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## Selling Scotland? Selling women's golf? The 2019 Solheim Cup in the 'Home of Golf'

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### ABSTRACT

In 2019, Scotland played host to the Solheim Cup, a competition contested by leading women professional golfers representing Europe and the United States. The event was given further political significance by the fact that it took place in the same year as the United Kingdom left the European Union against the wishes of the majority of Scots who had voted in the 2016 referendum on EU membership. This paper examines the significance of the 2019 Solheim Cup with specific reference to the quasi-mythical status of golf in Scotland and the use of sports events by the Scottish Government and the organisation responsible for Scotland's tourism strategy, VisitScotland, to enhance the country's image and attract visitors, particularly from overseas. Initially, discussion focuses on the historical roots of golf in Scotland, and its quasi-mythical claim to be the 'Home of Golf', a key motif in the nation's sports tourism strategy. Attention then turns to a critical examination of contemporary sport tourism policy in Scotland, focusing upon the nation's use of international sporting events as part of this broader strategy. To this end, we scrutinise the discursive strategies used by Scottish politicians and policymakers in relation to the 2019 Solheim Cup, exploring the extent to which the event effectively tackled the explicit goals of: (a) promoting Scottish values; (b) demonstrating the nation's capabilities for hosting sporting events; (c) cementing Scotland's reputation as the home of golf; and, (d) tackling socio-economic and gendered inequalities with regards to golf participation in Scotland.

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## Introduction

Myths have their beginnings in the reality of a country's past. In Scotland, history and mythology come so closely interwoven, that it's often hard to see the real country and its people. (Grigor, Grigor, & Rush, 1996, p. 3)

In 2019, Scotland played host to the Solheim Cup, a competition contested by leading women professional golfers representing Europe and the United States. The event was

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given further political significance by the fact that it took place in the same year as the United Kingdom left the European Union against the wishes of the majority of Scots who had voted in the 2016 referendum on EU membership. This paper examines the significance of the 2019 Solheim Cup with specific reference to the quasi-mythical status of golf in Scotland and the use of sports events by the Scottish Government and the organisation responsible for Scotland's tourism strategy, VisitScotland, to enhance the country's image and attract visitors, particularly from overseas. Furthermore, given the lack of past academic scrutiny of the Solheim Cup and its relative status within the domain of international sporting events, we endeavour to address this gap by offering critical reflections on the event's potential economic and political importance to the host nation.

To this end, we conducted an analysis of the discursive strategies used by politicians and policymakers in the Scottish context when framing the importance of the 2019 Solheim Cup for achieving the strategic goals of the Scottish Government and VisitScotland, the organisation responsible for Scotland's tourism strategy. This discourse analysis specifically focuses upon official government webpages, media releases, and parliamentary debates which explicitly discuss the 2019 Solheim Cup, providing a corpus of evidence of the discursive framing of the event in relation to broader goals in relation to sports tourism and golf in Scotland.

In order to delineate sources which could be deemed reflective of 'official' political sources on the 2019 Solheim Cup, the data sample was restricted to webpages, press releases, speech transcripts and policy publications which were (a) produced directly by official government agencies and (b) included the phrase 'Solheim Cup'. By restricting the data sample to sources which have been released from official channels, it was possible to specifically scrutinise examples of communication which have been officially sanctioned by press officials and campaign staff. Whilst this approach therefore precluded the inclusion of media-based discussion of the 2019 Solheim Cup, such limitations were deemed acceptable given the emphasis on the policy goals which underpinned the hosting of event.

Before turning our attention to the specific discursive patterns evident in these political sources on the event, we will commence our discussion by framing the 2019 Solheim Cup within the broader Scottish sporting context by firstly considering the historical status of golf and golfing events in Scotland and, secondly, scrutinising the importance of golf within the Scottish sports tourism policy.

## **Golf, Scotland and the Scots**

A number of modern sports, including curling and shinty, have been claimed to have originated in Scotland and to have the status, therefore, of 'national sports' (Burnett & Jarvie, 2000). In terms of global popularity for participants, spectators and media coverage, golf is first and foremost amongst these sports. Scotland has been widely credited as the 'home of golf', with supporters of this claim pointing to the early references to the sport's existence in Scotland in James II's 1457 decree which banned the sport (Geddes, 2000). Of particular relevance to this paper given the gendered character of the Solheim Cup, Mary Queen of Scots was accused by her enemies of playing golf and pall mall in the fields beside Seton Palace, just days after the murder of her husband, Lord Darnley, in 1567 (British Golf Museum, n.d.). If accurate, this is the first reference to a woman playing

the game. However, the veracity of this story has been seriously questioned (Alexander, 2017) as have the claims for the Scottish origins of golf which have been undermined by evidence suggesting that the sport may have been introduced to Scotland from elsewhere in Europe (Geddes, 2000; Lowerson, 1994), with Gillmeister (2002) pointing to Flemish references to 'kolf' or 'kolve' as early as 1360.

