

## The Golfer's Wife: From Birdies to Quadruple Bogies and the Rough in Between

**Janet Thompson**

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*The Golfer's Wife is a memoir about a happy marriage spent accommodating a husband's obsession.*

Janet Thompson's memoir concerns her marriage to a professional golfer; it promotes a positive image of the sport.

In upbeat prose, Thompson describes her personal conversion to the golf world. She alternates her own story with the profiles of the wives of other professional golfers, too, as well as with information about the charities that they support. Golf, for these groups of people, is presented as not just a hobby, but a livelihood.

For the uninitiated, Thompson takes care to explain golf terms and country club culture. Self-deprecating, down-to-earth humor peppers her memories, with witty wordplay appearing at the ends of most paragraphs. On the topic of losing golf balls, she writes, "dozens upon dozens have wound up in the treacherous woods and in the enormous ponds. I like to think of them resting in peace, covered in muck."

This self-deprecating tone extends to assessments of the gender roles of golf spouses, who in this book are all wives. "I'm not a good number one. I'm a good number two," Thompson observes. This seems to be the philosophy of all of the wives whom she profiles, too, who each make sacrifices for their husbands' professional golf careers. As another wife intones, "There's only room for one rooster in the henhouse."

Acknowledging that being "on tour" with a professional golfer is an insulated, "cult-like existence," Thompson nevertheless individualizes each golfer and their wives, sharing how the couples met, with notes about the personal challenges they faced. These challenges sometimes dovetail with details about the charities that the couples support, helping to distinguish among the otherwise homogeneous anecdotes from their privileged lives.

Similarly, Thompson portrays the golf-tour environment as one drenched in alcohol, even though only mild irregular behaviors are preserved in the text itself, as with a groom who dared to wear a powder blue tux to his wedding reception. Throughout, the book seems concerned with mimicking the public relations aims of Tour Wives Association: "to change the image of the tour wives and let the public know that they do not just go shopping, have spa treatments, and stay in extravagant hotels." Its details, humor, and descriptions of charitable works are flattering, and they are made to pair with its personalized advice for fellow sports wives who may fear becoming sports "widows."

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MICHELE SHARPE (March 14, 2022)

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