one child, a seven-year-old named Helen Dowell, seemed smitten with Dempsey. Every day, the young girl waited to greet Dempsey as he walked between his training facility and living quarters. Intrigued, Dixon interviewed the girl, resulting in a cute conversation that Dixon recounted in print:

“Is Jack Dempsey your sweetheart?” I asked her the other day when she had left off adoring long enough for the challenger to go in and get made up for the workout. “Uh, huh.” . . . “Did he pick you, or did you pick him?” “I picked him.” . . . “Are you going to see Jack fight?” was the next inquiry. “No. . . because the other man might hit him. I don’t want to see Jack get hurt.”⁵¹

As she did with Dempsey, Dixon wrote about Willard’s disposition toward children – in this case, his own brood of five back in Kansas. “Willard is the proud father of five, healthy happy young Americans. He is a good father, a generous father, a kindly, but at times, as occasion demands, a stern father,” Dixon wrote.⁵²

Turning her attention to Willard’s wife, Dixon produced a story that addressed the stomach knots that the champion’s spouse was likely to feel if, as rumored, she decided to break her usual routine and actually attend her husband’s bout: “It is easy to understand why Mrs. Willard has kept away from the ring. . . No woman could sit there and see the man she loves pounded, punched and pummeled. It would be beyond the bounds of womanly endurance,” Dixon empathized.⁵³

As this series of examples attests, much of Dixon’s coverage focused on interests that by 1920s standards – and perhaps even today – would be considered traditionally feminine; she wrote about relationships and the softer side of humanity, about the feelings of a wife, the love for one’s mother, and the innocence of a child.

Even more stereotypically feminine, though, were two other aspects of Dixon’s Toledo coverage: one was the almost embarrassing amount of attention she devoted to the handsomeness and muscularity of the fighters; the other was her preoccupation with the cosmetic changes experienced by Toledo as the city found itself unaccustomedly graced by celebrities, socialites and notable journalists who were arriving daily in anticipation of the fight.

⁴⁹ Dixon, “Dame Rumor States That Mrs. Jess May Be on Hand to See Hubby Sniff Rosin,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1919, 12.

⁵⁰ Dixon, “Dempsey Got His Chance at Start of His Career in Kearns’ Durango Gym,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 1 July 1919, 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Dixon, “Dame Rumor States That Mrs. Jess May Be on Hand to See Hubby Sniff Rosin,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1919, 12.

That Dixon would be unabashed in reporting about the boxers' impressive physiques and overall attractiveness was clear from the start. Appearing on consecutive days, her first two stories from Toledo were fawning tributes to Willard and Dempsey's masculinity. "Jess Willard is a man mountain," Dixon wrote of the defending champion in her first story. "He is the man oak of the species."⁵⁴ Several paragraphs later, under the subhead "Women Like His Looks," Dixon added matter-of-factly: "Women say Willard is good looking," then proceeded to list the reasons why in a series of one-sentence paragraphs:

The champion's hair is dark with just a touch of frost.
His eyes are blue beneath dark lidded brows.
His face is long and shapely.
His ears are small [and] so is his mouth. . .⁵⁵

In a similar litany the next day, Dixon described Dempsey, but with even greater effusiveness:

Jack Dempsey must stand for all time as a complete credit to the human body.
He is a perfect physical specimen.
He is fit as the finest fiddle.
He is like a valuable violin tuned in the hands of a master musician. His shoulders might have been modeled by a sculptor who loved the clay he wrought.
Beneath his sun-browned skin the muscles ridge, ripple, run.
There is not a superfluous ounce of anything from the top of his head to the tip of his toe.
He is the ultimate word in the man-mould.⁵⁶

Despite taking a break to incorporate some observations about Dempsey's fighting instinct, his lightning-fast fists, and his panther-like movements, Dixon had not finished her appraisal of his physical appearance. Returning to the topic, she wrote: "No one would deny he has a virile face, a face full of strength and courage to back you. His hair is dark and inclined to be a bit boisterous. His eyes are deep set with something of the dreamer in their brown depths."⁵⁷

In the days leading up to the fight, sports editor Wathey and male reporters from other papers also reported on the fighters' appearance, most notably their physical fitness. But the male writers did so as a matter of course, and nothing they wrote came close to approximating the gushing style employed by Dixon. Meanwhile, Dixon, for her part, continued to sprinkle adoring adjectives on the fighters: the twenty-four-year-old Dempsey, for example, had a "boyish face" a "broad grin," and a "perfect purling muscled body."⁵⁸ He was, wrote Dixon, "a

⁵⁴ Dixon, "Jess is a Man Mountain and Voted Good Looking by Most of the Fair Sex," *New York Evening Telegram*, 25 June 1919, 14.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Dixon, "Dempsey, Yankee Irishman, Must Stand for All Time as Credit to Human Body," *New York Evening Telegram*, 26 June 1919, 13.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Dixon, "Dempsey Has a Banshee Guarding Him; Willard's Faith Is in His Fists," *New York Evening Telegram*, 28 June 1919, 10; Jane Dixon, "Jane Dixon Gives Reasons For Dempsey Victory," *New York Evening Telegram*, 29 June 1919, 14.

young man god.”⁵⁹ Willard, who at thirty-seven was less the object of Dixon’s worshipful prose, nevertheless earned praise as a “mammoth mauler” who had “star points of humor [that] twinkled in his blue eyes.”⁶⁰ Not only that, but the purple shorts and jersey he wore during one particular training session were so becoming, that twenty admiring letters from female fight fans were subsequently found under the door of the champ’s gymnasium, Dixon reported.⁶¹

Whatever observations Dixon made about the boxers’ clothes, eyes, and muscular frames, they were no match for her dotting assessment of the fighters’ healthy-looking skin. In a single story, Dixon devoted more than a dozen paragraphs to the boxers’ flesh, finally concluding that the two had perfect, albeit different, complexions. Dempsey, having lived an outdoor life in Colorado and Utah, was “the color of burnished copper. Jack is as brown, as tawny as any of his Indian ancestors who roved the plains or tracked the forests,” Dixon wrote. “He is brown all over. There is not a blemish on his body. A peppering of healthy boyish freckles accentuate the coppery look of him.”⁶² In contrast, champion Willard “is white and satiny with a promising undertone of strong, healthy pink.” One might reasonably envy “the texture and smoothness of his skin, the clearness and coolness of his complexion,” Dixon continued in her assessment of Willard. Indeed, “not a spot, not a discoloration, mars this statuesque mould of the human form divine,” she wrote of the champ.⁶³ So perfect was the skin of both boxers that, according to Dixon, bettors could hardly go wrong by siding with either the tanned Dempsey or the fair-skinned Willard. “The brown or the pink? Here we are again, back to the old interrogation point, the question without any answer,” she wrote.⁶⁴ Both fighters, in her estimation, were tributes to the male sex.

Even fight promoter Tex Rickard, “medium height [and] broad of shoulder,” had his manliness extolled by Dixon.⁶⁵ Tracing his path from Texas cowhand, to Alaska gold miner, to prizefight promoter, Dixon asserted that “when the romance of Rickard is written it will have all the stories of holders of fortune, professional filibusters, globe trotters, [and] swashbuckling d’Artagnana looking like speaking day in the district schoolhouse.”⁶⁶ After all, the fight promoter’s adventurous life left no doubt that “Rickard is a man,” Dixon wrote in a simple, four-

⁵⁹ Dixon, “Dempsey Is the Essence of Strong, Daring Youth and Worried by Nothing,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 2 July 1919, 12.

⁶⁰ Dixon, “Dempsey Has a Banshee Guarding Him; Willard’s Faith Is in His Fists,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 28 June 1919, 10.

⁶¹ Dixon, “Dempsey Has a Banshee Guarding Him; Willard’s Faith Is in His Fists,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 28 June 1919, 10.

⁶² Dixon, “Jane Dixon Gives Reasons For Dempsey Victory,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 29 June 1919, 14.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Dixon, “Tex Rickard, Impresario of Fisticuffs, Is the Most Luminous Luminary of All,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 30 June 1919, 12.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

word sentence that not only concluded her story but seemed to leave her on the verge of fainting.⁶⁷

In fairness to Dixon, not everything she wrote was so fawning or superficial. Although scattered throughout her coverage, she did deliver occasionally meaningful insights about the fighters' skills and preparedness. Such observations – reporting, for example, that “Dempsey can spin around three times while Willard is making up his mind to move,” or that Dempsey seemed more excited to fight than Willard, who on the verge of retirement, saw the bout as one last payday – showed Dixon to be capable of making the kinds of assessments characteristic of her male sports writing colleagues.⁶⁸

Still, the boxers' stunning physiques remained her primary focus, as *Telegram* readers saw once more when it finally came time for Dixon to report the outcome of the Willard-Dempsey fight. Whereas sports editor Wathey dedicated much of his post-fight report to discussing the 56-pound weight disadvantage that Dempsey had overcome and the new champ's eagerness to defend his title against any suitable challenger,⁶⁹ Dixon's post-fight story stood as an unapologetic exaltation of Dempsey's masculinity. The second paragraph of her story is a perfect example: “Jack Dempsey, a mere lad of twenty-four, tall, lithe, slender, muscular, with a heart as broad as his perfect shoulders, and a smile as sunny as the mountain slopes of his native State [sic] – Jack Dempsey is this day the mightiest among men.”⁷⁰

Except for a few descriptions of particular punches that were exchanged during the fight, Dixon was more interested in dwelling on the manly features of the bout; indeed, “man” was the key word throughout her report, with Dempsey gaining most of the accolades. The fight, she wrote, was a “titanic test of man strength pitted against man strength,” an exhibition of “muscle against muscle,” and a testament to the fact that “America has the finest men on earth.”⁷¹ Finest among them in Dixon's opinion, of course, was the newly crowned Dempsey, whose “nerves are but electric wires charging out of his splendid body.”⁷² Dempsey, wrote Dixon, was the “best man. . . the fastest, the hardest hitting fighter who ever faced his man within the roped ring.” He possessed the “perfect body.”⁷³

Dixon was so taken with Dempsey that she failed to conclude her story with her usual string of notes about other interesting persons and developments she had witnessed that day, thus breaking a pattern she had established in her pre-fight coverage. As Dixon herself admitted in

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Dixon, “Tex Rickard, Impresario of Fisticuffs, Is the Most Luminous Luminary of All,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 30 June 1919, 12; Dixon, “Dame Rumor States That Mrs. Jess May Be on Hand to See Hubby Sniff Rosin,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1919, 12.