Not only has golf been framed as one of the few sports that was invented in Scotland, it has also been used in an attempt to demonstrate the nation's supposed well developed democratic sentiments (Forsyth, 1992). This too has been challenged with Lowerson (1994) criticising attempts to project Scottish golf as more egalitarian in nature in comparison to other countries where the sport is often viewed as a more elite and largely male pursuit, a view echoed in other academic discussion of Scottish golf (Geddes, 2000; Holt, 1989; Maguire, Jarvie, Mansfield, & Bradley, 2002).

Despite these caveats regarding the dubiousness of claims that golf originated in Scotland and that it is egalitarian in essence, a number of authors have acknowledged that the view of Scotland as the 'home of golf' retains legitimacy due to its significant influence on the sport's development resulting from the proliferation of golf courses, equipment manufacturers, players and course architects, both within Scotland and throughout the world as the game spread internationally (Bairner, 2009; Bairner & Whigham, 2014; Geddes, 2000). Regardless of the validity or otherwise of claims that Scotland is the home of golf and that Scottish golf reflects the country's egalitarian impulses, the myths remain as myths are wont to do and, as Archard (1995) argued, 'national myths may bear relations to the truth such that they are both true to some degree and, insofar as they are believed to be true, may be self-confirming' (p. 477). As such the stories that are told about golf in Scotland are inextricably linked to selective readings of Scottish history, social development and landscape. Thus, Lowerson (1994) argues that the creation and active perpetuation of the myth of Scotland as the home of golf in the pre-Union and post-Union period remain important in contemporary Scotland, with golf being used as a vehicle for attracting inward investment into Scottish tourism infrastructure and active sports tourists from across the world (EventScotland, 2015, 2019a, 2019b).

Less often challenged than the claims for invention and egalitarianism is the belief that the game of golf evokes the image of a national landscape, albeit imagined at least as much as real. According to Duffy (1997), 'the "sense of place" accruing from the ways in which people experience representations of present and past landscapes is a fundamental part of territorial identity and of geographical understanding' (p. 64). Simon Schama (1996) has argued that 'landscape is the work of mind' (p. 7). A similar point is made by Margaret Atwood (2004) when she writes, 'landscapes in poems are often interior landscapes; they are maps of a state of mind' (p. 59). But they nevertheless depict real places.

In the case of golf's proposed status as Scotland's national sport, the association with sport, nation and rural landscape is obvious (Bairner, 2009). It is true that many golf courses in Scotland are often located within the boundaries or on the immediate outskirts of major cities and towns. Others, however, are situated some distance away from the larger conurbations. Indeed, this is true of many of Scotland's best known courses which are located along the nation's coastline. Their relationship with the natural landscape has been captured in numerous fictional and non-fiction accounts of golf in Scotland.

Michael Murphy begins his mystical paean to the game of golf with a description of what might be regarded as an archetypal Scottish course. 'There, on the shore of the

North Sea', he writes, 'lies a golfing links that shimmers in my memory – an innocent stretch of heather and grassy dunes that cradled the unlikely events which grew into this book' (Murphy, 1972, p. 3). In contrast with the manufactured courses which have long been the norm in the United States, Asia and increasingly in the United Kingdom as well, the Old Course in St Andrews, upon which Murphy's Burningbush Links could easily have been based, was, in the words of James Dodson (1997), built by no man, 'shaped only a bit by Old Tom Morris and others, and it therefore abounds in eccentricity: massive double greens, crisscrossing fairways, target lines that seem to shift with the ever-shifting sea winds or don't exist at all'. A similar almost prehistoric vision of a Scottish golfing landscape is conjured up by Andrew Greig (2006) when he describes the North Ronaldsay course:

Scanning the course against the needle-bright light, I begin to understand there are no 'greens' as such, no 'fairway', no 'rough'. It's all an undifferentiated one, like the original world, the world before language. There is only undulating links turf, bounded by the ocean on one side and a great stone dyke on the other. (p. 7)

All of this refers to links golf, with Scotland's Open Championship courses situated beside the sea in the east and south-west coasts of the country and this is the landscape most commonly associated with the early pioneers of golf in Scotland and in time, far beyond their country's shores.

'Old' Tom Morris was born in St Andrews on 16 June 1821. He died in the same town on 24 May 1908, having fallen downstairs in the New Golf Club. His biographers, Malcolm and Crabtree (2010), write, 'From an age of great Victorians, Tom Morris emerged, if not the greatest, certainly the most widely-known of sporting figures' (p. 278). They add that 'Tom's name endures because of the indelible impression he left on golf' (p. 282). His grave in the cathedral burial ground has become a place of pilgrimage for lovers of golf from all over the world. 'His features', Malcolm and Crabtree conclude, 'remain instantly recognisable to everyone who plays the game that he, more than anyone, made great' (p. 283).

