



ESSAY

the case for all-male golf clubs

Illustrations
by
Tim Bower

I infuriated a woman I know by showing her the following excerpts from a statement by Hootie Johnson, the chairman of Augusta National Golf Club:

While men's golf clubs are diverse, their members have a common desire to create sustained bonds with other men. . . . Men's golf clubs, through their enduring presence, offer a sense of rootedness, a common body of experience and knowledge, a sense of continuity. . . . We are forever being told to give more energy, more time, to our marriage, our career, our children, our community. Men's golf clubs tell us to spend more time with our male friends.

"What a stinking bunch of sexist junk," she said. (I'm paraphrasing—believe me.) So I infuriated her again by confessing that Johnson hadn't actually said those things, and that I'd lifted them, with minor modifications, from the introduction of a popular recent book called *Girls' Night Out: Celebrating Women's Groups Across America*, by Tamara Kreinin and Barbara Camens. (In the parts I quoted, I substituted "men" for "women," and "male" for "female," and "golf clubs" for "groups.") The book, which profiles the Mah-jongg Girls, the Bridgies, the Phenomenal Ladies Motorcycle Club and a dozen other all-female social associations, is illustrated throughout with photographs of

Editor's note: First of a two-part series. In the April Masters preview, see a spectrum of viewpoints from some of the country's best thinkers. For previous articles, or to voice your opinion, check out www.golfdigest.com/masters.

by david owen

beatifically smiling, fulfilled-seeming women at various stages of life, some of them sipping wine or tea, several of them wearing pajamas and clutching pillows and teddy bears. In terms that approach the rapturous—"a safety net of enduring friendship allows the women to expose themselves, to reveal private corners of their lives not shared with the world"—the authors describe the intense feelings of contentment, acceptance, belonging and self-realization that women are uniquely able to acquire by joining clubs that, not incidentally, exclude men.

Girls' Night Out was published last August, two months after Martha Burk, the chair of the National Council of Women's Organizations, wrote to Johnson asking that Augusta National cease to be a male-only club. The book has not provoked a national controversy. It certainly hasn't prompted Selena Roberts, of *The New York Times*, to write a sneering, ad hominem attack on the authors' embrace of the notion of single-sex socializing. ("It's beyond you, isn't it, Hootie?" Roberts wrote, in an extraordinarily vituperative first-page column in *The Times'* sports section last November. "You can't understand why women don't just keep cookin' and stop stewin' over Augusta National's male-only membership.") Nor has it inspired protesters to demand—for example—that book publishers discontinue selling their products to the unashamedly female-only Mother-Daughter Book Group, of Seattle.

"That's different," my woman friend said. (I'm paraphrasing again.)

Well, is it? From the start, Augusta National's antagonists have acted as though the moral, societal and economic basis of their brief against the club were self-evident. They are wrong.

THERE ARE ABOUT TWO DOZEN all-male golf clubs in the United States (see accompanying chart), out of roughly 4,500 private golf clubs altogether. Over the years, I've had the good fortune to visit a number of them, and I've spent quite a bit of time at Augusta National. In the late '90s, the club granted me access to its archives,

members and employees, and I spent two and a half years researching and writing an authorized history called *The Making of the Masters*, which was published in 1999. During my visits to Augusta, I got a rare, extended inside look at the club and the tournament; I even played golf with Hootie Johnson. Did my experience predispose me to seeing Johnson's side in this dispute? Undoubtedly it did. But it also enabled me to do something that the club's most vocal detractors have seemed unable to do, which is to treat the club and the tournament as real things rather than as abstractions. Some of the loudest shouting so far has been done by people who not only don't play golf but also don't watch or care about the Masters.

The bitterest argument has been that the absence of women from the membership of any golf club is, *ipso facto*, the sexual equivalent of racism. Last November, the Rev. Jesse Jackson described men-only membership as "gender apartheid," and said, "The gender bigotry is as offensive as racial bigotry or religious bigotry."

A women-only group?