⁶⁹ Wathey, “\$10,000 a Week for Dempsey in Stage Contract,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 5 July 1919, 1. As the headline suggests, Wathey also wrote about the new champion's prospects for theatrical roles; even so, the headline ignores the other prominent angles that the writer developed, including the fact that the story's lead focused on the fifty-six-pound weight differential between fighters and said nothing of Dempsey's potential acting career.

⁷⁰ Dixon, “Jack Dempsey, Mighty Fighter, Won On Merits,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 5 July 1919, 5.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

her post-fight report, “I had intended to jazz a bit about the bout. My intention was to pick out the high spots of humor and send them along. [But] I can only remember the boy with the fire of youth in his deep brown eye,” she wrote, referring to Dempsey.⁷⁴

Though her trademark notes may have been absent from this, her final report from Toledo, their presence at the end of virtually all her other Dempsey-Willard stories only bolstered the traditionally feminine image that – as illustrated over the last several pages – was established through her fixation with hard bodies and her propensity for soft feature angles. Her notes, which had no parallel in the work of male sports editor Wathey, further feminized Dixon because they focused on topics that would have been considered traditionally feminine, most notably fashion.

Sometimes, Dixon’s fashion observations/notes pertained to fight fans en masse rather than any person in particular. Typical were remarks such as: “Black and white checkered suits are as plentiful among the fistic fraternity and their followers as gold mesh bags in the dressing room of a Broadway chorus,” or “Ginghams are considered smart for ladies who spend their afternoons and matinee money at the arenas. . . They are topped by sport hats, which set some one back well up in two figures, and they are further enhanced by summer furs that cost no less than three.”⁷⁵

Other times, Dixon referenced the styles worn by individuals. While entertainers and socialites were obvious targets, Dixon – in 1919, at least – was particularly wont to comment on the attire of her fellow journalists, many of whom had national reputations and were thus celebrities in their own right. As Dixon’s notes pointed out, the *New York World’s* Hype Igoe was “the niftiest dressed scribe west of Herald square [sic].”⁷⁶ The *New York American’s* Damon Runyon, also in town for the Dempsey-Willard bout, earned mention when Dixon noticed his lapel was absent its customary white carnation.⁷⁷ As Dixon observed in her notes a day later, friends who feared that Runyon’s flower was the casualty of a thinning bankroll needn’t have worried, as evidenced by the site of a free-spending Damon “wrapping himself around a double portion of porterhouse” in a Toledo restaurant.⁷⁸

Even when Dixon’s observations did not stem from fashion concerns, the notes section tacked to the end of her Dempsey-Willard stories regularly found reason to highlight the doings of her sports writing colleagues. Dixon would report, for example, the name of a sportswriter who “toddled” up the street of downtown Toledo in the wee hours, a not so veiled reference to the journalism fraternity’s flouting of prohibition laws.⁷⁹ Similar was this note, written in her trademark choppy style: “Boy galloped through the dining room of the Secor Hotel at dinner

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Dixon, “Dempsey, Yankee Irishman, Must Stand for All Time as Credit to Human Body,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 26 June 1919, 13.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Dixon, “Dempsey Has a Banshee Guarding Him; Willard’s Faith Is in His Fists,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 28 June 1919, 10.

⁷⁸ Dixon, “Jane Dixon Gives Reasons For Dempsey Victory,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 29 June 1919, 14.

⁷⁹ Dixon, “Dempsey Has a Banshee Guarding Him; Willard’s Faith Is in His Fists,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 28 June 1919, 10.

hour paging [sportswriter] Mr. Jack Curley. Clattering of cutlery could be plainly heard at Downey's refreshment parlor, five blocks away."⁸⁰

On another occasion, Dixon used her notes to chronicle how a well-intentioned sports journalist became involved in a fist fight: "Scribe Harry Hochstetter, of Chicago, attempted to extract a citizen from a plate of chop suey the other evening. The citizen woke up and began pulling [a] Willard on Harry. Harry came right back with a Dempsey and it was all over but the drag-out. . . ."⁸¹

Because such notes had less to do with the prizefight than with the nightlife of the press corps, they affirmed the feminine stereotype – however unfair – that women like to gossip. Thus, the notes that Dixon produced in the course of her Dempsey-Willard coverage suggested that she embodied traditionally feminine tendencies.

But what of the "feminist Dixon" alluded to earlier? How did Dixon reflect her feminist side in her boxing coverage? Given her gossipy tone, fashion focus, doting descriptions of masculinity, and inclination toward maudlin human interest stories, it appears that Dixon was the embodiment of femininity, not feminism.

Fuller consideration of her 1919 boxing coverage brings the feminist Dixon into focus.

Consider, for example, the notes most previously excerpted. While they can be unflatteringly characterized as the observations of a gossip, they could just as easily be defended as the work of an insider intent on giving readers an overall sense of the hoopla – late-night shenanigans included – that surrounded this prizefight/national spectacle. To describe Dixon as an insider seems even more appropriate when one considers that many of her notes about her fellow sports journalists were not scandalous, but simply informative. Spotting Ring Lardner as he tried his best to beat the Toledo heat was enough to prompt the following note from Dixon:

Mr. Ring Lardner, of "You Know Me Al" fame, comfortably ensconced in a chair two sizes too short, was taking the air on the front porch of the Dempsey cottage today. As the cool breezes from Maumee Bay fanned Ring's burning brow he found the atmosphere of Toledo rather damp, due no doubt to its proximity to Lake Erie. Might be right at that.⁸²

Other notes frequently named members of the press corps simply for the purpose of recording their predictions. One series of notes, in particular, rattled off the names of eight prominent sports journalists, followed by their picks.⁸³

Arguably, Dixon's repeated references to her male colleagues were an indirect way of declaring that she had penetrated their fraternity. It was clear from her gathering of predictions that she did indeed speak to the male writers and that they were comfortable in providing her with their opinions. Moreover, if she could confidently report on a writer staggering back to his hotel in the wee hours, or of a journalist getting involved in a fight at a restaurant, it stands to

⁸⁰ Dixon, "Jane Dixon Gives Reasons For Dempsey Victory," *New York Evening Telegram*, 29 June 1919, 14.

⁸¹ Dixon, "Dempsey Got His Chance at Start of His Career in Kearns' Durango Gym," *New York Evening Telegram*, 1 July 1919, 12.

⁸² Dixon, "Old Mr. Psychology Leans to Dempsey in Figuring Winner of Coming Battle," *New York Evening Telegram*, 27 June 1919, 14.

⁸³ Dixon, "Dame Rumor States That Mrs. Jess May Be on Hand to See Hubby Sniff Rosin," *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1919, 12.

reason that she herself was present to witness these occurrences. Or at the very least, she was friendly enough with some male writers that they would share their tales with her. For a woman to form such a rapport with male sportswriters in 1919, when the sports pages were still largely the province of men, is credit to her ability and confidence, their open-mindedness, or a combination of both. Regardless, the point is this: cracking that ol' boys' network was, in and of itself, boldly progressive. And so to that extent, Dixon emerges as a feminist.

In addition, the *Telegram's* presentation of Dixon's 1919 Dempsey-Willard coverage furthered the impression that she had muscled her way to the front lines of the sports writing fraternity. In spite of the teasers that had characterized Dixon as a quaint "character reader"⁸⁴ who would bring a "feminine twist"⁸⁵ to her 1919 boxing reports, the subsequent coverage portrayed Dixon more boldly. "Jane Dixon Gives Reasons for Dempsey Victory," one page-spanning headline proclaimed, suggesting that Dixon had observed enough of the Willard and Dempsey training camps to offer an informed opinion *a la* her male counterparts.⁸⁶ On another occasion, the *Telegram* published a large photo of Dixon, her notebook in hand, standing alongside defending champ Willard; the photo used a headline and cutline to remind readers that Dixon was "writing daily" from the Toledo training camps of Willard and Dempsey.⁸⁷ Several days after the fight, another photo showed new champ Dempsey, nattily attired in street clothes, as he was being "interviewed" by Dixon.⁸⁸ Projecting a confident air in both pictures, the smiling Dixon stood as the poster girl for a new kind of woman braving the heretofore largely male-dominated field of sports journalism. Intentionally or not, the photos reminded readers that Dixon, like male sportswriters, could gain exclusive access to the fighters, thus subtly implying that she enjoyed a credibility similar to that of her male sports writing colleagues.

Moreover, with pictures, headlines and by-lines all proclaiming her work, there was no way a reader could miss the fact that Dixon was flouting the conservative view that disavowed the association between women and prizefighting. Indeed, the very fact that Dixon attended the Dempsey-Willard sparring sessions and prizefight established her as a trail-blazing feminist. After all, her very presence at the training camps and heavyweight bout challenged inherited gender norms that deemed women's attendance at prizefights to be downright unseemly. Consider, too, that the appropriateness of female fight fans was a source of debate throughout the 1920s, and the fact that Dixon was already challenging these gender proscriptions in 1919 makes her place in journalism history all the more impressive.

Those who opposed women's attendance at boxing matches during Dixon's era could point to many factors: Fights were sometimes deadly for the combatants.⁸⁹ Also, the raw energy

⁸⁴ "Two *Telegram* Writers Visit Toledo Arena," *New York Evening Telegram*, 20 June 1919, 16.

⁸⁵ "Work of Boxers To Be Reviewed by Jane Dixon," *New York Evening Telegram*, 21 June 1919, 10.

⁸⁶ Dixon, "Jane Dixon Gives Reasons For Dempsey Victory," *New York Evening Telegram*, 29 June 1919, 14. The bulk of the story focused on the blotch-free complexions of the two fighters, as referenced earlier.

⁸⁷ "Jane Dixon, of *Evening Telegram*, Posed with Champion Willard," *New York Evening Telegram*, 30 June 1919, 2.

⁸⁸ "Dempsey Tells of Victory," photo, *New York Evening Telegram*, 13 July 1919, 11.