Morris's son, also Tom, whose short life bears many of the hallmarks of the modern cult of celebrity, was born in St Andrews on 29 April 1851. He won the Open Championship on four successive occasions (1868, 1869, 1870 and 1872), there being no competition in 1871. This established a record that has never been beaten as did his initial victory being achieved when he was only seventeen years old. Indeed, the history of golf owes much to, in Campbell's (2001) florid prose, 'the Scottish golfing missionaries who took the light of their great game into a darkened world for the betterment of all' (p. 10). One of those was William Anderson who was born in North Berwick on Scotland's North Sea coast in 1879 and emigrated with his father and brother in 1896. He went on to win the US Open four times (1901, 1903, 1904, and 1905). Scots may not have invented golf. Nevertheless, the men of the links had done much to bring the sport to the public's attention and provide it with its first celebrities.

But let us now turn our attention away from the coast to that other semi-mythical Scottish national landscape which is also associated with golf and specifically with the venue for the 2019 Solheim Cup. Far more than the coastal links, this is the landscape of tartanry, the modern cult of which began with Sir Walter Scott's stage management of King George IV's visit to Scotland in 1822, and of Queen Victoria and what Tom Nairn called 'Balmorality' (Jarvie, 1992; Nairn, 1988). According to Withers (1994):

The Scottish Highlands are real but they have also been created as a combination of ideological opposites. A cultural interest in uncultivated nature and 'primitive' peoples occurred alongside but in contradistinction to economic emphases upon cultivation, delight in the geometry of enclosed fields and persistent moral reproof towards unproductive land and a people believed to be intrinsically disposed either to sloth or warfare. (p. 64)

Even though people were being increasingly cleared from the lands to north of Scotland's central belt during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, thanks in no small part to Queen Victoria and Victorian painters and photographers, the Highlands became stereotyped as the Scottish landscape par excellence – as captured in Hamish MacCunn's orchestral overture, *The Land of Mountain and the Flood* composed in 1887 – not only in the imagination of non-Scots but also of the Scots themselves (Withers, 1994).

Along with Edinburgh and Glasgow, seascapes and the Highlands comprise the Scotland that most overseas visitors want to see and, regardless of where they were born and brought up, most Scots identify as quintessentially Scottish. Because these landscapes are also closely associated with golf, it is easy to appreciate how the sport and the places where it is played meet the test of Urry's (2002) 'tourist gaze' and are valuable to policy-makers in terms of enhancing the nation's image and promoting tourism.

Writing about comparable strategies in Wales in relation to the 2010 Ryder Cup, Harris and Lepp (2011) suggest that 'Wales was to be positioned as something quite different to its geographical neighbors (England, Ireland and Scotland)' (pp. 66-67). For history and present-day constitutional reasons, national distinctiveness was arguably less of a necessity in the case of the 2019 Solheim Cup. Furthermore, in relation to hosting golf events, as Harris and Lepp (2011) acknowledge, 'Scotland, long recognized and lauded as "the home of golf" enjoys a certain primacy here and names such as St Andrews, Troon and Gleneagles are known throughout the golfing world' (p. 67). However, despite Scotland's undeniably strong association with golf, participation rates, particularly in relation to gender, require further consideration.

## Women and golf in Scotland

The Scottish Ladies' Golfing Association was founded in 1904. Nevertheless, despite Scottish women's lengthy involvement in the game, golf has remained overwhelmingly male. In 2018, the make up of golfers in Scotland was 79% male, 12% female and 9% juniors (KPMG, 2018). As a result, the need to attract female players has been prioritised more by golf clubs in Scotland than by any other sports clubs, with a goal to introduce 15,000 women and juniors to the game (Goodlad, 2018). However, the traditional attitudes towards women golfers (see, for example Crosset, 1995, or Reis & Correia, 2013) and the historical gendering of golf club cultures (see, for example, George, 2009, 2010) appears to question the sincerity of this stated ambition.