Others have made essentially the same claim: that operating a social club whose membership includes no women is morally indistinguishable from operating a social club (or a society) that excludes blacks or Jews.

Yet Jackson's accusation depends on a false analogy, and on his own (willful) muddling of the possible reasons for making distinctions between human beings. Racism is a belief in nonexistent racial differences, especially ones that imply the inferiority of one race in comparison with another. Sexism is more complicated, because genuine, nonprejudicial differences between men and women really do exist. (Maintaining separate restrooms for whites and blacks is morally repugnant; maintaining separate restrooms for males and females is not.) Indeed, one of the transforming accomplishments of American feminism has been to foster a broader appreciation of the meaningful ways in which men and

women are not the same. Women who prefer to be treated by female physicians, or to join women-only health clubs, or to be represented by female divorce attorneys aren't guilty of "gender apartheid"; their preferences merely reflect the fact that they, like men, have needs and emotions and desires that are not sex blind.

All the female-only social clubs described in *Girls' Night Out* arose in part from a shared conviction that women have much to gain personally by socializing with women in the absence of men. For many women in the book, in fact, the absence of men is the entire point. (As one of the members of the Phenomenal Ladies Motorcycle Club explains, "Men are the cause of so much pain.") By creating enclosed, comfortable worlds from which men are excluded, the members of these groups gain the freedom to comport themselves in ways they would find impossible in mixed company. "When the Bridgies get together," the book's authors write, "they let down their guard and find new things to laugh at every time they

meet. . . . Their conversations are spiked with off-color jokes that would surely make their families blush."

Of course, women who socialize with other women don't do so only to gain new opportunities for telling dirty jokes. They do so also because they believe that spending time alone with members of their own sex enriches their lives. Anna Quindlen—the bestselling novelist and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist—made the same point in the '80s in an essay called "The Company of Women," in which she wrote that her experience (in the early '70s) as a resident of a coeducational college dormitory had convinced her "that there are still times when I prefer the company of women, particularly when I am in pajamas." She confirmed that belief years later, she wrote, when she and a female friend took their young children on a husbandless vacation. The trip was enormously satisfying for both women,

and the main reason was the absence of men. "I took off my shoes, let down my hair, took apart my psyche, cleaned the pieces, and put them back together again in much improved condition," Quindlen wrote. "I felt like a car that's just had a tune-up. Only another woman could have acted as the mechanic."

Quindlen's preference for female companionship during that week didn't make her an enemy of men; she was simply drawing a line between two different forms of human interaction. "It wouldn't have been the same if our husbands had been along," she explained, "and not just because I would have had to put on some decent clothes." Other putatively feminist writers have often celebrated exactly this type of female-only communing; indeed, they have



'That's different.' Well, is it really?

treated it as a sublime and necessary element in the life of an emotionally healthy woman.

At the same time, however, such writers have frequently dismissed the male-only equivalent as regressive, if not starkly pathological—just as my friend did when I flipped the gender of those sentences from *Girls' Night Out*. When women connect with other women, they're engaging in something transcendent; when men connect with men, they're exposing their inner Neanderthal. Quindlen herself embraces this double standard. When she weighed in, last November, on the Augusta membership issue—"a dispute so absurd it scarcely seems worth arguing"—her prose had shed its violin accompaniment. "In the foreseeable future," she wrote, in a back-page column in *Newsweek*, "the club will clearly find itself sulking reluctantly into the 21st century and admitting the executives and attorneys some of its members probably still

call 'gals.' Hootie Johnson, the chairman of the club, can stop harrumphing about being forced into gender desegregation 'at the point of a bayonet.' And if guys want a place to hang together, they can do what we gals do and congregate on the benches when they take their kids to the playground."

This is not only offensive and hypocritical, but also dishonest—unless Quindlen really does unwind by watching her three teenage children romping on the playgrounds in her Upper West Side neighborhood, and by chatting up the nannies who congregate on the benches there. (It's also a peculiar insult to lob at Augusta National's members, whose average age is well past retirement age.) Quindlen is not a golfer, and she doesn't know the game, and she hasn't met the men who are the target of her attack; perhaps she feels she knows their type. Her column, like Selena Roberts' tirade in *The Times*, is really just sexual profiling. The guiding

sensibility is not enlightenment but indiscriminate loathing. And that's exactly what "gender bigotry" is.