⁸⁹ See, for example, "Timely News and Views in the World of Sport," *New York Evening Telegram*, 8 December 1920, 6.

of the ring was alleged to incite fights among spectators;⁹⁰ in fact, as a prelude to one particular Jack Dempsey fight, the town hosting the bout erected a special jail that could hold up to 200 “miscreants.”⁹¹ Plus, of course, there was the prevailing argument that prizefighting lent itself to unsavory pursuits such as gambling and drinking. Testament to this was a Dempsey bout in Chicago where fans, even at the height of the Prohibition era, were allowed to carry their own hip flasks into the arena – federal authorities reasoning that the use of alcohol was so inevitable that they would rather fans supply their own controlled quantities of booze than invite the illegal sale of bathtub gin by criminal elements canvassing the scene.⁹²

Ironically, those who criticized women’s attendance at boxing matches included female journalists at the *New York Telegram*, the very paper for which Dixon produced her boxing coverage. Among them was Betty Brainerd, writer of a regular column titled “We Women.” Responding to a letter from a female college graduate who was “worried” that “something [was] the matter” with her because she enjoyed watching the 1923 Dempsey-Firpo fight, Brainerd scoffed, “My idea of fun is not to watch human beings beat each other up and bleed.”⁹³ Brainerd, who derided boxers as “men who have been failures at more useful occupations or else lack the equipment to do anything” besides fight, went on to question whether boxing fans “would pay the big sums they do pay for fight tickets to see a man flogged at a post? To me,” Brainerd concluded, “there is little difference between this and these so-called boxing matches. There doesn’t seem to be any real and sane fun in it.”⁹⁴

Mollie Worth – who, like Brainerd, reported women’s issues for the *Telegram* – also frowned on female attendance at prizefights. In 1927, as the anticipation of a rematch between the then-vanquished Dempsey and new titleholder Gene Tunney was stirring incredible levels of interest among Americans – women included – Worth fired this salvo: “There is no question in our mind that women should not attend boxing events. They may be splendid entertainment for the men but they cannot help women and are bound to coarsen and cheapen them in the eyes of the males.”⁹⁵ Such a statement, coming eight years after Dixon’s first foray into boxing coverage, underscores just how much of a pioneer Dixon was.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Ed Hughes, “Ed Hughes’ Column,” *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 7 February 1925, 12.

⁹¹ “Shelby Builds Hoose Gow to Accommodate Fight Fans,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 21 June 1923, 1.

⁹² “Safe For Fight Fans To Carry Hip Flasks,” *New York Telegram*, 22 September 1927, 5.

⁹³ Betty Brainerd, “We Women,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 17 October 1923, 9.

⁹⁴ Ibid. However, in her “We Women” column the following day, Brainerd backed off her stinging criticism a bit, saying that she had subsequently taken up the matter with a male friend of “gentle birth and breeding,” and that he was favorably disposed to the sport; *New York Evening Telegram*, 18 October 1923, 9.

⁹⁵ Mollie Worth, “America to the Fore in Sports, with Women in the Van,” *New York Telegram*, 7 July 1927, 10. Despite Worth’s criticism, the popularity of boxing among female fans was well established by 1927. As Worth herself lamented in that same column, “nowadays the fair sex thinks nothing of sitting at the ringside, smoking a cigarette, while two exponents of the manly art maul each other.” Further evidence of the keen female interest in boxing, circa 1927, are the letters that *Telegram* sports editor Joe Williams would receive from feminine fight fans who wished to share their opinions about a particular bout. See Joe Williams, “Letter Writing Boxing Fans: They Sure Do Get Steamed Up Some Brickbats and Bouquets,” *New York Telegram*, 29 September 1927, 13.

Even as vocal a women's champion as Margaret Goss – whose regular sports column in the *New York Herald Tribune* during the mid-twenties had promoted female involvement in participation and spectator sports as a healthy endeavor – had drawn the line at boxing, insisting that the closest she would get to a prizefight was “over the radio.”⁹⁶

Dixon, from the start of her boxing writing in 1919 until her departure from the *Telegram* in the late 1920s, typically avoided responding to such commentary directly. However, she frequently used her fight stories to approvingly call attention to the presence and enjoyment of female fight fans in the crowd or to explain why the sport held legitimate appeal to women. For example, in the wake of a 1920 bout in which Dempsey retained his title and advanced his popularity, Dixon took note of the lively contingent of female fans and credited boxing promoter Tex Rickard with helping make the sport both respectable and enjoyable for women:

It was trifling affair, with some fifteen thousand guests present, including five hundred fair fans, who did their cheering in high C. All the ladies agreed the [jewel encrusted championship] belt was lovely, the entertainment grand and the champion just “too sweet for anything.”

Mr. Rickard has shown us the difference between boxing matches and prizefights. He has placed the manly art on the high platform where it belongs, taken it out of the brutal brawl class and made of it a clean sporting event.

. . . [So] do not be scared to admit you were among those present, girls.⁹⁷

The next time Dempsey fought, in 1921, Dixon again incorporated praise for Rickard's role in making the boxing arena a welcoming place for female fans. Boxing, she wrote, “has taken on a feminine phase it will never lose as long as men like George Lewis Rickard, with assets of courage and imagination, make over a debacle into the most amazing spectacle since Nero turned down his thumbs in a Roman arena.”⁹⁸

Convinced of that as she was in 1921, Dixon was still excited about the continuing growth of female fight fans a full six years later. Using the famous Dempsey-Gene Tunney rematch of 1927 as her backdrop this time, Dixon flatly declared that the sizeable number of excited female fans attending the bout was a symbol of gender equality: Women attending the fight “were as intense” in their rooting as the men, Dixon observed.⁹⁹ Women “occupied ringside seats, within sniffing distance of the sweat, the gore and the rosin.”¹⁰⁰ They “grew hysterical,” raised up “soprano cheers,” and “climbed up on their seats.”¹⁰¹ All of this, Dixon concluded, was evidence that “sauce for the goose [is] sauce for the gander” – adding that any naysayers who still thought women had no place at prizefights should remember that human

⁹⁶ Margaret Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 7 July 1925, 16. For more on Goss, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁹⁷ Dixon, “Rickard Makes Boxing Appeal to Women, Says Jane Dixon,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1920, 2.

⁹⁸ Dixon, “Dempsey, Fighter of Century, Is Greatest of Gladiators, Jane Dixon Writes at Arena,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1921, 1.

⁹⁹ Dixon, “Sauce for the Goose and Gander,” *New York Telegram*, 30 September 1927, 6.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

beings “are made of the same clay. . . Civilization has no sex.”¹⁰² In this regard, Dixon was clearly a feminist – and an outspoken one, at that.

Yet even while she steadily supported female fight fans, Dixon’s traditionally feminine side remained prominent in her boxing coverage. From 1920 to 1927, her reports on Dempsey continued to mirror her maudlin, awestruck coverage of his rise to champion against Willard in 1919. There was only one notable exception: while she remained enamored with masculine physiques and feminine fashions, she no longer covered training camps in the days leading up to a Dempsey bout. Instead, the *Telegram* was more apt to assign multiple male scribes to the pre-fight coverage. Perhaps Dixon’s flexibility had worked against her. As prolific as she was in producing news, features and women’s columns for the paper, the *Telegram* may have decided that she was too valuable in these capacities to lose her to prolonged boxing assignments.

Whatever the reason, Dixon’s heavyweight boxing coverage throughout the twenties was usually limited to a single post-fight report, possibly preceded by a single preview story or stray feature. Although this arrangement essentially negated the steady stream of soft human interest features that were such a large part of her 1919 Dempsey-Willard coverage, it still gave her the distinction of being a woman who regularly covered boxing. Moreover, the arrangement still allowed her ample room to gush about the manliness of fighters and to string together miscellaneous notes that captured the atmosphere of the arena, with special attention being paid of course to famous fans and premier fashions.

That Dixon would eschew personality profiles – but continue to focus on masculinity, celebrity and fashion – was forecasted by the teasers that continued to promote her boxing coverage. No longer making reference to her character-reading abilities or her skill in “sizing up” personalities, the promotional ads from the 1920s pointed more generically to the “feminine viewpoint” that Dixon could offer.¹⁰³ Her “stories of championship battles from a feminine standpoint,” one ad boasted, were “in a class by themselves.”¹⁰⁴

Indeed they were. Unlike the reports of her male colleagues, Dixon’s heavyweight boxing stories could scarcely proceed two paragraphs without invoking a string of admiring adjectives that cast Dempsey as an athletic Adonis for the ages. When Dempsey’s lackluster performance in a 1920 title defense caused a pair of male *Telegram* sportswriters to wonder what had happened to the champ’s powerful punch,¹⁰⁵ Dixon gave no hint that Dempsey was off his game, even in the slightest. Dempsey had provided “a manlike demonstration in a man’s game,” according to Dixon, who was too busy characterizing the champion as a “lithe, tawny skinned human panther” to take note of any shortcomings.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ “In Tomorrow’s Sunday *Telegram*, Six Stories of the Big Fight,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 2 July 1921, 16.

¹⁰⁴ “The Dempsey-Firpo Battle,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 14 September 1923, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Hyatt Daab, in the lead, to his story, wondered “What’s the matter with the champion?” See Daab, “‘Gave Best I Had.’ -Dempsey,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1920, 6. Also expressing surprise at the difficulty that Dempsey experienced was George B. Underwood, “Dempsey Wins, Rickard Loses In Garden Bout,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1920, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Dixon, “Rickard Makes Boxing Appeal to Women, Says Jane Dixon,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1920, 2.

Just as Dixon continued to heap adoring prose on Dempsey during his seven-year reign as heavyweight champ, she also frequently extolled the handsomeness of his challengers. Previewing Dempsey's 1921 encounter with French challenger Georges Carpentier, Dixon surmised that both fighters had looks and heroic qualities worthy of the silver screen. Who would "dare to say Jack would not fit into the role of the cowboy lover like a show girl's shoulders fit into the warm embrace of a real ermine cloak," Dixon asked.¹⁰⁷ Carpentier, meanwhile, was so athletic and appealing that, if Dempsey should somehow lose the bout, fans "may be treated to the [on-screen] sight of the lithesome Carpentier doing the now celebrated 'leap frog' along the top of the Woolworth Building," in imitation of actor Douglas Fairbanks, Dixon added.¹⁰⁸ Alas, Fairbanks did not need to worry about losing any acting roles to the French pugilist; a day later, as Dixon chronicled in her usual awestruck tone, the "bronze Dempsey" handily disposed of the "blond Carpentier" in the ring.¹⁰⁹

As the decade progressed, Dixon remained true to her fawning formula. Offering her prediction on Dempsey's initial fight against Gene Tunney in 1926, Dixon sounded like a school girl trying to decide between two potential prom dates: "I still like Dempsey. Too bad! Tunney is such a handsome fellow," she wrote.¹¹⁰

When Dempsey subsequently lost his title to Tunney, Dixon painted it as a testosterone-fueled battle between two strapping and chiseled warriors: "Two gladiators, magnificent of mould, in the full power of their young manhood, flashing eye to flashing eye, tensed muscle to tensed muscle," is how she described it.¹¹¹

To write like this time and time again – as if mesmerized by the hulking frames and princely faces of the fighters she observed – set Dixon apart from her male colleagues in a significant, and not necessarily positive, way. In comparison to their blow-by-blow accounts of boxing matches, their intricate dissection of prizefights, and their authoritative columns, her observations – however dramatic her word choice – seemed trivial.