The first women's golf club was formed in St Andrews in 1867 (George, 2010). However, for thirty years, its activities were restricted to putting, out of sight of the 'real' golf that was played by men. By 1890 though women golfers were a feature of many courses in Scotland (Concannon, 1995). The Ladies Golf Union was established in Scotland in 1893 and, up until 2016, when it merged with the Royal and Ancient, it was the umbrella body for ladies' amateur golf on Britain and Ireland. Prior to its formation, one male critic, Horace Hutchinson expressed reservations about women's golf, a perspective

which may well have been shared by many male golfers when he wrote to the LGU's first president, Blanche Martin, that:

constitutionally and physically women are unfitted for golf. They will never last through two rounds of a long course in a day. Nor can they ever hope to defy the wind and weather encountered on our best links even in spring and summer. Temperamentally the strain will be too great for them. (cited in Concannon, p. 186)

Women were later restricted to 'associate' membership of many clubs and at some of Britain's most famous courses membership was for many years denied to women. Indeed, Muirfield near Edinburgh did not accept women members until June 2019 and although the Royal and Ancient (R&A) in St Andrews first welcomed women members in 2014, it was not until five years later that female changing facilities were installed in its clubhouse (Murray, 2019). Thus, although golf warrants, for several reasons, the title of Scotland's national sport, there is no reason for complacency about its gendered character in the country. Perhaps fittingly therefore, a women's tournament, the 2019 Solheim Cup, for the second time became the focus of the tourism dimension of Scottish sport policy.

### **Contemporary Scottish sport policy and tourism**

Home and Manzenreiter's (2006) review of academic literature on sporting mega-events argued that such events had received increased interest from the media, transnational corporations and governments from various parts of the world. Most pertinently for the current case of Scotland's hosting of the 2019 Solheim Cup, Home and Manzenreiter's contention that sports mega-events 'have become seen as valuable promotional opportunities for cities and regions' (p. 8) is of particular prescience with regards to the role of golf for Scotland, and the nation's sports tourism policy. Furthermore, numerous case studies of international sports events have identified instances where political influences have overt and covert ramifications for these events, despite spurious arguments from sports administrators, governments and politicians alike in stressing their independence from political considerations (Jeffreys, 2012; Macfarlane, 1986). Palmer (2013) argues that the 'social and economic impacts of sporting mega-events in terms of urban regeneration, tourism benefits or legacy outcomes for cities and countries who host them have all been recognized by governments, NGOs and cosmocrats alike' (p. 104). Similarly, Grix (2014) cites a number of prominent reasons why political actors have supported the hosting of international sports events, ranging 'from increasing sport participation among the population, urban regeneration, producing a 'feelgood factor' among citizens, to showcasing a national on the world stage and, of course, making a profit' (p. x).

In the Scottish context, a number of these motives have been evident within the policy approach of the Scottish Government in relation to the hosting of sporting events. Following the re-establishment of a Scottish Parliament in 1999 with a limited range of devolved powers, Scottish politicians have had the opportunity to pursue distinct strategies to promote certain Scottish economic, social and political goals. One such strategy has seen Scotland actively pursue a range of sporting events as part of an economic development strategy underpinned by tourism promotion, infrastructural improvements and urban regeneration (Chaney, 2015; EventScotland, 2015; Lockstone & Baum, 2008; Matheson, 2010; VisitScotland, 2011).

In particular, the central events strategy promoted by the official organisational body in Scotland, EventScotland, frequently stresses the importance of the hosting of sporting events as part of a broader strategy which uses the hosting of events as a key driver of tourism and economic growth in the Scottish context (EventScotland, 2015). The 'Scotland: The Perfect Stage' events strategy policy revolves around the promotion of particular themed years which place emphasis on different aspects of Scotland's culture, heritage, geography or natural environment, thus attempting to encourage new and returning tourists to experience different facets of Scotland during their visits (EventScotland, 2019a).

The 'Year of Homecoming 2014' is of particular interest when considering the importance of sport for this strategy, given that Scotland hosted two major sporting events that year in the form of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup at Gleneagles. Black (2014) argues that 'second-order' events such as the Glasgow Commonwealth Games are of great importance to 'locales for whom second-order games are the only realistic means of pursuing event-centred development strategies' (p. 16), arguing that any attempts to 'springboard' to larger sporting events is infeasible for smaller host nations such as Scotland. Given this, the strategy of Scottish policymakers has revolved around the frequent hosting of smaller international sporting events which are more manageable in their scope, thus reducing the economic and political risks of hosting larger international sporting events of a greater scale.

### **Golf and the 2014 Ryder Cup in Scottish policy and politics**

With specific reference to the Ryder Cup, it is relevant to note that, as early as 2001, the Scottish Tourist Board had proudly proclaimed, 'this is golf in Scotland ... not simply a game; it is a way of life ... remaining true to its traditional principles, handed down over the centuries' (Scottish Tourist Board, 2001, p. 27). Such rhetoric remains central within recent policy statements and promotional strategies regarding golf in the Scottish context. For example, the EventScotland website proudly proclaims Scotland as 'the Home of Golf', arguing that

[n]o country in the world can claim as close an affinity with the game of golf than Scotland. It is the country that gave the game to the world and where, to this day, thousands of visitors from all over the world come to experience golf in its truest form. (EventScotland, 2019b)

To this end, a report commissioned jointly by VisitScotland and Scottish Enterprise estimated that the 'economic value of golf tourism for the Scottish economy is £286 million in output, 4,700 jobs and £154 million in Gross Value Added' (VisitScotland / Scottish Enterprise, 2016, p. 4). Furthermore, the Scottish Government recently cited evidence from their officially-commissioned report into the hosting of The Open at Carnoustie in 2018, highlighting that the event was worth £120m to the Scottish economy, including £69m direct economic impact from the event as well as £51m in 'destination marketing' activity (Scottish Government, 2018).

