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Tucker Center NEWS

for research on girls & women in sport

FALL 2006

AT THE INTERCOLLEGIATE LEVEL
NATIONWIDE, WOMEN OCCUPY JUST
18.6% OF ALL ADMINISTRATIVE
POSITIONS.

—R. VIVIAN ACOSTA &
LINDA JEAN CARPENTER (2006)

www.tuckercenter.org

Pioneering Women in Intercollegiate Sports Administration

In the high-pressure, workaholic world of intercollegiate sports, any job is a challenge, but being an athletic administrator takes you to the next level. This is where you're lucky if you're only doing the job of three people. And if you're a woman doing the job, you face even greater challenges. That's why we want to recognize the efforts of two pioneering women in athletic administration—**Regina Sullivan**, Senior Associate Athletic Director at the University of Minnesota, and **Sandy Barbour**, Director of Athletics at the University of California-Berkeley. Though they have traveled very different and extraordinary paths, they share similar insights about the inner workings and strategies for success for women involved in athletic administration.

It goes without saying that sports in general, and athletic administration in particular, are dominated by men. Though the climate is clearly improving, females make up less than 20% of all athletic administration positions on a nationwide basis. And when a woman does occupy a position of power, especially at the elite levels of Division I athletics, hers is often a lone (and lonely) voice in the administrative dialogue. For example, of the 119 Division IA programs with football teams, only five have females at the helm: Maryland, Nevada, Arizona State, Western Michigan, and U Cal-Berkeley. Sandy Barbour is one of those "Fab Five." She explains why there are so few women at the top: "It isn't because women lack the skill and ability to do the job, or that there aren't qualified women out there, but most women haven't had someone promote or advocate for them."

Barbour has a most impressive educational background. She earned her undergraduate degree in physical



Sandy Barbour

education from Wake Forest in 1981 where she was a four-year letter winner and captain of the field hockey team and played two seasons on the women's basketball team. She earned an M.S. in Sport Management at the University of Massachusetts, and an M.B.A. at Northwestern University. Just 23 years old, she took a job in the athletic department at Northwestern as the Senior Women Associate. The legendary Associate AD at Ohio State, Phyllis Bailey, asked Barbour about her future plans. Barbour shrugged her shoulders and said she wasn't exactly sure, to which Bailey replied, "When you figure it out, let me know and I'll help you get there." Barbour has been "getting there" ever since with a great deal of hard work, fortitude, and outstanding mentors who recognized her talents early on. In addition to Bailey, Barbour has worked with and been promoted by Athletic Director Kevin White at Notre Dame, and Ted Leland, former AD at Stanford and the person responsible for hiring Barbour at Northwestern. As Barbour states: "I have had a number of mentors who believed in me and who gave me the courage and confidence to succeed."

Barbour's career spans 23 years. Prior to her position at Northwestern, she was the assistant coach of field hockey and lacrosse administrative assistant at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. After her stint at

"Pioneers" continued on page 3 ...

Letter From the Director

Hello Friends of the Tucker Center from Associate Director Nicole LaVoi!

With the beginning of fall, I am energized by the new and exciting projects the Tucker Center is undertaking this year, all of which you will read about in the following pages.

Of particular note is a collaboration we have just begun with the *Women's Sports Foundation* involving an innovative sport media research project. Our fall Distinguished Lecture Series features prominent sports journalist, Christine Brennan. Related to this latter point, our feature stories detail the achievements and pathways of pioneering women in sport journalism and athletic administration. The Tucker Center and all those passionate about sporting females have much to celebrate!

Did you know that women now comprise the majority of the student body on most college campuses, earn a majority of college degrees, and compete in collegiate athletics in record numbers? These achievements reflect and reinforce some significant anniversaries that will take place in 2006—the 35th anniversary of the passage of Title IX, the 25th year of the NCAA offering national championships for women's sports, and the 10th anniversary of the WNBA.