This impression was bolstered by the notes that were typically tacked at the end of Dixon's boxing stories. Unlike in 1919, when many of her notes pertained to fellow journalists, Dixon's ringside notes of the 1920s increasingly gravitated toward traditional celebrities and wealthy socialites. As a result, Dixon seemed increasingly star-struck, with her notes conveying the impression that she was little more than a glorified society page writer assigned to a major sporting event.

These notes, which were frequently broken up by dashes or subheads to separate one celebrity sighting from another, could be mind-numbing in length. Lists were so exhaustive at times that one might reasonably wonder how Dixon could provide careful watch of the fight, even if she had done some of the crowd scanning before the bout or in between rounds. Small

¹⁰⁷ Dixon, "Georges and Jack Seek Jobs as Stars in the Land of Film," *New York Evening Telegram*, 1 July 1921, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Dixon, "Dempsey, Fighter of Century, Is Greatest of Gladiators, Jane Dixon Writes at Arena," *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1921, 1.

¹¹⁰ "Here Are the Predictions of *New York Telegram's* Sports Experts on Big Fight," *New York Telegram*, 23 September 1926, 13.

¹¹¹ Dixon, "Enough Ready Money at Ring to Pay Debts of All Nations, Says Jane Dixon," *New York Telegram*, 24 September 1926, 3.

wonder that her accounts of the fight were often astonishingly brief, giving way almost immediately to her hallmark notes.

The celebrity lists compiled by Dixon during her 1920s coverage of Dempsey prizefights included names from the screen, the stage, the boardroom, and the halls of government. From the world of entertainment, Dixon was apt to single out the likes of silent film star Charlie Chaplin, singer Al Jolson or Broadway producer George M. Cohan. Often, she added some appropriate and snappy witticism about the stars she spotted, as with the following quip about Cohan: “George ‘Yankee Doodle’ Cohan and his faithful aid, Harry Ridings, were so close to Dempsey that they made to move over to give the champ a chance to Charleston for the crowd.”¹¹² Other times, Dixon simply rattled off names, as when she succinctly noted a large contingent on hand from the Great White Way: “The ever present theatre was there making a noise,” she wrote before proceeding to list 14 names in succession, with nary a breath in between.¹¹³

If one’s name was Vanderbilt or Morgan – even by marriage – that spectator was likely to be called out by Dixon for his or her business ties. Indeed, Dixon always saved some space for the industry barons, including “Mr. William Wrigley, exclusive purveyor of chewing gum to champs,” and Henry T. Ford, who, according to Dixon, spent his time at ringside figuring how much he would earn “if every one in the arena went crazy for a flivver,” as cars were popularly called.¹¹⁴

Politicians, too, were sure to be located by Dixon’s radar. In fact, she seemed especially fond of mentioning the large number of politicians in attendance at prizefights, perhaps as a subtle way of reminding anti-boxing legislators that many of their peers were fight fans who would be disinclined to support any measures banning or restricting the sport.¹¹⁵ Other times, the mention of political figures could be intended as a subtle jab, as when Dixon remarked that

¹¹² Dixon, “Enough Ready Money at Ring to Pay Debts of All Nations, Says Jane Dixon,” *New York Telegram*, 24 September 1926, 3.

¹¹³ Dixon, “Rickard Makes Boxing Appeal to Women, Says Jane Dixon,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1920, 2.

¹¹⁴ Dixon, “Enough Ready Money at Ring to Pay Debts of All Nations, Says Jane Dixon,” *New York Telegram*, 24 September 1926, 3; Dixon, “Dempsey, Fighter of Century, Is Greatest of Gladiators, Jane Dixon Writes at Arena,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1921, 2.

¹¹⁵ Although the author of this dissertation found no direct evidence of such a motive on Dixon’s part, it seems reasonable considering the legislative and civic debate that swirled around boxing in the twenties. Despite the fact that heavyweight prizefights during the decade routinely drew crowds of 80,000 to 100,000, the sport’s popularity did not dissuade some elected officials and citizens from seeking to stop bouts from being hosted in their respective communities or states. Philadelphia civic and community leaders, for example, were split about whether hosting the 1926 Dempsey-Tunney fight in their city would be an affront to the citizenry’s moral values and traditions. For an excellent discussion of this, see Evensen, *When Dempsey Fought Tunney*, 74-96. Apart from the Philadelphia controversy, assorted newspaper articles that attest to the legislative debate about boxing in the twenties include the following: “House Resolution Calls on Governor to Stop Big Fight,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 26 June 1919, 13; “To Introduce Boxing Bill for Connecticut,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 2 December 1920, 6; “Dempsey-Wills Fight Opposed in New Jersey,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 3 May 1924, sec. 1, p. 9; and “Between You and Me,” column, *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 7 October 1925, 24.

one New York politico in attendance had apparently “knocked off work down at Tammany for a few hours” so he could catch a Dempsey fight.¹¹⁶

Others earning frequent mention among Dixon’s faces in the crowd were athletes, whether from the boxing world or some other sport, and out-of-town fans, especially non-Americans who had fallen so under the spell of prizefighting that they traversed the ocean to witness the action firsthand. Even anonymous persons, with names ostensibly unknown even to Dixon, could earn a place among the lists of notables, often on account of nothing more than peculiar behavior or a fancy hat. The following two paragraphs, appearing back-to-back in a Dixon story about one of Dempsey’s early title defenses, represent a prime example of the anonymous-made-newsworthy:

A lady with a blue hat near the ringside dropped her glasses and never even missed them until the big smash was over.

A lady with a black paradise hat at the ringside announced she would not go home happy unless she had the red, white, and blue ribbons from Mr. Dempsey’s trunks, but no one offered to take them away from Jack.¹¹⁷

Other times, general fashion statements, though not associated with any particular spectator, earned inclusion among Dixon’s notes; typical were Dixon observations such as: “Lavender and shades of violet were the prevailing colors in women’s wear at the arena,” or “Earrings are very much in vogue. . . Fox is the fashionable sport fur.”¹¹⁸

With fashion a major focus of hers, it should come as little surprise that Dixon devoted much energy to identifying the well-heeled, well-dressed socialites. When introducing them in her “Who’s Who”-type compilations, Dixon made detailed observations about their miens and especially their dress. Typical is the following: “Displaying the very latest on fight fashions was Miss Edith Bobe, who has put the seal on a baby lamb dolman with chinchilla cape collar and a turquoise and silver turban wound around her Titian marcel wave in Turkish style.”¹¹⁹

Because these types of observations made up such a sizeable portion of Dixon’s fight coverage throughout the twenties, they made her seem a less serious sportswriter than her male colleagues. While male sports journalists did produce stories that sought to capture the atmosphere of a big bout, their focus tended to be on the larger picture – the sights, the sounds, the smells¹²⁰ – rather than on the minutiae of women’s earrings or the pre-fight delicacy enjoyed

¹¹⁶ Dixon, “Rickard Makes Boxing Appeal to Women, Says Jane Dixon,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1920, 2.

¹¹⁷ Dixon, “Rickard Makes Boxing Appeal to Women, Says Jane Dixon,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1920, 2.

¹¹⁸ Dixon, “Dempsey, Fighter of Century, Is Greatest of Gladiators, Jane Dixon Writes at Arena,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 3 July 1921, 2; Dixon, “Enough Ready Money at Ring to Pay Debts of All Nations, Says Jane Dixon,” *New York Telegram*, 24 September 1926, 3.

¹¹⁹ Dixon, “Rickard Makes Boxing Appeal to Women, Says Jane Dixon,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1920, 2.

¹²⁰ An example of an atmosphere piece by a male sportswriter is Vernon Van Ness, “Loser Won Crowd’s Cheers,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 15 December 1920, 6. Van Ness writes extensively about the crowd, but describes it with general adjectives such as “cosmopolitan” and “orderly” rather than taking a micro-approach that singles out individuals. A male-written atmosphere piece that does single out boxing spectators by name is Joe Williams, “Title Fights Lure Old Stars; Veterans Always Crowd Ring; Loyalty to Game or Curiosity?” *New York Telegram*, 20 September 1927, 13. Although fight fans are individually identified here, they are limited to former athletes;

by a particular socialite traveling to the bout in his private rail car.¹²¹ Because Dixon focused on the latter, she presented herself, however unintentionally, as an easily infatuated celebrity gossip who was smitten with famous faces and handsome boxers.

As stereotypically feminine as such writing may have appeared by 1920s standards, it must be remembered that Dixon – as pointed out earlier – was simultaneously championing the rights of female fight fans as a means of gender equality. It was Dixon, after all, who declared that men and women are “made of the same clay” and so were equally wont to enjoy a boxing match.¹²² Clearly, Dixon’s boxing coverage embodied the dual nature of the decade in which she wrote. Just as many women sought to balance political and professional gains with inherited gender norms circa the 1920s, Dixon’s boxing coverage provided a microcosm of the same struggle.

This is also apparent in Dixon’s coverage of sports other than boxing. Whether they appeared on the news pages or in the sports section, Dixon’s occasional baseball, tennis and horse racing stories provide examples of a seemingly conflicted agenda.

Consider, for instance, her coverage of the 1923 World Series between the New York Giants and New York Yankees. Among the several stories she wrote about that October series, the final one stands out. Reflecting on the crowds that had attended the six-game tussle, Dixon wrote, in all capital letters: “THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN FANS WHO ATTENDED THE EVENT DOUBLED,” then added in similarly aggressive, but lowercase style, that, “This speaks well for the new feminism, the feminism that participates in athletics, in sportsmanship, in the world of what’s what.”¹²³ As bold and progressive as that sentiment was, Dixon quickly reversed course, following her proclamation with several game-day observations that spoke to her fixation with things feminine. “Mrs. Babe Ruth,” Dixon wrote, “wore her most becoming smile and a lot of opulent furs. When the Babe rapped out a homer the wife nodded animated approval and ‘sacrificed’ a new pair of gloves,” apparently devaluing them with hearty applause or a toss in the air.¹²⁴ Dixon also took notice of “Mrs. Raymond T. Baker, the former wife of that splendid sportsman, the late Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, [who] was present with her two young Vanderbilt sons. . . [S]he wore a mark sport suit of black with leopard skin garnish and a small black chapeau wrapped with Oriental embroidery,” Dixon observed.¹²⁵

Later, when the hometown Yankees returned to the World Series in 1926 and ’27, Dixon’s coverage again conveyed a mixed message. On the one hand, she seemed proud to announce that she was “sitting in the press tiers” traditionally inhabited by male sportswriters and was even more gleeful to note how women’s attendance at the World Series had become

Dixon, in contrast, was apt to include former athletes among her sightings, but was even more interested in actors, politicians, and socialites.