In light of this evidence, the specific logic behind the efforts of EventScotland with regards to the exploitation of golf as a tool for enhancing Scottish tourism is explicitly acknowledged, with the organisation claiming that:

Hosting major golf events not only benefits the country in direct economic impact terms, with spectators travelling from around the world to attend, they also serve as a shop



window to the world, promoting Scotland on a global stage as the Home of Golf. With audiences upwards of 600 million homes around the world, there is no better way to showcase the magnificence of Scotland's golf offering than through the hosting of major events. (EventScotland, 2019b)

Indeed, this rationale for hosting major international golfing events in Scotland permeates not only the rhetoric of public sector organisations such as EventScotland; it is equally evident in the political discourse of politicians from across the political spectrum within the corridors of the devolved Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government. For example, with specific reference to the 2014 'Year of Homecoming', the Scottish National Party-led government frequently emphasised the impact of events such as the Ryder Cup throughout the year in terms of raising Scotland's international profile to this end:

We should not underestimate Scotland's reach on the world stage, first through the Commonwealth Games, politically through the referendum and, finally, through the Ryder Cup. Scotland is better known to millions of people throughout the world, which can only be good for our country, our economy and our tourism industry. (Shona Robison MSP, SP OR 1 October 2014, col. 22)

Nonetheless, as alluded to in the comments above from the Sports Minister at the time, Shona Robison, with regards to the Scottish independence referendum, the hosting of sporting events such as the Ryder Cup and the Commonwealth Games cannot be viewed as value-neutral in political terms. The chosen date for the referendum immediately sparked press speculation on the reasons for selecting autumn 2014, with the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn in June 1314 and the hosting of the events in the 2014 'Year of Homecoming', such as the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup, offered as possible explanations of the chosen date (Carrell, 2013; Morrow & Wheatley, 2003; The Economist, 2012).

Whilst a strong degree of agreement exists in terms of the potential benefits of sporting events for developing the Scottish economy via sports tourism across the political spectrum, events such as the Ryder Cup equally acted as a lever for political disputes. For example, for the pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP), the 2014 events acted as an illustration of the perceived constraints of Scotland's constitutional status within the United Kingdom in terms of fully maximising the economic benefits of the events:

The report entitled 'The economic impact of Air Passenger Duty', which was published in February this year, underlined the damage that APD is doing to our airports, our tourism industry and the economy. Scotland will welcome the world in 2014, courtesy of Homecoming, the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup, but we are in the absolutely absurd situation of increasing costs for people who want to visit Scotland. We believe that the devolution of air passenger duty would enable the development of a regime that supports more direct international air routes, reduces the costs of flights for passengers, and encourages more visitors. (Nicola Sturgeon MSP, SP OR 9 May 2013, col. 19605)

In contrast, the political import of events such as the Ryder Cup was equally seized upon by the arguments of pro-union politicians to illustrate the potential risks of politicising the sporting events of 2014 given their proximity to the independence referendum, arguing that such actions would be counter-productive in relation to the success of the events:

Great sporting events have the power to break down barriers and to bring people together so isn't it a shame that Alex Salmond simply wants to use them to promote his separation

agenda. It is increasingly clear that Alex Salmond sees the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup as nothing more than a backdrop for his plans for a separate Scotland. Scottish Labour will not allow these great sporting events to be used as props for separation but we will work to ensure that they are an advert for Scotland a strong country made stronger by its partnerships. ('Patricia Ferguson Speech to Conference', Scottish Labour press release, 2011)

Given these significant political interventions regarding the importance of the Ryder Cup in relation to the broader political and constitutional debates raging in 2014, it is important to stress that the hosting of events such as the Ryder Cup do not and cannot take place within a political or policy vacuum. In light of this, as we turn attention to Scotland's hosting of the 2019 Solheim Cup, we must in turn consider the political climate in which the 2019 event was situated.

