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 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 Leiland, 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 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 Leiland, 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.”

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Letter From the Director

Hello Friends of the Tucker Center

From Associate Director Nicole LaVoit

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 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 NCAAs 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 Kofo 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 stereotypes. You can read more about Tucker Center research initiatives by clicking the “Current Projects” link on our Web site at www.tuckercenter.org!

—Nicole LaVoit, Associate Director

Pioneering Women in Inter-collegiate Sports Administration

Sandy Barbour

Pioneers” continued on page 3 ...
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. I think about how different things would look if Dean changed the image from a porcelain vase to a lathé, 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 she 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.

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 great! 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.

KUDOS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 daughters as it is for dads.

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

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 often represented 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, underrepresent, and derogate women’s athletic achievements, they help to maintain belief systems and practices that relegated 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 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 these images which emphasize sportswomen’s hyper-sexual appearance trivialize and demote 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 (Dana Patrick drooped over a race car in a sexy pose)—impacts sports fans regarding their attitudes and intentions to act toward women 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 she perceives women’s sports?

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Research Updates

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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 columnists and reporters is much, 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 right is 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 and 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. As an AP intern 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 athletes, professional 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 is a veteran sports columnist 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 much a football 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.
Our 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.