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50 YEARS LATER: HOW TITLE IX HAS INFLUENCED THE WORLD OF SPORTS AND
THE EFFECT IT HAS HAD ON FEMALE ATHLETES

By

Catherine Alexandra Jeffers

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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Approved By

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DEDICATION

To my parents, who never waver in their support of me or my accomplishments. Mom, thank you for always being the one to calm my nerves and answering my endless FaceTime calls. Dad, thank you for being my favorite and lifelong editor and for lifting me up constantly. To my sisters, who compete at the highest level and inspire me to be my best every day. To any young girl who has felt lesser because of your gender. We matter.

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ABSTRACT

CATHERINE ALEXANDRA JEFFERS: 50 Years Later: How Title IX has Influenced the World of Sports and the Effect it has had on Female Athletes

This thesis aims to research the opportunities given to women within sports, and perceptions around their identities in the sporting industry. This thesis highlights the history of Title IX and its' impact on gender in sports. This thesis also discusses the lack of women's sports represented in media and the limited number of women in positions of power in sports. Since sports were introduced into modern culture, women have been advocating and fighting for their right to participate in sporting events and forcing even more complex conversations around equal compensation for their play.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

USWNT	United States Women's National Soccer Team
USMNT	United States Men's National Soccer Team
NWSL	National Women's Soccer League
MLS	Major League Soccer
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NAAF	Women's Division-National Amateur Athletic Federation
DGWS	Division for Girls' and Women's Sports
CIAW	Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women
AIAW	Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women
NWCA	National Wrestling Coaches Association
KHF	Kaplan Hecker & Fink LLP
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
SEC	Southeastern Conference
SWA	Senior Woman Administrator
JWS	Just Women's Sports
AD	Athletic Director

Introduction

In 1972, Title IX of the Education Act was signed into law by President Richard Nixon, granting equal opportunity in education and sport to women. When signed into law, it sought to separate gender from opportunities in education and athletics and opened the door to new opportunities and removal of barriers. [Title IX states](#): “No Person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program of activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

However, even after being signed into law, Title IX still received a lot of push-back from the NCAA and the new presidential administration. Because Title IX would cover all levels of education, including elementary, high school and college, athletic officials were concerned that the money-making sports, such as football and basketball, would have to share their budgets to support the growth of women’s sports. In February of 1976, the [NCAA filed a lawsuit](#) against Title IX. The NCAA challenged the validity of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare’s regulations. The NCAA stated that the regulations “extend the prohibition of Title IX to all activities carried on within an educational institution receiving financial assistance, without regard to whether a particular activity in question itself receives, as required by the express language of the statute, Federal assistance, according to NCAA Counsel Philip R Brown.” However, the case was dismissed for lack of sufficient legal standing to sue. Despite these attempts to withhold Title IX policies from applying to athletics, Congress upheld their decision and Title IX remained intact.

In its first few decades, Title IX had [successfully increased participation in sports](#), with 2,784,154 girls competing in high school sports by 2000, a 947% increase from 1972. Women's sports were successfully growing until former President George W. Bush ignited a large resistance to the implementation of Title IX in 2002. To win the election, Bush needed the state of Iowa's support and ended up with the reigns to change Title IX as it was known. "In January of 2002, the National Wrestling Coaches Association (NWCA) filed a lawsuit against the Department of Education, alleging that the athletic regulations interpreting Title IX were responsible for the decrease in men's wrestling teams, that it discriminated against men, and that the law was based on an illegal "quota system," (Hogshead-Makar, 180). This led to a lot of the public questioning whether Title IX actively hindered men's athletics, rather than helping women's athletics. Despite public protest and the wrestling lawsuit, Secretary of Education Rodney Paige upheld the legal standards under Title IX, ensuring no changes would be made to the policies.

To this day, women in athletics are continuing their fight for true equality and representation. Despite being granted equal access to the same opportunities as their male counterparts, there are still barriers that women are having to break to be truly seen as equal in sports, including the lack of media representation, unequal distribution of athletic funding, and underrepresentation of female athletic officials. The research conducted in this thesis will investigate the history of women in sports, including the 50th anniversary of Title IX and the growth of the coverage of women's sports, and will touch on the difference in marketing women's sports to audiences and the portrayal of female athletes in media. This thesis will utilize first-hand accounts from four female athletes and administrators- professional soccer player, Jaelin Howell, collegiate soccer and football player, Sarah Fuller, former Ole Miss Deputy

Athletic Director for Sports and Administration, Lynnette Johnson and former USWNT player, Olympic Gold Medalist and World Cup Champion, Brandi Chastain. These interviews took place during the spring of 2022 to answer the question: Since the introduction of Title IX, how much real growth has there been towards equality for women in sports and what is still left to be done?

Chapter I: A Brief Introduction into How Sports Have Shaped Me

I am the middle of three girls, something that earned my dad a lot of apologies from middle-aged men when they would find this out. “Geez, three girls, I’m sorry man.” He never cared. My dad was proud to be a #girdad, and he still is. This pride and simultaneous humility from my father had my sisters and I in contact sports by the age of 3. To my mom’s pleasure, we were still adorned with bows and our hair done, but we were on the field, court, etc. with the boys. These influential years of growing up playing countless hours of sports and watching football with the neighborhood dads is essential to my being. It is why I am so unapologetic about my passion for sports, but why I am such an advocate for female equality in sports and why I am writing this thesis. No more 14-year-old girls should have to show up for high school soccer tryouts like I did as a freshman, only to find out they don’t have uniforms because the money was funding the boys’ team. No 22-year-old woman should show up to their first day as an athletic trainer and find out there is no women’s restroom in the facilities – something former Ole Miss Deputy Athletic Director and Senior Women’s Administrator Lynnette Johnson fought to change at Ole Miss. No 28-year-old woman should have to spend most of her professional career fighting to be paid the same amount as her male counterparts – something the US Women’s National Soccer Team fights for daily. Women are constantly working to bridge these gaps and balance their worth and value as females in the sporting world.

Chapter II: Title IX and the Early Days

Title IX is the widely known marker of Federal legislation for women being allowed to compete in competitive sports without gender discrimination or limited opportunities. However, women have been engaged in sports for as long as men have, just without the same opportunities available to them. Because of the societal sectors set into place by the Industrial Revolution, women were not seen in athletic spaces, (Hogshead-Makar). The barriers for women in sports found its basis in homophobia and obvious misogyny: “the medical profession warned against exercise that was too strenuous lest it harm the women’s reproductive functions, while the moralists warned that sports participation would lead to a masculinization of women, either turning them against their prescribed roles or into homosexuals,” (Hogshead-Makar, 7).

In the early 1900s, women began to form athletic clubs to participate in sports such as tennis, croquet, bowling, and archery. In colleges, women were limited to intramural and sorority athletics, never becoming fully integrated into competitive collegiate athletics until the 1920s. In the 1920s, the Women’s Division-National Amateur Athletic Federation (NAAF) was created to open intercollegiate competition among women (Park and Hult, 1993). By 1941, the first women’s national collegiate championship was held in golf by the Division for Girls’ and Women’s Sports (DGWS). Women’s sports continued to slowly grow, with the Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (CIAW) being established in 1964 to sponsor national championships for women. However, due to pressure by the NCAA and increased responsibilities, the CIAW was unable to

continue economically and administratively. The “growing NCAA interest in women’s intercollegiate athletics created great concern among the women leaders,” (Wu, 1999).

The NCAA, or [National Collegiate Athletic Association](#), was founded in 1906 “to regulate the rules of college sports and protect young athletes.” In its beginning, the NCAA only included men’s collegiate sports, with the first national championship coming in 1921 for track and field. The NCAA divided into three divisions in 1973: Divisions I, II and III.

While women’s sports were growing, men wanted to be able to control the rules and regulations, along with the finances and any profit women’s sports brought in. Before Title IX, the NCAA did not attempt to get involved with women’s athletics because there was no female competition at the national level. However, due to the growth of women’s sports after the passage of Title IX, the NCAA had taken an interest in women’s athletics because of the increase of financial and political power to be gained if they took control of women’s intercollegiate athletic competition. Because of this, the NCAA attempted to force the AIAW out and gain full control, (Hult, 1994).

From the CIAW, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) was born in 1971 as an institutional membership structure. The NCAA pushed for an affiliation between the two groups, but the women of the AIAW were adamant that women maintain control of women’s athletic programs. Lucille Magnusson, Chair of the former CIAW stated in a letter to the NCAA that “the gals are not yet ready to be split into three groups [NCAA, NAIA, and NJCAA]. The fact that we could not come to some workable compromise between the three groups... was really disappointing to me,” (Wu, 1999). If taken over by the NCAA, the AIAW would be subject to NCAA control, something the female leaders were against. The women-led governing bodies wanted to maintain autonomy as long as possible before giving up full control

of women's athletics to the men in the NCAA. It was not until 1981, nine years after Title IX was signed into law, that the NCAA fully integrated women's sports into their structure.

Nineteen women's championships were added, and the first women's NCAA champions were not crowned until November of 1981, more than 75 years after the NCAA's founding.

Following the Cold War, support for female representation in sports continued to grow. According to Dr. Welch Suggs, author of the book *A Place on the Team: The Triumph and Tragedy of Title IX*, it was thanks to the competitive mindset of beating the Soviets in head-to-head battles that the public began to watch individual female competitions on television, such as tennis and gymnastics.

In 1967, one of the biggest displays of defiance by a woman in sport took place when Kathrine Switzer ran in the Boston Marathon before it was open to female runners. Switzer had been training for months and wanted to race in the "Mecca for runners." According to Switzer, the male runners around her were kind to her at the starting line, happy to have a woman accompanying them. "I tried to stay low-key; I sure didn't want any attention at this moment, but I tried to be accommodating, even when one runner insisted on having his wife, on the other side of the fence, take our photo together. Then the crowd quieted; someone up front must have been making announcements. We moved close together, and the smell of liniment was so strong that my eyes stung. The gun went off, and we were away at last," Switzer said. In her personal memoir, Switzer said her reasons for running included her love for the sport and because "women deserve to run, too. Equal rights and all that, you know." Her persistence to be included in a male dominated space placed cracks in the foundation of sports, allowing for women to seep through. In 1972, five years after Switzer's historic race, the Boston Marathon allowed women to officially enter the race.

Before Title IX existed, many states did not sponsor sports for high school girls and the NCAA was an organization for male collegiate athletics only. According to the [National Federation of State High School Associations](#), of the 3,960,932 high school athletes in the years 1971-1972, only 294,015 were girls, a mere 7.4%. Additionally, [athletic money and scholarships](#) were severely limited for women, with them receiving 2% of school's athletic budgets and "virtually no athletic scholarships." There were limited opportunities for women and girls to participate in athletics at all.

Today, women make up more than half of all NCAA athletes, yet, despite Title IX barring any gender discrimination in athletic opportunities, women are only receiving 28% of the total athletic budgets, 31% of recruiting funding and 42% of scholarship money. [In September of 2021](#), a study revealed that there were over 150,000 college athletic scholarships given to students, with over 3,000 more scholarships being available to men than women. Women make up 40% of all sport participants but receive a [mere 4%](#) of all media coverage. Although women's sports have [continuously grown each year](#) since the introduction of Title IX 50 years ago, the playing field remains far from equal in terms of support and opportunities.

Chapter III: The Big Players and their Personal Perspectives

This chapter includes the first-hand accounts of four highly esteemed women in sports, including current and former college and professional players, and high-level administrators. Each of these women have more than 10 years of experience in the sporting world and share their stories of discrimination, success, while reflecting on the growth of women's sports and offering advice for future generations and change. The four women interviewed are: Jaelin Howell, *Collegiate and Professional Soccer Player*, Sarah Fuller, *Collegiate Soccer and Football Player*, Lynnette Johnson, *Former Deputy Athletic Director for Sports and Administration*, and Brandi Chastain, *Former USWNT player, Olympic Gold Medalist and World Cup Champion*.

Howell is a self-proclaimed advocate for women everywhere, but especially for representation in sport. She is an inspiring young athlete who has the unique opportunity to change the culture of the USWNT. Fuller gained my attention as an avid soccer watcher and earned my respect when she walked onto the football field with the utmost composure and swagger, ready to face men and trolls with respect and poise. Johnson is well-known across the Ole Miss campus and intrigued me through her career accomplishments and loads of recognition from colleagues. Chastain is one of the most well-known USWNT players of all time. From elementary school to high school graduation, I had her celebration photo displayed in my room. She is the definition of a role model and someone I was honored to interview. All these women

continue to inspire me each day, and I cannot thank each of them enough for their thoughtful insight on their experiences as women in sport.

Jaelin Howell

Jaelin Howell is a 22-year-old female soccer player who played for Florida State at the collegiate level. During her four-year [career as a Seminole](#), Jaelin led the team to three College Cup appearances and two National Championships. The two national titles came in her freshman and senior seasons. Along with being a national champion, Jaelin also received back-to-back Mac Hermann trophies in 2020 and 2021. The Mac Hermann trophy is awarded annually to the nation's top male and female collegiate soccer players. After her career at Florida State, Jaelin was drafted second overall in the 2022 NWSL Draft by Racing Louisville FC and will begin her club career with them in the Spring of 2022. Jaelin was also recently called up to the senior USWNT and received minutes in the She Believes Cup on the way to a US victory. As a competitive female athlete at the highest level, Jaelin has seen how the landscape for women athletes has changed.

“I am very passionate about it, just because I have seen first-hand female sports not getting the attention or a lot of the benefits and the pay that men's sports do. Granted, they do have a lot more of a following and people investing their time and money into it, just because I think it all goes back to the exposure of it and people having these misconceptions in their head. What I want to do in my professional career is grow the game by exposing it to more people and showing them just how fun and exciting and awesome female sports, and specifically soccer, can be. I think it's also developing young female athletes and investing in our youth. Giving them the same opportunities and making them believe that they can do it. You see little boys, and they want to be Odell Beckham because they see him on TV all the time, they see him getting all this attention and being great, and they get to watch him constantly. A young female soccer player isn't going to see the same amount of stuff on Abby Wambach that they would a big-time NFL

player. So, I think it's just creating environments for young female players that will make them believe in themselves that they can get to that level."

Jaelin explained that despite the women's soccer team's success at FSU, she and her teammates still had to push for coverage on social media pages when they were playing in the National Championship.

"We had amazing fans, but nowhere near what FSU Football had. It's funny, because Gabby Carle and I actually had to talk with a lot of social media groups following FSU sports, and just say, "Hey guys we are at the National Championship for the second time in two years. We don't think there's enough attention around it." We had to get more people to really invest their time in watching it, and posting about it, and getting hype about it. Whereas if FSU football was in the National Championship, it would be all over."

For many female athletes, being compared to their male counterparts is all they've known. Fans and supporters don't come in huge numbers to see a women's soccer game as they do a football or baseball game. According to Howell, a lot of that stems from a misconception around quality of play.

"The misconception in people's heads is the quality of the soccer and how competitive it is. I think most people just don't realize because they've never seen or watched it. I think that's a major problem is people make judgments without actually seeing it or watching it. If people actually watched women's soccer and started investing in it, it would grow tremendously. You turn on ESPN and there's going to be a men's college basketball game, but how many times is there a women's soccer game or women's basketball game or volleyball game, unless it's a final four."

When Jaelin's athletic trainer at Florida State arrived over 30 years ago, there were no female athletic trainers on any staff. [The current number](#) of head female athletic trainers in all three divisions of the NCAA is 366, or 31.7%. In Jaelin's eyes, this shows tremendous growth up to this point, but there is still significant progress to be made. In Division I, only 19.8% of head athletic trainers are women, and assistant female athletic trainers make up 48.1%. There are still significant organizational barriers within the NCAA that are left unaddressed.

At the time of the [2021 Gender Equity Review](#) completed by Kaplan Hecker & Fink LLP (KHP), a litigation boutique out of New York City, KHP found that there are disparities among staff size and support, specifically in men's versus women's basketball: For the 11 full-time men's basketball staff members in the NCAA, the women had seven, and one of those seven was responsible for the same number of duties as seven different employees on the men's side. During the 2021 tournament, this women's basketball staff member was responsible for mementos and gifts, coordinating volunteers, planning hotels, space assignments and the Final Four Salute presentation. According the KHF report, "men's basketball has the equivalent of 21.86 full time employees, while women's basketball has only 13.92," for the execution of the Basketball Championships. While these differences in staff allocation can be attributed to differences in tournament and bracket sizes, the NCAA should still be able to provide equitable championship experiences for each sport, regardless of gender, and that is something that was notably not done for men's and women's basketball in 2020.

Even after Title IX was passed in 1972, it still took ten years for the first NCAA Women's Soccer Tournament to take place. The University of North Carolina won the title in 1982, their first of 21 under Head Coach Anson Dorrance. On the contrary, the men had been competing in the NCAA Men's Soccer Tournament since 1959 and had already crowned 23

champions by the time the women stepped onto a championship pitch. It wasn't until 1985 that the first USWNT was formed. Following their formation, the USWNT won the inaugural FIFA Women's World Cup in 1991 and have won three additional World Cup's. Conversely, the first USMNT was organized in 1885, and the men have never won a World Cup. The first professional men's soccer league was founded in 1967: The National Professional Soccer League. The current professional soccer league for men is the MLS, with 28 teams. The first professional women's soccer league began in 2001, the Women's United Soccer Association, and lasted three years before expanding to what is now the NWSL with 12 teams.

For Howell and the rest of her teammates at FSU, their success on the soccer field made a difference in how they were seen on campus.

“I do think we're treated differently [because of our success.] Soccer and softball at FSU are the two powerhouses and I think more people around campus and around the community knew more about us, just because we did get more exposure and attention for winning.”

However, it still was not equal in the grand scheme of things. When it comes to post-season play, men's sports have more coverage and receive more for the same accomplishments as women. [In a 2021 study](#) published by the University of Southern California, researchers studied 30 years of sport coverage and found that women's sports are continuously ignored. In 2019, women's sports coverage made up 5.7% of the televised portions on *SportsCenter*. Social media coverage of women's sports is equally lacking at *SportsCenter*, making up only 4.2% in 2019. 75.2% of TV news coverage was comprised of the “Big Three” of men's sports: football, baseball, and basketball.

“Eighty percent of the news and highlights programs in our study devoted zero time for women’s sports,” Cheryl Cooky, a professor of American studies and women’s, gender and sexuality studies at Purdue University said. “On the rare broadcast when a women’s sports story does appear, it is usually a case of ‘one and done’ – a single women’s sports story partially eclipsed by a cluster of men’s stories that precede it, follow it and are longer in length.”

“You go to the NCAA tournament, and if you’re a basketball player, you go to March Madness and Final Four you get an Xbox, new pair of shoes, all this stuff. When we went, we got a t-shirt, maybe a couple buttons, a hat. The difference is the money that is invested into it,” Howell said.

The NCAA came under fire in 2021 for the major disparities between the facilities and “swag bags” for the men and women’s side. [A Tik Tok video](#) by Oregon Women’s Basketball Player Sedona Prince went viral last March and showcased the major differences. The women’s weight room for the NCAA Tournament was one rack of light-weight dumbbells, while the men had a state-of-the-art facility with multiple squat racks and various other types of equipment.

Following the tournament, the NCAA hired KHF to conduct a thorough external review of their gender equity issues. The [initial review](#) found apparent differences between the Men’s and Women’s Basketball Championships. The review states: “As highlighted on social media, there were differences in the goods, services, and resources provided to the women’s basketball players, including their weight training facilities, COVID-19 tests, food, recreational opportunities, and gifts and mementos. In addition, there have been significant—and longstanding—disparities in the production and operation of the championships, including, among other things, differences in the quality and quantity of branding and signage at the arenas and host cities; in the use of the “March Madness” trademark; and in the sponsorship of the fan

festivals, etc. In all of these areas and more, the experience of the women's tournament participants was markedly different from and inferior to that of the men's tournament participants.”

In July of 2021, the NWSL ran a campaign called #NoMoreSideHustles. This campaign was a way to show what it was like for a professional athlete who made less than minimum wage. Many players on NWSL rosters were having to get second, or third jobs, just to keep their head above water. #NoMoreSideHustles called out the NWSL and demanded an increase in minimum wage salaries for players. For Jaelin, the push from her predecessors in the NWSL ensured that she wouldn't have to pick up an extra job on the side to sustain herself. According to Howell, the campaign was “prompting the NWSL to pay players enough and house them and give them enough resources to where they don't have to work second jobs, because for the longest time you did.”

“[It] means, you know, you can't, obviously, play to your potential if you're having to worry about that. So here recently, I don't think there'd be anybody that is working a second full time or part time job. Obviously, there might be things here and there, but with the new deal, you have to be housed in player housing, which takes care of housing. They just brought the minimum up from, I think it was \$22,000 to \$35,000, which is a huge difference and very livable.”