### The 2019 Solheim Cup

As befits its status in the history of golf, Scotland has played host to numerous major competitions, not least the Open Championship which returns at regular intervals to the country which hosted its initial 32 iterations. The Solheim Cup had been contested twice before in Scotland – in 1992 at Dalmahoy, near Edinburgh, where the championship course was designed by James Braid, born in 1870 in Earlsferry on the same Fife coast as St Andrews is situated. Like the PGA Centenary course at Gleneagles, it is inland and therefore also different from the links courses which host the Open Championship and reflect a close connection between the sport and one type of Scottish landscape. In 2000 the Cup was contested at Loch Lomond, also an inland course with 'mature woodland' (Campbell, 2001, p. 115) and described by Campbell (2001) as 'a very private place ... not a course that many will ever play and it has incurred some criticism in a land where golf has always been considered the right of all and not the few' (p. 116). Here Campbell perpetuates the myth of the democratic character of golf in Scotland and, in addition, draws our attention to that very different Scottish national landscape from that associated with links golf. In very few places is that landscape more apparent and, arguably more politically significant than at Gleneagles, the venue for the 2019 Solheim Cup.

The King's Course opened on 1 May 1919, according to Campbell (2001) 'a very fine example of moorland golf' (p. 106). It was followed by the Queen's course and then in 1993 by the Monarch's course, now called the PGA Centenary Course and the precise setting for the 2019 Solheim Cup. In 1921, Gleneagles hosted an unofficial forerunner of the Ryder Cup. Its famed hotel was opened two years later. The Ryder Cup itself has been played twice in Scotland – in 1973 at Muirfield, a links course with a different lay out from most others and, in 2014, at Gleneagles. According to Campbell (2001),

If there is one golf centre almost as well known outside Scotland as St Andrews then it is the majestic Gleneagles Hotel in Perthshire ... This celebrated retreat of the rich and famous ... many of whom perceive it as the essential Scottish experience. (p. 105)

Glen Eagles (Gleann na h-Eaglais/Gleann Eagas in Scottish Gaelic) is a glen (or valley) which connects with Glen Devon to form a pass through the Ochil Hills of Perthshire and Kinross. The name's origin has nothing to do eagles. It is a corruption of *eaglais* or *ecclesia*, meaning church, and refers to the chapel and Well of St Mungo, which was restored as a memorial to the Haldane family which owns the Gleneagles estate.

Despite the etymological truth, however, the romance of the name the Glen of Eagles undoubtedly contributes to the romance of a place that offers a gateway to the Scottish Highlands thereby bringing us back to the relationship between golf, Scottish landscapes and the tourist gaze.

Adding to the Scottishness of the 2019 Solheim Cup was the fact that Catriona Matthew was the non-playing European captain. Born in 1969 in Edinburgh and brought up in North Berwick, she learned to play golf on the town's West Course links, designed by Sir Guy Campbell, London-born but educated at the University of St Andrews. Matthew won the Women's British Open in 2009, four competitions on the LPGA tour and six on the European tour. She herself played in the Solheim Cup in 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2017. One of Matthew's vice captains was another Scot, Kathryn Imrie who was born in Dundee in 1967 and played in the Solheim Cup in 1996.

### **The 2019 Solheim Cup in Scottish policy and politics**

Although the contributions of Scottish golfers were therefore restricted to non-playing duties, their centrality to this unique team event added an extra layer of interest for fellow Scots above and beyond the hosting of the event. Furthermore, the symbolism of the team event which pits a European team against the United States team provides an additional layer of symbolic and political intrigue, given that the event was hosted in during the fallout from the 2016 UK-wide referendum on membership of the European Union which led to the victory of the 'Leave' campaign. The 2019 Solheim Cup was thus hosted in a period where both the UK and Scotland continued to be embroiled in ongoing political machinations to complete the so-called 'Brexit' process of withdrawing from membership of the EU. Furthermore, the fact that Scotland demonstrated a preference to 'Remain' within the EU has provided further impetus for advocates of Scottish independence (McEwen, 2018), with approximately 62% of the Scottish electorate voting to 'Remain' in stark contrast with their counterparts in England and Wales who had a majority for 'Leave'. As we have argued elsewhere (AUTHOR, YYYY), given this context, the hosting of a sporting event such as the Solheim Cup with a clear symbolic display of 'Europeanness' offered an additional layer of intrigue to the event in terms of its political framing.