¹²¹ Dixon, “Enough Ready Money at Ring to Pay Debts of All Nations, Says Jane Dixon,” *New York Telegram*, 24 September 1926, 3.

¹²² Dixon, “Sauce for the Goose and Gander,” *New York Telegram*, 30 September 1927, 6.

¹²³ Dixon, “Picked from Dust as Giants Were Battered by Yankees,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 16 October 1923, 11.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

commonplace.¹²⁶ Women were so numerous in the stands that the “shrill soprano din” they sent up for the Yankees was plainly audible, Dixon wrote in one story.¹²⁷ Still, the majority of her observations seemed to undermine the very feminist ideas she was expressing; rather than demonstrate knowledge of baseball or use the World Series as a platform for an extended lesson in feminism, Dixon was content to devote most of her coverage to hackneyed sightings of famous persons and commentary on the fashions they wore. Typical were these musings from 1926: Dixon noted that a particular Republican party leader was accompanied by a “Miss Marianne Richardson, a striking exemplar of the peach crop in Georgia.”¹²⁸ Dixon also opined that, “Were it not for Mrs. Edward Barrow, attractive wife of the secretary of the Yankees, and their lovely daughter Audrey, St. Louis [fans] would have carried off the beauty honors.”¹²⁹

The following sampling of similar observations was included in Dixon’s 1927 World Series coverage, which the *Telegram* heralded for its “feminine slant”.¹³⁰

- “Before the opening of hostilities, our favorite boy friend, [concession magnate] Mr. Harry Stevens, gave a luncheon party in the official dining room adjoining the press buffet. A towering cluster of old-fashioned garden flowers centered the table.”¹³¹
- “Mrs. Urban Shocker, wife of the eminent pitcher, [was] in a chic tan costume of crepe combined with velvet.”¹³²
- “[Baseball Commissioner] Judge Landis tried to look convincingly impartial. [But] Mrs. Landis, wearing white and black figured chiffon and a stunning black hat, was with [Babe Ruth], the Sultan of Swat.”¹³³

Such aesthetically flush observations, coming on the heels of Dixon’s more substantive comments about the social significance of female baseball fans, underscores how Dixon’s baseball writing incorporated both traditional femininity and progressive feminism.

This dichotomy was also plainly visible in Dixon’s 1926 profile of French tennis champion Suzanne Lenglen. Dixon began the story with a Lenglen quote that captured the tennis star’s favorable attitude toward women’s economic self-sufficiency – “The world respects women with the brains and the ability to own their own money”¹³⁴ – and proceeded to provide Lenglen a forum to expound on her feminist views. With tacit but obvious approval, Dixon allowed Lenglen to laud the “independent woman” who chooses a husband “intelligently and

¹²⁶ Dixon, “Baseball Beauties Droop as Yanks Wilt Under Fire,” *New York Telegram*, 4 October 1926, 5; Jane Dixon, “Fair Fans Do A Ruth In What To Wear,” *New York Telegram*, 7 October 1927, 2.

¹²⁷ Dixon, “Baseball Beauties Droop as Yanks Wilt Under Fire,” *New York Telegram*, 4 October 1926, 5.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ “a homer!” advertisement, *New York Telegram*, 6 October 1927, 6.

¹³¹ Dixon, “Fair Fans Do A Ruth In What To Wear,” *New York Telegram*, 7 October 1927, 2.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Dixon, “Woman’s Independence Wins Homage, Lenglen Believes,” *New York Telegram*, 1 October 1926, 6.

romantically” rather than marrying for “stupid reasons of imposed necessity.”¹³⁵ Dixon also gave Lenglen a platform to chastise women who “can’t find something to do” and so become idle “sitters” at home.¹³⁶ Further, Dixon gave Lenglen room to espouse the benefits of physical exercise for women: “they are working, and in order to do good work they must keep fit,” Dixon quoted Lenglen as saying of the new wave of professional women.¹³⁷ Yet however much Dixon may have agreed with Lenglen, Dixon followed her familiar pattern of simultaneously fueling the more widely accepted, traditional notions of femininity. For example, Dixon could not resist devoting lines of description to Lenglen’s “tennis togs,” including the athlete’s “accordion pleated skirt of white silk weave and texture” attached to a plain jumper.¹³⁸ “Over the jumper is worn a knitted woolen sweater of some bright color – turquoise blue is Suzanne’s favorite – coat model buttoned in front from a deep V neck,” Dixon continued before moving onto to describe Lenglen’s shoes and stockings.¹³⁹ The attention paid to Lenglen’s attire was more befitting a stereotypical female journalist of the era than the sports writing trail blazer that Dixon was – a further indication that Dixon was caught at the intersection of new feminism and traditional femininity.

Further indicative of this was Dixon’s horse racing coverage. Within the course of a few paragraphs, Dixon could go from writing about a jockey’s masterful skill – a subject that would hold obvious appeal to serious race fans and place her on par with male sports journalists – to lavishing doting attention on the polka-dot ascot worn by a horse’s caretaker.¹⁴⁰ On one particular occasion, Dixon wrote approvingly about a woman who had flouted gender norms by earning a living as a horse racing bookie. Having handled more than two million dollars in wagers, the woman was the only female bookmaker “of extensive operations and wide note,” Dixon wrote.¹⁴¹ The angle pursued by Dixon was clearly a feminist one, affirmed not only by the content of the story but also the headline’s reference to this “pioneer woman bookie.”¹⁴² Yet, in the course of highlighting her subject’s impressive rise within the male-dominated profession of bookmaking, Dixon could not allow the woman’s accomplishments to stand on their own. Instead, Dixon was compelled to remark on the woman’s physical attractiveness and fashion sense. This included references to the woman’s “twinkling blue eyes,” “carmine touched cheeks,” and “powdery hair peeping out rebelliously from her smart black turban.”¹⁴³ By incorporating such comments into the story, Dixon prevented the woman’s accomplishments

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Dixon, “A Horse-Talk with Papyrus, King of the British Turf,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 7 October 1923, 4.

¹⁴¹ Dixon, “Fair Bettors Game Losers, Says Pioneer Woman Bookie,” *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 16 January 1925, 2.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

from being considered free of her feminine beauty; that is, Dixon could not bring herself to promote a feminist angle without also holding on to what was traditionally feminine. The point is further illustrated in the story when Dixon reacted to the female bookmaker's assertion that women jockeys are rare. ". . . [T]his is rather too bad," Dixon opined, "since jockey regalia would be enormously becoming the feminine style of beauty."¹⁴⁴ To this end, Dixon was sending a subtle but important message to her readers – namely that while she, Dixon, was progressive enough to write about horse racing and other sports that were usually left to male journalists, she was not willing to sacrifice femininity in the process. For Dixon, feminism and femininity were not mutually exclusive; rather, they were complementary.

Indeed, virtually all of Dixon's sports writing – most notably her boxing coverage – attests to this. In an era when women found themselves tugged between the lure of radical feminism and the safety of old-fashioned femininity, Dixon managed to straddle the line. By writing about sports from a "woman's point of view," she found a way to have the best of both worlds: On the one hand, she could cover boxing and other sports that were typically off limits to female reporters, thus challenging the gender restrictions of the newspaper industry and earning a platform from which to argue for society's acceptance of female spectators at prizefights, baseball games and the like. On the other hand, she could also use her sports writing as a means to affirm traditional notions of femininity in the face of the emerging feminist movement. In particular, Dixon used her sports stories to remind readers that women could pursue anything from economic independence to a love of sports, all without abandoning traditional feminine interests in matters both big (i.e., relationships, marriage) and small (i.e., beauty, fashion).

Viewed in this way, Dixon's sports writing illuminates much more than the rise of female sports journalists in the 1920s. While her reporting of sports from a "woman's angle" does indeed exemplify the most common way female journalists gained access to the sports pages during the Jazz Age, Dixon's writing more importantly highlights the confusion faced by the era's "new woman" and demonstrates the way one female journalist reconciled those tensions.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As an editorial cartoon from the period so perfectly illustrates, the concept of womanhood during the 1920s underwent a major transformation that was accompanied by awkwardness, confusion and tension. The cartoon, published in the *New York Telegram* in 1927, depicts a prim, middle-aged woman sitting alongside two younger women on a trolley. The older woman – attired in a hat, frilly blouse and flowing skirt – peers disapprovingly at her two co-passengers who, besides wearing short dresses adorned with ribbon, have offended the modest woman’s sensibilities by recklessly casting aside their hats to fix their hair and makeup – “in public!”¹

The scene highlights the era’s strain between traditional ideas of femininity – embodied by the older, conservatively dressed woman – and the evolving, more daring gender notions associated with the “new woman,” symbolized in the cartoon by the rouge-wearing flappers.²

This tension surrounding the concept of womanhood underscores the tugs and pulls characteristic of the 1920s – a decade caught in the shadows of the Victorian age while at the same time moving into the modern era. Quite expectedly, conflicting ideas about the female gender were frequently reflected in contrasting fashion preferences, as is the case in the scenario described above. However, the 1920s strain between traditional femininity and progressive feminism also manifest itself in many other ways.

For example, a woman who ran for mayor of West Hoboken, New Jersey, during the twenties found it difficult to explain her political platform apart from her traditional duties as a homemaker. Meshing the two, she sought to lure voters by declaring that she would houseclean the town as well as she does her own house.³ In Chicago, a young woman who won first prize among 350,000 female contestants in an international fitness competition explained that she kept in shape through a combination of housework, a stereotypically feminine chore, and basketball, a sport whose popularity among women was just then exploding.⁴ As with the mayoral candidate, the example of the contest winner attests to the fact that women found themselves at an odd crossroads in the twenties: they were making significant professional and personal strides that bucked traditional notions of femininity, but their accomplishments were still in some ways constrained by leftover ideas about the appropriate role for women in society. Whether in the workplace, in the gym, at the voting booth or in the beauty parlor, women struggled to redefine themselves, especially in terms of power and/or physicality that transcended the domestic sphere.

Especially surprising, perhaps, is that the occupation of sports journalist – widely presumed to have little or no association with women circa the 1920s – also provided ground where ideas of womanhood were forged, refined, and contested during the Jazz Age. Despite scholarship that gives the impression that the widespread emergence of female sports journalists

¹ “‘Taint Fair!’” editorial cartoon, *New York Telegram*, 20 September 1927, 19.