In spite of these remarkable milestones, there is still much work to be done. For example, the recycled notion that "girls aren't interested in sports" persists alongside new forms of backlash against sporting females. Most notable are claims made by psychology professor James Garbarino in his recent book *See Jane Hit: Why Girls Are Growing More Violent and What We Can Do About It*. Garbarino makes a number of outrageous claims such as the increase in women's sports participation in the wake of Title IX has led to a parallel increase in girls' confidence and physicality. Why is this such a bad thing? According to Garbarino, such developments have led, in turn, to more aggression and off-the-field violence among young girls. Unfortunately, his empirically unsubstantiated claims were perpetuated by national media outlets such as *The Today Show* on NBC and the *Chicago Sun Times*.

In sharp contrast to the myths and stereotypes that continue to surround sportswomen, the Tucker Center shines a light on the pioneering women who have created and maintained "zones of empowerment" for sporting females. The women that we highlight in this issue of our newsletter are no exception. We are reminded that Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, repeatedly stresses that the empowerment of women is a crucial aspect of healthy nations. We also know that research clearly demonstrates the ways in which sports provide a significant context for empowering females. To help dispel myths that undermine girls' and women's sports participation, we are committed to generating evidence-based information that will give parents, teachers, coaches, and policy makers the tools they need to counteract gender inequality. You can read more about Tucker Center research initiatives by clicking the "Current Projects" link on our Web site at www.tuckercenter.org!

—Nicole LaVoi, Associate Director



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GUEST COLUMN: DADS & DAUGHTERS DIRECTOR JOE KELLY

The Influence of Dads on the Lives of Their Active and Sporting Girls



I've been very nervous ever since she was born. I think that girls are more delicate and precious. I feel that she is like a very fragile vase sitting at the edge of the table waiting for someone to carelessly knock it down. And once it falls, there is no way to keep it from breaking. — Dean

A daughter is not a fragile vase. Ironically, the more I treat her like one, the more fragile she will be. Think about how different things would look if Dean changed the image from a porcelain vase to a lithe, flexible, warm, powerful, living, breathing being. Suddenly, fathering a daughter becomes a lot more fun! He's in a position to substitute an obsession with how her body looks with an appreciation for what it can do. When we stop treating our daughters like fragile vases, amazing potential and strength is released. Facilitating the love of physicality is one of the most valuable gifts we fathers give our daughters.

A great joy of being an involved father is how our younger daughters and stepdaughters often worship us as their heroes. Who wouldn't love that? But maintaining that connection is a big challenge as daughters get older. Sports and physical activity can be a natural way for dads and stepdads to meet that challenge. And thanks to Title IX, there is a lot more support for building father-daughter bonds through sports—which is as good for dads as it is for daughters!

Unfortunately, many of us have to clear a common hurdle first, that of perceiving our daughter as delicate or fragile:

What motivates girls to take up sports and physical activity? Research shows that the most common triggering factor is a father who plays with his daughter when she is young. When a father or stepfather bounces his one-year-old

on his knee, horseplays with his three-year-old, kicks a ball around with his five-year-old, plays catch with his seven-year-old and shoots baskets with his 12-year-old, he increases the odds that she'll get and stay involved in physical activity as a teen. This lowers the odds that she will get in trouble during adolescence. Every day has opportunities for Dad to draw attention to his daughter's physicality.

Dads and stepdads are often more willing to let our children (girls and boys) take physical risks than are moms. That's good! It stretches our kids, helps them deal with fear, and makes them feel more competent. So, for goodness sake (and for hers), wrestle with her, run, toss the football, take her to a game, listen to her, and treat her as a whole person ... not as a vase poised to fall and break.

Joe Kelly is president of the national nonprofit Dads & Daughters (www.dadsanddaughters.org) and winner of the Women's Sports Foundation's Title IX Dad of the Year Award. This article is adapted from his book Dads and Daughters: How to Inspire, Understand and Support Your Daughter.



Photo courtesy Joe Kelly

Research Updates

"Expanding the Boundaries of Sport Media Research: An Exploration of Consumer Responses to Representations of Women's Sports"

Sport media scholars have consistently uncovered two patterns of representation throughout mainstream media: 1) female athletes, compared to their male counterparts, are significantly underrepresented with respect to amount of coverage; and 2) sportswomen are routinely presented in ways that emphasize their femininity and heterosexuality versus their athletic competence. These same scholars have argued that a major consequence of these media trends is to maintain women's status as second-class citizens in one of the most powerful social, political, and economic institutions in this country. The basic premise of their research is that because mainstream media ignore, underreport, and denigrate women's athletic achievements, they help to maintain belief systems and practices that relegate sportswomen to the sidelines.