However, despite the potential for exploitation of this symbol of European unity at the Solheim Cup, the political framing of the event avoided discussion of its relationship to the fractious debate on Brexit and instead focused primarily on issues of tourism strategy, economic considerations, and gender equality in sport. For example, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's statement on the SNP-led government's 'Programme for Government 2019-20' specifically references the implications of the Solheim Cup alongside other sporting events in terms of enhancing the economic benefits to Scotland's tourism strategy:

In recent years, a great boost for our tourism sector has been the reputation that Scotland has earned as a first-class host of major events. Later this month, Gleneagles will host the Solheim Cup, and next year, Glasgow will host four matches for the Euro 2020 football tournament. The UEFA European Championships Bill will therefore form part of this year's legislative programme ... This programme recognises the vital importance of ensuring that all parts of Scotland benefit from economic growth. (First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, SP OR 3 September 2019, col. 21)

Indeed, the contribution of the 2019 Solheim Cup to the broader events strategy of the Scottish government acted as the central recurring theme within the political discourse surrounding the event, with a broad agreement from across the political spectrum on this matter from politicians from both the SNP government and opposition parties such as the Scottish Conservatives:

Next year, Scotland will play host to the European Short Course Swimming Championships, the European Athletics Indoor Championships and of course the Solheim Cup. The reputation that Scotland has developed as a host of world-class events brings opportunities for international promotion and business for our economy. We must not take that for granted. (Fiona Hyslop MSP, SP OR 4 September 2018, col. 87-88)

In 2018, we have the World Junior Curling Championships in Aberdeen and in 2019 the Solheim Cup is coming to Gleneagles. Those events will give us a huge opportunity to promote Scotland worldwide and to show what we do best. They are a great opportunity for us. We cannot talk about events without talking about St Andrews and golf, because they are synonymous. St Andrews is the home of golf and represents the history of golf. We have had some fantastic events there down the years and I am sure that we will continue to see many in the future. (Alexander Stewart MSP, SP OR 22 September 2016, col. 96)

The common tropes found within the parliamentary contributions on the Solheim Cup were also reflected in the promotional material and press releases related to the event. Of particular note was frequent repetition of phraseology regarding Scotland's status as the 'Home of Golf' and the 'perfect stage' for major golfing and sporting events, thus mimicking the language of the VisitScotland strategic planning documents:

Glasgow Airport has been announced as an official sponsor of The 2019 Solheim Cup ... Joe FitzPatrick, Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing, said: 'Scotland is famous for its warm welcome and with Glasgow Airport as an official sponsor, the golfers, officials and thousands of fans set to land here in September are guaranteed a memorable first impression. Scotland is the Home of Golf and the perfect venue for The Solheim Cup. Gleneagles has already staged a Ryder Cup, in 2014, which was a huge success and showcased wonderfully our country's heritage, sporting excellence and expertise in staging events to an international audience'. (Solheim Cup, 2019)

In particular, to those of you who have come from outside Scotland, I want to offer the very warmest of Scottish welcomes and encourage you to enjoy the typical Scottish weather. I hope you have a wonderful time here. Thank you all for being here with us today. Scotland is the home of golf and is ready to provide the perfect stage. I'm delighted to welcome you all to this 16th Solheim Cup. (Scottish Government, 2019; 'FM Nicola Sturgeon's speech at the opening ceremony of the biennial golf tournament for professional women golfers')

Indeed, despite the aforementioned lack of academic scrutiny of the status of the Solheim Cup within the domain of international sporting events, recent work on the event suggested that the 2019 iteration of the Cup was originally predicted to 'attract 70,000 spectators and 600 million TV viewers' (Lechner & Solberg, 2021, p. 10). In fact, these predictions were exceeded according to VisitScotland's evaluation of the event, with record crowds of over 90,000 in attendance, and approximately 3000 h of televised coverage of the event broadcast to 200 nations (VisitScotland, 2019). In addition to this emphasis on the role of the Solheim Cup for Scotland's events and tourism strategy, the hosting of arguably the largest event in women's golf also resulted in discussion regarding the

potential impact of the event on encouraging participation from females and, particularly, young females in golf and sport more broadly.

Unsurprisingly, again there was little in the way of political disagreement on this contention, despite the abundance of evidence which suggest such legacy claims often fail to come to fruition (Horne, 2007; Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006; Stewart & Rayner, 2016). The broad agreement on the potential benefits of the Solheim Cup thus ignored the questionable nature of this 'trickle-down' conceptualisation of sports participation 'boosterism', as evidenced in parliamentary contributions from across the political spectrum:

Staging the Solheim Cup not only offers us the opportunity to promote and celebrate our values, demonstrate our experience and innovation in hosting events and highlight our commitment to promoting the equality agenda, but it will help to cement Scotland's reputation as the home of golf and to inspire a new generation of children – girls in particular – to take up the game that was invented in their home country and to get involved in sport more generally. (Aileen Campbell MSP, SP OR 22 September 2016, col. 98)

As we have heard, the Solheim Cup, women's football and the Netball World Cup have dominated the sports headlines this year and they are gathering new fans by the million. I think that levelling the playing field for women and girls begins in school, so I am heartened to learn that my granddaughters are being encouraged to take part in any sport they fancy – nothing is off limits. (Rona Mackay MSP, SP OR 2 October 2019, col. 92)