² The dissertation author’s review of newspapers suggests that the term “new woman” was commonly used by the 1920s, when the press frequently invoked the moniker to describe women who were entering traditionally male lines of work, becoming actively involved in politics and/or challenging sexual mores.

³ “Grandmother, Seeking Highest Office in West Hoboken, Pledged to Clean Town,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 2 September 1923, 2.

⁴ “Don’t Powder or Rouge, ‘Perfect’ Girl’s Recipe,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 7 December 1924, sec. 1, p. 2.

is a relatively new development,⁵ it was actually during the Roaring Twenties that significant numbers of women began to make inroads as sports reporters. In fact, as this dissertation has documented, at least thirty-five female journalists wrote about sports on a regular, semi-regular or occasional basis during the twenties. The public's reaction to these women – as well as the assignments that these female journalists covered and the writing styles they employed – all shed light on issues of gender and equality circa the 1920s.

In part, women in the twenties were able to enter sports journalism because society at the time was growing more used to the association between women and physicality, *vis-à-vis* women's participation in – and attendance at – competitive sporting events. Further aiding women's forays into sports journalism during the decade was society's growing preoccupation with sports heroes and other celebrities – a trend that fit with the newspaper industry's preference to assign female journalists to cover personality-driven stories over hard news. In fact, the majority of women who broke into the sports journalism field during the twenties did so by covering major sports events from a “woman's angle” – an assignment that involved capturing the mood of the arena and identifying the fashionable celebrities in attendance.

Still, whatever the circumstances and conditions that helped female writers crack the sports page during the 1920s, their very involvement in sports reporting sets them forth as examples of the era's “new woman.” After all, they were entering what one female journalist of the period called the “closed corporation” of male sportswriters.⁶ And as highlighted throughout this dissertation, they faced their share of obstacles, with both readers and newspaper colleagues registering objections. Thus, all of the female sports journalists of the 1920s must be recognized as pioneers. Not only were they part of the first major wave of women to participate in sports reporting, but they did so amid a climate that was at times unreceptive, if not outright hostile.

Inserting themselves into this situation, then, female journalists who wrote about sports during the twenties were redefining womanhood. They challenged barriers that had previously held sports writing as the sacrosanct realm of male writers. And in the process, they reflected the decade's struggle to find the right balance between traditional femininity and progressive feminism – that is, each of the 1920s-era female sports journalists challenged societal and institutional barriers in her own way, with some of the female writers making a broader claim for women's place in sports journalism than others.

Of the three women profiled in this dissertation, Lorena Hickok must be considered the most progressive. By mixing with male football players and coaches aboard trains and in hotels, the *Minneapolis Tribune* writer overtly pushed the bounds of social convention – a testament to her strong personality, especially since she worked in the traditionally conservative Midwest while the two other women featured in this dissertation worked in the supposedly more progressive Northeast. What's more, Hickok smoked, swore and partook in poker games – all behaviors that were considered an affront to femininity, at least by lingering Victorian standards.

More specific to her writing, the very fact that Hickok covered a football team was itself a distinction among female journalists of the period; few, if any others, covered a male sports

⁵ See the literature review and appendix of this dissertation. Aside from Pamela Creedon, few if any scholars have supplied evidence to suggest that women were widely working as sportswriters as far back as the twenties. Rather, most scholarship gives the impression that the widespread emergence of female sports journalists in America was a byproduct of the 1970s, when the momentum from the women's liberation movement sparked litigation demanding that women be added to newspaper sports departments and be given access to male locker rooms.

⁶ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 471.

team on a steady basis. Just as significant, Hickok's football reports resisted classification as the kind of sports writing that was produced to satisfy a "woman's angle" or "feminine viewpoint." In fact, Hickok made no secret of her utter distaste for formulaic women's/society-type news. And so while most female journalists who covered male athletes during the period produced stories that were supposed to appeal to women – stories that highlighted masculine physiques and focused on the fashions worn by celebrities in attendance at sporting events – Hickok wrote stories that appealed to men and women alike. Her football stories were essentially features, in that they regularly incorporated quotes and highlighted the personalities of the coaches as well as the mood of the game. Even so, Hickok's stories still managed to pay ample attention to the statistical and strategic side of the sport.

Her male counterparts in the sports section, on the other hand, were more one-dimensional in their approach. Their stories were often strings of breathless paragraphs that described action and strategy. Rarely featuring quotes, these male-produced stories were not as readable as Hickok's work. Indeed, it is hardly an exaggeration to credit Hickok with introducing an entirely new style of sports writing to the *Minneapolis Tribune* – a conversational style widely employed in the sports sections of virtually all newspapers today.

Yet as groundbreaking as her style may have been, Hickok's stories about the University of Minnesota football team generally did not appear in the sports section, but were instead relegated to the news pages. Granted, many of her football stories earned a place on page one. But as flattering as that may have been, the underlying message was that the writing of a woman – even if she was covering a male sports team and writing in a style that appealed to both male and female readers – did not belong in the sports section. Further, Hickok had to cover several Minnesota football games from the grandstand; the male-inhabited press box was off limits to her, at least during the early part of her sports writing career. In these ways, then, even as brazen a reporter as Hickok – a reporter who flouted gender taboos to mingle with male athletes and coaches on the road – faced limitations tied to traditional notions of gender appropriateness that lingered at the crossroads of the Victorian Age and modern era.

Ultimately, though, the proscriptive notions that limited her press box access and kept her stories out of the sports section were overshadowed by her overtly feminist attitude – an attitude that rejected the "woman's angle" approach to sports journalism and seemed to revel in flouting social taboos.

Conversely, the *New York Telegram's* Jane Dixon wrote sports from the so-called "woman's angle." Moreover, she gave no indication that she found the approach trite or objectionable. To the contrary, she seemed to take genuine delight in it, gushing about the handsomeness and strength of male athletes while recording star-struck observations about celebrities who attended various sporting events. Although she wrote about a variety of sports, Dixon concentrated mostly on boxing. Her stories appeared on the sports pages, where they employed a wide range of worshipful adjectives to describe the physiques of heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey and his challengers, as well the styles worn by the fawning female fans who attended Dempsey's bouts. By themselves, such stories affirmed traditional notions of femininity; they suggested that women were superficial sports fans at best, more interested in socialites and fashion trends than sport itself. Further, the effusive way in which Dixon wrote the stories did little to suggest that she herself was not smitten with Dempsey and the star-studded crowds he attracted. In other words, Dixon – while indisputably a trailblazer because of the mere fact that she covered so many major sporting events – was more content than Hickok to adhere to a stereotypically feminine approach.

That said, a closer look at Dixon's entire body of newspaper work shows that even she, to a significant degree, embraced progressive feminism. While her sports stories fall comfortably in line with traditional ideas of womanhood, her women's page columns reveal a more internally conflicted writer. At times using her women's page column to espouse the merits of marriage and motherhood over the rewards of a career, Dixon would on other occasions use her presence on the women's page to extol the virtues of salary-earning women who chose independence over loveless marriages. She also used her women's page columns to fiercely defend the right of women to attend sporting events, especially boxing. In an age when many social observers – including staff writers on her own paper – criticized women's attendance at boxing matches as unladylike, Dixon used her platform on the women's page to defend female fight fans. She encouraged women to attend prizefights and other sporting contests, arguing that they stood to derive just as much enjoyment from those athletic battles as men. Given that many persons frowned on women's attendance at boxing matches, the fact that Dixon covered so many bouts is also testament to her feminist side.

Thus, Dixon emerges as a paradox: she refused to be intimidated by those who said it was improper for her to cover such a violent sport as boxing and she encouraged other women to attend prizefights. Yet her very coverage of boxing was so full of fawning descriptions of the handsome fighters and chic fans that she gave the impression – on the sports pages, anyway – that she was less feminist than she was traditionally feminine. Clearly, she struggled to reconcile the tensions between Victorian and modern gender notions.

Less conflicted than Dixon, but still exemplary of the competing notions of womanhood that marked the era, was the *New York Herald Tribune's* Margaret Goss. On the one hand, Goss challenged the practices of the Fourth Estate by earning a place in the *New York Herald Tribune's* traditionally male-dominated sports section in the winter of 1924. Not only that, but soon after cracking the sports section, she laid claim to a regularly appearing, by-lined sports column – a “first” for a woman as far as this research can determine, and an accomplishment made all the more impressive by the fact that her column frequently stood alongside that of Grantland Rice, the leading male sports columnist of the day. Moreover, Goss aggressively introduced a new kind of writing to her paper's sports pages; whereas most male reporters seemed intent on conveying information and opinions, Goss often recreated experiences, putting readers in the shoes of an athlete or outdoors enthusiast – so that readers could experience the sounds of a whizzing tennis ball or the crunching of a snow-covered path beneath a hiker's feet. More significant to the advancement of her gender, Goss used her column to unabashedly advocate women's active involvement in competitive, highly physical sports. Remember, this was a woman who, in response to suggestions that outdoor exercise had the unflattering effect of coarsening women's skin, quipped that all women should in that case welcome the opportunity to “die tough and leathery.”⁷

Yet as outspoken and strident as Goss was in insisting that the public acknowledge and endorse women's athleticism, she clung to certain ideas that were more characteristic of traditional, Victorian thinking. Despite insisting that women have similar opportunities as men to develop athletically, Goss criticized emotional outbursts by female athletes – such as arguing with a line judge during a tennis match – as unladylike. She also considered some sports to simply be inappropriate for women, even as spectators. Of boxing, she boasted that she had never gotten closer to a bout than her radio, and suggested that other female sports fans follow

⁷ Goss, “Women in Sport,” *New York Herald Tribune*, 6 September 1925, sec. 10, p. 2

suit if they wished to preserve their femininity. Further, there is no evidence to suggest that Goss ever tried to expand her column beyond the scope of female athletes. Seemingly content to cover the women's sports scene, she essentially conformed to the decade's prevailing belief that women, if they were to cover sports, could only do so in certain ways – in this particular case, by restricting themselves to coverage of fellow women. This is not to suggest that Goss should have pushed the bounds of her column to allow for coverage of male athletes. Rather, the observation is meant as a reminder of the realities of the period: women could cover sports, but to do so, they had to abide by certain restrictions.