In spite of the contributions made by sport media scholars, a significant gap in our understanding of women's sports remains: We have yet to produce a body of evidence that provides direct support for *how representations of sportswomen are interpreted by consumers* (e.g., sports fans). In addition, there is almost no research on how interpretations of media images impact consumers' attitudes toward women's sports overall, as well as their intentions to support female athletes by, for example, viewing or attending a sporting event.

To address this significant limitation, the Tucker Center—in partnership with the *Women's Sports Foundation*—will launch a pilot study this fall that will lead to a nationwide investigation. **Mary Jo Kane** and **Heather Maxwell** will base their innovative study on the basic tenets of *audience reception research* whereby scholars pay particular attention to what readers *do* with the texts they consume. This approach allows Kane and Maxwell to empirically address two opposing points of view regarding how these portrayals are "taken up" by the intended audience. On the one hand, advocates of women's sports say that images of athletic competence empower female athletes and generate positive attitudes toward (and interest in) women's sports. They further insist that those images which emphasize sportswomen's hyper-sexual appearance trivialize and downplay the importance of women's athletic events.

The other point of view comes primarily from those who market and promote women's sports. They firmly believe in the common-sense notion that "sex sells" and that the most effective way to represent (and promote) women's sports is to emphasize the femininity and sexual appeal of female athletes. Given these opposing perspectives, the current study will employ focus groups to measure how exposure to the various ways female athletes have been portrayed—from athletic competence (on court, in action) to objects of sexual desire (Danica Patrick draped over a race car in a sexy pose)—impact sports fans regarding their attitudes and intentions to act toward women's sports. In sum, two questions will be at the forefront of the investigation:

- How do consumers interpret particular media images and do those interpretations influence interest in, respect for, and support of women's sports?
- How does one's social role/position in society influence the interpretation of a media image, meaning does the particular lens that an individual brings to the image influence how s/he perceives women's sports?

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KUDOS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- In August, Director **Mary Jo Kane** presented "Title IX: A Tale of Two Competing Narratives" at the Geography of Sport and Recreation Symposium sponsored by the Minnesota Humanities Commission in St. Paul, MN.
- Associate Director **Nicole LaVoi** will present coach and parent workshops this fall to a variety of sport organizations including U.S. Youth Soccer, the Minnesota Youth Soccer Association, the United States Tennis Association, and the Minnesota High School Girls' Basketball Coaches Association. These research-based workshops focus on helping adults create a positive youth sport climate.
- In November, Affiliated Scholar **Stephen Ross**, along with Ph.D. students **Heather Maxwell** and **Patrick Walsh**, will present findings from their study "The Influence of Gender on Sponsor-

- ship Recognition" at the Sport Marketing Association Conference in Denver, CO. **Maxwell** will also present "A Comparison of Motives: WNBA Fans versus Elite Division I Women's Basketball Fans" at the same conference.
- In October, Affiliated Scholar **Diane Wiese-Bjornstal** and Ph.D. student **Jens Omli** will present "KIDS SPEAK: Preferences for Coach and Parent Behavior" at the annual meeting for the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology in Miami, FL.
- Also in October, **Heather Maxwell** will be conducting a workshop on marketing and sponsorships for women's intercollegiate athletics at the National Association of Collegiate Women's Athletic Administrators' National Convention in Sacramento, CA.
- **Kent Kaiser**, Ph.D. student in the U of M's School of Journalism/Mass Communications, and

- Erik Skoglund**, M.A. student in Kinesiology, will present "Sports Coverage as Equality Indicator Pre- and Post-Title IX" at the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport Conference in Vancouver, BC, in November.
- **Mary Jo Kane** received the President's Award for Outstanding Service from the University of Minnesota this past June. This prestigious award was established in 1997 to recognize faculty and staff who have provided exceptional service to the University.
- Program Associate **Jonathan Sweet** was the co-recipient of the School of Kinesiology's 2006 Outstanding Service Award for civil service staff. This award acknowledges exceptional effort, quality work, and sustained job performance on existing and unanticipated special projects.
- Affiliated Scholar **Jo Ann Buysse** received the Outstanding Alumni