I thought that the Solheim Cup was extremely well presented ... We can perhaps take that forward in the future, because it matters from the perspective of the people who are competing, and it also matters because it gives the wider world an impression of what the media are saying about women in sport. (Liz Smith MSP, SP OR 2 October 2019, col. 98)

Again, similar rhetoric regarding the potential 'legacy' of a boost for sports participation was echoed in the promotional discourse surrounding the Solheim Cup, demonstrating that both politicians and the event organisers retained a strong degree of message discipline in their framing of the event:

Themes of equality, innovation and experience underpin all the event's planned communications and on site activity at Gleneagles as the 2019 Solheim Cup aims to engage both the traditional golf audience and the wider sport fan, raising the profile of women's golf both in Scotland and internationally ... The 2019 Solheim Cup will not only showcase the stunning assets of Scotland, the Home of Golf, but also build on the legacy of the successful 2014 Ryder Cup at Gleneagles. It will underline that Scotland is the perfect stage for major golf events as it seeks to help inspire a new generation of children to take up the game invented in their home country. (Solheim Cup, 2019)

The world leading sports, media and events organisation firm IMG will partner with the Scottish Government to deliver the 2019 Solheim Cup at Gleneagles. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon made the announcement ... she said: '... They share our vision of an open and inclusive event and will work alongside us to show that in Scotland golf is a family-orientated game that is open to everyone. We want to use the 2019 Solheim Cup to encourage greater participation among women, young people and families and IMG's strong track record in the women's game will help us to achieve this'. (Scottish Government, 2016)

To this end, VisitScotland's evaluation of the event emphasised some moderate success in terms of broadening participation in golf, including 'more than 5,000 junior admissions, 13,487 spectators through taking part in golf zone activities, [and] innovative accessibility programme with fully accessible viewing areas and free to hire mobility scooter'

(VisitScotland, 2019). However, despite the laudable attempts to frame the event in relation to the Scottish Government's attempts to tackle gender inequality in sport, it was also apparent that this effort was not necessarily an end in itself. Indeed, VisitScotland explicitly acknowledged that this was also at least in part a broader element of their broader marketing strategy relating the 2019 Solheim Cup:

Solheim Cup could spark rise in female golfing visitors ... Despite Scotland's international reputation as the Home of Golf and a booming golf tourism industry worth in excess of £286 million per year, only 12% of golfing visitors to the country are currently female. With a global push on female golf participation and female golf participation in some countries in excess of 40%, there is huge growth potential in the female golf visitor market. The 2019 Solheim Cup being held at Gleneagles will once again see Scotland in the golfing spotlight and represents a fantastic opportunity for Scotland to reiterate that it is the most open and accessible golf destination in the world. (VisitScotland, 2018)

Although this rhetorical position regarding the goal of enhancing gender equality in golf through the hosting of the 2019 Solheim Cup is laudable, it can also be argued to be equally superficial. With relatively slow progress evident in terms of tackling the existing social inequalities within golf participation in the Scottish context along lines of gender, race and socio-economic status (Kitching, 2017), the extent to which the event will prioritise addressing these inequities in Scottish golf rather than focusing primarily on economic goals remains questionable.

## Conclusion

Links golf is arguably more compatible than places such as Gleneagles with the egalitarian myth of Scottish golf. Green fees for St Andrews residents, their children and University of St Andrews students to play the Old Course are remarkably low (St Andrew's, 2019). However, if local people are fortunate enough to get a tee time, once they approach the eighteenth green a glance to the left will take in the R&A Clubhouse, home to a golf club which did not admit women members until 2014 with Muirfield Golf Club not following suit until 2019 (Sawer, 2019). Despite Mary Queen of Scots's fabled contribution to its development, golf has never been especially inclusive in terms of gender and, as exemplified by Gleneagles, social class has also been a major factor in response to the questions of who plays and where. Like so many places in the Highlands, sport, defined in its broadest sense, was something to be enjoyed by a British, and even global, male elite with Scots on hand to serve them and ultimately the interests of the British state. As Jarvie (1992) observes, 'the Balmoralization process contributed not only to the popularization of Highland Gatherings in a particular form but also the popularization of the Highlands as a recreational playground for a certain leisure class' (p. 168).

The extent to which the 2019 Solheim Cup has successfully redressed this process, whether in terms of gender or socio-economic equality, remains to be seen. However, it is suffice to note that the Scottish Government's aforementioned goal of showing that 'in Scotland golf is a family-orientated game that is open to everyone' (2016) remains an aspiration rather than an accomplishment for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, golf will remain an important allure for tourists to the 'home of golf', and its political import for the Scottish Government as part of its broader tourism strategy will thus maintain its status within Scottish sports policy.

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