



The Undercover Economist describes an experiment to examine whether men and women have a different appetite for competition and performance (November 23/24). The researchers designed a task that involved throwing tennis balls into a bucket, and found that men and women act differently in an important way.

Some years ago, I took part in a similar "balls in a bucket" game at Manchester Business School. We could stand as near or as far away as we wished but the aim was to get the three balls in the bucket.

As the only woman on the course, I patiently waited until the

men had tried to outdo each other in standing as far away as possible. I then simply walked up to the bucket and dropped the balls in.

I claimed the prize (which was a poured pint of beer, rapidly going flat), as I had used the least effort, with the least risk and 100 per cent success.

A heated argument followed, which I ended by taking a sip of the beer. There were about 20 participants, and we then sat in a circle on the floor to discuss the "game". I passed the glass of beer to my neighbour as I had no wish to drink a full pint while he would be thirsty. I was amazed, several minutes later, to have the glass come back to me, still with some beer in. In spite of their "macho"

behaviour, all of the competitors had quietly taken a sip and then passed to their neighbour.

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