Hence, Goss – like Hickok and Dixon – reveals the dual nature of the 1920s female sports journalist. Each journalist profiled in the pages of this dissertation in some way adheres – willingly, it would seem in some cases – to certain gender-based restrictions that accompanied her entrance into the male-dominated field of sports journalism. Simultaneously, however, these women found ways to rise above the traditional gender-based notions that threatened to circumscribe their sports writing contributions: Goss, rather than be content to opine on the doings of female athletes, gradually transformed her column into a bully pulpit to argue passionately for the expansion and acceptance of women's competitive sports. Hickok, though generally kept off the sports pages, forced notice of her sports writing abilities by forging a style that not only eschewed the “woman's angle” formula, but introduced an engaging style that went beyond anything her male counterparts on the sports pages were producing. And Dixon, despite writing about boxing from the superficial and formulaic “women's angle,” used other stories and columns to remind readers that female sports fans should be taken seriously and that they had the same right as men to attend and enjoy prizefights, regardless of what detractors might say about the inappropriateness of women at boxing matches.

Ultimately, then, these three female sportswriters highlight the tension and confusion associated with the concept of womanhood in the 1920s. By venturing into the male-dominated world of sports journalism, all three set themselves forth as an example of the “new woman” ready to face challenges and opportunities associated with uncharted territory. Further, the way they each reacted to their opportunities underscores how women of the era were caught at an intersection where traditional ideas of femininity vied with new, progressive ideas of feminism for supremacy – within society in general and the workplace in particular.

That the sports pages should provide a forum where this struggle was debated and lived – at least by some women – provides a unique and illuminating lens through which to view the tremendous transformations and tensions that marked the lives and careers of pioneering professional women during the Roaring Twenties.

Appendix

The following paragraphs list the names of female journalists who wrote about sports between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. The list was compiled after carefully combing Ishbel Ross' anecdotal history and then combining those results with Pamela Creedon's research. A review of early nineteenth century newspapers conducted by the author of this dissertation yielded names of additional female sports journalists who are also listed below. Taking into account these key sources – Ross, Creedon, and the dissertation author's own search of newspapers – this Appendix makes an effort to discern, or at least estimate, the year or years when these women were writing about sports and to point out, where readily discernable, the newspapers or wire services for which the women were working. The names that follow are provided in list form, so that they might be easily referenced by other researchers seeking to advance the study of early female sports journalists. Also, because the information below is intended to guide future research, the first names of the journalists are provided, even though in a few cases, they were already mentioned in earlier sections of the dissertation.

The earliest women to write about sports on a regular or semi-regular basis can be traced to the period between 1869 and 1908. They are, in alphabetical order:

- Ruth Hale, a Philadelphia- and New York-based writer who “was one of the first women in the country to cover sports.”¹
- Sadie Kneller Miller, who covered the Orioles baseball team for the *Baltimore Telegram* in the 1890s.²
- Maria (Midy) Morgan, who has already been mentioned in this literature review for her coverage of horse racing at the *New York Times*, where she worked from 1869-1892.³
- Harriette Underhill, who succeeded her father in covering horse races at the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1908 and has been referred to as “the pioneer woman sportswriter in New York.”⁴
- Sallie Van Pelt, who covered baseball for the *Dubuque (Iowa) Times*.⁵
- Eloise Young, who was sporting editor and writer for the *Chronicle-News* in Trinidad, Colorado, in 1908.⁶

¹ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 259. Although the years are not specified, the context in which Hale is mentioned suggests that she was working sometime in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Also of note, Hale was married to Heywood Broun, himself a popular sports reporter who later rose to even greater prominence as a crusading columnist.

² According to Ross, Miller even traveled with the team on a national tour. Her stories were by-lined SKM, presumably to hide her gender. See Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 497-498. Creedon suggests that Miller may have been the first woman to cover professional baseball. See Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, vii, 73-75, 126-127. For more on Miller's journalistic career, which included news coverage as well as sports reporting, see Thomas, “Sarah Kneller Miller, 1867-1920,” in *Notable Maryland Women*.

³ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 145-149; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 70-71, 75.

⁴ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 412-413, 470; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 74.

⁵ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 73.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

Other women also wrote about sports around the turn of the nineteenth century, although, it seems, less frequently. While these women might cover a sporting event for the sake of reporting its outcome, it seems that their purpose, most times, was different: to produce a “woman’s angle” which might include references to the celebrities in attendance at particular athletic contests, or to recount their own experiences as participants in sports-related “stunts,” such as skiing a difficult trail or accompanying a race car driver for a practice run. Sometimes, a sports story was simply a detour along the way to, or in the midst of, a more distinguished career in news. Whatever the reason they ventured onto the sports path, women who probably fit best under this category in the late 1800s or early 1900s include:

- Janet Barry, who was tapped to provide the viewpoint of a “woman spectator” at the 1916 Jess Willard-Frank Moran heavyweight title bout.⁷
- Winifred Black and Nellie Bly, both of whom wrote about boxing.⁸
- Elizabeth Brough, who wrote under the name Helen Dare and covered races for the San Francisco press.⁹
- Nellie Verrill Mighels Davis, who covered the Corbett-Fitzsimmons championship fight in Carson City, Nevada, in 1897, when she was editor and owner of the *Carson City Daily Appeal*.¹⁰
- Edwina Fairweather, who conveyed her impressions of a baseball game for the *New York Herald* in 1916.¹¹
- Caroline Harding, a society reporter who covered golf matches for New York papers in the spring of 1900.¹²
- Inez Haynes Irwin, who wrote about wrestling for the *San Francisco Bulletin* in the early 1900s.¹³
- Pauline Jacobson, who covered fights and baseball for the *San Francisco Bulletin*, also circa the early 1900s.¹⁴
- Malvina Lindsay, a *Kansas City Post* reporter whose first assignment was to write a humorous story about a baseball game.¹⁵

⁷ Janet Barry, “‘Wanted Small Man To Win,’ Confession Of Woman Spectator,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 26 March 1916, 10.

⁸ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 66; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 70-72, 75.

⁹ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 576-577.

¹⁰ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 70.

¹¹ “Edwina Fairweather at Ball Game,” advertisement for *New York Herald*, as published in *New York Evening Telegram*, 15 April 1916, 20.

¹² Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 448.

¹³ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 70.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 505.

- Eleanor Booth Simmons, who sought and received an editor's permission to cover a prize fight while working at the *New York Sun* in 1915.¹⁶

As the century progressed and American entered the 1920s – the so-called Golden Age of Sports – women appear to have played an even more significant role in writing about sports. It appears that no fewer than twenty women were reporting about sports on at least a somewhat regular basis in the 1920s, with another nine or more covering sports in a lesser capacity.

Among those who seem to have been most involved in sports reporting in the Roaring Twenties – in some cases covering a mix of sports while in other cases devoting their coverage to female athletics – were:

- Rose Atwood, who wrote about sports for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, an African-American newspaper.¹⁷
- Lillian Barker, who in 1924 produced a series of stories about baseball star Walter Johnson for Thompson Features Service Inc.¹⁸
- Mary Bostwick of the *Indianapolis Star*, who covered sports such as baseball, basketball, boxing and football in addition to some car racing and aviation-related stunt reporting.¹⁹
- Dorothy Bough, who in 1922 became the first female sportswriter at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, where she covered some men's sports.²⁰
- Mary K. Browne, who covered sports such as boxing and tennis for the United Press wire service.²¹
- Jane Dixon of the *New York Telegram*, whose boxing reports are treated extensively in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.²²
- Bernice Dutrieuille, who produced sports stories for the *Pittsburgh Courier*.²³
- Margaret Goss, whose "Women in Sports" column for the *New York Herald Tribune* is the subject of Chapter 3 of this dissertation.²⁴
- Dorothy Greene, whose column "The Sportswoman" was a *Washington Post* fixture in the late 1920s.²⁵

¹⁶ Ibid., 120.

¹⁷ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 79.

¹⁸ Her name is mentioned in a report about a lawsuit that Johnson filed against Thompson Feature Service Inc.; the pitcher denied that he gave the syndicate any authority to make use of his name in the series of stories he supposedly related to Barker. See "Walter Johnson Sues For \$50,000," *New York Telegram and Evening Mail*, 22 January 1925, 18.

¹⁹ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 72-73, 75.

²⁰ Ibid., 75, 77.

²¹ Several of her by-lines are found in the *New York Telegram*, circa July 1927.

²² Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 192-193; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 74.

²³ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 79.

²⁴ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 468-472; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 75-76.

- Ann Harber, whose “The Woman in Sports” column appeared in the *New York Evening World*.²⁶
- Betty Hardesty, who joined the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* as a sportswriter in 1924 and covered some men’s sports.²⁷
- Lorena Hickok, whose coverage of the University of Minnesota football team is taken up in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.²⁸
- Cecile Ladu, who was named women’s sports editor of the *Albany (New York) Times Union* in 1929.²⁹
- Dorothy Lindsay, who was appointed to a similar position at the *Boston Herald* in 1925.³⁰
- Dora Lurie, who reported on men’s sports for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* after joining the paper in 1927.³¹
- Gertrude Lynahan, who became a member of the *New York World’s* sports department in 1927.³²
- Helen O’Mankin, who covered some men’s sports for the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, circa 1925.³³
- Nan O’Reilly, a New York-based golf writer who for a time worked under the name Jean Sanderson.³⁴
- Janet Owen, who began writing a column on female athletes for the *New York Evening World* in 1928.³⁵
- Elizabeth K. Read, who covered men’s golf and women’s sports during the early part of her career at the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.³⁶

²⁵ Her by-line appears regularly on the sports pages between 1924 and 1927. Special thanks to George Solomon, recently retired as assistant managing editor for sports at the *Washington Post*, and Don Ross, senior editor at the Freedom Forum, for alerting the dissertation author to Greene’s contributions.

²⁶ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 76.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁸ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 207; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 75, 77-78, 101.

²⁹ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 75-76.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

³² Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 175-176, 470.

³³ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 77.

³⁴ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 470-471; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 74-75.

³⁵ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 470.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 514.

