

Special Sportswomen

Teeing-off

(...) Sport isn't just about macho men, but amazing women who've achieved success, often trailblazing against prejudice and male domination; look at golf for instance. For years it was the sole preserve of men and women didn't get a look in. Of course, they were allowed to play and even had their own tournaments, but they didn't make a fraction of the money or get the TV coverage that their male peers did; Nancy Lopez changed all that. She was a precocious child talent, winning the New Mexico Amateur Tournament in 1969 at the age of just twelve without ever having had any formal lessons. Nonetheless, she knew how to address the ball, tee-off, drive, play bunker shots and putt. She went on to have a top class golf career that lasted over 20 years, filling her trophy cabinet along the way. Her flamboyant playing style and personality made her very media friendly and she is probably the most influential person in the popularization of women's golf. These days the baton of the leading lady of golf has been taken over by Michelle Wie; born in Hawaii to Korean parents, she turned pro at just 16 and has been the youngest woman golfer to win many events. She's highly marketable, but also controversial in being rather boastful about her talents. She once said if she ever gets bored with playing golf, she'll start again, left-handed. She's also incurred the disapproval of the golfing authorities for wearing 'inappropriate clothing', which in golfing terms, means branded designer trainers – well, she has to keep her sponsors happy!

Ice-Queen

Naturally, when you think of women, you think of grace and beauty (...). And what's more graceful than figure skating? (...) perhaps the greatest exponent of the sport ever was the Norwegian Sonja Henie. The little blonde bundle of energy could camel spin, upright spin with layback, toe loop, axel jump and flip with the best of them. She won a remarkable 10 consecutive World Championships and three Olympic Gold Medals; to top it all she became a highly successful businesswoman to boot: girls rule, boys drool!

Perfection

Here's a sport where women have the upper hand; gymnastics, where we can demonstrate poise, balance, agility and flexibility. The halcyon days of the sport saw the domination by the Soviet and Eastern-bloc countries in the seventies, with girls as young as twelve competing. The Belarusian, Olga Korbut, captured the hearts of many with her artistic routine and cheeky smile. She was the first female to do a back flip to catch on asymmetric bars and her charisma was only exceeded by her acrobatic ability. However, although she did take 3 Golds in the 1972 Munich Olympics, she missed out on the main prize due to errors and she was pipped to the post by team mate, Ludmilla Tourischeva. She was the bridesmaid once again next time around in the 1976 Olympics, when the spoils went to Romanian Nadia Comaneci who scored the maximum ten points, being returned by all seven judges; she was literally, unbeatable. In all, she won three Gold Medals.

In Pole Position

(...) 'Women can't compete in something more demanding like racing cars.' How wrong you are (...), listen and learn.

Danica Patrick has got the looks, the brains and the brawn to mix it with the boys in the rough and tumble world of motor sport. She started car racing at 10 and moved to England as a teenager to compete against F1 driver to be, Jenson Button, in Formula Ford and then returned to the States to go into IndyCar Racing and Indianapolis 500. she drives for GoDaddy in Nascar Racing and was the fastest ever pole position qualifier in the Daytona 500, so you'll be eating dust while eating your words. She's not bad looking either and posed for Sports Illustrated Swimwear but turned down a request from Playboy. There's nothing wrong with her bodywork but she can let the wheels do the talking; go girl, go!

Game, Set and Match

The area where women have made the greatest impact surely has to be tennis, and the pioneer of the modern women's game is without doubt, Billy Jean King. BJK holds more records than a travelling DJ and she can boast 39 Grand Slam Tournament trophies, including six crowning victories at Wimbledon. She won titles not only in singles but women's doubles, mixed doubles and, perhaps most famously, against a man in what she was billed as the 'Battle of the Sexes'. Always a strong advocate of equality and women's rights, King expressed her outrage that, even in early seventies, women were being paid a pittance compared to their male counterparts. To add insult to injury, former thirties' and forties' tennis player Bobby Riggs, jibed that the women players were so inferior than even he, at 55, could defeat the top women of the time. He proved his point by beating former Wimbledon winner, Australian, Margaret Court. The gauntlet had been thrown down and for the honour of women, and a winner's purse of \$100,000, King took up the challenge. The event was televised live to a worldwide audience and, of course, she whipped his ass in three straight sets and struck a crucial blow for women.