This “deal” that Howell mentioned is the new NWSL CBA, or collective bargaining agreement. Signed into action on January 31, 2022, this agreement is the first of its kind in women's soccer history. According to the [NWSL Players Association](#), the CBA will allow players to “report to preseason camp [on February 1st] with the safety, security, and protections or a collectively bargained contract that sets NWSL on a positive trajectory for the future.” The

agreement between the league and its' players includes a 160% increase to minimum salaries, 4% year-over-year increases and free agency within the NWSL. The CBS Sports Soccer Podcast, *Attacking Third*, lays out a few more of the specifics within the deal:

“The primary terms of the CBA are projected to require an additional incremental investment by NWSL owners of nearly \$100 million and include raising the minimum salary to \$35,000 along with an increase in player salaries. The agreement will also provide free housing, transportation, fully-vested 401(k) contributions, health, life and disability insurance. Additionally, eight weeks of parental leave – whether for birth or adoption – and up to six months of mental health leave. It will also include a share of net broadcast revenues if the league is profitable in the third, fourth or fifth year of the newly negotiated CBA.”

Along with the CBA, the NWSL has extended its highest-ever contract to the 2021 NWSL Rookie of the Year, Trinity Rodman. After re-signing with the Washington Spirit, Rodman will become the highest-paid athlete in the NWSL, surpassing the likes of Alex Morgan and Megan Rapinoe. Rodman is set to make \$1.1 million over four years. Her \$1.1 million dollar deal is above the pay limit for the league but is being allotted through allocation money and her base salary. It's a huge step in securing top wages for the top-performing female athletes. In comparison, the tenth-highest paid athlete in the MLS is Victor Wanyama, who makes \$3.1 million playing for CF Montreal.

“Her re-signing this contract is in a new-era, I think, where there is more money. Obviously, I think the team had a lot of allocation money, and they wanted, I think, you know, a lot of the attention directed toward that. I think it's really good for female sports actually, and female soccer, because now that it's public knowledge and everybody knows she's getting paid that much, it's going to require a lot of these clubs with big-time players... that're still in the

league, to pay them more because it kind of sets the standard. It's going to push clubs to start playing their players a lot more. It's going to grow the game," Howell said.

Jaelin is currently in Louisville, Kentucky gearing up for her rookie season with Racing Louisville FC in the NWSL. Howell is living in the player housing provided by the league and has signed a guaranteed three-year contract with pay increases each season. She is also being called up for USWNT camps under head coach Vlatko Andonovski. Howell's main goal as someone at the highest level of their sport is to continue investing in the future of female sports and the youth, and continuously upping the exposure of women in sports.

"I think [women's sports] have grown tremendously. I think there's still a lot of work to do, but the progress that has been made is crazy."

Sarah Fuller

Thrust into the spotlight in the fall of 2020, Vanderbilt Women's Soccer goalkeeper Sarah Fuller stepped into the role of kicker for Vanderbilt Football, changing the landscape for women in sports everywhere, and becoming a beacon of hope and a role model for young women.

Shortly after Vanderbilt Soccer won the 2020 SEC Tournament by defeating No. 1 seed Arkansas 3-1, starting goalkeeper Sarah Fuller received a call from her assistant coach. The kicking team for Vanderbilt Football had been wiped out due to COVID-19, and the coaches had seen Sarah's talent, including an [assist](#) from behind midfield in a game against Tennessee. (For non-soccer fans, that's an incredible feat for a goalkeeper). They needed a kicker and wanted Sarah to try out for the team.

“I was like, “oh shoot okay, yeah I guess I can do that.” So, within 30 minutes [of the call], I was out on the football field and just casually kicking field goals. It was kind of like, do what you want, kind of figure out what feels good. I made like 12 out of 15, or 13 out of 15, I can’t remember the exact number now. They seemed impressed, the special teams coaches did, and so then I went in and signed up as a football player on the NCAA website.”

It didn’t set in with Fuller until a phone call with her parents that she could be the first woman to ever play in a football game for a Power Five conference team. The 22-year-old, who stands at 6 ft 2 in, had to get fitted for shoulder pads and a helmet, and would soon be donning the Vanderbilt uniform for a completely different sport than what she was recruited to the school for.

“I called [my parents that] night when they were back in Texas and my dad was like, “I think this going to be a really, really big deal.” And I was like, “I’m kind of gathering that too, I think it’s going to be a big deal.” I went into it not thinking much of it, just thinking it would be a cool opportunity.”

With just five days to learn how to kick a football, something Fuller says is not easy to transition to from soccer, she was on the field with #32 across her chest and “Fuller” across her back, preparing to kick off against Missouri on November 28, 2020. Despite Vanderbilt getting blown out 41-0 by Mizzou, Fuller still became the first woman to play in a Power Five football contest when she executed a squib kick at kickoff. A few days after the game against Missouri, Head Coach Derek Mason was let go and the kicking team returned from COVID-19 protocols. This became an awkward situation for Fuller, who admires Coach Mason and credits and appreciates him for bringing her on the team. Sarah had been fully integrated into the team, joining them for all meetings, meals, and practices.

“That was tough. Then I asked my special teams coach, I was like, “Listen, don’t keep me here just because I’m a girl and you don’t want to hurt my feelings, and you have a few games left. Don’t do that.” And he was like, “Listen, we actually want to keep you because you’re more accurate, especially with [point after attempts].” I had a much higher percentage of making them than the other kickers did. Now don’t get me wrong. Some of the other guys could hit like 50-yarders and be really consistent with that, but they couldn’t hit a PAT, which is just a basic, you know, extra point. So, I was like, “Okay, well if that’s if that’s the case, then I’ll stay.”

The coaching staff had decided that for the upcoming game against Tennessee, Fuller would kick the extra points or anything under 25-yards, and anything over than would be left to the other kickers.

“I was able to make two points, and then of course, my life has completely changed since then.”

One of Sarah’s core memories after her barrier-breaking experience was the tennis legend Billie Jean King reaching out to her to offer support and congratulations. King is a pioneer for gender equality and an advocate for female representation in sports. She is regarded as one of the greatest tennis players of all time and recognized by Fuller and Howell as one of their role models in all of sports. King pushed for female recognition and earned huge respect when she beat Bobby Riggs in the 1973 [“Battle of the Sexes” tennis match](#). In the words of [King’s website](#), this match, in combination with the passage of Title IX “is often credited with both igniting a boom in women’s sports participation, and for empowering women to advocate for equal pay in all sectors of the workforce.” It is women like Billie Jean King that can be recognized for creating opportunities for women like Sarah Fuller.

“I think we just have to continue to fight for and demand, honestly. It’s got to come down to what we’re willing to fight for, and I just think we need to continue to do that. It’s never going to be perfect, but we can get close. We can get close to where it almost seems nonexistent, not having to worry every year if the NCAA is going to do the right thing,” Fuller said.

The “right thing,” according to Sarah, is in reference to the differences across post-season tournaments such as March Madness and the College World Series. [In 2021](#), the photos released from inside the men’s and women’s March Madness sparked controversy and anger over the differences in facility set up and amenities. Also, the women play over a shortened timeline, with men receiving more days off in between for rest. Similar inequalities are present in the baseball and softball NCAA tournaments, the College World Series. For the [Women’s College World Series](#), there are no showers at the facilities, forcing players and coaches to shower at their hotels. Additionally, the teams are often forced to play double headers, all in an effort to keep costs low. The men, on the other hand, play in a world-class facility with off-days for golfing and massages. The irony comes from the Women’s College World Series [receiving higher TV ratings](#) than the men, averaging 1.2 million viewers in 2021 compared to the 775,000 for the men. While the fan recognition is felt in the stadium and on national television, softball coaches and players still argue that the NCAA treats them as a second-tier sport.

For Sarah Fuller, women’s representation in sports media has become a major topic of contention around gender equality in sports. [According to research](#), women’s sports receive around 4% of total media coverage, despite accounting for [44% of the college athlete population](#). This disparity is a huge hinderance on the gender equality movement in sports, and something Sarah Fuller wants to bring more attention to.

“The media towards women’s sports [needs to be changed]. It drives me insane. Have you ever looked at ESPN when they post about a woman, and you look at their comments? It literally upsets me. I have to walk away because I want to reply to every comment, and I know that’s not healthy. But then when you go on ESPNW, it’s all amazing and fantastic. So, stuff like that needs to change. They need to play women’s sports in bars and hotels. It just needs to be more present.”

On February 20, 2022, ESPN and ABC featured an [unprecedented night-time slate](#) of strictly women’s sports for the first time. The lineup featured a College GameDay special edition of No. 1 South Carolina Women’s Basketball at noon. The rest of the day included a women’s basketball matchup of No. 12 Tennessee at No. 1 South Carolina, the USWNT SheBelieves Cup matchup against New Zealand, and college softball matchup of No. 3 UCLA vs No. 4 Florida State. The women’s slate of games was hugely popular among viewers, helping [ESPN reach](#) an average of 2.068 million primetime viewers this quarter, a 40% increase since last year.

“Knowing that you can go on ESPN and watch all of these games, seeing the schedule, actually seeing it when you’re in a bar or restaurant, that means a lot,” Fuller said. “It’s so crazy how you start promoting and you showcase women’s sports, I don’t think people realize that there are women’s sports, so when you start promoting them and having ads for them, and having athletes sponsor things, female athletes sponsoring Gatorade, people will want to watch it. They’re not going to watch something they don’t know exists,” Fuller said.

Because she spent time participating in both a women’s and men’s sport at an SEC school, Fuller had first-hand experiences of what it was like being treated as a female athlete on a successful team versus the perks on being on a men’s sport, despite their losing record.

“The football team got nicer stuff; I’ll tell you that. It drove me insane because they would complain about like, their giant airplane wasn’t nice enough... We’re both getting nice stuff, but especially the quantity that the football team was receiving. I was just so astonished by all the gear that they had, all the food that they received, and the quality food was really good. You want a whole pizza to yourself? Here you go, and there’s more in the back so take some with you.”

Fuller went on to note the differences in her time as women’s soccer player, winning the SEC Tournament, versus her time on the 0-9 football team: “Football might be the money maker, but they’re not the one’s winning championships.”

After their game against Missouri, a member of the football coaching staff led Sarah to the referee’s locker room where she could shower and change.

“So many women work in football and when we went to Missouri, we didn’t have a women’s locker room. I don’t know what I was expecting, but they put me in the ref’s locker room, which was trash. I’m surprised they don’t provide a locker room for women for the opposing team.”

“When I was getting stuff for my helmet, I noticed all the guys had something they were supporting or wanting to promote. I had heard of this non-profit... ‘Play Like a Girl’ in Nashville. I love their message, I love that saying, I think it’s awesome and I think it’s fitting for what I was doing. That was one thing that I [said] “I want this to be done. You guys will make me a decal and I’m going to put that on the back of my helmet,”

Little did Sarah know that decision would become a powerful image for not only young girls with aspirations for their own future in sports, but women across the world. Donning “Play

Like a Girl” across the back of her helmet with her long braid coming out of the back of it, Sarah has become an important symbol for equality in sports.

“If they want to play football, they can play football, but, you know, if there’s something that they want to do that they feel, you know, society doesn’t allow them to. I mean, you can do it, like, you’re just going to have to push through some barriers sometimes, but you can definitely do it.”

Lynnette Johnson

Lynnette Johnson’s first memory surrounding Title IX and the gender disparities within sports was in high school in the early 1980s, just a few years after the law was signed into effect.

“We got hand-me-down basketballs and uniforms from the men. We’re women. My dad went in and fought to get us new things and said that [we] deserve better. That was my very first experience of understanding that it’s okay that women get the opportunity to compete equally.”

Lynnette Johnson is a highly accomplished female athlete and administrator who worked at The University of Mississippi for over 30 years as the Senior Woman Administrator and Deputy Athletics Director for Sports and Administration. She recognizes that many women who work in sports have likely had their own personal experience that cued their understanding of the gender differences within the athletic world. When Johnson came to The University of Mississippi in 1989, she worked as an athletic trainer. She was surrounded by men, with no full-time female on staff.

“I was in the Fieldhouse... it was an all-men’s building; I had no restroom. No female restroom. No designated restroom that said “women.” I had to go up a flight of steps... I had to

go outside because it was all-male inside. So, from 1989 to 1994, I didn't have a restroom, technically for me.”

However, Johnson never complained. She never filed a suit, never whined, she just did her job. Johnson sat at the table, surrounded by testosterone, and fought for herself and those to come after her.

After becoming the first head female athletic trainer in the Southeastern Conference overseeing football and going on to achieve a high administrative role, Johnson was promoted. By the time 1998 rolled around, she had her own bathroom and became the Assistant Athletic Director and Senior Woman Administrator.

[The SWA role](#), created by the NCAA is designed “to encourage meaningful involvement of female administrators in the decision-making process in intercollegiate athletics. It is intended to enhance representation of female experience and perspective at the institutional, conference and national levels.” The irony is not lost on Johnson. There is no primary male administrator because, “that’s always the athletic director, right, because it’s always a man,” Johnson said.

Upon her promotion, the university immediately cut her pay. According to Johnson, she was informed that she didn't have enough experience and would be out \$5,000 of her paycheck.

“There was nothing I could do to fight... Every time something came up for the women, I'd have to raise my hand and say, “Hey, you know, we might want to consider this,” and I'd probably get outvoted.” Johnson joked that she even tried to count herself as two votes for the women: one for each of her hands. “If I stand up for what I believe in, I'm being bitchy,” Johnson said.

Johnson stayed the course and continued to fight for herself. She was eventually promoted and put in charge of baseball regionals, much to the surprise of any man that contacted her. When hearing her voice on the phone, Johnson said they would always point out that she's a "chick."

"Stepping into a man's sport, all of a sudden, they were like, "Okay, this woman might know what she's doing." Well, I did, with all of the women's sports already that I was in charge of but moving over into a men's sport became very valuable."

From 2002 to 2012, Johnson oversaw 10 Ole Miss athletic programs including track and field, men's tennis, and men's golf. Johnson is an advocate for all sports but understands the crucial need to continue fighting for women's equality, especially in their athletic facilities.

"The Gillom Sports Center in 1998 is where volleyball competed, and tennis competed. Guess what it didn't have? We're in Mississippi: air conditioning. We built a facility that didn't have air conditioning. They competed for two seasons without air conditioning," Johnson said.

Her priority as Assistant Athletic Director: get air conditioning in the Gillom Center, no matter the cost. When volleyball would play, they would have to stop points to mop the floors because of the lack of air flow. "We had no sound system, we had no bleachers, we had a scoreboard that looked like Oxford High School's, probably worse than that back then, and we had nothing in the building that said Ole Miss on it." Johnson pushed through resistance, gathered donations of equipment, and got it done. By 1999, the Gillom Center had air conditioning, but still no bleachers.

"It wasn't always easy... There are two times I probably came very, very close to losing my job because I spoke up. I went around the AD one time to the university attorney. I went

directly and had a meeting with the chancellor of the University of Mississippi and then he built the existing soccer stadium that you see now, because I went to the chancellor and he built that in '02 with university money," Johnson said.

However, Johnson doesn't think she deserves a gold star. She notes that there are plenty of women older and younger than her that are continuing to fight for the same things that she did 20 years ago.

"I don't know what to tell people. I mean, we've come so far, but yet the NCAA that is over women's athletics can't even do it. So, you expect us to do it on the campus of the University of Mississippi consistently," Johnson said.

During her administrative career, Johnson was never handed anything. She explained that "Every pay raise I got as an administrator is because a man got a pay raise and I went in and said, "Why did he get it? I have the same title." And then I got half of what he got."

Currently, women who work full time are still making 83 cents to every dollar that a man earns. According to the [American Association of University Women](#), "the consequences of this gap affect women throughout their lives. The pay gap even follows women into retirement: As a result of lower lifetime earnings, they receive less in Social Security and pensions. In terms of overall retirement income, women have only 70% of what men do."

According to Johnson, there have been plans in the work to renovate Ole Miss's Softball Stadium since 2017. For years, the university would not host NCAA Softball Regionals in Oxford because our stadium was not up to par. However, the new "[Champions. Now.](#)" campaign will provide \$350 million to expand and improve all Ole Miss athletic facilities, including softball. Despite the new campaign, softball will not be in their new facilities until closer to

2024, because according to Johnson, “we chose football first... football brings in the money. That’s not what Title IX says. Title IX says, providing the teams with the same opportunities to be successful within the market of their sport... Our softball team is not even close, but they come next when we’ve had plans on the table since 2017.”

Johnson argues that the situations don’t add up. Softball won an SEC Championship in 2017, but when was the last time football won the SEC? It was 1963, before Title IX even existed.

“It doesn’t equate. Find the money and do the right thing. People don’t want to do that, and I don’t know how to fix that,” Johnson said. “It’s exhausting. I’m getting a Trailblazer Award from the Southeastern Conference... it’s just because I’m exhausted. It’s an exhausted award... I just did my job.”

Women must work harder to get out in front of the demoralization and discrimination. They’re constantly caught up in the cycle of double standards.

“We’re only getting it because some other man got it before us and we’re trying to catch up. Don’t get me wrong, I earned that [pay raise], I deserved that money. Those women deserve to be there, but they only got there because somebody else had already been there,” Johnson said.

In the NCAA, [only 24 % of all athletic director roles](#) are held by women, and only 15% are within Division I schools. In Power 5 conferences, 60 of the 65 school’s employ male athletic directors. The five powerful women are: Sandy Barbour of Pennsylvania State, Jennifer Cohen of Washington, Heather Lyke of Pittsburgh, Carla Williams of Virginia, and Candice Storey Lee

of Vanderbilt. From 2018-2019, the number of women in athletic director positions across NCAA Division I rose 0.4%.

When it comes to media representing women in sports, Johnson believes that it comes down to who can be the first to do something, or to provide something for women. For networks like ESPN, the pressure is on them to represent gender equitably across all platforms. Athletes across the world are speaking out and taking a stand for what they believe in. Why now? In Johnson's eyes, "You can't demoralize women anymore. You have to give us respect because we deserve it."

According to Johnson, being a senior level female administrator, you must be a little cutthroat at times to be heard over the booming sound of men. However, women should be able to make tough decisions and be recognized for that.

"Do I have to become a man and make male decisions to be [valued]? I don't know that we want to do that. I am a woman. I bring value to the table for being a woman. I shouldn't have to make the decisions men make to do a job that we think is male dominated," Johnson said.

Brandi Chastain

In 1999, Brandi Chastain made history. In the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup final, Chastain scored the final penalty kick against China that won the United States the World Cup. In celebration, Chastain ripped her jersey off, sliding on her knees in her sports bra, fists pumped into the air. [This image](#) has become a lasting symbol for women in sports and since then, Chastain has seen an incredible amount of progress considering Title IX.

“I think, when I say progress, I mean the sheer number of young women and girls who engage in participation. So, since 1972 to now, millions of women, young girls growing into women, and women, have had an opportunity to play. In the beginning, it was not what we would call compliant. Most institutions did not follow through with the rules or the letter of the law... Even though that the law was present, it didn't mean that it was followed,” Chastain said.

Chastain explained that as the level of competition trickled down, there was less compliance with Title IX. [According to research](#), only 25% of all women compete in sports, compared to 43% of all men. It took time to model the behavior from a college level all the way down to elementary school sports. Thanks to women like Chastain and her predecessors, young girls have not had to fight as hard to participate in sports. When she was in middle school, Chastain went to try out for the co-ed soccer team but was the only girl on the field. It took her male friends pushing their coach to open his eyes to Chastain's talent that earned her a spot on the team.

“We have so many young girls who see that they're worth being in this space. I think that is one of the greatest hurdles, because something could be present, but still not in action,” Chastain said.

The impact that Title IX has on women's athletics has extended into more than just being able to participate. Women are also in the process of fighting for equal pay among male and female athletes.

“We want to talk about equal pay as something that's been a byproduct of Title IX. That was not the intention. The intention was to give young women an opportunity to participate and

educate themselves. This was an education bill; this was not a sports bill. But we all understand, as people within sports, the life education you get by participating. The fact that we've bridged so many gaps and now were talking about equal pay is incredible," Chastain said.

On February 22, 2022, after years of back-and-forth with US Soccer, [the USWNT reached an agreement](#) that will provide equal pay for the men and women's national teams. The agreement also included a payout of \$24 million to certain players that have been involved in the ongoing dispute since they filed a gender discrimination lawsuit in March of 2019.

The statement from US Soccer and the USWNT says: "We are pleased to announce that, contingent on the negotiation of a new collective bargaining agreement, we will have resolved our longstanding dispute over equal pay and proudly stand together in a shared commitment to advancing equality in soccer. Getting to this day has not been easy. The U.S. Women's National Team players have achieved unprecedented success while working to achieve equal pay for themselves and future athletes. Today, we recognize the legacy of the past USWNT leaders who helped to make this day possible, as well as all of the women and girls who will follow. Together, we dedicate this moment to them. We look forward to continuing to work together to grow women's soccer and advance opportunities for young girls and women in the United States and across the globe."