- Award from Southwest Minnesota State University in September, 2006.
- **Heather Maxwell** authored an editorial, "Sponsors Risk Future Profits When They Ignore the WNBA." The editorial appeared in the May 29-June 4, 2006, edition of *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal*.
- **Rayla Allison** joins the School of Kinesiology faculty beginning this fall. She will also be a Tucker Center Affiliated Scholar. Allison maintains a national law practice representing female athletes, coaches of women's sports, and management in the areas of Title

- IX. She arrives from the Human Performance Department at Minnesota State University, Mankato, where she taught a variety of courses in Sport Management. Welcome, Rayla!
- **Dads & Daughters** will host a special fundraising event featuring **Christine Brennan**, October 11, 2006, 6:30-8:30pm, at the Dorsey-Ewald Conference Center in St. Paul. For more information visit www.dadsanddaughters.org.

Stay current on Tucker Center news and research initiatives and visit links to published studies by visiting www.tuckercenter.org.

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Regina Sullivan

Associate Athletic Director at Tulane and the Deputy Athletic Director at Notre Dame. Today at Cal-Berkeley she serves as the Director of Athletics, overseeing a department that sponsors 27 intercollegiate programs and operates on an annual budget in excess of \$40 million.

Regina Sullivan shares with Barbour an equally long career path and a remarkable list of outstanding mentors even though she took, in her words, a “haphazard road” into athletic administration. Sullivan graduated from Yale in 1983 with a degree in psychology. At Yale, she was a four-year letter winner on the women’s basketball team. After one year as a women’s basketball graduate assistant, Sullivan realized she wanted to turn her passion for sports into a career. She began her career with an internship at the Women’s Sports Foundation, followed by administrative positions with the Women’s Basketball and Volleyball Coaches’ Associations, and a graduate assistantship at the University of Tennessee where she completed her MA degree and helped Pat Summit host the Women’s Final Four in 1990. Shortly thereafter, Sullivan became an Assistant Athletic Director at the University of Texas under the guidance of then Director of Athletics, Donna Lopiano. Sullivan’s next stop was at UC-San Diego as the Associate Director of Athletics. Here she served with another legendary female administrator—Judith Sweet. In 2001, Sullivan was recruited by Chris Voelz to come to the University of Minnesota and become the Senior Associate AD, the

position she currently holds. Though Sullivan attributes her success to being “in the right place at the right time and having good contacts,” she is being rather modest because her mentors read like a “Who’s Who” of women’s athletics! And Sullivan’s success is due to great mentors who recognized her amazing talents and life-long dedication to sports.

Both Barbour and Sullivan believe that the keys to success include a passion for one’s job, an unrelenting work ethic, and an ability to be flexible and seize opportunities when they arise. Perhaps most importantly, they share a deep-seated responsibility to reach out, make time, and help the next generation of young people—particularly young women—achieve their goals while pursuing a career in sports. Their advice for doing just that? Remain flexible, be willing to start at the bottom to get your foot in the door, work hard, be patient, and communicate effectively, especially when it comes to writing.

Barbour and Sullivan both recognize the particular challenges that come with being female in a male-dominated profession, especially when football is part of the equation. Barbour shares a revealing story about how she handles insinuations or outright challenges to the notion that she isn’t capable of running a football program. At Tulane, she was addressing the football boosters when the man who introduced her said the group was concerned about how she was going to succeed given that she had never played or coached football. She pointed out that her very successful predecessor at Tulane, Kevin White, “didn’t play football either—he was a track guy!” With her adept and accurate answer, Barbour made her challenger realize that she was just as qualified as any man.

As friends of the Tucker Center know, we have come a long way in all aspects of sports in the wake of Title IX. But we wouldn’t be where we are without the remarkable leadership of individuals like Sandy Barbour and Regina Sullivan. For that, we are all in their debt!