LAST NOVEMBER, TY VOTAW, THE COMMISSIONER OF THE LPGA TOUR, endorsed Martha Burk's ongoing indictment of Augusta National. Of course, the LPGA has exclusionary policies of its own; only women are allowed to become LPGA-certified teaching and club professionals, and only women may compete on the LPGA Tour. Votaw said he hopes the LPGA will soon reverse its 43-year-old ban on permitting male teaching and club pros to join the LPGA—it hasn't done so yet—but that excluding male competitors from LPGA Tour events will always be a necessity, "due to the physiological differences between men and women."

No golfer would deny that such differences exist. The average male touring pro

drives the ball 30 or 40 yards farther than the average female touring pro and has numerous other strength-related advantages. Male touring pros also putt better, as a group, than female touring pros do, for unknown reasons.

Physiological differences are not the only ones that separate golfers of different sexes; they're not even the biggest ones. At most clubs, in fact, the average female golfer is about as different from the average male golfer as a member of the Phenomenal Ladies Motorcycle Club is from a Hells Angel.

The main difference can be reduced to this: Male golfers have a much greater tendency than female golfers to view playing golf as the most important nonwork, nonfamily activity in their lives, and to conduct themselves accordingly. At my own small club, for example, the men, as a group, are far more likely to: play in rain, hail, burning heat, darkness and snow; keep score; offer unsolicited, counterproductive swing advice to their playing partners; practice their short game; buy a stupid thing they saw in a Golf Channel infomercial; describe, shot by shot, a dreary recent round; employ a caddie; refuse to play without having something on the line; play more than 18 holes in a day; travel anywhere at all for the sole purpose of playing golf; and regularly watch women's golf tournaments on TV. The women at my club, meanwhile, are generally more likely, as a group, to: believe that luncheons and dinner dances are essential club activities; skip a tournament if they feel it's someone else's turn to win the trophy; call it a day after nine holes; hold no particular opinion about the condition of the greens; urinate in designated areas only; view changing the color of the clubhouse trim as a capital-spending priority; refuse to play for money; and complain about the two talented young sisters who spend virtually every afternoon honing their game on our practice green or driving range. (Basic beef: Where's their mother?)

Even if men could be persuaded to pee only indoors, male golfers and female golfers would still be divided by more than physiognomy. My brother and I usually see each other just a few times a

year, inevitably on a golf course. "What did you two talk about?" my wife will ask when I return, and I'll answer, truthfully, "Our swings." My Sunday-morning golf buddies are my best male friends in the whole world, but there are more than a few of them whose occupations I don't know: The subject has never come up. My wife used to think that the apparent apathy of my friends and me concerning the details of one another's personal and professional lives was pitiable; she now accepts that men have a different way of being important to their friends—just as I now accept that when she speaks to me in anguish about some crisis, she's more likely to be looking for sympathy and emotional support than for a step-by-step solution to a specific problem. Men don't lack "feelings"; they just tend to

express them less directly, and to relate to one another not by talking on the phone into the wee hours of the night, or by holding a slumber party with the other members of their mah-jongg club, but by flying through a snowstorm to play 36 a day in Myrtle Beach.

The fashion writer Holly Brubach, who as a girl observed both her father and her mother playing golf with their friends, perfectly described the difference between male and female golfers, in an essay called "Play Like a Man": "If their running conversations were any indication, women regarded golf as a social game, like croquet or canasta. My mother and her friends chatted continually about upcoming parties or their children's latest accomplishments, taking time out to strike the ball every now and then. For men, however,

Exploring how men



golf was evidently more along the lines of, say, chess or baseball. No small talk. My father and the other members of his foursome, when they spoke, did so in a telegraphic banter: They teased one another good-naturedly; they improvised nicknames. The subject was always golf."