However, the agreement is still contingent on the ratification of a new CBA between the USWNT and league officials, which will be voted on in the beginning of April. Because this landmark decision is not set in stone, it is hard to garner the monetary achievements, but the emotional side is clear to female athletes.

“We’re hopeful that by the 31st of March, that the CBA will be taken care of. So, don’t count your chickens until they’ve been hatched. But I think on the emotional side, on the personal investment side, that we can feel good that we’re in this place right now,” Chastain said. “I’m an optimist, but it’s hard to fully allow myself to be really, super joyful until it’s signed.”

To Chastain though, playing soccer was never always about the money. It’s something she knows she deserved, but it was never the No. 1 goal.

“I didn’t come to soccer and to the Women’s National Team for equal pay. I came because I love soccer and I found a place where there were others who felt the same way. And together, we created this incredible bond and this incredible environment that gave us a platform to go out there and challenge all the limits. To push each other past comfort and to embrace one another during hardship, and to uplift and celebrate in moments of joy. Those are not things you can put money on,” Chastain said.

Chastain has a persona surrounding her, one of celebration ever since her ’99 World Cup goal. Because of that, she feels a responsibility to be an ambassador for female athletes and to make a big deal about every victory, whether monetary or emotional, so that others will begin to understand the significance of each moment. [Her celebration](#) sparked a revolution in female representation in sports media, something that is still in need of work today.

“Because social media is now so prevalent on where people are influenced, I believe there’s a greater chance for women in sports media to be less able to be gender specific and male specific, because now there’s other outlets,” Chastain said.

One of those new outlets: [Just Women's Sports](#). This newly found media outlet is “100% women's sports, 100% of the time.” They post daily content of dominant female athletes and their various accomplishments, along with blatant discrimination and sexism in the sports world. It's amazing that there are outlets like JWS out there, but the need for them comes from the lack of female representation in traditional media outlets. From Chastain's point of view, it all comes down to fear and discomfort.

“It's like anything else that needs change, it's uncomfortable,” Chastain said. “It takes power possibly away from some people. Nobody wants to let go of what they have for fear of losing power. When honestly, I think you can be more powerful. The more you embrace, the more you recognize that the world is diverse, the more powerful you become.”

For Chastain, there will always be a constant drive to want equitable opportunities, and if that takes pushing some buttons to get it done, she's not afraid.

“We're just going to be ourselves. I feel like we do have to push because we're getting resistance. I feel like I want to be this peaceful warrior for sports, I'm just going to continue doing the things that I do. And if by doing that, it makes you uncomfortable and it makes you think about change, then I'm doing the right thing,” Chastain said.

Chapter IV: Are We There Yet?

This thesis shows that despite numerous successes for women in sport, including Sarah Fuller's historical participation on a Power Five football team, there is still much more to be done to reach true and significant equality among male and female athletes. The reform must begin from the organizational level, with the NCAA implementing some sort of policy to increase the number of female administrators, coaches, and trainers across all divisions. It is something that may never be fully accomplished, but trailblazers such as Brandi Chastain and Lynnette Johnson will not be overlooked in all that they've done to bridge the gaps. It is apparent that women do not fall short in terms of accomplishments on the field, but the lack of opportunity for success off the field is greatly lacking, even 50 years after Title IX was signed into law to prohibit gender discrimination. It is imperative that changes are made in all levels of athletic competition to better optimize Title IX and to give student-athletes and athletic professionals more equitable gender opportunities.

Scholarships

In previous chapters, I pointed out the lack of equity in scholarship funding for men's and women's sports. To determine the best possible practices for change, it is imperative to take a closer view. In [NCAA Division I women's soccer](#), team's average 28 players on a roster. Of those 28 players, coaches are limited to handing out 14 total scholarships. These scholarships can be divided as the coaches please, whether that be 14 full-ride scholarships, or a mix of full-ride

and partial scholarships. Realistically, women's soccer can award full scholarships to 50% of its roster. In [NCAA Division I FBS football](#), a maximum of 85 full-ride scholarships can be handed out. A football roster in Division I FBS is capped at 105 players, equaling around 81% of rostered players receiving a full-ride scholarship if the roster is at full-capacity. While it is [mathematically impossible](#) to give an equal number of scholarships across all NCAA sports, perhaps a better distribution percentage should be set across sports to create more gender equity.

Women in Power and Power to the Women

As laid out earlier, there are obvious disparities in the number of women who run NCAA Division I athletics (five of the 65 Power 5 universities currently have female athletic directors). A growth in the number of female athletic directors would greatly strengthen the structural support for gender equity. As Lynette Johnson stated in her interview, women bring value to the table simply for being a woman. It is important to have women at the table to advocate for women's sports—it is no longer viable to have men constantly making decisions that belittle women's sports, [something that happened](#) when the SVP of Basketball for the NCAA prioritized men's basketball over women's. To destigmatize women in sports, you must be able to see females being successful at all levels. The NCAA could begin by hiring more Title IX specialists to serve in their organization and create a gender equity role with high organizational standing. As laid out in the KHF review, better coordination between men's and women's tournaments across all sports is critical. There should also be a system in place to actively listen to athletes. For example, a listening forum where a representative from the NCAA comes to each university to hear from female student-athletes, female administrators, and trainers, as well as athletic

directors could greatly benefit the disconnect that is evident between those on the ground and those making the decisions.

Elevate the Playing Field: More Media Coverage

It is known that media coverage of women's sports is severely lacking, with an abysmal 4% of sports media coverage devoted strictly to women's sports. To just level the playing field, the "big three" media conglomerates, FOX Sports, ESPN, and NBC Sports, must incorporate more fully slated women's programs at peak hours. The 2022 Women's Basketball NCAA Championship game had 4.85 million viewers on ESPN, the most-watched college basketball game, men's, or women's, on the network since 2008. The Women's College World Series averaged a higher number of viewers than the men. When televised, people tune in to women's sports. But it does not happen often enough. It is equally important to lift women's successes up as much as men. Bring on more female commentators to men's sports—there is no rule saying that only men can commentate men's sports. Women like Holly Rowe and Erin Andrews are [role models](#) for young women who are able to see people of their own sex being successful in a male dominated industry.

It is not enough for the NCAA to simply know Title IX exists and sit back while discrimination is still evident. They should actively be surveying all programs and discrepancies between men's and women's tournaments, facilities, and scholarships. A seasonal review following the conclusion of each NCAA Championship sport should be conducted based on gender equity to protect against any further straying from the basis of Title IX.

APPENDIX A: JAE LIN HOWELL INTERVIEW

JAE LIN HOWELL

Yeah. Um, so I started playing soccer when I was three, my parents just kind of threw me in. It is like the first or you could really do you know, they didn't know much about soccer or anything. I continue playing that I played basketball, volleyball track. So I played like a lot of sports, but I've always just loved soccer. Um, I started focusing solely on soccer, probably seventh grade. I'm just like, that's kind of what you had to do for, you know, sports. Growing up, you just kind of have focused on a single sport, I'm getting to that age, which I think kind of sucks. Just because I think playing multiple sports is super helpful, but I think it's getting even worse now. Or, you know, kids are choosing one sport super early on. But I did think it, you know, it helped my development and stuff. Um, so when I was 14, um, I started getting called into youth national team camps, um, kind of sporadically and stuff. I played for Arsenal, Colorado, in Fort Collins. Um, and then, probably when I was, I'd say, 13 or 14, I started going to real Colorado, which was like, hour and a half drive down to Denver every day. So I literally go to school, and then drive an hour and a half to practice drive back. Um, but they were in a different league, better league at the time. So I chose to do that. Um, so I played three, all Colorado, the rest of my youth club career. And like I said, Then around that time I was with youth national teams. I was on the u 1516. But then the u 17. Cycle is the first World Cup cycle. So I went to the U 17. CONCACAF championship, I went to the U 17. World Cup, and then which was in Jordan. And

then I was kind of traveling around old high school, like I honestly didn't really go to high school that much,

um, I go to different countries or camp or, you know, states with the national team and stuff. So I was traveling a lot, probably once or twice a month, sometimes it was World Cup cycle. Um, and then, in between, I committed to Florida State. I'm like, into my sophomore year, which is actually pretty late for a female soccer player. And then I went to the u 20 World Cup before I went to Florida State, and u 20 qualifiers before that each cup was in France. We lost both the World Cups, by the way. Got out in group. Um, yeah, I mean, I think growing up like is just a very unique situation just because I didn't get a lot to do a lot of the, you know, high, typical high school stuff and because I was gone most of time I was gone to camps, I was traveling the world and stuff, but I wouldn't want to change it just because the experiences and stuff I obviously had doing that, but it definitely was very different. And I think it changed my mentality about a lot of things, um, got to Florida State I loved all four years. Mark is awesome, the coaching staff is great, super professional, I want to go somewhere, where it elevates my game, I knew my goals, and thought that they could get me there. And they're really good at development and that sort of stuff. So, I know, you know, all this, I was just talking so you have everything. But, um, and, uh, so won the national championship in 2018. I want it just last year, and 2022. And then, well, 2021 Sorry. And then I won the mac herman, um, my junior year, and then also my senior year. And between that I got two camps with the national team, I think I've been to eight camps now. Um, which has always been, you know, the top priority in mine.

And then got drafted second to Louisville. When was December? Um, can it be more happy, honestly, being here, um, you know, second, second team year, but, um, you know, it's a growing program, and we have like, great facilities. We have great ownership. And so I'm

excited. And now I was just trying to stay consistent with the full team. So that's the short but long, I guess summary of everything.

CATHERINE JEFFERS

So the next one is who, who were like the first couple people that come to mind when you think of figureheads for women in sport, like people that have made progress for equality.

HOWELL

I would definitely say Serena Williams, the Venus sisters. Just, I don't know, putting women's sports on a map and, you know, obviously, a lot of money in tennis. So I think you know, that helped. And men's tennis. First of all, like, I think a lot of the women's sports that are very popular are connected to very well known men's sports. You know, tennis is big money with big men's names. So I think, you know, that helps. And, obviously, you know, being some of the first great female black athletes, I think, also, you know, with diversity and equality and stuff, like that was amazing. Um, so I definitely see them and just like the money aspect of women's sports, and just how iconic they are, you know, everyone knows who they are. And they're female and female sports. So I think very iconic them. Um, I'd say for soccer, you know, everyone knows who Mia Hamm is. The 99 World Cup, I think was a turning point for Women's Soccer Winning that World Cup. And, you know, that generation of players really growing the game. And then, you know, soon after that, the first pro league was in the US. So I'd say like Mia Hamm and Abby, one pack for women's soccer, specifically, um, you know, like, there's Julie Foudy and a lot of others, but I'd say obviously, a household name would be Mia Hamm.

Um, and she's a, you know, a pioneer. And then I honestly, I don't know a lot of women's basketball players. But, um, I would say definitely, those are some of the ones that I've really seen the icons for women's sports. And like I said, I think it all a lot of it has to do with unfortunately, like, men's sports, kind of being connected to the women's sports to like obviously, soccer like it's not huge in the US and I think that's due to the MLS not being as well known and popular as NFL and NBA and stuff. Like that. And a lot of the more successful women clubs are connected to bigger men's clubs, like, you know, Barcelona, Real Madrid Man City over in Europe, they're connected to the big time men's clubs, and they're very popular over there. And so I think, you know, that's just what it's, I'm kind of what's happening here. And obviously, it's growing a ton. But I think in terms of like women, like, women, that would make a difference, I think, you know, back then for them to do it and make a difference be iconic back then even was even more crazy, just because, um, you know, the most popular, but I think those are, you know, some of the ones that come into my mind immediately.

JEFFERS

Yeah. Um, and then, as someone who's fully immersed in the world of women's sports, as an athlete yourself, do you truly feel like there has been significant developments towards equality? Since say, the introduction of title 9 50 years ago?

HOWELL

Yeah, I do. I think it's run tremendously. I think there's still a lot for to do. But the progress that has been made is, you know, crazy. I actually did a similar interview with women in the

workplace. And I don't know if you remember Robin Gibson, I'm at Florida State, Carolina might have mentioned her. Yeah. So she's been working there for like, 35 plus years. And she's just going over the differences of like, there wasn't even female athletic trainers allowed, like when she first started. And so and like, you know, that's a difference of 3040 years. And I think it's the same with like, women's sports, like, we didn't have a pro Women's Soccer League, you know, until the 2000s. So I think has grown a lot. And then obviously, like, specifically soccer, like, this year, we just signed the CBA with, like, equal pay or not equal payment, but more payment, the minimum salary going up, like there's player housing, there's stuff like that, that I think, is definitely helping, and it's growing. And, you know, you see more stuff on ESPN, and you see more stuff being posted about women's sports, but still nowhere near you know, the men's side, I think I saw something like ESPN only posts like 4% of women's sports on their page. Um, and so there's still a lot of growing to do, but I think it's grown tremendously since Title Nine. And from my experience, you know, there are things equality wise, you know, we don't get the same things as the men's teams, we don't get the pay the facilities and the attention. But, you know, the 30 years of difference between Title Nine, and then now or however much time it was, is crazy. So hopefully, you know, the next 3040 years or more,

JEFFERS

Kind of going off to my next question was, what are the like, the specific things that you see in I guess, specifically soccer, that need to be broken down in order to reach true, like VC truly is equals to the men's side?

HOWELL

You mean, like, what barriers need to be broken? Um, I think, you know, people don't sometimes want to watch women's soccer specifically, um, compared to the men's just because they think it's, you know, not as fast and the quality isn't as good. Stuff like that. I think that's, you know, a misconception. It's obviously there is a difference, but, um, it's obviously, different sex. So I think, um, that I think the misconception in people's heads is just the quality of the soccer and, um, you know, how competitive is and stuff like that. I think most people just don't realize because they've never seen or watched it. I think that's the major problem is like, people just make judgments without actually seeing it, watching it, following it, stuff like that. So I think if people actually watched women's soccer and started, started investing in it, I think grow tremendously. It's just right now the problem is there's not an investment or a want to watch it. You know, you turn on ESPN, there's going to be a men's college basketball game, but how many times is there a women's soccer game or women's basketball game volleyball game, unless it's a Final Four. So I think a lot of the problem is like, a lot of these major networks or media honestly aren't doing a good job. Just putting women's sports out there, even if it's just a regular game. And allowing people just to, you know, watch it because I guarantee you put one sports on enough, you know, people just don't know, they're gonna watch it, I'm sorry, this a lot of my family like, didn't know, soccer at all. Until I started playing, you know, they're like, small town, Nebraska had no idea. And now that I've been playing, they obviously had like, watch a lot more games, and now they really enjoy it. So I think it's just a matter of people kind of getting past misconceptions and what's already in their head about female sports and actually following it, investing in washing in that, and that comes, you know, from the top down. So I think it's these big media news corporations, and, you know, all of them kind of promoting it.

And, you know, these big companies investing in female sports for people to actually really start to take time to enjoy it and invest in it, like I said, so I think that's just the main thing, but

JEFFERS

It's perfect. I'm okay, as someone at like, the highest level of their sport, is there anything specific that you personally want to accomplish to bring equality?

HOWELL

Um, yeah, I think, you know, I think it's super important. Like I said, I'm very passionate about it, just because I've seen, you know, firsthand, female sports, not getting the attention, um, for a lot of the benefits and the pay that men's sports do. And granted, you know, they do have a lot more of a following. And people investing their time and money into it, just because I think it all goes back to the exposure of it. And, you know, people having these misconceptions in their head, so I think, you know, I want to do in my professional career is grow the game by exposing it to more people and showing them just how fun and exciting and awesome female sports and specifically soccer can be. So that's, you know, one of my goals, and I think it's also developing young female athletes, and investing in our youth. You know, giving them the same opportunities and making them believe that they can do it, um, you know, you see little boys and they want to be Odell Beckham because they see him on TV all the time, they see, you know, him, getting all this attention and being great, and they get to watch him constantly. But I think, you know, for female athletes, it's just a little different because, like I said, it all comes down to the exposure and you know, a female soccer player, a young female soccer player isn't going to

see the same amount of stuff, you know, on Abby Wambach that they would be a big time NFL player. And so I think it's just creating environments for you female players that will make them believe in themselves that they can get to that level. And you know, like I said, just investing in them and growing the game even more. So to where we have a great following in the US. And so I think that would be my main goal is just the exposure, part of it. And then also, growing youth female sports.

JEFFERS

I think that's something like not a lot of people think about either, like, like, we talk about the media coverage a lot and that sort of thing. But going to the starting point, and like starting at the base of these young, like the younger generations and getting them to like believe in themselves and aspire to be female athletes, the female athletes that they Yeah, anyway.

HOWELL

Yeah. No, I totally agree. Yeah, it's, I think it's, I think it's just different because, you know, all these young boys are like, I want to make the NFL like, I'm going to be big time player, like, whatever. Um, I think for a lot of us growing up, like, we always had those aspirations of making the national team but it was just for the love of the sport. You know, we don't make a lot of money, we don't get a lot of attention. It was all for the love of the sport. And so I think obviously keeping that aspect but like I said, like you were saying, just like, starting from the bottom, yeah. Okay, these

JEFFERS

These next two questions, I kind of just wrote them down, but they kind of contradict each other. I'm not really sure, but all I'll read them both to you and you can kind of pick which one you want to do. First one is because you won two national championships out of power five school, do you think you were treated differently because you were successful? And then the other one was, what differences did or did you notice any differences from like your male counterparts like the male athletes at FSU? So I mean, I guess you could, yeah, if you want it, it's kind of Yeah, yeah,

HOWELL

For sure. Um, well, I'll start with that one. I think the main difference, like being a female college athlete, um, I think would definitely, well, first of all, like we're talking about the exposure, you're not going to get the attention that like FSU football would, um, you're not going to get you know, the following and stuff like that are the fans, um, and therefore, you know, people investing money and so football is gonna have their own weight room, their own locker room, we have our own locker but like bigger, nicer locker room, they're gonna have you know, they're building a brand new section and more for them like a whole new like facility like, just because there's more invested into male sports like that and and basketball and football and all these you know, power men sports, and I think that was like a huge difference I saw in terms of also, um, you know, you go to the NCAA tournament, and if you're a football or if you're a basketball player you go to March Madness and final for you get next box new pair of shoes, all

this stuff, you know, when we went we got a t shirt maybe like a couple buttons a hat it's just like the differences you know, the money that's invested into it and um, you know, obviously we get a lot of same stuff because the title nine but you know, there are some big differences like that. And then like I said, just the fans and the following of it. We had amazing fans but nowhere near you know what FSU football hot. And it's funny because Gabby, Carl and I actually had to talk with a lot of social media groups following FSU sports, um, and just say, like, Hey, guys, like, we had the national championship for the second time, two years, like, we don't think there's enough attention around it. And we had to get more people to really invest your time and watching it and posting about it and getting hype about it. Whereas, you know, if FSU football was in the national championship, it would be all over. So it's definitely a little differences like that. But, you know, I, I think LSU did a great job trying to make as equal as possible, but like we said, it's just kind of the culture in the US where not everything is going to be equal because of the investment in money and men's versus women's sports. That's and then you're good. No, no, go ahead.

JEFFERS

I was just gonna say the Final Four. Like, do you remember the Sedona Prince from Oregon player when she went on Tik Tok? That's in my thesis, like that whole social media week when she went on like, Good Morning America and was talking about everything that was going on there. March Madness versus men's March Madness.

HOWELL

Yeah. Yeah. Crazy. No, it is. It's crazy. I think that's a great point. Um, and then what was your what was the other question? Sorry,

JEFFERS

It was because it pretty much like because FSU and soccer like won two national championships and you're out of business. Do you think you were treated differently versus how you would have been treated if y'all weren't successful?

HOWELL

Yeah, I do. I do think we're definitely treated differently. You know, um, I think soccer and softball FSU are the two powerhouses and, um, I think more people around campus and around the community knew more about us, just because we did get more exposure and attention for winning, but, you know, I think that's any team men's or women's but I definitely did do think that it made a difference in terms of, you know, I don't know about like treated differently, but definitely from the standpoint of people knowing and recognizing and investing time, you know, when we went to the National championship last year. We had decent exposure we had decent people following. But after people really saw us Excel this past year, you know, we had record breaking fans. And I think we like broke the average record this year just because they knew we were good. They knew we're winning. So I do think there obviously is a difference. And you know, I think that's men's or women's, but no specifically women's sports at FSU. Since we were winning a lot as a female. Sport. I think it did make a difference.

JEFFERS

I think it also says something that, like, y'all had haters on social media this season. Like that.

HOWELL

Well, I had haters.

JEFFERS

I like saw one guy's account and something had to be seriously wrong with him.

HOWELL

Oh, I know. I like your business. I know. I was like Jeff, something. Awesome.

JEFFERS

Calm down. Jeff.