- Adela Rogers St. Johns, who began writing for the Hearst papers in 1925 and reported on a wide variety of sports, including key events such as the World Series, Rose Bowl, Kentucky Derby and the Olympics.³⁷
- Theodora Sohst, who in late 1925 succeeded Margaret Goss as writer of the *New York Herald Tribune*'s "Women in Sports" column.³⁸
- Nettie George Speedy, whose work for the African-American press included coverage of horse racing and prize fighting.³⁹

Those 1920s women journalists whose coverage of sports appears to be less frequent – and whose reporting often centered on a social angle, human interest theme, or sports-related stunt⁴⁰ – include:

- Helen R. Adams, who interviewed Jack Dempsey's wife for the United Press after witnessing the Dempsey-Gene Tunney boxing rematch of 1927.⁴¹
- Mabel Greene of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, who reported on fashions worn by spectators at the Kentucky Derby.⁴²
- Helen Hadakin of the *New York Mirror*, who wrangled an interview with a woman being detained at Ellis Island after the South American boxer Luis Firpo had arranged for the woman's transportation to the U.S.⁴³
- Julia Harpman, the *New York Daily News* and *Chicago Tribune* reporter who covered Gertrude Ederle's swim of the English Channel, was involved in an aquatic stunt of her own, and also covered the World Series and some boxing.⁴⁴
- Genevieve Forbes Herrick of the *Chicago Tribune*, who also wrote about some boxing.⁴⁵
- Micheline Keating, who as a member of the city department at the *New York Mirror*, covered some prize fighting and polo.⁴⁶

³⁷ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 74; recall that Mills, *A Place in the News*, 219, also highlights St. Johns for her sports writing contributions.

³⁸ Sohst's first column for the *New York Herald Tribune* appeared 20 September 1925, in sec. 10, p. 2.

³⁹ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 55, 75, 79.

⁴⁰ This is not to suggest that the women listed in the preceding paragraph did not also, at times, produce such angles.

⁴¹ Helen R. Adams, "Jack Still Is Monarch to Estelle," *New York Telegram*, 28 September 1927.

⁴² Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 234.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 303.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 261, 268-269; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 101. Harpman was the wife of Westbrook Pegler, who began his newspaper career as a sportswriter before gaining a wider reputation as a general interest columnist.

⁴⁵ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 540.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 304-305. Keating was at the center of a controversy over whether a woman writer should be allowed to sit in the press section at a polo match. Ejected from press row by an official of the Polo Writers' Association on grounds that no women were permitted in the press section, Keating was forced to sit among spectators next to the press area, her typewriter balanced on her knees. She then would hand her copy to her telegraph operator, who was across the aisle, sitting with the male members of the press.

- Margaret Pratt, whose journalism career included a by-lined story on the Dempsey-Firpo fight for the *New York World*.⁴⁷
- Evelyn Shuler, a Philadelphia newspaper journalist who wrote about her experiences flying in the open cockpit of an airplane and participating in other aviation stunts.⁴⁸
- Imogene Stanley, who on one occasion was assigned to interview heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey.⁴⁹
- Alva Taylor, whose men's fashion column for the *Chicago Tribune-New York Daily News* syndicate incorporated observations on the fashion scene at the racetrack.⁵⁰
- Sophie Treadwell McGeehan, who wrote a "color story" on a major Dempsey bout.⁵¹
- Helen Worden of the *New York Evening World*, who did occasional stories about sports, including polo, racing, and hunting.⁵²

Still other women journalists who wrote about sports during or before the 1920s are referenced in a manner that does not allow the reader to ascertain, more specifically, the years when these reporters engaged in sports writing. Also difficult to assess, in some cases, are: the regularity with which these women covered sports, the types of sports they covered, the reporting styles they employed (straight reporting versus stunt reporting) and even the newspapers where they worked. Despite this vagueness, these women – pioneering sportswriters because their contributions came either during or before the Roaring 20s – are noted here, with details provided to the extent that they are available. These women include:

- Theodora Bean, who spent time in the *Chicago Daily News* sports department.⁵³
- Ruth Byers of the *New York American*, who did some sports-related stunt reporting and earned her first by-line for a story profiling boxing champion Jess Willard.⁵⁴
- Ann Cutler of the *New York World*, who covered the U.S. marble champion during a series of his performances in South America.⁵⁵
- Adeline Daley and Rosemary McCarron, who are mentioned simply as female sports writing pioneers.⁵⁶

⁴⁷ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 513.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 289.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 396.

⁵¹ Reference to Treadwell McGeehan's story on the 1921 Dempsey-Carpentier fight was found in Rice, *The Tumult and the Shouting* (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1954), 119. Treadwell McGeehan was the wife of W. O. McGeehan, noted early twentieth century sportswriter.

⁵² Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 388, 390, 392.

⁵³ Ibid., 257-258.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 180-181.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 169. Arguably, this does not qualify Cutler as a "sports" writer unless one broadly defines sports to encompass all competitive/recreational events, regardless of whether they are particularly physically demanding.

⁵⁶ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 105.

- Helen Nolan, a New York-based reporter who did some reporting on swimming.⁵⁷
- Katherine Oglesby, “the Texas girl expert” who reported on the 1919 Jack Dempsey-Jess Willard fight from Toledo.⁵⁸
- Genevieve Parkhurst of the *San Francisco Call*.⁵⁹
- Mary Elizabeth Plummer, “Indiana’s first girl sports columnist.”⁶⁰
- Nellie Revell, a member of the Chicago press who was among the earliest women to write about boxing.⁶¹

The Ross and Creedon sources yield fewer names of female journalists whose writings about sport can be squarely placed in the 1930s. Without differentiating the scope or character of their work to any significant degree, these women sportswriters include:⁶²

- Mildred Adams, who covered a Spanish bullfight while a feature writer for the *New York Times* Sunday magazine section.⁶³
- Rosemarie Barrie, who covered tennis for the *Pittsburgh Courier*.⁶⁴
- Vera Brown, who wrote about various sporting events for the *Detroit Times*, including the 1934 World Series.⁶⁵
- Rosaleen Doherty, whose stunt reporting for the *New York Daily News* took her to the ski slopes.⁶⁶
- Geraldine Fitch, who covered a bridge tournament for Universal Service.⁶⁷
- Inez Callaway, who authored the “Nancy Rudolph” society column for the *New York Daily News* – an assignment which required her to keep up with the social set at yacht races, prize fights and other sporting events.⁶⁸

⁵⁷ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 188-189.

⁵⁸ Oglesby is mentioned in Dixon, “Willard And Dempsey Impatiently Await Gong,” *New York Evening Telegram*, 4 July 1919, 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 588.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 256-257.

⁶² Since the focus of this dissertation will be women sportswriters of the 1920s, an effort is not made here to distinguish the extent and style of sports reporting done by these women journalists, circa the 1930s.

⁶³ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 163. [I have to check the NYT index to make sure this was in the 30s; it’s likely on the cusp].

⁶⁴ Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 79.

⁶⁵ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 537-538.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 189. Arguably, this does not qualify Fitch as a “sports” writer unless one broadly defines sports to encompass all competitive/recreational events, regardless of whether they are particularly physically demanding.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 452-453.

- Frances Turner, whose women's sports column in the *Baltimore Sun* featured both her by-line and picture.⁶⁹
- Maribel (Owen) Vinson, the Olympic skating champion who was hired by the *New York Times* to cover baseball, basketball, and other sports.⁷⁰

In terms of women sports journalists who picked up the torch in the decades immediately following the 1930s, Ross is no longer a source of information, since her book was published in 1936. Creedon, meanwhile, mentions only a handful of names from the 1940s:⁷¹

- Doris Blackmer and Jean Buck, and Marie Williams, all of whom produced wire service sports reports.
- Lois Fegan, who covered professional ice hockey for the *Harrisburg (Pa.) Telegram*.
- Mary Flannery, who covered sports for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.
- Mary Garber, who started writing about sports at the *Winston-Salem (North Carolina) Sentinel and Journal* during the decade and whose career is documented in many other sources.
- Zelda Hines, who spent time as women's bowling editor for the *Chicago Defender*.
- Jeane Hoffmann, who in the 1940s may have been the first woman to cover Major League Baseball training camps.⁷²
- Adeline Sumi, who worked on the sports desk at the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*.

After that, Creedon skips quickly through the 1950s and 60s, before slowing down to highlight dozens of women sportswriters from the last quarter of the twentieth century, with particular emphasis on their struggles for access to male locker rooms and acceptance in the male-dominated sports industry.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 471-472; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 78.

⁷⁰ Ross, *Ladies of the Press*, 471; Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 75, 78. Vinson did not cover skating, however, because of concern that it might compromise her amateur status as a skater.

⁷¹ The names listed in this paragraph can be found in the "Women in Toyland" chapter in Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 67-107 – especially 79-82.

⁷² While her name is spelled as Jeane Hofmann on a by-lined article she produced for *Editor and Publisher* in 1944, the 1959 edition of *Best Sports Stories* includes a story on which her by-line appears as Jeanne Hoffman, representing a difference in the spelling of both the first and last names. See Creedon, *Women, Media and Sport*, 101. Ardell, *Crashing the Press Box*, has the name as Jeane Hofmann; Ardell suggests that Hofmann was covering minor league baseball games as early as 1937.

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Minneapolis Sunday Tribune

New York Daily News

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EDUCATION

- Ph.D., Mass Communications, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa., December 2003
- Master of Journalism, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa, May 1996.
- B.A., communications, Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., May 1991.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

- Assistant professor of communications, Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, Pa., August 2001 to present.
- Professor-in-residence, Shanghai University, Shanghai, China, Summer 2002
- Visiting assistant professor of communications, Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, Pa., August 1999 to July 2001.
- Lecturer, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa., August 1998 to May 1999.
- Teaching assistant, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa., August 1997 to May 1998.

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS:

- Presented paper, “Lorena Hickok: College Football Beat Writer of the 1920s,” at annual conference of the American Journalism Historians Association, fall 2003.
- Presented paper, “Margaret Goss: Pioneering Female Sportswriter and Sports Columnist of the 1920s,” at annual conference of the Association for Journalism in Education and Mass Communication, summer 2003.
- Delivered “research in progress” presentation about early twentieth century female sportswriters at the annual conference of the American Journalism Historians Association, fall 2001.
- Delivered presentation about the history of women sports journalists at the annual conference of the Association for Women in Sport Media (AWSM), spring 2001.
- Assisted Dr. Thomas Boyle, Susquehanna University, in collecting data for grant-funded project on Internet use among likely voters in the 2000 presidential election, fall 2000.
- Served as panelist during session on “Early Career Challenges and How to Meet Them,” at annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), summer 2000. Panel sponsors included the Theory and Methodology and Graduate Education divisions of AEJMC.
- Presented paper, “The Changing Face of the *New York Times*, 1865-1881: A Comparison of the *Times*’ Coverage of the Lincoln and Garfield Assassinations,” at the annual conference of the American Journalism Historians Association, fall 1999.
- Co-authored and presented study, “Community Journalism at Work: Local News Content on the Rise,” at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, summer 1998
- Contributed to the study, “Thick Description: A Methodology for Communication Policy Studies,” presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, summer 1998.
- Authored the media history article, “Inventor of the Baseball Box Score,” which appeared in *Editor and Publisher*, June 14, 1997.