The difference Brubach identifies may be entirely cultural; it may even be something that we men have subconsciously created for the purpose of making the game, and ourselves, seem moronic to our wives. Or maybe women are just better than men. (See Quindlen's essay on this subject, "Women Are Just Better.") Whatever the explanation, though, the difference is both real and huge—and every reasonably active golfer of either sex knows that it exists. That's why most male golfers play the game mainly with

defining activity, along with a conviction that the vast majority of women don't share the faith.

All-male golf clubs are actually rare. My state is unusual in that it has even one of them: Connecticut Golf Club. It was built in the mid-'60s on a sprawling old estate, which originally included tennis courts and a swimming pool. Among the developer's first moves were bulldozing the pool and erecting a cart barn on top of the tennis courts. (You can still see the painted court lines on the cart barn's floor.) Why did he get rid of those amenities? "Because women like swimming and tennis," a member told me. That member is happily married, and he often happily plays golf with his wife (at a different club, where they both belong).

The state with the most all-male golf

viding facilities for them, even as guests."

In 1988, Solano started a different kind of golf club, called Royal Fox, which was the first private golf club in the Chicago area to permit women to join on their own, as full voting members rather than as spouses. The response was underwhelming. "Very few women applied, or even asked about applying," he told me. Today, Royal Fox has roughly 275 members, of whom six are women.

"Today, we hear the word 'discrimination,' and we fall to the ground," Solano said. "That's because we immediately think of race, and we know that's wrong. That word is poison, but it tells a story without the facts."

Why don't female golfers get together and start Women's National? Actually, they did. When Augusta National was

and women share friendships.

other male golfers, and why most female golfers play the game mainly with other female golfers or with their husbands, and why men who are in a position to do so sometimes decide to join golf clubs that don't have female members.

ENJOY PLAYING GOLF WITH COMPETITIVE women. I am also a deep believer in equal rights for male and female members of mixed-sex golf clubs, including absolutely equal access to weekend tee times and shared clubhouse facilities, and the elimination of sex-based restrictions on control of equity at clubs that are owned by their members. (These are the real equality issues at private golf clubs, by the way.)

By personal preference, though, I play most of my golf with other men, and I happily play at all-male golf clubs whenever I can figure out how to get myself invited to one. The main feature shared by all of them—aside from unimaginative menus and too many opportunities to notice that men's butts, which are undersized to begin with, apparently shrink further as men get older—is an unwavering devotion to the game of golf as a life-

clubs, for some reason, is Illinois, which has four of them. I recently visited the newest of the four, Black Sheep Golf Club, which is situated on a rolling, treeless parcel of exurban farmland about an hour west of downtown Chicago. The clubhouse, a simple white barn, sits on a rise near the center of the property.

The decision to exclude women from Black Sheep was an economic one. "Our idea was to form a club where the emphasis would be on golf," Vincent Solano, the club president, told me. "We wanted to keep the expense down, and to charge only enough to cover the cost, and to have just 200 members so that you can play golf any time that you want to. We don't have a restaurant. We have a shower, a bathroom, a bar, a place to sit, and a golf course." To attract a significant number of women, he said, he would have needed to add expensive amenities, a full social calendar and many more employees—and even with those things, he is certain, the response would have been limited. "Believe me," he said, "if there were a hundred women who would join a club like this, we would have women. But there's no market for it. We would never find enough women to join to justify the cost of pro-

founded, in 1931, a female-only club called Women's National Golf and Tennis Club had been thriving on Long Island for eight years. Women's National was created by a female golf champion named Marion Hollins and was financed entirely by wealthy women. The holes, which were relatively short, were designed with women in mind.

Men could play Women's National only as guests. David Outerbridge, in a biography of Hollins called *Champion in a Man's World*, writes, "The club opened to great success, and it became a center of play for the champion women golfers of the day, as well as good and average golfers." Women's National survived as an all-female club for 18 years, before being done in by the Great Depression, the Second World War and the women themselves, who, fearing hard times ahead as the war began, elected to merge with the men of the nearby Creek Club.