HOWELL

What is his name? Yeah, he

JEFFERS

was the one that said that you should have gotten kicked out of the national championship game for this slideshow.

HOWELL

Oh, yeah. Like he was all over. And that's what my cousin was on. They're like, Dude, it's a bit creepy. Like, why are you so invested in like dogging on her and, and the dogs on? Like Santa Clara to like Santa Clara pay players when they played BYU. So we're thinking it's like, either BYU player fan that has a hidden account. And it's like trashing everybody. Um, yeah, that was in. I was like, I'm a people pleaser. So I was pretty upset at first, like reading a lot of those. But then I looked at their bios. And it was literally all BYU people. And they're like, the biggest sore losers and like, they were so nasty at the game. Like the fans were awful. And, like, there's just a lot of stuff, but, um, yeah, he was, uh, he was pretty bad.

JEFFERS

What's your face? What's their girl's name? The blonde one, Mikayla.

HOWELL

Oh, Mikayla, cool hand. Yeah, yeah, she's, uh, she's super nice. And like, everyone thinks that we like hate each other, because they're like, on the field, but we like apologize to each other. Like, she got a yellow on me too. But like, we apologize, and like, We were fine. It's just all the fans were just riled up. So, you know?

JEFFERS

Yeah. Okay. I think I just have one more. But all right. So there's obviously a lot of talk about, or a lot of discussions about how they're, how it's important to have female athletes that are prominent, but do you think that it's also as important to have women that are in positions of power in the sporting world? Like, not just ask, yeah, coaches at ease, all that kind of stuff.

HOWELL

I do think it's important, because, you know, the people making decisions for us have to, you know, some of them, not all them, it doesn't have to be, you know, full female, and I think it has to be balanced. You know, like, I think for me, it's like, women shouldn't have anything more than men just as mentioned, have anything more than women, it should just be equal. And there should be equal jobs and higher positions for women as there are men and, you know, like, you're saying, a DS, and coaches stuff like that, um, and, you know, like, it doesn't even have to be equal, just like whoever's best, you know, and I think that's where people get confused. You shouldn't hire somebody, because they are a woman or you shouldn't hire somebody because they are man, just whoever's best for the job. And I think there's a misconception that mad men can do the job better. So I think that's where the disconnect is. Um, so but I do think it's

important to have females in higher positions, just because, you know, for me, personally, I'm having on staff was always important, just because they understand more, because obviously, they're female too. They get your feelings they get where you're coming from, in a lot of different ways and aspects. So I think it's important, you know, to have somebody representing, you know, what you've been through and what you're going through and having similar experiences. Just so they're making decisions that kind of align with that as well. But yeah, like I said, I think you know, doesn't always have to be equal. It just has to be who's best for the job and misconception right now is, a lot of times it's like men is better. Men are better at the job. So you know, whoever whoever is better should get it whether it's man, male or female, but there definitely is more of his tipping scale of men getting those higher positions right

JEFFERS

now. Yes. Okay. I have like two questions that were more just for me that I was curious about that pertain to my thesis. But so the other day I pitched or like, read the article about trinity Rodman getting the \$1.1 million four year deal. And it is like a different story to a class, that doesn't matter. But could you? I don't know if you know, but could you explain how it's because I read in the article that it's over the cap that the NWSL allows, but it's through. The reason that she's a lot she's allowed to earn over is, like, it's Half Salary and half, like allocation money or something. Understand.

HOWELL

So, I'm still learning this too. But um, each team gets a certain amount of allocation money, and you see the like, for example, Orlando traded Alex Morgan for like, \$250,000 allocation money. So that basically means they can allocate that toward any player they want. Um, so it's not a trade of players, it's a trade of money. So like, a club could be like, Okay, we're gonna trade these three players, but we don't want any of you, your three players. We just want allocation money, so we can pay our top players or pay any of the players that we want to get, if that makes sense. Okay,

JEFFERS

yeah, that doesn't make sense. But, um, how is this just like a personal question? How is she making more money than like Alex Morgan? And NWSL?

HOWELL

Yeah, I think a lot of people on that question, um, I think it's based on ownership in the team that you're on how much money they have, it's based on potential. And, you know, the women's game has grown significantly in the past two to three years. So her resigning this contract is in a new era, I think. And you know, where there is more money, and then obviously, I think the team had a lot of allocation money, and they wanted, I think, you know, a lot of the attention directly toward that. And I think it's really good for female sports, actually, and female soccer, because now that is public knowledge, and everybody knows she's getting paid that much. Um, it's gonna require a lot of these clubs with big time players like Alex Morgan. And, you know, like, just will not make her you know, because she's, you know, kind of older, but, you know,

the big time players that are still in the league, it's gonna require clubs to pay them more just because like, it kind of sets the standard, like, oh, shit, like, Trinity is making lunch. And she's a young player with a lot of potential, like, why can't I make that much and it's going to push clubs toward paying their players a lot more. So it's going to grow the game, but I think that had a lot to do with it. And there's a lot of moving parts, but like I said, I'm not 100%. So,

JEFFERS

okay, that kind of made me think of another question that I think could pertain to my thesis.

Okay. But is, are there a lot of people on Louisville that have a second stream of income, like a second job? Or do most players? Can they live off of their NWSL? Wage, and salary?

HOWELL

So before that? I think the past two years that's really changed. So do you remember when the individual was doing something called like, no more height side? Hustles it was a Yeah, it was like a campaign slogan, no more side hustles basically, prompting the NWSL to pay put pay players enough and how's them and gave them enough resources to where they don't have to work second jobs, because for the longest time you did, which means you know, you can obviously play to your potential if you're having to worry about that. Um, so here recently, I don't think there'd be anybody that's working second, like full time or part time job, like, obviously, there might be things here and there. But I think with the New Deal, you know, you have to be housing player housing, which takes care of housing, and then they just brought the minimum up from I think it was like 22,000 to 35,000 which is a huge difference, um, which is

very lovable and You know, I think I think that'll make a huge difference. And I don't think that I don't think anybody would be working a second job at this point. But you know, I could be wrong.

JEFFERS

Yeah, I know. That was something I interned for Orlando pride and Orlando city over the summer. And that was something that I talked to like the communications director about a lot. Because for like, three years or something, and so she was telling me about, like, girls that would come from practice. What they didn't have, like a, like a second full time job, but yeah, like a side hustle. Yeah, so do they evaluate like, like for you? Would they just reevaluate after your first season and like, increase your pay or something?

HOWELL

No. So I signed a three year contract, and the pay is already set. So it's guaranteed um, some players you know, will sign a one year contract for the second year option. So then the club will be like, if you do good your first year, you know, will resign you your second, probably with more money. And then other players are signing like two three year deals like me where he's guaranteed. And like mine will increase each year, if that makes sense. Like from year to year. So it just kind of depends, but I think it's moving in the right direction.

APPENDIX B: SARAH FULLER INTERVIEW

SARAH FULLER

Gotcha. Okay. Um, yeah, I was recruited when I was a sophomore in high school. And then I committed going into my junior year that summer. It was around that time. And so go go into Vandy, and everything. You know, I was expecting to play and perform really well, I went in with an injury, and a broken foot on that took me out for the semester that season. And then my sophomore year came in, was working out really hard training really hard, I slipped a disc in my back. So that took me out for sophomore season. Um, and then junior year, I was doing good, I was healthy. And everything was good. I just, we had two seniors who were splitting time that were ahead of me. So that was hard to beat out. Not only just one, you had to beat out both of them. Yeah. And so that wasn't going to happen. And you know, kind of realized, like, the best thing I can do here is like, work really hard. And, you know, push them and push my teammates, and it's gonna make me better in the end for my senior year. So then two new year comes around. And it was a little bit of a rocky start at the beginning, but then I was able to, you know, get the starting spot. And it was all through COVID. So, you know, we were in lockdown, and had to get tested all the time. And so it's pretty intense. And then we went to the SEC tournament, and we ended up winning the entire thing. It was it's pretty awesome. I'm sure you can attest to the whole thing. Yeah. And then I like when we played Tennessee, I blues, Tennessee, I had an assist from like midfield. So that was pretty cool. And then like as soon as

we got back from the tournament, I got phone call from my assistant coach, and I called him back and he was like,

Hey, you still Nashville, like Yeah, he's like, Would you be interested in trying out for the football team? They need a kicker. There, the kicking team essentially got wiped out from COVID COVID and close contact and everything. So they need a kicker or the games can be canceled. And I was like, oh, shoot, okay, like, yeah, I guess I can do that. And so within 30 minutes, I was out on the football field and just like casually kicking field goals, it was kind of like, do what you want, like kind of figure out what feels good and just go out there and just kind of like a tryout and I was like, Okay, I made like 12 out of 15 or 13 out of 15 I can't remember the exact number now but um, yeah, they seemed impressed the special team coaches did. And so then I went in and signed up as a football player on the NCAA website for the clearing house and everything. So I became a dual sport athlete. And then I got fitted for shoulder pads and helmet and the whole thing. Yeah, I mean, it was crazy. And I called my parents right after the phone call with my coach. And I told him, I was like, Hey, I think I'm gonna go do this. And they're like, Okay, that sounds good. And they're driving back from Alabama from the SEC tournament. And then I called him that night, and they finally were back in Texas, and my dad was like, I think this is gonna be a really, really big deal. And I was like, I'm kind of gathering that to me a big deal. Um, and I like, I went into it, not thinking much of it, just like, okay, school opportunity. This is exciting. Um, and, you know, then I think it was like, two weeks later, or a week later, or something like that. I think. A week later, I had like five days to learn how to kick. Which is difficult, like, it's not an easy thing to transition from soccer to football. So and then they wouldn't let me practice like in the beginning, because they're like, you just played a whole tournament. They're like, just chill out a little bit. And I was like, Okay, so, yeah, and then we played Missouri, and, you know, unfortunately, like, didn't get to, we didn't score and how many field goals that game. But, you know, I was able to do the kickoff. The squib kick

is a really, I had to do a squat. Because I know people. People don't understand. Yeah, no. And the way I the way you kick a soccer ball as you come up from underneath it up. Well, like when you have that little holder, the football holder thing, like, I tried it, I tried it, and it like I kept hitting that thing. And then the ball would just like topple over. I was like, No, this isn't gonna work. So then I had, we ended up deciding to have someone hold the football. Yeah. And we, they were like, well, you can kick the crap out of it. And I was like, yeah, and they're like, it might be effective, just to hit one of the guys in front of you. And then maybe we can, like, get the ball back. And I was like, okay, literally, it was like two days before the game like three, two or three days before the game. We're like, alright, this is what it is. And we just did it, like, dedicated to that was practicing that. So yeah, we did that. And then, um, the guys ended up coming back from you know, quarantine and everything. And the coach Mason got let go. That was very awkward. Oh, yeah. I mean, I've I've always admired him. And I think he's a great person. And obviously, it was like, his idea to bring me in and, you know, very, very appreciative of everything that he's done. But, uh, yeah, it was very awkward to be in there. And these guys have been, you know, that says that the has been their coach forever. Yeah. And I'm like, one game and sitting there. And they're like, alright, we let them go. And I was like, okay. All right. So

CATHERINE JEFFERS

You were like, in on that team, meaning

FULLER

I was in on everything. The only thing I didn't do is lift weights with them, because it didn't make sense to like jump in their training program. Yeah, I just kept doing my soccer program. Yeah, so I was, I was on that. Um, so that was, that was tough. And then I asked my special teams coach, I was like, Listen, don't keep me here just because, you know, I'm, I'm a girl and you don't want to hurt my feelings. And you know, your games left. Don't do that. And he was like, listen, weren't we actually want to keep you because you're more accurate and you've been like, yet, like, especially with PhDs, I had ahead but much, much higher. Like percentage of making them then then the other kickers did and now don't get me wrong. So the other guys could hit like, you know, 50 orders and be really consistent with that, but that they couldn't hit a pa t, which is just a basic, you know, extra point. And so I was like, Okay, well if that's if that's the case, then I'll stay and so that was what was decided for the Tennessee game is that I would take PSATs I think anything like 25 yards and then there were like you were so consistent with that you can take that and then anything behind that the guys would take so yeah, I mean I was able to make I'll make two points and then of course my life is has completely changed since then. I was gonna go into hospital administration and get my Master's in that and I was like, can't do that. Can't got to do something else. That just feels so weird now. So decided to get thankfully eventi has an amazing sports centers Payment Management Program. So, you know, went into that and we went through our first season and my first season with them that was that was good, a little tough. We went through quite a bit of injuries and COVID knocks and people out in the middle of the year and it just threw us off a little bit. But you know, winning season I was held the shut out record for like seven weeks or something like that. So I'm not mad about that. So yeah, no, it was, it was good. So now we're working on our spring season and doing two

days for some reason, but that's why that's why I took a nap and it's taking a nap. Like, two days in

JEFFERS

Spring season. Dang. To get you started. So is our so you're using your sixth year and then you're getting is it a master's program? The sports entertainment management?

FULLER

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Okay. Oh, and then then I'm going to this summer. I'll be a part of us. Excuse me. It's called pre Pro League. So it's like right underneath NWSL. The US LW League? I'm gonna be up in Minnesota for three months playing for them. So

JEFFERS

I saw Yeah, I saw that on Instagram. Yeah. That's awesome. Okay, it's the you What is it called? Again? Michigan right down the pre Pro League?

FULLER

USL W League.

JEFFERS

Okay. Gotcha. Okay, and so now more into just like women and sports questions like those kinds of specific ones, who comes to your mind as like prominent figures in the push for women in sports and like a quality? Yeah.

FULLER

So Billie Jean King is the very first person that comes to mind. Because she like personally reached out to me, and has been, like, a very prominent figure throughout my all the stuff that I've done like she will, she seemed me and messaged me, and she posts about me sometimes. And so like, just the fact that she takes the time out of her day. And she does this, like, I feel like she does this to everyone, like every woman that comes up and does something like crazy, like that are amazing. And she like personally reaches out to them and make sure that, you know, they have someone they can talk to. And and so her for sure. No, she's she's was very time for all that stuff. And yeah, I just really, really appreciate that. And then obviously, all the stuff that she's done. I mean, that's Yeah.

JEFFERS

That's awesome. Yeah, she's one of my like, highlights in my thesis, because she pretty much is like, the first woman to make an impact after Title Nine, like, hugely on like a national scale. So it's really cool. And then these are, these are just like, really linear, big questions. But do you feel personally that there has been significant developments towards equality since the introduction of Title Nine?

FULLER

Yeah, I mean, I definitely say there was a I, cuz I've had a conversation with my aunt. She's in her 60s, and, and she was saying how she's like, it's crazy that like you're playing, you know, you're playing football. And she's like, you know, we used to not be able to play full court

basketball, we just had to play like, like half court basketball. She's like, we've come such a long way since then. No, don't get me wrong. Like, there, there does need to be a lot of improvement. Like with the, you know, I think March Madness was a good, a good example of how like things were lacking. And I saw an ad the other day from March Madness, and it's crazy. It was all men's basketball. I was like, that's crazy. Didn't we have like a realignment thing? What was happening there? Um, but, you know, stuff like that. I think we just have to continue to fight for and demand. Honestly, it's gotta it's got to come down to like, what, like, what we're willing to fight for. And then I just think we need to continue to do that. And it's never gonna be perfect. And I think but we can get close. We can get close or it almost seems non existent. Like, you know, we're not we're not having to worry every year. Like, is the NCAA gonna do the right thing is, you know, stuff like that gonna happen again. So, yeah,

JEFFERS

Totally. Um, I guess you kind of kind of already touched on my next one, which like, the specific barriers that you see still in place that need to be broken down. Like, I think March Madness is that's like a really, really specific one that I have like a section about with Sedona prints like her tick tock, like, account of everything. She's that was. Yeah, that was fantastic. Yeah. Um, but is there anything else that you see that is like something specific that needs to be changed?

FULLER

Yeah, I'd say the the media towards women's sports. And people like on social media will say like, no, like, it drives me insane. Have you ever looked at like ESPN when they post about a

woman? And you look at their comments? Yes, it it literally like upsets me. I have to walk away because I like want to reply to every comment and I know that's not healthy.

FULLER

When you go on ESPN, W like it's all like, oh my god, amazing, like, fantastic. So stuff like that needs to change. You know, obviously, like, they need to play women's sports in bars and hotels and you know, there it just needs to be more present. And and did you see last night?

JEFFERS

Like, I don't know if you saw but ESPN all day and Saturday night they were. It was like the first time I'd ever seen something like this in the bar on ESPN. It was like the full slate of women's sports coverage on Sunday. And it was like UCLA versus FSU softball, US Women's National Team game like, oh, like, Oh my God, I've never seen this before. This is crazy.

FULLER

Like notification. That's the thing that stuff is, like I said slowly starting to change. We just have to continue to be like, Yeah, I mean, it's it's so crazy, how you, you start promoting and you like, showcase women's sports people. I don't think people realize that there's women's sports. So when you start like, promoting them, and you know, having ads for them, and having athletes sponsor things, female athletes sponsoring like Gatorade and stuff like that. People will want to watch it, like they're not going to want to, they're not going to watch something they don't know exist. So like knowing that you can go on ESPN and watch all these games. Seeing the schedule,

like actually seeing it while you're in a bar restaurant, like that means a lot. So that comes to mind specifically on something that, you know, is helping with everything, for

JEFFERS

sure. I like that I'm going to use that as a quote not going to watch something they don't know exists. It's a good one. Um, okay, so as the kind of more use specific questions. With your experience on the football team and being the first female kicker and a power five game, do you feel like you were treated differently either, whether that be better or worse? Because of like, that success and that experience?

FULLER

Yeah, I think like, in the moment, and with my teammates and stuff, like I know, I don't think I was treated any worse. I thought I was just treated like a teammate. I will say I feel like some of my and even my, like male coaches with the football team were fantastic and very helpful. And we, we still talk to this day. But I will say I feel like some of my coaches like since then get have like a type of jealousy. I can't like, pinpoint you. There's something about it. And I'm like, I'm not. Listen, I'm not trying to wanna, you know, it's so, um, I don't know, I I don't know if that answers your question or not. I don't even know what it is. Exactly. I could be totally reading into it, but that's just kind of like the vibe I've gotten office things.

JEFFERS

Yeah, what about more? Like, more from like, the general public?

FULLER

Yeah. Okay, from the general public. Um, I've gotten that, that's hard to say because I've gotten so many like positive, like so many positive messages and, and especially on online and social media. But when you do see those, like those negative ones, they seem to stand out more. And, and that can get, you know, pretty frustrating. But they're, you know, there's always going to be people online or, you know, they can talk all they want online because they're behind the screen and you know, if they walk up to me and realize that that I'm 612 120 pounds, they're gonna be like, Oh, nevermind Let me not tell this to her face. Yeah, I mean, I again, I've never had anybody, like in person just off the street be like, I hate what you did like that doesn't ever happen I've only ever had like positive, like physical encounters like that. So that's that's been a good thing for sure.

JEFFERS

Um, do you feel like in specifically, I guess I'm kind of going to split this question into like two parts. So you had like you it was you Vanderbilt soccer like before football before you got called up to kick. And then when you were on the football team, do you feel like those two instances so you're just this gonna sound so complicated? You're just like a female athlete playing with women? And then you were a female athlete playing with men? Do you think there were differences from how maybe either the school treated you or students on those two different teams?

FULLER

Yeah, I'm at the football team got nicer stuff, I'll tell you that. It drove me insane because they would complain about like, their giant airplane wasn't nice enough. And I was like, we ride on the sky. I'm like, with sometimes we take private, we took private plane sometimes, and they were scary. Um, and like, you know, we're, we're both getting nice stuff. But it was like, especially the quantity that the football team was receiving. I was just so astonished by like, all the gear that they had. All the food that they received. And like, the quality of food was really good. And not that we didn't get, you know, good food on the soccer team. It was just like, you want to hold pizza to yourself. Here you go. Like, and there's more in the back. Take some with you. And we're I was, you know, just always eating at the dining hall and which is, you know, again, it's fine. But it's like, there definitely is a difference. And it drives me nuts because they're like, well, football is the moneymaker. And I'm like, Yeah, but like, Can we can we not spread like that money? Yeah. A little bit, you know, like football might be the moneymaker. But that one's winning championships.

JEFFERS

Yeah, exactly. Like you guys had a better record.

FULLER

And yeah, so house thought that was funny. Yeah, but I definitely did notice that. And then one thing I noticed was kind of crazy was that so many women work in football. And there wasn't like when we went to Missouri, we didn't have a women's like locker room. And I wasn't expecting like, I don't know, I don't know what I was expecting. But they put me in the refs locker room, which was trash. And I like I was just kind of like, wow, like, there's just so many

women that work in football. Like, I'm surprised. They don't provide like, a locker room for women for the opposing team or whatever. But you know, how like, they are with opposing teams, or like, here's the crappiest thing. So, I mean, to be fair, that that is kind of part of it. But that was just something I noticed as well. Maybe off topic. Sorry. But

JEFFERS

That's, that's fine. Um, that Wait, where did the refs go?