LEARNING OUR LEGACY

A Job of Their Own: Women in Sports Journalism

Last June, the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at the University of Central Florida released its *Racial and Gender Report Card of the Associated Press Sports Editors* (APSE). Not surprisingly, there are some pretty grim statistics when it comes to women journalists in the field of sports. To begin with, only 5% of all sports editors are women. The percentage of female sports columnists and reporters isn’t much better—just 7% and 10%, respectively. Given that women comprise half of the population, and represent 43% of all intercollegiate athletes, the voices of women sports journalists need to be heard throughout the vast sport media landscape. Fortunately, one place where this is happening is right here in the Twin Cities. We can claim two pioneering sports journalists of our own—Pam Schmid and Rachel Blount of the *Star Tribune*.

Schmid is currently a part-time sports writer at the “*Strib*.” Her love of sports began early on. Growing up in the Washington, D.C., area, Schmid cheered for the Redskins and always made reading the sports page her first priority. In 1987, she earned her B.A. with a double major in rhetoric/communications and history, and was a track and field walk-on at the University of Virginia: “They didn’t have a journalism major then, so I got into journalism backwards.” Her first job was with the Associated Press (AP) in the Minneapolis bureau. She covered some local college and professional teams which led to the position of copy editor at the *Star Tribune*. In 1998, she began covering the newly created “women’s sports beat” which, according to Schmid, covered “a lot [of territory]”—college women’s basketball, the WNBA, and grassroots girls’ and women’s events such as high school sports.

While Schmid’s path into sports journalism was a bit unorthodox, Blount’s career path took a more traditional route. A beat reporter for the *Star Tribune* since 1990, Blount launched a weekly sports column this past June. Blount’s love of sports was greatly influenced by her parents and her two brothers, both of whom (along with her father) were college athletes: “My mom was just as enthusiastic a spectator as my dad and my brothers were participants!” In 1984, Blount earned a B.A. from Notre Dame in American Studies. At ND, she began writing sports pieces for the student newspaper, *The Observer*. This experience crystallized her passion into a career as a sports journalist: “I had an epiphany while writing for *The Observer*—this is what I’m supposed to do.” After earning an M.A. in journalism from

the University of Missouri, Blount began covering college football at various newspapers until she was hired by the *Strib* as a sports reporter in the early ’90s.

Though their careers took different paths, both Schmid and Blount have experienced the discriminatory and even hostile climate women sportswriters face on an all-too-routine basis. Such examples range from crude comments, flirting, and sexual innuendos from players and fellow journalists, to attacks on their credibility and motives. Blount explains: “Back in 1985, I couldn’t even go into the men’s locker room. I had to wait outside and hope they would send someone out. Half the time they didn’t. A lot of people would think I did my job to find a husband or to look at naked men . . . I’ve also had people tell me that being a [female] sportswriter was *immoral* because it was a man’s profession and I was depriving a man of the right to support his family . . . Most of that stuff has gone away, but it did exist.” Schmid can more than relate to what Blount went through. As one of the only women sitting in the football press box, Schmid was keenly aware that she was not part of the “old boys’ club”: “I’m fine with that [not being a part of the “club”], I just want to be able to do my job.”

Despite these obstacles, they persevered and succeeded. And both claim the climate for women has gotten better. Blount attributes the improved climate to the fact that more women are covering sports on television: “It’s a huge help when people see women on TV who are passionate about sports, capable, well informed, and as professional as any man.” Indeed, the fact that AP sports editors were willing to commission a self-study on the state of women sports reporters (the study cited above), is another strong indication that change is occurring. As Schmid explains: “There are so few women out there that departments feel the pressure to diversify. Papers are looking for qualified, talented, smart women writers who bring different attitudes and viewpoints . . . If you show up, work hard, and show what you can do, there are no limits.”