Why did Augusta National survive the war while Women's National disappeared? Surely the explanation is that those particular men cared about golf in a way that made them willing to sustain a money-losing dream for the duration, and those particular women did not.

Maybe part of the reason the women let their club go was that Marion Hollins, by that point, was spending most of her time in California, where she had started two other golf clubs.

Hollins, who died in 1944 at the age of 51, was the first important female developer of golf clubs in the United States; she was also essentially the last. In recent decades, new golf courses have been built in this country at the rate of approximately one per day, yet women have had leading roles in the creation of only a tiny number of them. Why? The explanation can't be economic, because women control almost half the private wealth in America. The only possible explanation is desire. Since Hollins' day, American women have clearly believed that there are better uses for their money. Which is kind of the men's point, no?

aUGUSTA NATIONAL'S FEMALE critics have sometimes suggested that their intervention is necessary because the primary activity at Augusta National is not golf but "networking," and

that the members, as a result of being members, gain an unfair advantage in the business world. "Augusta is the 19th hole for corporate synergy," Selena Roberts wrote in *The Times*. "On the board of Coca-Cola, Sam Nunn and Warren Buffett sit side by side, able to mull the perils of Amen Corner and discuss how the market is more unpredictable than (he-he-he) a woman's mood ring (back slap, back slap)."

This is not just dumb (mood ring?); it's also wrong, characteristically wrong. Augusta National has roughly 300 members. The average out-of-town member shows up for a total of a week or two every year, or every other year; the average local member plays mostly on weekends and mostly with other local members. (The club and the course are closed from late May through early October, and are virtually deserted during January and February.) They all come to the club not to share corporate secrets or to plug holes in the glass ceiling but to play golf the way men like to play golf. Perhaps two dozen have names that a media-immersed person might recognize—men like Jack Welch, Bill Gates, George Shultz

and Arnold Palmer—but the great majority are just well-to-do retired guys, most of them in their 70s or older, whom nobody ever heard of. If Sam Nunn and Warren Buffett really do feel the urge to synergize, they have many more opportunities to do so at Coke board meetings than they do at Augusta National, where they have seldom if ever crossed paths and where Buffett is known to keep pretty much to himself. Members who are still employed sometimes do entertain business associates or clients—including women, who can play the course and stay at the club as guests any time that guests are allowed. (The only demographic group that suffers in this area is non-golfers. Should the club be forced to admit them, too?)

Augusta National is, first and foremost, an idealized, man-style social club—a pure golf club—and always has been. Clifford Roberts, who founded the club with Bobby Jones, believed that its most important tournament was not the Masters, which the club inaugurated in 1934, but the Jamboree, an annual weekend-long competition for members only. If you are a male golfer

MALE-ONLY CLUBS

The 24 male-only clubs make up less than 1 percent of the private golf clubs in America (year of openings in parentheses):

Adios G.C., Coconut Creek, Fla. (1983): When President George H. Bush visited Adios in 1992, a female Secret Service agent took a post outside the clubhouse to comply with the no-women policy.

Augusta (Ga.) National G.C. (1932): Still an all-male membership, though the club says women play more than 1,000 rounds a year there.

Bear Creek G.C., Denver (1985): The club has male and female caddies, and they're allowed to play anytime there's no member play. Members' wives, however, cannot play the course.

Black Sheep Golf Club, Sugar Grove, Ill. (2002): "We're basically trying to have a place to come play golf, smoke a cigar in our underwear and go home," club president Vincent Solano told *The Chicago Sun-Times*.

Blind Brook Club, Purchase, N.Y. (1917): President Dwight D. Eisenhower was a member of the club.

Bob O'Link G.C., Highland Park, Ill. (1916): In 1921, 15 members resigned after a slate of directors favoring admission of women was defeated.

Burning Tree Club, Bethesda, Md. (1923): One infamous story, from more than 30 years ago, is about a young woman who was a passenger in a plane that made a forced landing in the rough at the 18th hole. "I think she was let in

the clubhouse," Max Elbin, then the head pro, told *Golf Digest* in 1997. "I'm pretty sure she was."