FULLER

I don't know. I don't know. It was after the game. And they're like, Yeah, you can go in and shower and I go in there. And it's like, there was crap all over the floor, like open wrappers and all this stuff. And I was like, Okay. I mean, I'm not gonna complain about this. Um, yeah, I don't know, they weren't in there. I'm sure they they get out of there. Like, as soon as the game's over, they don't. They don't get attacked.

JEFFERS

Um, okay, so you didn't really like, I mean, you didn't set out to when you came to Vanderbilt? It wasn't like you were like, Okay, I'm gonna be on the football team. So that was kind of like thrust upon you. I mean, you did accept the invitation and everything. But do you think it like, what, what kind of example did you hope to, like bring to or like to set for young woman after that opportunity was presented to you?

FULLER

Yeah, well, I even think like, I guess a little part of me kind of knew that like, uh, you know, people some people will be watching I didn't know, almost the whole frickin world will be watching. But, um, when I was getting stuff for my helmet I know Notice all the guys had something on the back of their helmet that that they were like supporting or wanted, you know, to promote and stuff. And I had heard of this nonprofit and almost actually worked for them during the summer one time, but it just didn't work out with my schedule, but play like the girl in Nashville. And I was like, I love their message. I love that saying, I think it's awesome. And I think it was like, fitting for what I was doing. And I that was what one thing that I was, like, I want this to be done, like, you guys will make me a decal, and that I'm going to put that on the back of my helmet. And they'll kind of look at me for a second. Okay, all right, we'll do that. And it's it, you know, turned into this, this big thing and this image of me, you know, with the braid come out of the back the helmet with that logo underneath play like a girl. And you know, even if that wasn't me, I think that hyperlink take me out of it. I think the visual of that is very powerful for young girls to see. And not necessarily that they, you know, if they want to play football, they can play football, but, you know, if there's something that they want to do that they feel, you know, society doesn't allow them to. I mean, you can you can do it, like, you're just gonna have to, you're gonna have to push through some barriers sometimes, but you can definitely do it. If you go out there, and you work hard, and you know, you don't let those tough times get in your way. So, yeah, I cuz I, you know, I obviously, like you said, I didn't go out there to play football, but I wouldn't have won that SEC championship, if I, you know, would have given up on my like, third or fourth injury, you know, like, I wouldn't have been in that situation, I wouldn't have been there for them to ask me or, you know, I think that assist really helped. That wouldn't have happened, I don't think they would have looked to me. So. You

know, I think all the struggles that I went through, got me to where I am today, and in a weird way, kind of grateful for

JEFFERS

So yeah, I mean that, like, you wouldn't have gotten the opportunity if, like you said, if you weren't playing soccer, like if you weren't a female athlete, you're able to So yeah, that's, that's really cool.

FULLER

Yeah. Last night. Oh, football team is on scholarship. Like Yeah. Oh my god. Like unless you're a walk on. Everybody's on scholarship.

JEFFERS

Yeah. Crazy. Um, okay. What so you've obviously gotten to do a lot of freakin cool things. You're on Sports Center, ESPN, everything. Going to cowboys games. What?

FULLER

Just my dad extra. I thought it was I had an extra ticket. And I was like, Can I go like, I really want to go and then my mom I saw Sarah Thomas was Yeah, roughing. And we're like, let's get down there. Like let's get a picture with her. We'd like weaseled our way down to the to the sideline. And then we saw a really good picture and then it blew up. Yeah. I was like, wow, what good mean. Like, like,

JEFFERS

You did your own publicity stunt. Yeah. But what's like the coolest opportunity you've gotten out of out of this experience?

FULLER

Yeah. I mean, like, I got to do the inauguration, which was really cool. I mean, it would have been cooler if I got to go to DC but obviously, like the fact that they even like, asked me it was crazy. And so that was cool. But I have to say that SBS SBS was the coolest thing I got to do. Really? Yeah, I was like, That was insane. And I really just I asked my my agent wasn't my agent at the time. It's just someone I knew. I wasn't allowed to have an agent yet. Um, I was like, hey, like, do you think it's possible I could, like, go to the SPS. And he's like, it's crazy because the the coordinator or like the person who puts on the event and everything just called me, so I'm gonna call her back right now. And I was like, oh my god, don't do that. And he called me back music got you two tickets. I was like, Oh my god. So we my dad and I flew first class, which we never done before it to New York, and New, we had a great time in New York. We've never been to New York, and when, you know, your new Time Square when it's time square, and then we went to like the Freedom Tower and did the 911 Museum and got to see all that and, you know, then obviously, got to go to the SBS. And I've met so many cool people and Derrick Henry Gronk. Chloe Kim, who I know have her phone number. She's like, here's my number. And I was like, you were the sweetest thing ever, like, cool. She won gold. Like, yeah, well, I thought about it. And I was like, I get so many. Like, when everything happened with me, I got so many texts, and it was just so overwhelming. So I was like, Yeah, I don't know, maybe like, in a week, I might. Like, I didn't want to overwhelm your phone. Yeah, no, I was like, I was

like, I've never like. But that was the coolest thing I got to do. And, you know, you do the SPS, and then there's an after party afterwards, and there's like, free drinks. And it was just like, it was nice, because I didn't feel like, especially with COVID and everything that was happening, like, you know, it was, everything was pretty locked down. Around that time when football was going on. It's like I actually got to celebrate all the stuff that I'd accomplished. So every now and then I kind of I kind of forget, I'm like, I don't I don't think about it. And I'm like, Okay, I've done I've done some cool stuff, and I should be proud of myself and I, but I'm bad with that. I'm not. I'm like there's more to do another task. So, like, I'm just a role model for like every young woman. Gotta gotta keep grinding.

JEFFERS

Yeah. Just right. I'm sure it's overwhelming. Like, it's crazy. Like what but what you've done is so awesome. Yes. Thank you. Inspiring my I I work at our like school newspaper as the sports editor, second female sports editor. My assistant editor she told me, I told her I was interviewing you and she texted me and she said, She's super big into sports to everything. And she said, No freakin way. That's awesome. I can't wait to hear how it goes. Please tell her I think she's a bad beat and all the douchebags who said read stuff had had blank blank. Okay. No, tell her she's about me told her that. YouTube is She's a hoot. She was so excited. But, okay, so with ni l and like, do you? Are you? I know you're partnered with no cap sports, right? Yeah. Is that helping you with like, capitalize on ni l? And everything is

FULLER

So funny story, actually. So after the when the football stuff is happening, everybody was telling me, she's got to get representation. She needs an agent. She needs something. Which is true. I did. I had so much stuff happening. And I was being ripped off in a lot of different ways. Like people are selling merchandise and like all kinds of stuff. And I wasn't seeing a penny of it. So it was kind of crazy. My dad, I gave that to my dad. I was like, Can you figure this out for me? Because I was still in the middle of school like still finals. The guy was not done with school. Um, and, you know, thankfully, my, my boyfriend was like, Hey, move in with me because like, I would have been all on my own. Um, so yeah. Anyways, my, my dad was on the hunt, find representation essentially. And so he looked up what's the best agency for soccer players. And he found Wasserman which is out in LA. And he called, they don't have any phone numbers. So he had to like find a phone number. And then he called someone and someone answered and they were like, like, Who's this? And my dad was like, Hi, I'm like, Brandon Fuller is Sarah Fuller's dad like trying to find her representation. We don't know what to do and it's kind of crazy and she Good, you should start for and he was like, yeah, she could hold up, I'm gonna drive through I'll call you back. She's like, food or something hangs up. And then Richard, my, my now agent my now and I, our presentation calls him back and is like, hey, like, what's what's going on? And so Richard has kind of been a part of my life since that has happened. I still haven't met him in person, but he's been a fantastic person. Um, and, you know, helped me navigate everything. Surprisingly. You know, there was a lot of things that were happening like the Vandy was asking me to do that. He advised me to say no to which is good. And one of the things was the, I don't know if you know, the like the not the CEO of Barstool Sports, but like the, the not the president, guy, whatever his name is. But the girl who like started Barstool Sports, she has her own podcast. Yes, you are not going to want to be on that podcast. And I was like, okay, like, I just, I

was saying yes to everything. I've never done anything. And you get so many requests. And you're like, I felt bad if I said no to something. Yeah. And I was like, Yeah, okay. I told him, Richard about it. And he was like, Don't do that don't do anything associated with barstool at all. And I was like, and I started looking into it. And I was like, seeing like, you know, kind of the stuff she posts and obviously, you know, what barstool posts, like? Yeah, that's a good point. So I said, Hey, I'm pulling out of the center view, I'm not going to do it. Not even two days later, did like the women's hockey go, like, I don't know, they changed their name since then. But it was like the Women's Hockey League. A few players went on and was on the podcast, and they got so much heat for it for being on that podcast. And I was like, that would have been me. That would have been me if I were like, so very thankful for that. And then, um, you know, federal aid, so much freaking money off of everything. And I didn't see a penny of it. And I wasn't on a full ride. So I was getting letters in the mail every week that someone had donated to Vanderbilt, my honor. And I wasn't on for ride. I was still paying for paying for school. So and there was nothing I can do. Like I tried everything in the book. I was like, Can I start my own business? Can I like sell clothes? Can I like what can I do to hopefully capitalize off of this. And every single thing it was like red flag, red flag, red flag, you can't do it. So obviously, when an I O came to be, we knew it was going to be legal in Texas. So that was nice that I was already like transferring to North Texas. So I was preparing for it. And then the NCAA just came out and was like, Okay, well, everybody, it's gonna be legal for everybody. So, um, you know, that's been incredible since then. And I've been with Wasserman and they've been fantastic. And then no cap approached me. And I'm actually a part owner of that company. And what we do is, we are a free platform for college athletes and schools, like for compliance and everything, to partner with brands. So college athletes can partner with brands to make NFL deals, basically simplifies it. So

you don't have like weird companies reaching out to your DMS and being like, do you want to do this and then not knowing if you're gonna get paid and stuff like, kind of sketchy? Um, but it's great for for every college athlete, not just like, the D one quarterbacks, like any D, D, one, D two, D three, whatever sport you are, you can go on there and find a deal that you want to do. So it's, it's been cool to be a part of that, that group and you know, help get it together or I think for launching the what's the new website? This week or next week, so that'll be that'll be good. So sorry, that was a big tangent, but I don't know mad cuz like, I don't think people know that. I that's about me. So that's

JEFFERS

Crazy. So did you now have you ever seen like any of that money? Or still still don't have like my Vanderbilt? Yeah.

FULLER

When we don't talk like we intentionally they things are separated. And I wanted to do that, especially with the football team. You know, they had a new coach come in, and I was like, I'm not this is not my thing anymore. I'm not gonna you know, even touch on that. Yeah, and then just having that it's not like I would see anything but You know, moving on and moving forward. Thankfully, I've been able to make some really awesome deals, I got to do one with tempo, which is the, you know, the workout like machine and everything was fun to film those. I got to my own, I finally had my own clothing brand for a little bit with a few hoodies and T shirts and stuff. And my Nana wears hers all the time. And, yeah, I've gotten to do I'm trying to think I got to do something with Google the other day. Yeah, like, and you just have stuff

popping up. And I don't think people realize how difficult like social media stuff is you have to, they're like, here's, you know, we'll pay you this much. And you're like, Oh, that looks good. When you see all the work, you got to put in, you know, that's a lot of work. So, I mean, it's not easy to make, you know, content and make it look natural. And yeah, so, but it's fun. You know, I'm, I'm grateful for the opportunity that I can finally make money now. So

JEFFERS

Is that the image of you with your helmet in the play like a girl? And like your name plate? Is that in a commercial for ESPN or something? For SEC Network? Maybe?

FULLER

Maybe? I don't know. Sorry, I got so many things like, Oh, I feel really bad.

JEFFERS

No, it's okay. I just feel like I'd seen it maybe. And like, it might be in that commercial where the commercials that they play on SEC Network when it's two SEC teams playing each other and they show each school's little mini commercial? Yeah, probably get my BA in that. Yeah. They're still using you. Yeah. I feel like that, like my sister, same thing. There's a video of her on FSU commercial making, she's a goalkeeper making the PK save against Southern cow to go to the Final Four. And they put it in, like after she graduated maybe or something or before and I L. And so like, if she was there. Now she would be getting money from that, but she can't because yeah, she's not a student. So it's crazy. So weird. So many things. Okay, I think, Oh, okay. I have like one last question. It's kind of like a, I don't really know. It's just one I

randomly came up with. But with so obviously, there's, with with Title Nine and like the push for equality for women in sports. There's also that separate thing of like, women in positions of power in like within sports, like whether it be coaches, a DS, anything like that. Do you like view those as like either a female athlete or a women in position of power up those is like equal pushes towards equality? Or do you think like, it's more important for to see like female coaches and ad's than it is to just see female representation on like a field,

FULLER

Like you're talking about, like in terms of like, now that there is kind of a push, like, just want to make sure that there's like they they deserve the position? Is that what you're asking?

JEFFERS

Kind of I mean, I don't know. I when I was talking to I interviewed Jalen Howell, like last week, and she like I asked her that question. And she was kind of talking about how she thinks now is like, people realize that now it's just whoever is best fit, whether it be a woman or man. Yeah, so

FULLER

I would agree. I would agree with that. I mean, I think we kind of that kind of happened to me with the whole football thing. And I wanted to make that very clear. Like, don't keep me here because I'm a girl and because this is getting press and all this stuff. Because we can easily you know, step back like I was here for a purpose and that purpose has been met like you know, but they had they kept me because they were like No, you're you're good enough for it and you're doing the job correctly. So that was that was good to hear. Because I wouldn't have wanted

wanted to stay if it wouldn't have been that way. But yeah, no, I think I think it's the same thing also with like the media, like you see women in these positions of power and you know, on TV and all this stuff like it's kind of like a light bulb goes off like oh, yeah, they can do that. Like of course they can do this like they were doing all the other jobs beforehand. Like why not like be able to lead in these ways. I It's funny because they they say like, you know, they say if like women ran the world that there would be like World War Three in a matter of days. And I'm like, I actually find that women seem to be less emotional about things.

And hasn't what war has ever been started by a woman. They've all been sorted by actly.

Exactly. So I'm just kind of like, I just think that's funny, but you know, yeah, I definitely. I wouldn't ever want to be put in a position where, where they're like, they're like, Here, go do this, because you're a girl. Like, I don't want that. I don't, I don't ever want that. I want it to be because I've earned it. And I think that's the best way to keep it. Like the quality. But it needs to be a quality like it, then I think that there needs to be that understanding is that that's all that's ever wanted is an equal chance and equal fight to earn that top position. And if they didn't earn it, they didn't earn it. You know, that's just kind of that's kind of how it is. So

JEFFERS

Yeah, I think I saw, like the other day, maybe it was a couple of weeks ago, it was the first ever all female broadcasts of an NBA game. Like, that was crazy to me. Yeah, just

FULLER

They're starting to do that more. And it's just, like, that's the thing happen sooner. But like, I wanted to get to the point where we're not like celebrating that anymore. And just yeah, it's just a normal thing. Yeah.

JEFFERS

It's just a thing. So I think once we get to that point, we'll, we'll be golden. But until then, I feel like every week there's something like when we're like, oh, we broke another barrier. I'm like, Okay, we're not. We're still we're still pushing here. Yeah. I like that. Okay.

APPENDIX C: LYNNETTE JOHNSON INTERVIEW

CATHERINE JEFFERS

So if you wouldn't mind taking me through your history of being prominent and leadership roles, and kind of your gender equity role at Ole Miss?

LYNNETTE JOHNSON

Absolutely. So I was an athlete, so a lot of, of people who work in athletics come from that athletic nexus of the background. And so from a Title Nine perspective, my first experience with Title Nine was when I was in high school, to where I started to understand that that piece of it, I am an 84 graduate in high school. So that's the early 80s. And and really, it was only a decade in to the law, if you will, when I was going through high school at age 84. And yeah, we got hammered down. Basketballs and uniforms from the men were women. In the 80s, there weren't very many women's cuts back then. Anyway, you know, there were probably women's tennis shoes cuts. So you know, that whole transpired and my dad went in and fought to get us new things and said, you know, they deserve better. And so that was really my very first experience of understanding, you know, what, it's okay. That women get, not not always the same, but but the opportunity to compete equally. Does that make sense? So I'm not gonna go, like, Oh, my God, that's I gotta go from 84 to now I know. But from an experience standpoint, I wanted you to get that perspective that a lot of women who work in athletics now probably have an experience at some point, much earlier that probably cued them to understanding and that was

mine. And so I came to Ole Miss in 1989. I was an athletic trainer. And so I didn't think I was doing injuries

and illnesses of student athletes running out on the field. I was in charge of first track and field in volleyball, but then moved into women's basketball and football. And we had no full time female on staff at that point. So we had two full time male athletic trainers. We had two female G gas', which I was one of we had about eight students, and one or two of them were girls and the rest were boys. I was in a in the Fieldhouse. So if you're on campus, you have the Start Center where the walk of champions that goes into bought Hemmingway there's a building to your right, that building didn't exist originally. And the other building was the old building in 1989. And that's where I came in. And it was an all men's building. I had no restroom. No female restroom, no designated restroom that said, women, I had to go up apply to steps, click a door, put a walk on it. And that was my two I had to go outside because it was all male inside. So I had to get wet to go around and get up. Then they built the storm center, which is that other building and renovated our building and added women's restroom. So from 89 to 94. I don't have a restroom, technically for me. Or the other young people, you know, I said we had another Tas and stuff like that. So, um, and did I follow suit now? Did I complain? No, I just did my job. Um, and so I spent from 89 to 1998 in the athletic training world, and in 1997, the fall of 97, our Senior women's administrator at the time they assist an ad that was designated oversee the women. The

