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THE STAND DIVERSITY

A good thing, this diversity is. For the most part.

Diversity takes differences, which can often be negative or seen as such, and turns them into positives. We get to know and experience more about people, cultures, lifestyles, values and priorities and more. And, that is good. For the most part.

Take golf for example. Recently, THE ROYAL AND ANCIENT GOLF CLUB which governs golf in the United Kingdom (UK) and produces and promotes the British Open Championship has decided to allow women to attempt to qualify for the field of players in the 2006 British Open. The tournament from its hoary beginning was designed for men only. Now, in a magnanimous gesture, politically correct of course, and in an attempt to promote diversity, the ROYAL AND ANCIENT GOLF CLUB lords will allow women to attempt to qualify for the tournament, not to invite them of course, but to simply allow them to compete for a player position. Were it not for diversity, or that which is politically correct, or flat out pressure, or (heaven forbid) for the financial, the prospects of better television ratings and more money, there is no way the tried and true male chauvinists who run British golf would ever let a mere female play in the British Open. The sign FOR MEN ONLY has been on the walls for the last 150 years.

Is this, as an avid golfer I wonder, really necessary? Why is it not proper to have separate golf tournaments for men and women? The truth of the matter is that no woman playing golf today could ever win a men's PGA sponsored tournament under the very best of circumstances. The distance factor alone would preclude a woman from winning. One or several women competing in a field of 150 of the very best male golfers in the world would have absolutely no chance to win that tournament. It is therefore, in my view, nothing more than a publicity ploy or at worst, a capitulation to the pressure of that which is politically correct and diverse. Any offer to a female for an all male golf tournament is simply not sincerely made, no matter what they say.

But since it is a fait accompli, what is good for the goose should be good for the gander. I would surely expect that the LPGA (Ladies Professional Golf Association) would surely be ready, willing and able to allow any male to compete to play in an LPGA-Ladies Tournament, wouldn't you? Fair after all is fair. It would be interesting indeed to see Tiger Woods play in perhaps the Major tournaments (four) sponsored by the LPGA, in the name of diversity of course. Tiger would win any of those tournaments with his worse day of golf. That, even if it would be politically correct, will never happen. That, the critics would say, is diversity to an extreme.

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It seems there is a constant attempt to create diversity and equal access in sports. Colleges and Universities are required to equally fund programs for men and women in so many ways, even though men's programs may produce far more profit. Males coach female teams, and occasionally women coach men. Nothing wrong with that if in fact the coaches are qualified. But merely to create or force diversity for the sake of diversity is simply not right and not fair. Private organizations, including non-profit organizations, should have the right to set the standards, and the terms and conditions for entry and admission to any event. It should be simply none of the governments business, in my view.

Back to golf. Take the Masters Tournament. That is perhaps the most prestigious golf tournament in the world held at Augusta National in, of course Augusta, Georgia. The Good Old Boys who run that tournament have done so for years, with a litmus test for entry which is extremely difficult to meet if one wishes to earn the right to play. On the other hand, the Board Of Directors of Augusta National will invite anyone the world over who is a master at some form of golf. The tournament includes amateurs, former champions, foreign golfers, international players, and golfers of all colors and ethnicities. It is truly a beautiful sight to see, but the invitations are strictly on their terms. Enormous pressure was applied to Augusta National to allow women to play, change the demanding terms for entrance, and otherwise open the membership to more minorities. The men who run the club refused, produced the tournament without sponsorship and continued to do it their way. They would not be pressured to be diverse no matter how politically incorrect. They stood up for their rights. In this case, diversity demands went to far and diversity loss.

So, there is a limit. Perhaps a golf tournament of any stripe is no big deal compare to the many other problems in this world. But it is the principle of the thing, the right of people to band together, invest their money, establish their enterprise and set the firm rules and regulations for that enterprise without interference from Uncle Sam. That is why I think it is good that Augusta National would in no way compromise what they believed was right no matter the pressure. Diversity is good as long as it does not destroy differences!

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