Butler National G.C., Oak Brook, Ill. (1973): The club dropped out as host of the PGA Tour's Western Open after the Shoal Creek controversy in 1990.

Connecticut G.C., Easton, Conn. (1969): Originally known as The Golf Club at Aspetuck, the club was the creation of Lawrence Wein, who once was an owner of the Empire State Building.

Garden City (N.Y.) G.C. (1899): In the mid-'90s, the Garden City school district barred the boys' golf team from using the course because of the club's all-male policy.

Gator Creek G.C., Sarasota, Fla. (1973): Flags on the greens bear likenesses of women.

The Golf Club, New Albany, Ohio (1967): Known as Pete Dye's best design in America.

Lochinvar G.C., Houston (1980): Lochinvar was the base for Butch Harmon before his move to Henderson, Nev.

Old Elm Club, Highland Park, Ill. (1913): Legend has it that a woman once made it to the front door of the club dragging a pullcart in the mistaken belief that the club was a public course.

Pepper Pike Club, Cleveland (1924): Women are allowed at a Christmas cocktail party.

Pine Valley (N.J.) G.C. (1914): Jack Nicklaus once played the course while honeymooning with Barbara, who was driven around the perimeter to catch glimpses of Jack during the round.

The Plantation G.C., Indio, Calif. (1996): The inspiration for Southern Dunes (*below*).

Preston Trail G.C., Dallas (1965): Subject of a 1973 *Golf Digest* story, "Last Bastion of Male Chauvinism." Baseball legend Mickey Mantle was responsible for the Mickey Mantle Rule: You have to wear *something* into the grillroom.

Ridglea C.C., Fort Worth (1966): Ridglea began as a public course in 1928, then formed a private club in 1954. Twelve years later, it built a separate course and clubhouse for men only.

Sharon G.C., Sharon Center, Ohio (1966): The club was started by a group led by General Tire president Gerry O'Neil.

Southern Dunes G.C., Maricopa, Ariz. (2002): The men's-only designation set the course apart in the crowded Phoenix market.

Squires G.C., Ambler, Pa. (1963): An oft-told story: Wives who sometimes telephone the club are told, "Lady, this is one place you don't have to worry about your husband."

Wolf Creek Golf Links, Olathe, Kan. (1973): So good it was home to the 1979 *Missouri* Amateur.
Wolf Run G.C., Zionsville, Ind., (1989): The membership has included former NFL coach Mike Ditka.

and have played in tournaments with other male golfers, you can guess what it's like. It consists of too much eating, too much drinking and a degree of seriousness about golf out of all proportion with the skill of the players. Augusta National has three other weekend-long, member-only golf events, all of them similar to the Jamboree.

Would the member-only events be different if women took part in them? Obviously, they would. Does that difference make a difference? Only Augusta National's members are in a position to have an opinion on that subject, and their opinion is that it does. No outsider has any basis for declining to take them at their word—just as no outsider has any basis for claiming that the Bridgies would be just as happy playing poker with their husbands. To support the right of those men to engage in such activities with other men—a right supported by the Constitution, by the way—is no more disgusting than it is to support the right of Wellesley College not to go coed.

The current debate concerning the makeup of this club's membership is absurd at almost any level, because if you

add it all up and round it to the nearest number of a reasonable size, *nobody* is a member of Augusta National. Despite what various critics have suggested, the average past, present or future male golf-playing corporate CEO has no more chance of being invited to join Augusta National than Anna Quindlen does. (Possible compromise for Martha Burk: Persuade Hootie Johnson to make me a member, and I'll work to change the system from within.)

mARTHA BURK, A NON-golfer, has said that it's the existence of the Masters that makes Augusta National's male-only membership a fighting issue—although when her media crusade began, she didn't know what the Masters was, as she revealed when she said, "An event of this profile could be held somewhere else." She presumably knows better now. But does she really understand that the "profile" of the Masters is not something that was simply bestowed upon this all-male club, but was painstakingly created by its members over the course of almost 70 years? It's precisely this hard-won success that grates on the club's most vocal critics. The Times even argued that the club and its chairman "prey on the generous nature of patrons who buy every last shirt, hat and sock with a Masters logo on it."