NCAA, which you've probably researched, has a designated position for a woman. There's no primary male administrator that's always athletic director right because it's always a man, but they designated early in the 80s, a primary woman administrator because they realize Women weren't at the table to fight for other women. So the NCAA said you, you have to do this. And still not everybody did this. I wrote my dissertation in 2018, to get my doctorate at Ole Miss. And there were still programs in the country that didn't have a woman at the table to represent their women. So I went into the athletic director at the time, I was the first female head athletic trainer in the Southeastern Conference overseeing football. Had a high administrative role at that point, had toilets I could go to as a physician did not have a shower, all the men had locker rooms and showers and I just had a toilet room that was it, and said, hey, you know, I hear this person is retiring. I'm interested in maybe moving to another position. And, you know, long story shorter, I got that opportunity in January of 98. Actually, in December of 97, the Chancellor and the ad said, Hey, we're going to promote you to be our next Assistant ad. And senior women's administrator, upon that, they cut the pay immediately. He said, you don't have enough experience, I'm taking \$5,000 away and like, what, what, and there was nothing I could do to fight. So the female administrator was making X amount of money. I mean, they came in and they took \$5,000 away. So in July 1 of 1998, even though I did it on an interim basis, I became the senior women's administrator at the University of Mississippi assistant athletic director, was my official title. And I was the only woman at the table with a bunch of them. And nice, people love them to death. I mean, I stayed at Ole Miss for 32 years. But every time something came up for the woman, I'd have to raise my hand, say, hey, you know, we might want to consider this and then I'd probably get out voted. Hey, we might want to consider this and I get out voted. Um, I started trying to count my votes. Hey, boy, about two hands. That's

two votes. If you ask anybody about me, Catherine, I've got a big mouth. And so I just continued to stay at the table and run my mouth. And back then it was memos. We didn't have really Internet Email yet. There were no cell phones yet. You have to remember this is that dial up on the phone and do a memo. So I started writing memos and document and stuff and I got pulled in and said, This is rude. I mean, how can you say this? Because women are what pitches right? When we fight for things. I don't know that that's appropriate for your quote, nah, thing but I a lot of people will say that. You know, if I stand up for what I believe in, I'm being bitchy. Okay, um, but I stayed the course. I get promoted. I got put in charge of baseball regionals. A woman. The guy called me because you're, you're a chick on the phone. I'm like, Well, I'm glad my voice isn't so deep that you didn't realize that I was a woman. But I ran baseball regionals from oh four. And and was bragged on coach VA, CO. And all of a sudden they were like a woman's doing this. And so stepping into a man sport. All of a sudden, they're like, hey, this, this woman might know what she's doing. Well, I did with all the women's sports already that I was in charge of. But moving over into a men's sport became very valuable. So in, oh, 2003. Then I got men's tennis and men's golf. I already had men's track and field because we only had one head coach. And so we had 13 head coaches, and 10 of them reported to me 10. And I had that for until Ross Bjork came in 2012 10 head coaches. So for 2002 Two that I oversaw all 10 programs and just continued to stay the course. Now, I would like to say this, that men's golf and men's tennis don't get the same things as football and men's basketball. So I am an advocate for all sports. But having said that, you know, we still have to fight for women's equity in their facilities. The Gillam Sports Center in 1998. Is where volleyball and volleyball competed and tennis competed Guess what it didn't have. We're in Mississippi air conditioning. We built a facility that didn't have air conditioning. They competed for two seasons without air

conditioning was the very first thing that I did. I went to the ad at the time, it was John Shaffer and said, We have to have air conditioning that the Gillam center will, but that's gonna cost X amount of money. I said, a lot. I mean, I pushed I'm like, Really, you want me to go public and talk about how there's no air conditioning, for women's volleyball, they're stopping, we're mopping the floors. We had no sound system, we had no bleachers. We had a scoreboard that look like Oxford High School, probably worse than that back then. And we had nothing in the building that said Ole Miss on I mean, nothing. And so I started my moment from that to say, we have to have things that are providing that opportunity, I got a lot of things donated. I mean, I've just busted my butt to do that type of stuff. Um, we got air conditioning, as well. So they moved in the building in 97. So I became this wa 98. And then it took a full year to fight for it. So then, you know, in the fall of 99, they competed with air conditioning, and we still didn't have bleachers at that point. But it, you know, it just, it wasn't always easy. I probably, there are two times I probably came very, very close to losing my job. Because I spoke up. I went around the ad one time to the university attorney. I went directly and had a meeting with the chancellor of the University of Mississippi. And then he built the existing software soccer stadium that you see now is because I went to the chancellor, and he built that no to with university money, because I went to him and said, This is ridiculous. So um, you know, I say that all the say not say, give me a star. But there are multiple women across the country that are I mean, I'm 55 that are older, and to be quite honest, younger than me that are still having to do that. And the law is 50 years old. Man, the law is 50. It's a law. What's the law? Well, we don't have to do that. It's risk management. Right? Is somebody going to file a lawsuit? Is somebody going to is a student athlete going to do what they did at the NCAA last year and step up and do the video of how it winnable things are? Huh, that's Siddhanam Prince's like, over March Madness, that's all all that

social media stuff is in mind. And and we've been saying for years that that the NCAA wasn't treating the women the same, but it took a student athlete who can't get fired or sued. Right? I mean, women who work coaches who work male or female because we have male coaches that work in women's athletics, too, not just women who want to speak up, lose their jobs, Catherine. Students, student athletes had to start helping the NCAA softball, they added days, I was on that committee for six years. And you go to the College World Series for baseball, the executives, the ladies that are on the committee, so you have people who are on a committee who choose the teams that are conference schools. So I was on the softball committee for four years, help choose the teams that go to the NCAA tournament. And then as part of the committee, you help you go cover an event and then you go to the College World Series for the entire College World Series. We work. We work 12 hours a day, we cover teams, we have to do this, the baseball guys sit in a box and drink. I'm sure they don't have to stand down in the dugout and do time and tell the coach what to do. We've been complaining for years that as a 13 member committee in their men on that too. Why are we having to work? The men they alternate, they go half the week and other half the week they come in and out because the NCAA and the stadium provide the people to do that. But the women administrators we're sweating our butts off. Yeah. And the just the amount of time that they squeeze the Women's College World Series into and then baseball gets like three days off in between games four days off, if they change that to this year, so they extended it and put a day in between the the championship series. And if you go look ESPN like softball, veteran baseball, it's the higher ranking score. But those things are still happening. It's 50 years. I don't know what to tell people. I mean, we've come so far, but yet the the NCAA that is over women's athletics can't even do it. So you expect us to do it on the campus of the University of Mississippi consistently? Right. Yeah. It's, it's shocking. And it just kind of, I don't want to say

it's laughable, but it just makes me it makes me so angry that I can't help but be like, like scoff at it. Like it just can't believe that it's every pay raise I got as an administrator is because a man got a pay raise. And I went in and said, Why did he get it? I have the same title. And then I got half of what he got up, I'll give you and granted, I made good money, huh? I just didn't make that money. Yeah. Until I retired until we hired the last verse. So we're hiring a man. The ad comes in and says, Guess what? I'm going to pay you what I pay him. Great. Yeah, I'm getting a pay raise. But I deserve that already. But because he was hiring him in, I want to give you exactly what I'm giving him. How does that make you feel? I'm going to give you exactly what I'm giving him. Be happy about that. You're going to get a \$20,000 pay raise because I'm going to pay him because I think he's worth that. But because I know the equity I'm going to pay you. There you go.

CATHERINE JEFFERS

It's almost like every single accomplishment that men or that women are receiving is seen as like, the most amazing thing ever, when it should be normalized. It shouldn't be like the next greatest thing to have this step towards equality. It should just be like, yep. Okay. That's what it should be like. How many lawsuits Do you hear of men trying to get equal pay? Not one. Not one. I mean, soccer just got it yesterday for USA soccer. And it's not even one more than the men. Yes. I mean, how where is this? Yeah, I know. I grew up a sock that one like really gets to me because I was a soccer player. My whole life. My sister played college soccer. My little sister's playing college soccer, like everything. And I've followed that since I can remember and seeing that yesterday, or two days ago, I guess. But it's was awesome. But it's still not, like set in stone. It's right up to pass all these things and meet in March. And it's like, right, right.

JOHNSON

So I'm excited about the champions. Now. I can say all these things because I can't get fired anymore. Because I retired. But to be quite honest, I've said these behind closed doors. We're doing the champions now. Campaign is wonderful, right? We've announced that we're gonna knock down the softball stadium and build it. We're gonna renovate soccer. We're doing men and women's golf. By the way, women's golf won a national championship. Tell me what other men's sport has done that since the 60s. None. Thank you. That's easy, right. Um, but who's getting it first? What are we what are we renovating right now? Football? Oh, football. Let's see. Let's see the softball stadium. Can't know they don't want to bring ESPN here when we host regionals because our stadium sucks. We've had plans on the table since 2017. And won't raise the money because we're like, well, we don't have the money. But we choose football first \$20 million to renovate football, build them a weight room that they already have. Because we wanted up here and we want to make it look nicer because well limit football brings in the money. That's not what Title Nine says Catherine says providing the teams with the same opportunities to be successful within the market of their sport. Our softball team is not even close to what our baseball team is. And our football team is not even close. But they come next. When we've had plans on the table since 2017, they come next that's where the wall that's risk management. Nobody's filed a suit heavy now I didn't even because I'm gonna lose my job. Softball coach, someone lose their job. But nobody nobody from a family. We love Linkous and gosh, we're winning. We ought to do this for lane. Softball was winning in 2017 Tell me the last SEC championship baseball's one. I mean, footballs one oh, they haven't. They haven't but tell me the last one softball 120 17 It doesn't equate, find the money and do the right thing. People

don't want to do that. Because they don't want to do that. And I don't know how to fix that. When it gets built, we're gonna all this is great softball won't see a stadium. It's 2022 20 They won't be in a new stadium till 2024. And they're gonna have to play someplace else, because we're gonna knock the whole thing down. I'm excited that we're gonna knock it all down. But they're gonna play at a high school. Because we're doing this now. It could have been done in 2017 and 80, who's here now wasn't there. But oh, we went on probation because of what sport football That's right. Lost \$25 million because of football. But yet they get the money back first, because football brings in all the money. I get it. I get it. But the cycle is there. You look every time of the new football coaching hire, the money goes to football. And it's not just Ole Miss. You can look at any program. It's not just the University of Mississippi, and we're going to make decisions for football first, then we're going to go with other sports, even if they should have been first when I as we can. Or we will or we are whatever verb.

JEFFERS

I interviewed Sarah Fuller, the she played soccer. Yeah, became the first Oh yeah. She was talking to me about like, she remembers this one time in the locker rooms are on the way to a game with the football team. And they were all complaining because the jet that they were on or the plane that they were on wasn't as nice as the last one that they had been on. And she just kind of looked around and was like, just kind of she was in shock. She was like, what do you what are you complaining about? You're writing a private charter plane to your game. We fly commercial or take a bus? Like I don't, I don't understand. She said this. This one thing was funny. They brought in a full pizza for each individual player on the team. Every single player got their entire pizza to themselves. Choose do you do need that? Do you need that whole pizza? Is that what

we're going to spend the money on? The everyone would like at full pizzas? Like no one. No one needs that. It was her Yeah. Yeah. But but until she gets over there to see that. But no football player is riding with a soccer team. Right? Or the, you know, our volleyball program.

JOHNSON

You know, those types of things and COVID until COVID came, we actually had coaches driving teams and bands and women's golf, men and women's tennis and Rifley had to physically drive and two fans from Oxford, Mississippi to Atlanta to compete for three days, and then turn around and drive their teams back in the middle of the night. All those programs in 12 cedars because 15 cedars became the dangerous. And they're like retired Lynette and I'd go in well, from a financial standpoint, it's cheap. I get it. We are lucky. Nope, no, if a wreck happened, we would have had to make a change. But our coaches were strong and they did it for years. COVID came in and you couldn't get in a van right yet. It's like two people in a van. So then we had to put everybody on four separate buses. That has stayed, we realize, I mean, it's safety, but we still made decisions, even though it was unsafe for financial decisions and men and women's golf every goes well but men and women's golf are doing it. So it's equitable. No, no women's athletics. You take all of women's athletics and all of men's athletics. And that's how you balance it. Most go men, men's golf, women's golf, women's basketball, men's basketball. That's the easy look, right? But if you take all the men's sports, you take baseball, and yeah, you're not gonna put baseball in 15 Vans, because they're big, but still, that doesn't preclude safety, right? They have a personal driver. You're not going to ban football, like gotta get on a charter plane. We understand those pieces. But that doesn't mean you make different decisions for other teams. That's the premise of gender equity within the market, try and give

every team the opportunity to be successful. You go to a men and women's basketball game? Are there the same marketing things? Do we have t shirts giveaway at every women's basketball game? No. But we do pretty much at the men's game. Who's winning more this year? Oh, women? I know the answer that but, you know, there for a time period, our band at the University of Mississippi wouldn't show up for the women's games, only the men's games, we had to battle even ourselves with the bat. Well, you know, they need their break too well, but you're gonna march at football. You're a band? Where else are you playing? So it's still here. This is this is reality. Today, we're still battling in those things. And we have a long way to go. And I'm gonna be honest, if we have 65 division of power fathers 65 Power Five schools, and I think it's, you got Virginia, Vanderbilt, Missouri, Washington, Penn State. Five out of 65 that have women needed. I was not made interim at the University of Mississippi with 30 years of experience. I'll just leave it at that.

JEFFERS

So that's like one thing that I've been asking everyone I've been interviewing is to talk about the importance of females in leadership roles, like we understand it needs to be equitable in the actual playing like female athletes. But it's just as important to have those highly accomplished women in leadership roles at universities that professional teams like what one of my one of my interviewees was talking about?

JOHNSON

Yes, that's very important. And I think we're coming to the realization that it should be just whoever, whoever is more equipped for the job, whether that be a man or a woman, but I still

think that there's a sense of misogyny in Oh, they're the same exact equipped, but I'm going to choose the man. Like, I know, I was told I'm just more comfortable with the man. But how is that an answer? Yeah, I'm more comfortable. Well, we hire who looks like us, Catherine, you can you can research that all you want. I mean, we hire who looks like us, because we're most comfortable. Now. I would say there are female presidents Carla Williams at Virginia, who was my colleague in the Southeastern Conference. And she got hired by a woman at Virginia. And I think that person has since left and she's going to hire males, and she's going to hire females. And she hasn't hired all her coaches aren't black women that look like her because she women women have, they're going to give the appropriate perspective because we've been, you know, marginalized for so long. The ad at Vanderbilt was my colleague in the Southeastern Conference. They didn't hire her. They hired a black male. After the one ad decided to retire. They didn't even they didn't hire her. And she was She's younger than me didn't hire her. They hired a black male had zero experience. At collegiate athletics, zero. He lasted one year messed everything up in the next year. They're like, we'll make her interim and then they hired her. Mean, we don't even get a chance. And she hired a white football coach. She's a black female, she hired a white women's basketball coach. She's a black female, because she's gonna try and hire the best person. But I guarantee you, she vetted everybody, regardless of gender, race, everything because she had been marginalized, so much. White males, it's tough. It's terrible. I mean, I'm married to a white male, but it's tough. I rip on him all the time. I mean, that's, it's difficult and I'm telling you, it's hard to hire until we have five female golf. We may have six right now because Connie leads track and field. It has taken me we used to get a mess because I had male head coaches, because I couldn't get women to come to the university who had partners male or female who I could get a job in Oxford just because the pay sucks. We can pay you like a half a

million dollars when we hired her and her husband's like you go bid. You know, I'm not making a half a million but I went after a volleyball One year and she two volleyball coaches in two separate times because 20 years of hiring people, both on my husband's and banker, where can he get a job in Oxford? We have banks but I can't guarantee him a job. Well, he makes more money than me. The other lady who was the head coach at Creighton in volleyball, who we played this year and last and she's 20 year career, her husband's an attorney. She wouldn't leave in Omaha, to come to Astra, Mississippi, but she's one of the top female coaches. I tried to recruit her twice. She loved ci mudgin It's hard to recruit Corey Pincus here. Her husband is a physician's assistant. He had just graduated and and she had this opportunity and and he wanted emergency physician's assistant place we busted our butt. We were in Tupelo just to getting connected. We didn't get him a job but getting connected. And who won the national championship, I asked hard to help her husband, find what he needed to do to get her to come here. She could have stayed in Augusta in Atlanta area and he would have had 1000s of opportunities. It takes a ton of effort. Now she's got two kids now we got to support those things. I'm not saying we're paying for nannies and we're doing those things. But we have to understand that if you're gonna keep quality women, you'll let his two kids. Cory has two kids. Marsha Beasley took 10 years off of Rifle to raise her kids. And then we hired her back. And guess what, you know, she's got three kids. And no, she's won a national championships by the way, our rifle coach and took our program in four years and put us at third and fifth and back to back NCAA champion. We're an all women's program and compete against men. So but we have to, we have to work at that. We have to work at that. We you know, whether it's partner, or spouses, male or female, it doesn't make any difference we have to put together when we hired Steven McRoberts, our volleyball coach before Kayla. I mean, his I spent time with his wife,

because they, they they needed homeschooling options, because that's what they did. Where he was, he was fine. We had to go out of our way to do we just do my link is like I'm coming.

KERMIT DAVIS, we worked on KERMIT DAVIS, he wasn't leaving if we didn't take care of owls. He was very clear. That's probably one of the few head coaches from that perspective that was like, How can we support my child with that syndrome? He's like, I've been here night, you know, 19 years take care of Allie. She's got her support system. How does that kind of play into it? But 90% of the time, the men, spouses are just coming with, I've only lost one male head coach because the spouse wouldn't come easily the wife like I'm not coming. With that. It's tough. It's tough. In a smaller community, it's tough. But the money's not there. We're not paying millions of dollars. We have no million dollar coach at the University of Mississippi for women's athletics. Actually, if you add up your let, Connie, I mean, we may get to I don't know I could add it up. We may get to 1.5 million with all of the women's coaches. And that's not even. I mean, that's just under Mike Bianca. We have three men's coaches that make over a million dollars. We might after this year, you might not see that. But she said Buster, but Right. I'm interviewing her next week. I just think she's the coolest person ever. I've done like three features on her for the daily Mississippian. And I just, I text her this morning at 6:30am. I'm like Rise and shine with your double double 22 wins and 10 in the conference. She's like really at 630 in the morning, but she got little girls that she had to get up so so I knew she was up and then we text back and forth. Yeah, I mean, I wanted to hire you let I mean, we it was it was not an easy search at that time with our program in the drink. We had people who weren't interested in coming here and and she got here and then the whole team quit. Not because of her but they just they just did and so but she's like I can do it. I can do it and a lot people didn't believe her.

JEFFERS

Oh, well. Yeah, ain't getting on the bandwagon now. Now, that's right. All right. No room on the wagon if you weren't there to begin with

JOHNSON

That's, that's what I say, softball, a lot of people are like you can't win and Ole Miss and softball, you can't win, get off my bandwagon, get off of it, because you just you can, we just had to get all the support around it and do those things. So and then now we got to build a stadium. So all of our women's programs right now have gone to the NCAA. And women's basketball is going to get a bid rifle just got to bid, women's tennis is going to get a bid. We know women's golf. So track and field is seventh in the country. And we already know men's men's golf, men's basketball isn't going to go to the NCAA. So at the end of the year, we're going to have 10 women's programs, mark my words. And I think that'll be historical, that will have gone to the NCAA tournament, just mark that you can put whatever your thesis is ready, make that that's that's hard work from a lot of people, including men, I don't want to discount that. But it's a lot of work. And it's exhausting. It's exhausting. I'm getting a trailblazer award from the Southeastern Conference next week. And that's like, it's just because I'm exhausted. It's an exhausted award. We're all getting this Trailblazer Peggy and all of these women are and a couple men are getting it too. From other schools, but I'm like, it's because we've, you know, it's I almost lost my job three times. I'm a trailblazer. I just I just did my job.

JEFFERS

Um, what about another kind of topic that I'm touching on in my thesis is representation in the media? And just could you talk a little bit about the evolution of that. So I feel like we're still growing like we're stepping up. Obviously, it's nowhere near where it needs to be. But I mean, ESPN on Sunday had an all women slight. So if you could just talk about the evolution of women in media.

JOHNSON

Absolutely. So when I got to Ole Miss in 89, we were in each other's weddings, because we ended up being roommates on the road. Bonnie Bishop, so she was one of the first media people for football. As a woman, Langston Rogers was over it, but Bonnie built kind of like me built her way up, and she runs her own business. Now, Lighthouse reputation. So go take a look at her. Even send her an email and talk about that, because she would be an unbelievable resource for you. You can say, hey, Lynette, I can, I'll shoot you some of her information. But, you know, back then she wasn't allowed in the locker room. Right now. Now they're allowing women in the locker room. Um, I think some of it, and this is gonna sound really bad. Who can be the first to do something who's gonna be the for oh, we were the first to to provide this for women. Because they want to be the first ESPN has tried to be their leader. We they spend a lot of money on women's athletics. I don't want to discount that. But they could have done that years ago. They've had, they've had a lot of great people years and years and years who have I mean, they have people from the get go, um, that have been on ESPN that can do these things. Why now? I can't answer that. Oh, wait a minute, because they don't want to be behind because the pressure is out the me to movement. Athletes are speaking up. You know, it's, you can't demoralize women anymore. You have to give us respect because we deserve it. So people are working to

do that. But here's the whole thing. I mean, that was all spotlights that nobody's like, Oh, look at all the boys. You know, they might say this is the all black female, male, black female crew or all black crew. So it's not just gender to it is race that we're engaging in, in what we look like on a sports level. And then it's leaders holding other people accountable. So from a standpoint of the the media right now, if you look at the University of Mississippi, and this is communications, all right. We have a GA doing women's Basketball. We have a GA doing softball because the two full time people there got promoted to men's sports because other men left. How's that? Right? Let's the men get the GA. The women get the GA. Every year we are developing young people, male and female, but the women in media at the sports level, get the lesser. And I want this count on people work hard. The one young lady who's doing women's basketball right now she is a graduate student doing full time work. Because the guy got the promotion to men's basketball and he's got to take it. The softball dudes now baseball. We have gas' writing our stories, having to miss class. And it happens all the time. And so it's the same thing in the professional level. They're they're rotating out. But now does it bring ESPN news is it put a spotlight on them? It's all about them. The women just like me was going to turn out my \$20,000 pay raise because the guy got it. I didn't earn it, right. No, no, these we're gonna do it. But we're only getting it because somebody, some other man already got it before us and we're trying to catch up. Don't get me wrong, I earned that money. I deserve that money. Those women deserve to be there. But they didn't get there because somebody else had already been there. And that's what's sad. And that's where we can't get away from the Catherine. We can't get away from let's put the woman first, then let the man come behind. What? What hasn't happened yet? That hasn't happened yet. And if a woman makes a mistake, if one of these women make an error during their broadcast, if a female ad makes a mistake, you think she's gonna work again?

What's Bruce Pearl doing right now? You know, Bruce Pearl was fired at Tennessee, and how to show cause because he cheated. And then Auburn hired him. And he still had issues, right and refuse to talk. Now we're giving him a lifetime contract, because he's a winner. If that happened to a woman, she's in Siberia.

JEFFERS

I like to think about it. I mean, I hope this isn't talking down on the university. But like with Kermit right now. I mean, he got a contract extension, and he's not winning games. And then if Kojo were to do the same thing, or second, or if she were to do that this year, she probably would have been gone. But because she's winning, she's well, true.