The recent decision to offer Blount her own column is a case in point—it is a significant marker that recognizes the hard work, professionalism, sports knowledge, and talent she has demonstrated over the last 17 years. Though in many ways it was a great opportunity, Blount struggled with whether she should take it on because doing so would mean having a higher profile and being subjected to the criticism that comes with writing



Pam Schmid
Reporter, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*



Rachel Blount
Reporter and columnist,
Minneapolis Star Tribune

an opinion column. But in the end, Blount felt a responsibility to present a different—not to mention valuable—point of view and cover topics that were not being discussed. As she points out: “The columns I write that are about women’s issues and women’s sports draw the most feedback and letters.” Her recent column in which she argued that Michelle Wie should have the opportunity to play in PGA-sponsored golf tournaments drew 250 emails: “All of the negative emails on the Wie column were from men, but the positive emails were from both men and women.”

Though the type of criticism Blount encountered “comes with the territory,” Schmid believes there is an additional pressure—an unwritten code and set of expectations exists for women sports journalists who cover female athletes: “Because I am a woman covering women’s sports, women in particular expect me to be a friend of women’s sports and be supportive, rather than critical. I cover the story in the way I see it, regardless of the gender of the athlete.”

We are fortunate to have two great sports reporters who do indeed “cover it the way they see it.” The pioneering voices of Rachel Blount and Pam Schmid have paved the way for other women journalists and provided Twin Cities’ readers with a diverse point of view when it comes to sports of all kinds. Their talent, hard work, and perseverance are something which we can all be proud of!

DID YOU KNOW?

Gender Equity for Non-Traditional Sports

The Action Sports Alliance is a nonprofit group comprised of female athletes and their advocates. The group’s mission is to grow the sport of women’s skateboarding. This summer they made headway fighting for gender equity. At ESPN’s Summer X-Games in early August, the critical focus was not on the event itself, but the negotiations between the executives at ABC/ESPN and the Action Sports Alliance. An agreement was brokered to increase both women’s prize money and media coverage during the Summer X-Games. The first victory for the Alliance involved prize money—the winner of this year’s women’s skateboarding competition earned \$15,000, an increase of \$10,000 from last year’s prize. However, it was still far lower than the \$50,000 purse earned by the male winner. And though women account for 29% of all skateboarders in the U.S., the amount of media coverage they receive lags far behind their male counterparts. Next season, for example, ABC/ESPN will provide a half hour of coverage of women’s skateboarding but will devote 18 hours to the men’s competition. Action sports such as skateboarding developed within the culture of equal opportunity created by Title IX. But as with more traditional sports such as basketball and softball, patterns of inequality still persist. Fortunately, organizations like the Action Sports Alliance fight hard to ensure gender equity in action sports. To follow their progress go to www.actionsportsalliance.com.



FALL 2006 DISTINGUISHED LECTURE: CHRISTINE BRENNAN

Best Seat in the House—From the Locker Room to the Press Box: Women's Sports in the 21st Century

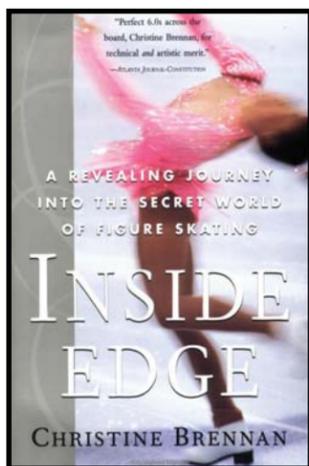
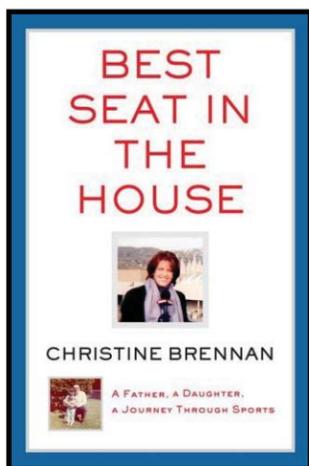
Tuesday, October 10, 2006, 7:00-9:00pm

William G. Shephard Room

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Christine Brennan, author and award-winning columnist for *USA Today*

Our fall Distinguished Lecture features **Christine Brennan**, the award-winning sports columnist for *USA Today* and frequent guest commentator on ABC News, ESPN, NPR, and Fox Sports Radio. Brennan, also a best-selling author, will discuss her latest book, a memoir entitled *Best Seat in the House: A Father, A Daughter, a Journey Through Sports*. Brennan's book highlights the role of her father in giving this future superstar the support and confidence she needed to excel in the pre-Title IX world of sports.