America is the place where things that could only possibly happen in the movies happen for real. Billy Jean upped the wage rate and helped women in sport to be taken more seriously, but tennis still remained largely white and middle class, where you needed to be able to pay for expensive private coaching. Then a black guy came along and decided that he was going to train not one but two of his daughters to become world champions. It would sound crazy if you'd never heard of Venus and Serena Williams. During their teens, the Williams sisters experienced racist spectator comments in matches but they overcame this, and Venus went on to be the first African American woman to be ranked World number one in 2002. between the sisters, their hard hitting baseline play has won them a total of 13 Singles Grand Slam titles, four of which were played against each other in consecutive years. As well as providing successful role models for black Americans, the William sisters have also continued Billy Jean's fight for gender pay equality, teaming up with UNESCO, although on a personal level, they are well sorted for money, raking in millions of dollars in product endorsement money for brands such as Nike, Puma and Tampax.

Serena makes a particularly attractive marketing proposition as she cuts quite a dash on the tennis court with some very colourful and outlandish outfits. These have included brightly coloured dresses, denim skirts, boots and flesh tone garments that give the appearance of near nudity; it's come a long way from the all white tradition of Wimbledon and is enough to make an umpire blush! But this shouldn't detract or distract us from their amazing achievements in terms of sport and equality.

TEST

Idioms

IDIOMS			
1	to be pipped to the post	A	odszczękiwać komuś
2	to eat sb's words	B	pokonać kogoś
3	to whip sb's ass	C	jednoczyć się z kimś
4	to add insult to injury	D	zostać pokonanym w ostatniej chwili
5	to team up with sb	E	przełać czarę goryczy

Verb-noun collocations

Verb		Noun	
1	take	A	disapproval
2	incur	B	an impact
3	have got	C	the wage rate
4	make	D	the baton
5	cut	E	down the gauntlet
6	up	F	dust
7	throw	G	the challenge
8	be	H	the looks
9	eat	I	bridesmaid
10	take up	J	a dash

Sports categories: golf, ice-skating, car-racing, tennis

SPORTS ACTIVITIES			
1	private coaching	A	
2	to putt	B	
3	pole position	C	
4	to play bunker shots	D	
5	toe loop	E	
6	to tee-off	F	
7	axel jump	G	

ANSWER KEY

1. Sporting idioms

to be pipped to the post
to eat sb's words
pittance
to add insult to injury
to whip sb's ass
to team up with sb

zostać pokonanym w ostatniej chwili
odszczękiwać komuś
psie pieniądze, grosze
przełać czarę goryczy
pokonać kogoś
jednoczyć się z kimś

2. Verb-noun collocations

to take the buton
to incur disapproval
to have got the looks
to make an impact
to cut a dash
to up the wage rate
to take up the challenge
to thrown down the gauntlet
to be bridesmaid
to eat dust

przejąć/wziąć pałeczkę
wyrazić dezaprobatę
dobrze się prezentować
wywierać wpływ
odcinać kupony, dostawać kasę
podwyższyć stawkę
podejmować wyzwanie
rzucić wyzwanie, rzucać rękawicę
być o krok od sukcesu
pozostawać w tyle, przegrywać

3. Sports categories: golf, ice-skating, car-racing, tennis

SPORTS ACTIVITIES		SPORTS CATEGORIES	
1	private coaching	A	tennis
2	to putt	B	golf
3	pole position	C	car racing
4	to play bunker shots	D	golf
5	toe loop	E	ice-skating
6	to tee-off	F	golf
7	axel jump	G	ice-skating

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