JOHNSON

But that's where the female administrator who fights behind the scenes to you'll let's gonna fight for self, don't get me wrong. But the comment that gets made prior to that, from the executive woman in most departments is, you're not going to be able to do that. So don't even start. So that woman tries to protect the coach before that even happens, so she doesn't have to do it. I know that because I've said that. And to be quite honest, what they did for Kermit won't affect your lead as much this year. It has to affect every female coach of every coach of a female sport. Because we rolled him over, and he didn't go to the NCAA, but we're like, oh, we're rolling over and he's now I bet you. I bet you he stays? Yeah, I bet you he stays we're gonna make an execution. I bet you he stays. That's what that's like what me and my assistant editor at the DM. It's like one of our biggest things that we're talking about right now is what would he have to do to get? We'll just have you read keys. Keith just did an interview last week on it. Go find he did

an interview. It was one of the podcast interviews on Kermit. So go Google in his car and I read it because I'm like, because he rolled him over right before the season started. We negotiated like, Yo, let last March. Why why did you wait six months and then roll him over two weeks before the season started? Is the chancellor asking that at that? I mean, why didn't you roll him over dinner last year? What were you waiting on? Nobody's asking those questions and I won't take anything away from Keith but every female coach is managed within two weeks to a month, their season ending. They know where they stand. They know what they're doing. I don't, I don't know. But he said, Yeah, the guys are playing hard. We've had some injuries. And we evaluate at the end of the year, okay. But now, when you roll somebody over, it cost us more money, Catherine. So when we rolled him back to four years now his buyout is greater. So we have to pay him more money, pay out his assistants, and then pay more money to hire somebody else, kind of like we did with Matt Luke \$10 million to Matt Luke. Paid off all of his coaches. To higher link, it's the same for every sport. It's just money. Yeah. Which I don't know that we have a ton of but we are working at it. But it's hard in women's sports. It's it's hard. But I will tell you, the women administrators across the country, try and get out ahead of that. I know I did. I know. And I negotiated the contracts for my coaches. I'm the one who make the duquan honest, the recommend the decisions. I was allowed to do that. Yes. Could I be overruled at any time? For sure. I wasn't the ad. But I would have been out ahead of that. Keith Carter would have heard from me going. I don't know what what, what, right now, none of the coaches that reported to me were really on the line. So let's just be clear, because they're all doing well, you know, men and women's tennis men and women's golf, you know, but had somebody been there. Even a guy I would have said, what? Okay, you just made that decision based on winning and losing. So how are we going to do it over here? So, yeah, it'll be interesting. But yeah, I

don't know. It's I can't answer all those decisions. I know how I would do certain things. And when I work for the ad, I support the ad, I might tell them that I don't agree with them behind closed doors. But I mean, they could fire me as well. And I didn't get fired. But I ran my mouth a lot. So some something was happening. There was some respect there. I worked for five, five or six directors in the same amount of chancellors and stepped away myself. It was hard. It was hard to keep going. So I miss it. Some I have to admit. Really? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I retired the end of April, because I came back and I teach. So by the state of Mississippi, I would have retired probably in June end of the academic year, because, I mean, why would I quit in the middle of all my teams, but I had to take 90 days off to be able to come back and teach in the fall. And so the decision I had to make, so I got to go to the national championship. But nobody's counting that as my legacy for women's golf. I am I got the trophy, and I got a ring I am but oh, you've retired, what was a man? It would have been all of their legacy, right? I mean, it's amazing how those things transpire. But I don't know. Maybe your generation can get it. Get it saw. I'm getting a bunch of gray hair. I answer your media question. I hope I answered it. You know, I gave a couple different examples. But I still truly believe that women have deserved it. And whether that's athletic trainers, or strength and conditioning coaches or media at the professional ranks. Somebody is doing it because they are getting positive vibes off of it. And then that person has so much more pressure to do right and be the best. They can't make mistake because then I mean, that's part of what women carry. And black people carry is you make that mistake, then they go see the women can't do it. And that's that's that's the cycle so the woman can't do it. So we're not going to give them a shot. Like they can't do it. But men can't do it all the time and they get jobs again.

JEFFERS

Lane Kiffin is a perfect example. Like given a perfect example. My uncle proceeded him at Tennessee. My uncle's head coach, Tennessee Bert. He came after Lane Kiffin like Kevin got fired. My uncle got brought in at Tennessee. And Derek Dooley. Yeah, yeah, yeah, Coach Dooley. He's going back to Alabama to be an analyst and do the next even growth. Saving. Yeah, because you're saving for I think seven seasons, but yeah, well and when you were talking about the whole wife thing, so my dad's sister, that's her, his, his wife is my dad's sister. And she's a gynecologist. Yeah. And she mentioned once she was up and moved about every three years, and my oldest or my cousin, she moved her freshman year of high school senior year of high school. It's, it's crazy. But he's my uncle has told me so many stories about He's an attorney, right? He has a law degree. He's a law degree, and then decided to coach you.

JOHNSON

But you're really good intention. Because I mean, when you're when you're watching football, I mean, obviously, you're 32 years. So you're, you're watching what everybody does. So Joan Cronin. She's being honored. But she was one of the first trips I made to Tennessee, when Pat Summitt was alive because there were only two programs that were split in sec, Arkansas and Tennessee, when I joined, they were actually split programs, male and female IDs. And so I went over to learn, I'm like, you know, what are you doing? How are you getting this done? How are you supporting, you know, women's athletics? Do you get money from the men's side, they still did. Um, but, you know, so I've, I've watched Tennessee for many, many years, and then they go, you know, Danny White's there. He, he, he was my colleague here at the same level. So Ole Miss right now, just so just so you've got an ad, the ad at Tennessee, was the fundraiser here at

Ole Miss the ad at Ole Miss, worked for the ad at Tennessee, and he was my student athlete at the age of 17. And I had 15 years more experienced than both of these guys. Um, the ad at Auburn worked with these three guys at the foundation. You had their corn who just resigned at Alcorn State. He reported to me at Ole Miss, and was an ad. You've got David Harris, who's the ad at Northern Iowa, all Division one. And then John Hartwell worked here. He is the ad at Utah State. All men that were my colleagues are reported to you your or at one point, yeah, I had one that reported to me, and all of them are athletic directors. And and some of them applied and you say, Linda, have you ever applied to be an ad and I didn't, but some of them didn't apply? They were promoted from within and didn't have to apply? Wait a minute, Keith was promoted from within and then he was the ad for six months. So why should I compete against him? When the position opened? He had a six month as I was ad. So and that's not his fault, right? I mean, he had opportunities, not gonna say, now give it to him. No, he's gonna do that. No, he's gonna do that. No, he's gonna He's not gonna walk in there and say, Well, you know, forget that. But, you know, those things happen. The ad at Auburn was that flow with Danny white, so Danny White was at at Buffalo. Okay. And, and, and Alan Green was is number two. So then Danny went to Central Florida. They promoted Alan green. So then Danny white, self proclaimed national champion at Central Florida. He gets the Tennessee job but But Alan green who's promoted from within it, Buffalo then gets to move to Auburn. I mean, it's men help men. Have I talk about any women in that mix helping a woman or no, and none of those minutes hired me by the way, Keith kept me but none of them have come back. Because I put a lot of pressure on the table Chico runner back now. But Monticola Braun, who's the Deputy with Danny white at Tennessee. Monica was here at Ole Miss as well. And she has as much experience as any of those men and nobody's hired her yet and she's applied for multiple athletic director jobs a lot. I

wonder why I think only one of them another female was hired over her. I don't know. She has a doctorate to Danny has a doctorate. I have a doctorate. What does that mean? I don't know if that does anything but she has as much experience as any of those men and these higher

JEFFERS

Where I come up with some of my, here's what I found, and here's what I think moving forward may fit into this for you. That's kind of how I'm structuring mine, too. Is, is you were right now how we can get better. And I mean, I, I've known the answer to my burning thesis questions since I created it. I mean, the answer's no, there's not equality. But it's just, I'm kind of, I guess, I'm just giving, like, an overview of what we have accomplished and the growth that we have done. And then why it's, well, and then it's, again, it's 50 years of Title Nine, and we're still talking about some of the same things. And that question is why?

JOHNSON

Why what part of men are complaining about anything? Yeah, they're not. They're wearing \$5,000 Nike shoes, like given \$5,000 They're given into it, you'll let them have a \$5,000 Nike shoe. I mean, well, hi. Good question. I don't know that I'll ever be answered. The question is, will we ever truly catch up business? Why part of my thesis I did. I researched the C suite and business and there was another, you can look at some of our references. There was another dissertation that I looked at the woman went for business in the C suite, and it happens in business. I mean, we're a business and athletics is a business. Right? But it's happening, you know, across the country, as well. And, and then ultimately, at the end of the day, mass 55. And retired. There's no reason I retired for a couple reasons. One, I was tired of fighting the fight. And I have two teenage girls, and I needed to make that decision. Men don't do that. Very few

men are just going to retire to take care of their families. Maybe Matt Luke, he just stepped down. But I don't have 10 million in the bank. Okay. You know, so women make different decisions. We value our family, we look at different things. And I have that in that graphic. I have those step points of what we think through the eight, the deputy at Florida, Linda Taylor, she should have been an ad 10 times over. But she made she we all make different decisions on why we stay and the 10 women I interviewed. Everybody was at their institution 20 plus years. And and your cousin moved again five times. I think she's moved seven times. Seven times there. I mean, but my family my kids just mad me we've moved one time because I just retired and moved my family at Oxford. That was it because I valued different things. And so some of that has to factor into it. Women have to be a little more cutthroat at times. It's not all the men we have to make some different decisions and I put that in there as well. Um, but why do we have to become a man? Do I have to become a man and make male decisions to be that? I don't know that we want Do that I'm a woman, I bring value to the table for being a woman. I shouldn't have to make the decisions men make to do a job that we think is male dominated. I guess that's a that sounded pretty good. But did you have it you can go back and pull that up actually sounded really good. There are moments I'm really good, Katherine. Oh, no, maybe it was my Chick fil A nugget that didn't that brain? Yes. Hey, I'm happy to follow up with you. If you get back and you review this, or there's a question that we didn't I mean, is there any more questions? I mean, I'm, I'm retired. I'm just having lunch here. So is there anything else I touched on everything that I wanted to ask you about and talk to you about? It was great. Well, happy to follow back up? Um, yeah, if you need to. And I wish you the best. And we have to continue writing about it. We have to, from a media perspective, it has to be continued in everybody's front of mind. Or because very similar to George Floyd and those types of issues

that we were all in the moment, and we say, Say her name, say her name. Have you seen that lately?

JEFFERS

No. Have you seen Ted Lasso? Oh, this is gonna? Okay. I watch the series talking to the media.

And he's like, Well, as a white man, I don't have to ask you guys to write about what I like, what problems I'm facing when Sam is protesting the Dubai air campaign. And he's like, for someone like Sam, I have to tell you to write about it. I don't have to tell you to write about it for me, because I'm a white man.

JOHNSON

That's a big one. Well, and it's interesting, because he works for a woman too. Yeah. And he spends his entire time trying. I mean, bringing her biscuits every day, out of respect and just his personality. But right. I was, I was my office was next to the ABS office. And one of my my bosses. And so I mean, our doors were side by side. So I would get everything. And I would just want to pop in and say hey, what's going on or give them an update? At one point I was told Lynette you have to make an appointment with me stop popping in. But my office was next to his. So did I see everybody going into his office every day? Yeah. Yeah, every guy walked in there. And I knew they weren't making I watched them just because their office, they could walk in and out every day. And I was told I had to make an appointment. That's absurd. Um, so guess what I did in my office, I'm usually very strong. I moved my desk. So I could see out the door of people coming and going, I moved my desk to another corner of the office because it was eating at me every day that I have to make an appointment through the secretary who was my secretary

to, to get 15 minutes with my boss. And I watched every man walk in and out of his office and knowing it wasn't on the calendar because I could go see the calendar. So I moved my desk, so I didn't have to see it. Even though I knew it was happening, then I'm like, I don't have to see it. Like, you gotta be kidding me.

JEFFERS

I mean, that's a microaggression. I mean, really?

JOHNSON

When I make an appointment with me, I can't have you popping in all the time. What 10 head coaches reported to me, Okay, I'm gonna tell you what's going on. But that's, I mean, I'm not the only I mean, that's probably 1000 Women could make that statement or more in my profession. It's just It's sad.

And you go, why?

JEFFERS

Because it's football. They're bringing in the money.

JOHNSON

Mmm hmm. It is. And again, this is not indicative of the University of Mississippi. I That's the school that I know intimately. But it's every everyplace. Yeah. Yeah. It's, it's a lot of places. So, gotta keep keep pushing forward. Keep pushing forward. So Well, thank you for giving me an opportunity to visit and, um, when it's all said and done, I actually used a senior thesis in one of my classes on media. So I might be pulling yours up. I have had my students read it and write a

article critique on it, because I was impressed with their social media pieces. I think it was a one that was done two or three years ago.

JEFFERS

So I'll send it to you when it's when it's done. Or I can send you the thesis defense zoom, link, if you want to hop on be awesome. No, that would be awesome. Any word I can give you? That would be awesome. Cool. Well, thank you so much. Again, this is really fun and informative. Awesome. All right. Thanks for waiting times for me. Of course, of course. All right. Take care. Bye.

APPENDIX D: BRANDI CHASTAIN INTERVIEW

CATHERINE JEFFERS

So I'm kind of centering it around the 50th anniversary of Title Nine, and where we've come since then, and what we still have left to do, because there's a lot. But my first question, would you just mind speaking a little bit on the development that you've seen towards equality over the years?

BRANDI CHASTAIN

Oh, my gosh, Catherine, that is such a big question. I know. Well, I guess I would just attack that question by looking at it from the perspective that I was born in 1968. So four years before the law was enacted, many 2025 years for my mom, before women in sports were encouraged. Right, so I've seen incredible amount of progress. And I think when I say progress, I mean, the sheer number of young women and girls who engage in participation. So since 1972, to now, millions of women, young girls growing into young women and women have had an opportunity to play in the beginning, it was not what we would call compliant. Right. So most institutions did not follow through with the rules or the letter of the law. And so even just, you know, when we talk about what's the perception, even though the law was present, it didn't mean that it was followed. And so that even just in itself was, I think, significant in it when I think back, and now all of a sudden, it's 50 years, and how long it took for, because we're talking about institutions of higher education, we're talking about where you are right now at Ole Miss, and, and other universities across this country. But then you have to think down from that. You think high

schools, you know, public, private, you think middle schools, and then you think elementary schools, and so forth, maybe the higher group in the collegiate environment, there was compliance. But then as it trickle down, less and less compliance. And so, you know, changing the behavior, and modeling positive behavior within the law, took a long time. So, you know, I think the the sheer number of young girls who are encouraged to participate, for me is like one of the greatest milestones of 50 anniversaries. We have so many young girls who see that they're worth being in this space. I think that was the that is one of the greatest hurdles. Because some, some something could be present, but yet still not advocate still not inaction. And so I think that Action speaks very loudly today.

JEFFERS

I agree. And it's because of people like you, and the 90 Niners and just so many amazing role models that like girls like myself had growing up that just encouraged us to want to get out there and play. Like you're saying in my high school in 2015. When I was a freshman, we didn't have uniforms for soccer. Boys team had uniforms and they had a practice facility and field. My dad had to go and start a booster club to get us uniforms and it's just post 2015

CHASTAIN

It's, it's crazy. Yeah, and I think that you know, we want to get we want to talk about equal pay as something that is that's Been a byproduct of Title Nine. That was not the intention. The intention was to give young women an opportunity to participate and educate themselves. This was an education bill. This was not a sports bill. But we all understand as people within sports, the education you can the life education you get by participating. And so I mean, the fact that we've, we bridge so many gaps. And now we're talking about pay equal, no, we're talking about equal pay is incredible. And you say, you know, we still have a lot of things left to do. And I believe that this decision that US Soccer has made, and the lawsuit that the US Women's National Team brought to us soccer. And the decision to settle for some, I think, is incredible. It's an incredible landmark. It's historical. I think there's people who are out there that say it's still not enough. And I think it's, I think they're both right. Right. The decision is historical. And yet, we still have to keep pushing forward. Because there will be people who, who will always be naysayers. Mm hmm. So the resolution, the resolution of persistence, still must exist.

JEFFERS

That was kind of my next question, or at least the topic. But what the new player agreement means for the younger generation and the significance of it.

CHASTAIN

I, I feel that there's different categories to answer that question, because there's going to be the the actual monetary answer. Here's here is what the landscape of us talk well, and remember,

today, March 2, the CBA, has not been decided, and it hasn't been agreed upon. So we are talking hypotheticals right now still. So it's not it's not an absolute decision. We're hopeful that that decision, will that by the 31st of March that the CBA will be taken care of. So. So don't count your chickens until they're actually yeah. But I think on the the emotional side on the InVEST personal investment side, no, I feel like this is where we can feel good that we've, that we're, we're in this place right now. And I'm an optimist. But it's hard to fully allow myself to be really super joyful until it's signed. Because I think what what I'm sorry, I'm not saying this very well. And it's, it's a really tough topic, because I didn't come to soccer, and to the women's national team for equal pay. I came because I love soccer. And I found a place where there were others who felt the same way. And together, we created this incredible bond, and this incredible environment that gave us a platform to go out there and challenge all the limits. And to push each other past comfort and to embrace one another during hardship, and to uplift and celebrate in moments of joy. You know, and those are not things you put that you can put money on. And so those feelings for me haven't changed. But I believe that what we're trying to I think put into balance is worth and the worth of the athlete on both sides of it within US Soccer. When when you feel totally full over here in the endeavor, and in, in the pursuit and in the outcome and you've done all you can and you've invested everything. And yet you don't feel valued by the the entity that's your that's on your shirt. That's a weird place to be. Yeah. And so the perception I think, from the outside is, hey, you have everything you want. But I think time still needs to elapse so that the whole of the institution of US Soccer fully embraces that worth.

JEFFERS

I think a lot of it talked about this with some of the other people that I've interviewed. But the idea that we have to celebrate so widely every single accomplishment or milestone when it should be normalized, like that's what it what it should be, like, yes, it's a huge accomplishment to to reach this stage. But isn't that just what it should be? Like? Yes, like, we're, we're women, we're no different. But, like, that's what we deserve. That that's kind of like a topic that I've been teetering with is, do we? Do we celebrate it so vastly? Or do we nod our heads and say, Okay, let's keep going. Like, that's obvious? Like, yeah, that's what that's what we were here for? Yeah, I think it's both. I honestly believe it's both because

CHASTAIN

I am, I mean, I obviously I'm, I have a I have a persona that people recall from 1999, of celebration. So for me, sports is a celebration, I think when you do good things, it is a celebration, it doesn't have to be a world championship doesn't have to be an Olympic gold medal. It could be something simple. Like for me, it's like, I'm checking three things off my 1010 item list. And I'm like, Okay, I've done those things. Like, you know, what I'm saying like, you know, I feel I know what you're saying. It's like, if we don't make a big deal about this, nobody else will. And they won't see the significance of this moment. So I feel we we've been set up that we have to do that. Because we need to continue the journey and continue carrying the load of making sure that it it doesn't go away. Right. I mean, I feel women have had to carry this. Some will say burden. I will say responsibility. I mean, we are an ambassador, we are ambassadors for ourselves, whether it's voting, whether it's pro choice, whether it's equal pay. Because before those things were enacted, they didn't exist. And there were women who didn't have those opportunities. So I think we have to move forward. And with the we've done that it is

normalized, but we also have to celebrate it and be we have to rebind and consistently keep it in the forefront of our mind because Title Nine some let me think what year it was, I believe it was in the Bush administration, but you you should do the fact checking. It might have been the younger Bush talking about doing away with Title Nine. And there was like, Oh my gosh, that would be a tragedy. Because people thought we're in the place we need to be but we really weren't. So I think that I think celebrating it is important. Recognizing Black History Month. Women, you know, international, Women's Day and women's I mean it is important the future anniversary it is important.

JEFFERS

I that's that's kind of like the whole reason why I wanted to do this as my topic. Like, I've always been super passionate about women in sports. But I do think, like you said, when we come to kind of a, a stagnant place, like, oh, have we done everything that we can do, then it's not talked about as much. And we forget to celebrate and to recognize each other. And it still needs to be done. So I've Yeah, I agree, basically. But another thing, another topic that I talk on a lot in my thesis is about the representation in sport media, and you obviously have one of the biggest moments in media for women in sports of any, any time, in my opinion. So would you mind just talking a little bit about how just the media representation has evolved?