Growing up in Toledo, Ohio, Brennan could only dream of the opportunities that today's sports-women take for granted. She attributes her early love of sports to a father, who fanned her passions as a young football and baseball fan, a girl who knew more baseball statistics than most boys her age. Her father's encouragement has continued throughout Brennan's remarkable career, from her early days as a beat reporter to her current status as one of the top sports journalists in the country.

Brennan was one of the first female sports journalists at a major newspaper to cover an NFL team: From 1984-1996 she wrote for the *Washington Post*, becoming the first woman to cover the Washington Redskins. She also covered the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, as well as the next 11 Olympic Games. In 1988, Brennan was elected the first president of the Association for Women in Sports Media and on two occasions she was named as one of the top 10 sports columnists by the Associated Press Sports Editors. In

2005, she won the prestigious National Association of Collegiate Women Athletics Administrators' Award for her contributions to promoting women's sports. In addition to her outstanding work as a journalist, Brennan has written six books, one of which, *Inside Edge*, was listed on *Sports Illustrated's* Top 100 Sports Books of All-time.

Christine Brennan has blazed a pioneering trail for all women sport journalists. She participated in sports before the passage of Title IX, witnessed the legislation's impact on sports and journalism, and had a front-row seat as women's sports participation has exploded over the last three decades. But Brennan also knows that in spite of this remarkable progress, too few women hold positions of power in the field of sports journalism, and that female athletes continue to be ignored and trivialized throughout mainstream media. Her lecture will shed light on these important issues and offer insights from an award-winning journalist who occupies the "Best Seat in the House." Please join us on October 10 in welcoming and honoring Christine Brennan.



RECAP FROM LAST SPRING'S DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

"The Professionalization of Youth Sports"



Distinguished Lecture speaker Professor Dan Gould, Michigan State University

Last spring, Professor Dan Gould presented a distinguished lecture entitled, "*The Professionalization of Youth Sports and its Special Impact on Girls*." Professor Gould is the Director of the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports (ISYS) at Michigan State University. His work examines critical issues in youth sports and educates parents, coaches, administrators, officials and athletes about the repercussions of an over-professionalized, win-at-all-costs mentality on the youth sport experience. In his lecture, Professor Gould highlighted research indicating that when youth sports reflect a professional model, young athletes are more likely to experience burnout, injury, eating disorders, excessive stress, competitive anxiety, and issues related to self-esteem. In addition, Gould emphasized how little we know research-wise about the youth sport experience for young girls. His thorough review of the literature helped crystallize future research questions that must address policy issues and narrow the gap in how similarly or differently the current climate in youth sport impacts girls versus boys.

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TUCKER CENTER STAFF UPDATE

Jens Omli



Jens Omli will join the Tucker Center this fall as a Research Assistant. Jens is a third-year doctoral student in sport psychology with a minor in child development; his advisor is Tucker Center Affiliated Scholar Professor Diane Wiese-Bjornstal. Jens received his Masters degree in psychology—with an emphasis in athletic counseling—from Springfield College in 2004.

Last year, Jens worked with faculty and fellow graduate students in the *Minnesota Youth Sport Research Consortium* (MNYSRC). His primary research interest is children's preferences for coach and

parent behavior during youth sport events—a project he calls "KIDS SPEAK." KIDS SPEAK is a cutting-edge research initiative that will provide a foundation for developing research-based educational interventions for coaches and parents. These interventions will, in turn, help improve the overall climate for all children involved in youth sport.

In addition to his research on KIDS SPEAK, Jens is working with Nicole LaVoi on the issue of "background anger" and its impact on the youth sport experience. They are especially interested in if and how background anger affects girls

versus boys. Background anger refers to such inappropriate behaviors as yelling at referees and "coaching" from the sidelines.

Jens' research interests complement his varied professional experiences. He has been a sport psychology consultant, a program coordinator, and a coach for community tennis. He has also served as a research associate for the National Football Foundation Center for Youth Development Through Sport. Needless to say, Jens Omli will enhance the research agenda of the Tucker Center and make a difference in the lives of our children, particularly young girls!