This is a stunningly bewildered interpretation of free enterprise (and of free will). Selling a desirable product to willing customers is not predatory. No one forces golf fans to attend the Masters, buy Masters souvenirs or watch the tournament on TV. Nor does the fact that golf fans freely choose to do those things entitle them to control the affairs of the club, beyond the influence they exercise by deciding whether to attend or tune in. The same is true of any company with a product to sell—including The New York Times Co., which, the last I checked, hadn't begun tucking proxy ballots into copies of its newspapers.

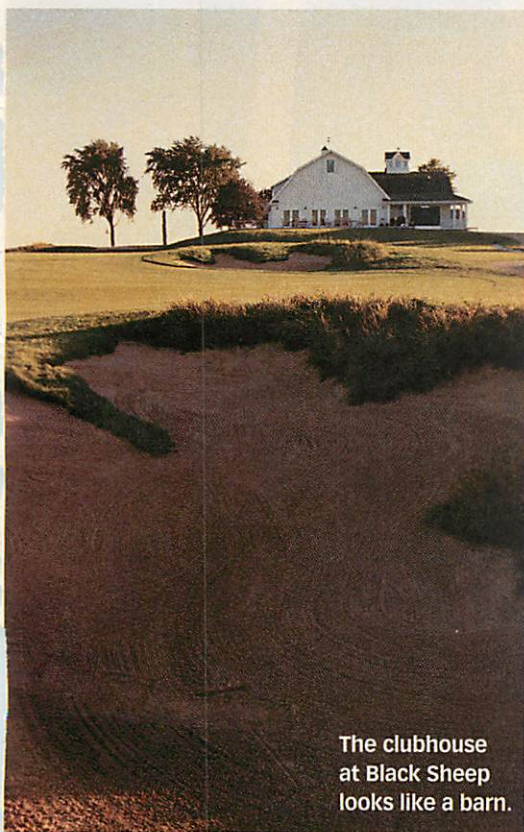
The Masters has undeniably grown into a big financial success—but it's a financial success of a very particular kind. Augusta

National is different from almost all other private golf clubs and country clubs in America in that it has never sought to be classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt organization. That means that it does something that the National Council of Women's Organizations doesn't do: It pays income taxes. What's more, Augusta National reinvests the tournament's net proceeds back into the tournament, and the club's net proceeds back into the club, and donates the remainder to charitable organizations, including the LPGA Foundation.

It's easy for Anna Quindlen to demand that Tiger Woods, as a symbol, withdraw from the Masters—because the tournament and the game mean nothing to her beyond the opportunity they provide for making a stink. ("I think golf is a silly game, truly a good walk spoiled," she wrote.) Most nongolfers don't even know what the controversy is actually about. "So, have they decided to let women play in the Masters yet?" a nongolfing friend asked me.

You get the feeling, as you read and reread various attacks on Augusta National, that the critics' real grievance is not about sexual inequality but about these particular men—who are rich, and who love a stupid game, and whose club is in the South, and whose chairman uses his childhood nickname and speaks with a Southern accent. Such men are safe, easy targets for derision. (Burk even mocked Johnson's accent for a reporter from The Washington Post.) They're just "good old boys," who couldn't seem more unlike the kind of people who do wholesome, life-affirming things like shopping for shoes with the other women in their motorcycle club. But the real test of all rights, including the right to spend nights out with members of your own sex, doesn't lie in how you apply them to yourself. It lies in how you apply them to people who are different from you—even when they are as different as this. ■

Contributing Editor David Owen writes a monthly column for Golf Digest and is a staff writer at The New Yorker. Next month: A forum of viewpoints on the Augusta National membership issue.



The clubhouse at Black Sheep looks like a barn.