CHASTAIN

Well, I'd love to say it has evolved. But if you look at the percentages, I was just reading something I think it was yesterday or two days ago, because of you know, this, this lawsuit and the news, of course, it becomes like front page, and now it's not age 4% of the sports media

landscape is about women. The population of women participating in sports is higher than 4%. Think it's 49 49% of athletes. Yeah, it's near equal. Yeah. And so I am super excited. I told you like, I'm the optimist. I love I love sports. And I watch everything. But I am, I am encouraged by just women's sports. You know, just women's sports. Oh, yeah. They're all their whole entire Instagram, Twitter. Everything is in my thesis and my spoken with Haley Rosen. I have not the founder, I would love to connect you. That would be amazing. She's awesome. She played soccer. She played soccer at Stanford. And I would be very happy to connect you. Because I think you have to ask her the question of what gives you the the guts what gives you the reasoning, the determination? What gives you the hope that what you're doing is going to work? Because even ESPN, I think half heartedly so you know, ESPN W and I think during the right times, they highlight it. But they don't really put it into action. They just started differentiating between men's college basketball and women's college basketball. It used to just be college basketball, and women's college basketball. Yeah. Yeah. So I think you know, so talking about sports media. As a sports fan. I when I was younger, I I honestly, it. I never looked at it and goes, gosh, I don't see anyone like myself. Because I didn't feel I was any different. Honestly, when I was a girl, I thought it was gonna play in the NFL. I liked football. My dad watched football. I watched it on Sundays, like, I'm gonna do that I was better than all the kids around me. Like, you know, I was like, Okay, this is something I do. Even though I didn't see myself, I never felt like I was not in the landscape. It didn't even cross my mind. And perhaps that's because I had people around me who encouraged me to play. My mom was a wonderful role model. And my father became my coach. From the time I was like eight till 16 And he we didn't know anything about soccer and we learned together and so I think the willingness for them to be in a in a space that didn't really belong to them kind of gave me superpowers the thought of like superpowers

like I could do that. Even though that was not didn't represent me. So what I see in sports media now is much more opportunity. Again, it's The landmark contract of Dawn Staley, the women's basketball coach at South Carolina. To me, that was significant. She's not the first millionaire female coach, but as a former athlete that, you know, that was so present in for me, like, I watched her and I knew of her and I watched her in her college days. And then I watched her with the national team. And I watched her become a coach. And now to see her in, in a position that where an institution values for, that tells me this, like, I see you dance daily. I see you and I think because basketball traditionally as an American sport, because the players themselves in the in the NBA, have embraced women's basketball, Kobe Bryant being specifically because of being a girl, Dad, I think all of a sudden, elevated the conversation. And because we hold those people in high esteem, and now they're talking about women's basketball, or women in basketball, women in ownership, women in coaching, all of a sudden, it becomes more comfortable, more normalized. And now. Now, what I'm seeing in sports media, is that and sports media, as now not as, like, we'll just use ESPN, Fox Sports, CBS Sports, NBC Sports, as four outlets. Because social media is now so prevalent on where people are influenced. I believe there's a greater chance for women for sports media to be less able to be gender specific. And male specific, because now there's other outlets. And so I think their way of doing the traditional way of doing things will be challenged in a good way. I think the conversation about being challenged is difficult, because there's usually a negative connotation to being challenged. Right. When I think when I think of being challenged, I think of being better. And so I'm hoping that these four outlets that we talked about, will want to be better. And that they have for so long not included half the population. That how much greater of a reach would they have if they included it? Like to me that they're harming themselves? Yes. Like to me, I'm thinking, do I know

something? They don't know. Like I if I could sell because they're in the selling business. If I could sell more sports to a greater population. Wouldn't that be a good thing? Yeah.

JEFFERS

Like two Sundays ago, or maybe it was this past Sunday, ESPN, nothing. It was two weeks ago. They had on their like roller at the bottom of the screen. And like one time during a commercial break. It was like, oh, Sunday is catch this lineup of all these women's sports and it was like FSU verse, UCLA softball, the she believes Cup game. And I think a basketball game, maybe South Carolina basketball game. And it was the first full slate of women's sports for nighttime coverage. And it's just stuff like that. I'm like, why don't you do that more often? So many people were talking about that. So many of my friends were posting it sharing it everywhere. Don't you want that more often? It just

CHASTAIN

Well, I'll tell you, Catherine, honestly, it's like anything else that needs change. It's uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable. It's it. It takes power possibly away from some people. Nobody wants to let go of what they have. For fear of losing power. When honestly, I think it's like you can be more powerful. The more you embrace The more you recognize that the world is diverse, the more powerful you become. And so I think it's I think it's honestly, I mean, when you look at discrimination at any point, it's it's theater, it's, it's, um, it's discomfort. It's not the way we do things. It's, you know, when my grandfather used to my grandfather passed away many, many years, but he would, you know, I, we would talk about what it was like growing up in the south when he was a young man and the, the vernacular that was used. And I was like,

well, that's not appropriate. That's not appropriate wasn't really appropriate then. But that's how it was. Right? That's the way we did. That's just how it was. Huge. And so, just because that's how it was doesn't mean that's how it is or should be, or will be. And I think the idea of change is super exciting, yet really scary. For most people, actually putting it into action is like, we can talk about it all we want, but actually making progress and taking steps towards it is the hard part. I think the first step is the hardest. But once you take that step you recognize it's like me, I'm about to get on that peloton, and I've been quite absent from that peloton. Um, and it's always the hardest one, right? That first step is always the hardest one. And I feel that I feel that there's fear, unnecessary fear that that gets in the way, if you said the word and this is something we talked about, I talked about in sports. I've heard talked about it from coaches I've had, and what I use with my players is the perception of pressure versus the reality of pressure. And the reality is really not as bad as the perception. And so when they get when I think I've heard this so many times, like, why didn't we do this before? Right? Why didn't we do this sooner? I've heard that so many times, I say because people were afraid. They were afraid. And fear is a terrible obstacle. And the perception of that moment and that fear, it gets blown out of proportion. There's nothing wrong with women's sports. Nothing wrong with them at all. In fact, why wouldn't you want to if you had daughters or granddaughters or nieces? Why wouldn't you want them to have the same great feelings that you had when you played sports? Mm hmm. If you can take your yourself out of that and ask that question. I think everybody would say like, oh, I would love that would be great.

JEFFERS

I think similar, you've done things is gets in the way. Yeah. Similar to you. Like my dad, he has three girls. But like, he also played sports growing up, so to my mom. But when we were growing up, and we were playing sports, it was just normal, like, there was no girl sports boy sports, it was just sports, because I think it would probably maybe have been different if we had like a brother thrown in the mix. But it was just three girls. And my dad had to get used to it and get comfortable and fast. And like, like your dad, he was my coach for a while until it got up to club level. And I think that definitely makes a difference. And not everyone is so lucky to have that type of supportive figure. But I think the more we start to talk about women in sports, and just push it out there, the more everyone will have to become more comfortable with it and realize that it's just part of everyday life. Yeah, it's interesting.

CHASTAIN

You know, you say, you know, we have to push it out there and and I think like, we're just being we're just going to be ourselves. We're going to be ourselves, and I feel like we do have to push because we're getting resistance, right? When you get a resistance, you have to push against that resistance. And I think we I feel like I want to do it like, I want to be this peaceful warrior for sports, which is I'm just going to continue to do the things that I do. And if if, by doing that it makes you uncomfortable and it makes you feel Think about change, then I'm doing the right thing. You know, I'm doing the right thing. 100%

JEFFERS

I could just talk about this forever. I was I was on. My last interview was with the retired Ole Miss deputy athletic director, Assistant Deputy athletic director, and she was here for 30 years,

and never got brought up to full AD status. Someone below her a man was brought up. And we talked for about an hour and a half. And everything she had to say was just amazing and shocking. And what what were the reasons that they gave her? None. Not ever putting her in that position? She had a doctorate she had more schooling more experience, but the man that was under her got brought up before her she didn't even get made interim. And so she retired in 2021.

CHASTAIN

I mean, honestly, what do you I mean, that's just the way we've done things. Yeah. That's just so I guess, to your point, in that moment, you have to push. You know, it's too bad that she decided to retire.

JEFFERS

She said she had pushed too much, and was at risk of being let go. So she took it upon herself. Stepped down. But that is just crazy.

CHASTAIN

Okay, another question. Can I ask you? Yes. What are your feelings in this is within this conversation about mascots? Having to be designated lady volunteers versus CD

JEFFERS

Instead of just volunteers? Yep. We have. So we just moved away from Lady rebels. But the only team that had lady rebels was our basketball team. Everyone else, we're just Ole Miss Rebels. I mean, we have a mascot issue no matter what it is, like, female or non female just

overall. But we I think last year, athletics sent out an entire brief about how we're not supposed to use the term lady in any of our stories, any media. Anything, no more lady rebels, just rebels. And I was like, Well, I, I work as the sports editor for our newspaper. Okay. I was second female sports editor. I said, I've always just used rebels, like who's still using lady rebels. But it's, it was on tons of paraphernalia like it was on everything. And on Twitter handles, Twitter, Twitter, pictures, Instagram pictures. I just want like, why would we need that? In what world? Just say? If you're going to say, if you're gonna want to differentiate between the gender just say women's basketball and men's basketball, and then continue using rebels throughout the story? I think Tennessee still uses it, don't they still they are the Lady Vols. I think so. And I just was watching their basketball game the other day, but I cannot recall. I don't know if I had the volume up. So I cannot recall hearing what the announcers were calling them. So I'm curious. I'm pretty sure that their personal Twitter handle is Lady Vols hoops. If I'm remembering correctly, like they, I don't know. I would be interested to talk to someone at Tennessee and hear if they actually like if they're, I don't know, re empowering themselves by using it and saying, I I just don't see how that could be a positive way to go about it. Because then you're saying that the default is always the men's sport team. And you have to make a difference for the women's sport team. Why? That just the men don't have to be the default. Yes, correct. You say basketball. You say soccer. And then if you need to know who you're talking about, you could say men's basketball. Yeah. Or it's say the coach's name or the players name and then you'll make it easy. I The I've never understood that. I try to remember back to high school if we differentiated in soccer. I want to say that we were the lady Titans want to say that we were really Yeah, I can't remember exactly like On our uniforms when we got them, I know it just that tightens. But I think like on school announcements and emails, it was oh the lady Titans one, 126lab la 126lab la bla, and the Titans

just it's, it's silly. It doesn't need to be done still. What are your thoughts? I am sending you right now it text message connected. Rosen. Amazing. That is awesome. I appreciate that. Thank you so much. Have you seen more than just balls that Instagram account? No. Oh, I love them. They they have like a classic orange. I think everything that they post is orange or something. But they were the ones that are at least that I saw first during last year's college world series that posted like the difference between the Men's College World Series, and the Women's College World Series and the days in between and the number of games and the facilities and everything that got just blown up. And then now that Women's College World Series has added in extra days for people to rest because apparently only men needed to rest in between their games.

CHASTAIN

Well, it's because women are strong. And women wear many hats and we always have and yeah, because we will because we can because we will. Good for them. Yeah, good for them. Okay, I am sending you I know their tic tock account over the Winter Olympics. A girl that I followed that talked about women's sports got brought on to just women's sports tic toc to do Olympic recaps and I thought that was super awesome okay, I hope this is right tell me if this sounds okay. Ladies Haley and Catherine meet one another Haley Catherine is writing her senior thesis on I want to make sure what what is your title? My working title is the conversation surrounding women in sports okay conversation around so it said again the conversation surrounding women in sports okay sorry Okay, so I wrote Catherine is writing her senior thesis on the conversation surrounding women in sports we spoke about the 50th anniversary of Title Nine the US Women's National Team USSF decision and the broad topic and significance of women's sports today. I

think you too should talk immediately because Catherine is doing great and meaningful work. She is also the sports editor at Ole Miss

JEFFERS

Let me run through all my my general note ones. I don't know if I answered any of your questions. Oh, yes, you did. And I appreciate. I have some great, great little time markers that I know I'm going to use as as quote No, you know what I you know what I have found over my years

CHASTAIN

Over my years as a professional athlete, when we had when we had significant wins, like the World Cup or the Olympics, I had male allies, men who play professional sports that I watched on television, and that I admired. Absolutely full on saying what we did was amazing. And I will say that that was something that has fueled me knowing that people who live in that sports world understood the commitment and the investment, physical, mental, emotional investment that it takes to achieve something like that. That is, that has been one of the most significant things that I have gotten from my, like professional career. And I think it's that it's I spoke about that earlier, right? When you have these these counterparts, these male counterparts who recognize and stand by your side, not in front of you, not saying, Hey, let me lift you up, because you need help. But they stand next to you. And they say, that was hard. And you did that. And I see it. That is incredible. And I think that that resonates, and that ripples out. And I think that's where we're really finding a lot of traction.

JEFFERS

I spoke to Sarah Fuller, I don't know if you remember the Vanderbilt soccer player that kicked Yeah, so I spoke to her two weeks ago. And she, like Tim Howard reached out to her after everything, after she got brought on to kick. But she says she remembers after the first game when she didn't have to kick an extra point or anything. The coaches came back in and she was like, listen, these players have cleared COVID protocol like you can have your kickers back, don't keep me on just because I'm a girl, just because you feel bad or you want the recognition. And they said no, you don't understand you. You're You're much better at kicking point after attempts than anyone on our staff, they'll kick field goals, but you, you kick your PTS, and we're keeping you on because you are the better player in that aspect. And so she said, that was like, the main thing that she wanted to make known was don't just keep me on because I'm a girl. And because you feel like you have to because you're getting a bunch of attention for it. If you believe I'm the better player, then I'm staying. But if not, I'm not gonna stay. So she said that was that was really important to her. And that made her much more comfortable going forward, sets off. So I thought that was that was really cool. But it it's hard not to just kind of, I don't want to say bask in the support. But just appreciate all of the support and recognition that you receive when you when you do something so

CHASTAIN

Huge. Like it's just, it makes you realize, or I guess most people probably already know it. But you're reassured that everything that you put in was worth it and that you are being recognized for all of your accomplishments. Well, I had I had a very similar situation happen. When I was a

young girl, I I lived in a I'm from Northern California, I think people most people would say you it's a liberal environment. You know, I lived I had a diverse neighborhood. To some degree, I had friends that were Hispanic or black or white, Caucasian. You know, I had, I had friends of all ethnicities. And I really was close to this one. Young man, and we are still friends today. And we don't look anything like each other, you know, gender color or anything. But we've been friends for 45 years. And in middle school. I was going out for the CO Ed team that had no girls. And when I showed up with a couple of my teammates from my club, the coach looked at us like what do you and said, What are you doing here? And we said we want to try out for the team. And he's like, Oh, this is not this is Not for you. And he, my friend, Steven spoke up and said, Coach, you should see them play. They're really good. And so that was my first introduction to ally ship. Mm hmm. And I didn't think twice about it at the time, to be honest with you, I just wanted to play. I didn't know that playing head, that other people thought that playing had parameters, like you needed to look like this to participate. I didn't know that. And I'm really grateful that I didn't. Because I love sports. And I just, I played everything from street, tag, touch football, to street baseball to tree climbing, skateboarding, it didn't really matter, right. But when Stephen did that, that really resonated down deep inside of me. And I carried that I think, as a lesson, that when someone is told that they don't belong, I should advocate for them. What do they look like me or they play like me, or they're as good as me that they need advocacy. And so he modeled that for me. And I feel like that's kind of been a part of the fabric of the person that I am. And so when I, when I got to this, like when we won the World Cup, and we were in New York, and we happen to run into a Yankees or two Yankees, whatever, and they were just like, Whoa, that was so amazing. Blah, blah. I mean, literally, tears came out of my eyes. Tears came out of my eyes, I think because I was exhausted. And just like, it had been a, you know, it had

been a lifelong journey to that moment, really. And that tournament was so exhausting. And then the post media was very exhausting. And imagine, yeah, and it I mean, all for good, right? All for good reasons. But it was, you know, there was a, it, there was a cost to it. It was exhausting. But when he said that, it was just like, that meant just so much. I just remember that really, resonating really deeply within me and I, I will, every now and again, just text him and just say, Hey, I was thinking about you today. Thank you again, for that moment that nobody else probably saw, but has really meant a lot to me. And because of that I get to move that forward. So yeah, I don't I don't know how that came up. But that's, I love that. Yeah. For me. That's what that's what it's all about, right? Like me sending a text to Haley. Because you're doing something good. I want to facilitate that. I feel like that should be where sports human. But humanity should be. Right? How can we do good things so people can do good things that will uplift other peoples that will help everybody? That's what sports means to me. It's always part of such a greater picture. And there's always something vaster and wider.

JEFFERS

So, being the sports editor, post sports editor, when you write about football, or your paper writes about or one of your reporters writes about football, and you have to edit it. Is there someone who or do you edit it? Or do does a man edit it?

JEFFERS

No, I'm the I'm the sports editor, Ruby's my assistant sports editor. So I have the final say, on all sports articles. And then our editor in chief is also a woman. She doesn't know much about

sports. So she kind of leaves the sports to me. So I know, no boy or Guy Edits it, unless they write it, then I still have to edit it after that we have three male writers. But I would say Ruby and I covered probably more football than the male writers.

CHASTAIN

That is a that seems to be a big deal, Catherine to me. I mean, that seems like it would be very significant in a place with such, I would say, I mean, I watched college sports. And I know that Ole Miss football team is very important to the university. And the way that it's celebrated, and the way that it is approached in the fall is like the everything stops when football happens. And if you probably asked anybody who was maybe my age and older, if a woman should be writing about the football team, they would probably stop and they would probably not.

JEFFERS

There's still probably of the 7580 seats in our press box at the football stadium. Me and Ruby, are two of the five women that are in it. For football games are still it's it's kind of a that's, that's still something that we're working on. But for our publication, at least our sports staff is majority female, our entire staff is majority female. But so if we get to at least go and represent the women, then we feel we feel like we've accomplished a good amount.

CHASTAIN

Absolutely, I mean, honestly, when you know, we're looking at the landscape of college applications, it the majority is women. So why wouldn't there be more women in that in that space? Interesting.

JEFFERS

The Alabama, the I think the only other female sports editor is at Alabama. So that's, that's pretty cool. She's awesome. So she has the final say for Alabama football.

CHASTAIN

Wow, that is huge. That is huge. That is incredible. Incredible. Let's not let's not stop the conversation here. I'm actually off topic. I am starting this is a part of the conversation.

However, I guess I shouldn't say it's off topic. It is on topic because eSports is huge. Yet the landscape at the landscape is quite equal. Like percentage wise, I think it's like 50 to 48. Yet, again, it's one of those environments that is not welcoming. It doesn't it has kind of a bit of a toxicity to it that is not encouraging girls to participate or women to participate or being said like hey, this is not where you belong, kind of feel. And I am getting into ownership of a team in a player's league where there will be professional athletes owning teams. And it's I'm finding it very interesting that ownership for men is not that hard because they make more money. And so for me to find female investors who are players is difficult. Like, no, no doubt that someone like Gianna Santos who can write a \$2 million check in on a team. No problem. Don't you don't have to think about it. I mean, as an investment, you think about it. But you know, I'm saying like, as you know, his wealth, you not really think about it, but for a woman to decide to use \$25,000 to become a part of the ownership. That's significant. And that I guess back to your, your question about, you know, the equal pay, that has been, that pay has been a sticking point because it keeps women out of ownership. And that is something that we absolutely must be a

part of, because then we get to be a part of the overall decisioning. Okay. I guess hadn't even.
Yeah, Oh, totally.

JEFFERS

Yeah, like no one. Obviously bad in NY When David Beckham was like, Okay, I'll take over in
Miami. All

CHASTAIN

Right. Yeah, if so, ownership is a big deal. But if you don't have the resources for ownership,
then how do you? Because you're because your pay is equitable, but not equal. That's an
obstacle. So that is a significant milestone, I think we're getting we get closer now to ownership.
And that's what we need. That's what will really change the conversation.

JEFFERS

That's like, one of my final things that I talk about is this significance of having not only
representation on the field on the court, in you like playing field wives, but in higher levels,
owners, coaches, administrators, we need, we need women in roles, significant ownership roles,
not just playing.

CHASTAIN

Yeah, and that's, and that's, I look at Derek Jeter, as an example of he's a he's a new age fearless
owner, because he's hired a woman to be a manager. Right. And so or, you know, a managing
partner, the general, sorry, general managers, what I should say, is the manager is on the field.

Yeah. And to me, I think that's a generational shift. And so he would, I mean, he is an ally for women. Mm hmm.

JEFFERS

100% Yeah.

CHASTAIN

Go to class, lady.

JEFFERS

This was awesome. And thank you again, for connecting me with Haley. I'm going to respond right when I get out of class for but thank you so, so much. Got it. I will reach out if I if I need anything, or want to send you anything. Yeah, perfect.

CHASTAIN

And I hope that we have a chance to further the conversation about I think we should have more conversations about the eSports thing. And you know, what you're going to do next after you turn in this amazing thesis that you're writing? And where are you going to make your next big impact because you're working with someone like Haley or in an environment that I'm hoping that they're that a lot of women are investing in, I think would be wonderful. And I want to continue to have the conversation and let's let's, let's push for change. Mm hmm.

JEFFERS

100% Awesome. Awesome. Thank you so much. Okay.

CHASTAIN

All right. Bye.

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