Dear Colleagues

**Fierce young women in sport according to journalist commentators**

**Problem:**   journalists have used the expression fierce young women, to describe girls who choose to take their place among sports people. The description of young women as fierce, appeared to refer to those who attract publicity because of their high level performances in athletics, soccer, football and cricket. Coining this colourful expression is only one of the antics of television journalists, who seek opportunities to attract attention to themselves. They are often not skilled in any sport, yet have no hesitation in pronouncing upon the ethics of genuine sports people.

There are however genuine sport journalists who are skilled in sport. We are grateful to these television entities, who succeed in bringing news of sports people who succeed, particularly in international events. They are far from the would-be intellectuals who pose as sport journalists.

On being selected for the 1982 Australian Shooting Team to compete in the Commonwealth Games, the writer was invited to appear on a televised ABC program, where the compere did his best to get me to admit that I had Gold, Gold, Gold foremost in my mind. This well-known ABC journalist did not have the first idea how sports persons prepare for major events. As it turned out, the writer did win a gold medal, dismissing everything from the mind associated with a winning score and the gold medal. All sports people are well aware of the hazards that result from such a distraction and teach newcomers to not allow their minds to be distracted by scores while competing. While the ABC continued to plague audiences with this misleading approach to sport, the Australian Sports Institute did its best to correct the misinformation being distributed by the would-be sports journalist.

It is a fact that a small group of women who shoot seriously in F Class, are now showing that they can group within the X-ring, from 300m to 800m. On 8 and 9 June 2019 at the Wingham Open Prize Meeting in NSW, two young women won the two-day aggregates in their respective F Class disciplines.

This article is concerned with real advantages possessed by the supposedly fierce young women in rifle shooting, whether in TR or F Class. Please note that at this early stage of the research project, these are only personal viewpoints. When scientifically tested and confirmed, they will cease to be personal assertions and become recognized as proven facts.

**Discussion:** until the present time, women and young girls have been denied the opportunity to take up a sport, unless it was in netball, tennis, softball and certain other games. The writer remembers his own mother not wanting his sister to play sport of any kind, because in her mind girls who did that became over-confident. Instead, girls were encouraged to knit, make clothes, play the piano, paint pictures and keep their bedrooms tidy. Joining the Girl Guides was discouraged because girls were taught to become independent and self-assertive. At high school, they were not encouraged to go on to university, but on leaving school, to get a job in an office or a bank. Many studied teaching, art and a field of education with the best scientific foundation of all: early childhood learning. Others chose to become office typists, nurses, librarians and musicians. Upon leaving school, many naïve mothers hovered to assist their innocent daughters to identify and catch unwary young fellows. Sports such as football, soccer, rugby and cricket just did not exist.

Rifle shooting under Australian Rifle Club Regulations was denied, except to four named women. Two who were known to the writer had been trained in shooting during World War I while members of The Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) of the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps. They were named in Amendments to the Regulations, passed in both the Australian House of Representatives and the Senate. Otherwise, women were not allowed to shoot in Australian fullbore rifle clubs.

A similar situation existed in the UK, where Marjorie Foster had been an ambulance-driver during the First World War. In 1930 she won HM The King’s Prize at Bisley. Such was the level of discrimination, that she was denied the prize until her rights were legally asserted.

In 1978, a woman was a member of the Australian Rifle Team to Bisley. An invitation from the North London Rifle Club for the Team to attend a social welcome in the clubhouse, was in accordance with the rules of the Club, i.e. restricted to men. The Captain of the Team advised that the team would welcome the invitation if it included all members. An important change of culture occurred, which led to the North London Rifle Club formally adopting a motion, which from thereon enabled women to be welcomed at the Club.

**Observations:** the writer has recorded apparent advantages observed in women who shoot:

* some appear to possess a more appropriate style and skills in listening
* an interest to listen to a skilled person, noting or absorbing the exact details of a recognized improvement to a technique
* a willingness to implement exact details of procedures of shooting techniques
* a disinterest to perform a technique based upon an assumption that I know all about this and am therefore able to perform it better than others
* often have a smaller hand and enhanced fine motor skills, resulting from a similar distribution of nerve tissues as the much larger hands of many men, leading to greater sensitivity in the performance of the trigger release technique
* greater awareness of changes in self-esteem and self-direction, which result from having practiced shooting techniques which led to enhanced performances.

Some journalists have ascribed these abilities in women to an assumed absence of testosterone, a hormone thought to affect women’s thinking and abilities. Clearly, this is just another instance of pseudo-medical ignorance which has been published by journalists.

The above characteristics have been utilized by many women in other fields. Theatre nurses have frequently demonstrated these same advantages, which led many to become highly regarded medical colleagues. There would appear to be further exciting characteristics yet to be identified which may enhance women as rifle shooters. Hence, there is a need to seriously investigate further characteristics of women in addition to these documented by the writer.

**Conclusion**:  there appear to be certain characteristics possessed by women, which might lead them to excel in rifle shooting. It is concluded that a need exists to undertake research to identify factors and conduct trials, which enable them to be better understood. Research into these factors identified in women, could provide valuable information which may enhance the techniques used by individual shooters, both women and men.

Best regards

Geoff