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XI women who took Title IX to front office

RICK BURTON

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While much of the debate over Title IX has centered on playing opportunities for women in U.S. higher education (women's NCAA Division I teams now outnumber men's teams, as USA Today has noted), I got to thinking about whether this 1972 federal legislation has spurred notable contributions by women in the front office.

The obvious answer is yes. For the last three decades, women have enjoyed increased opportunities on the business side of the sport ledger and, in many cases, have successfully entered what was once a "boys only" club. But who were the pioneers? Who really helped diversify American boardrooms, conference rooms or broadcast studios?

Here's my take on the most notable:

Billie Jean King

While many sport historians point first to Billie Jean

King's fabled tennis showdown with Bobby Riggs in 1973, King went beyond her exploits on the court to help establish the Women's Sports Foundation in 1974, World TeamTennis (King was the first woman commissioner in professional sports history) and the Women's Tennis Association. Of the three, the development of the WSF as a lobbying group for equality has been the most valuable in furthering Title IX's original intent.



King

Donna Lopiano

Donna Lopiano, the former University of Texas



women's athletic director, has worked tirelessly for more than 10 years to put the Women's Sports Foundation on the sports map. Along the way, Lopiano, the foundation's executive director, helped create scholarships, grants and visibility for thousands of American girls and girls' teams. She made corporate America respect women's sports and angered more than a few NCAA coaches and athletic directors in her stewardship of the WSF.

Lopiano She recently suggested the Commission on Athletic Opportunity (initiated by U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige to study and suggest possible changes to Title IX) was a sham because, in part, 60

percent of the committee members represented Division I-A football schools. Lopiano holds firm to her belief that gender discrimination still exists in America.

□ Ina Broeman

One of the most powerful people in the sponsorship world for the last three decades has been Philip Morris' Ina Broeman. The best example of her influence was the co-branding relationship she helped create between the giant cigarette manufacturer and women's tennis with the Virginia Slims Championship. When Virginia Slims created "You've come a long way, baby," the beneficiaries included King, Rosie Casals, Chris Evert Lloyd, Martina Navratilova, their agents and financial advisers.

Broeman's legendary work for the Virginia Slims Championship (which ran from 1972 to 1994) connected female athletes, events and sponsors in the most comprehensive way ever.

□ Phyllis George

To some, the selection of Phyllis George as an NFL broadcaster was nothing more than a move toward big hair and Southern accents. But when George joined CBS' "The NFL Today" pregame show with Brent Musburger, Irv Cross and Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder in 1975, she became the first woman ever in an NFL broadcast studio. That she held that position for 10 years spoke to her professionalism and talent. That a host of women now cover sports on-air for TV networks, affiliates and radio groups, speaks to her pioneering influence.

□ Anita DeFrantz

A bronze medalist in the women's eight-oared shell at

the Montreal Olympics in 1976, Anita DeFrantz went on to earn her law degree and became the International Olympic Committee's first female vice president in 1997. She was the first woman to represent the United States on the IOC when she was elected in 1986. DeFrantz is a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee executive committee and recently ran for the presidency of the IOC. While she was not selected, her presence within both the IOC and USOC has been instrumental in achieving benefits for both athletes and the United States.



DeFrantz

□ Barbara Hedges and Judith Sweet

The first woman ever to run an NCAA Division I program, Barbara Hedges took over the University of Washington's athletic department in 1991 and promptly watched the Huskies go 12-0 in football, defeat Michigan in the Rose Bowl and win college football's national championship. Additionally, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education, Hedges moved UW to a point where it was "the only Division I institution with an undergraduate enrollment at least 50 percent female to have achieved substantial proportionality in both scholarships and participation."

Hedges, however, was not the first female athletic director to run a program involving both men's and women's teams. That honor belonged to Judith Sweet, who took over the University of California-San Diego athletic department in 1974 and ran it for 24 years before leaving to join the NCAA. UCSD won the Sears Director's Cup for Division III in 1998.

□ Patty Viverito

While the Gateway Conference was founded as a women's athletics group in August 1982 (with Patty Viverito as commissioner), it was 1992 when Viverito became the first woman to govern a conference that played football. Today, eight schools in the Missouri Valley Conference (Illinois State, Indiana State, Northern Iowa, Southern Illinois, Southwest Missouri State, Western Illinois, Western Kentucky and Youngstown State) take their football directives from Viverito.

Viverito's performance with the Gateway Conference may have helped create opportunities for women such as Linda Bruno, who became commissioner of the Atlantic 10 Conference in June 1994, and Brenda Weare, interim commissioner (and now associate commissioner) of Conference USA.

□ **Sara Levinson and Amy Trask**

When Sara Levinson came to NFL Properties from MTV in late 1995, some league insiders felt it was just a publicity stunt to shake up the league's internal power structure. But Levinson's keen eye for emerging demographics, including female NFL fans, gave America's most powerful league a chance to approach the new millennium thinking beyond just men and boys. Levinson's selection probably helped pave the road for WNBA President Val Ackerman (selected by NBA Commissioner David Stern and the league's board of governors in 1996) and USOC presidents Sandra Baldwin (named president in 2000) and Marty Mankamyer (2002).

Amy Trask made her mark on the NFL at the team level when she became the first female chief executive in the league's history in 1997.

□ **Lee Ann Daly**

ESPN may be well regarded for its "SportsCenter"

and on-air personalities such as Dan Patrick, Tony Kornheiser and Michael Wilbon, but it has been the presence of Lee Ann Daly, senior vice president of marketing, that has influenced the marketing and positioning of America's leading sports cable network.



Daly joined ESPN in 1997 as vice president of advertising and by 2000, ESPN was named the "Promotional Marketer of the Year." ESPN's advertising, frequently featuring top athletes such as Roger Clemens, Evander Holyfield and Michael Andretti, has been instrumental in building awareness for ESPN's popular "SportsCenter" and is annually considered for the ad world's most prestigious awards.

Rick Burton is executive director of the Warsaw Sports Marketing Center at the University of Oregon.

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