

Collector's Edition
Founded 1997

real SPORTS® e-Zine

The Authority in Women's Sports™

Most Important Moments in Sports 2011



REAL SPORTS™ continues its tradition of selecting the *Top 10 Most Important Moments in Sports*.

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#10

Youth Power

Youth and professional sports are littered with damaged goods and shattered lives, not unlike many young child actors. But it's not a league's, nor the media's, nor the general public's place to limit the potential of young athletes — it is the responsibility of their parents to support them in doing what's right (and yes, that's where the most blurred lines sometimes occur).

Despite the potential risks, REAL SPORTS commends the commitment 16-year-old pro golfer Lexi Thompson has to the game. She qualified for the U.S. Women's Open at age 12, the youngest ever to do so, and then she turned pro at age 15. With a half-brother on the PGA tour and a brother playing golf in college, this is a family affair - can you imagine the family holiday get-togethers?

Anyway, on Sept. 18, Thompson won the Navistar LPGA Classic, in Prattville, Ala., becoming the youngest winner of a LPGA event (16 years, 7 months, 8 days). Thompson is no one-hit wonder, though — she followed up with a victory at the Dubai Ladies Masters on Dec. 17.

On the cover: Tennessee coach Pat Summit and Stanford coach Tara VanDerveer embrace prior to their team's match-up on December 20, 2011. Summit was chosen as this year's Sports Person of the Year.

As part of REAL SPORTS founding principles – we are committed to showing women's sports in action – bringing to life the intensity and feelings associated with women's sports. We remain true to this concept. This year, there were fewer images available meeting this requirement.



#9

Presidential Endorsement

President Barack Obama picked the University of Connecticut to win the 2011 NCAA Women's Basketball Championship, in part because of his encounter with Maya Moore. Regardless of the side of the political aisle you sit on, it is good for women's sports when the president of the United States takes such an avid interest in the game and that he respects the talent of women players. Obama said:

"For my birthday I had a little all-star game here, and we had Dwayne Wade, LeBron James and Carmelo Anthony and just a whole slew of all-stars. And Maya, because I'd gotten to know her when she came here, was on the court. She lit the guys up and was playing hard, and they were playing hard. She picked Dwayne Wade — sorry, Dwayne, but I've got to report on this — I mean, she picked him clean on one play. So she can hang with the best players in the world, and she's a winner."

While the president's pick for the NCAA title fell short (UConn was eliminated in the semifinals), Moore was drafted at the conclusion of the tournament, and she went on to help her team, the Minnesota Lynx, beat the Atlanta Dream for the franchise's first WNBA title, sweeping the best-of-five series 3-0.



In 2011, Maya Moore concluded her stellar career at UCONN.



It's interesting to note that the WNBA has been a haven for past NBA players and male coaches. There's nothing wrong with this,

REAL SPORTS believes in putting the best with the best. It was just nice to see that for the first time in WNBA history, both championship finals teams were coached by women — Cheryl Reeve (Minnesota) and Marynell Meadors (Atlanta), who, by the way, was one of the league's original eight head coaches.

It's hard to believe it, but the WNBA just celebrated its 15th anniversary. However, because of the off-season nature of the league, players still need to hold other jobs, as evidenced by the vast number of players who play internationally. The league is on to its third president, and attendance for 9 of the 12 teams increased from 2010 to 2011

#8

Standing Tall For What You Believe In

For centuries, China was a leading civilization, outpacing the world in arts and sciences, but foreign challenges in the 19th and early 20th centuries caused havoc across the country, and its people found themselves under a communist system that, while credited with ensuring China's sovereignty, imposed strong controls on everyday life.

If you're a fan of the arts, sciences and athletics, you understand the importance of freedom of expression, exploration and commitment — something hard to do under autocratic controls. That's why REAL SPORTS recognize the staying power and commitment of Li Na, a 29-year-old tennis player who is the first Asian country representative to win a Grand Slam singles title (at the 2011 French Open) ,and she made it to the finals of the 2011 Australian Open.



So why open with the historical perspective? Li left the Chinese national team in 2002 for a variety of reasons, including challenges regarding who she could date, who her coach could be and how she would train. Li used the break to study part time at the Huazhong University of Science and Technology (she ultimately earned a bachelor's degree in journalism in 2009).

Li returned to the team in 2004, then she quit again in 2008 when the opportunity presented itself for sports reform. Under the terms of her release, Li was able to pick her own coach, hold onto the majority of her winnings (88 to 92 percent versus previous 35percent) and marry the man she felt was right for her. With her success in 2011, she serves as an inspiration for country and the region and shows that standing tall for what you believe can pay off in the long run.



#7

Not Your Typical Women's Sports Sponsor

Get ready for even more GoDaddy.com promotions. The company has done its market research, and the numbers show that running racy commercials are more successful than tamer and, to some, more boring commercials.

In 2011, race-car driver Danica Patrick announced that she would be leaving the IndyCar series to race NASCAR full time. As of Oct. 2, Patrick left IndyCar racing with 50 completed races (the next-highest total is 32). Patrick's place in history for open-wheel racing is secure, with a third-place finish in 2009 at the Indianapolis 500 and a win in the 2008 Indy Japan 300 (the first woman to win an IndyCar race).

Patrick now drives the No. 7 GoDaddy.com Chevrolet Impala full time and hopes to build upon her recent success in NASCAR, a fourth-place finish on March 5, at Sam's Town 300 Nationwide Series Race at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

#6

Leap of Faith — Olympic Sports in a Non-Olympic Year

For years, proponents of women's ski jumping have been pushing for gender equality. Unlike the 2010 Vancouver Games, where the case for inclusion was taken all the way to Canada's Supreme Court, the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, will not see the same challenge because women's ski jumping has been officially added.



For years, the International Olympic Committee has rejected women's ski jumping, claiming the sport did not possess enough elite competitors. Unfortunately, REAL SPORTS has heard that argument before, for example as the reason for women's softball removal from competition, although that sport was caught in the undertow of baseball's demise. With faith and the opportunity to compete, usually the best wins out.

In the case of women's ski jumping, competing in harsh conditions of heavy fog and strong winds at the Nordic world championships in Oslo, Norway, in March seemed to be the evidence needed to sway the voters. Officials who decided to continue to hold the women's ski jump competition despite the conditions deserve credit too — the ability to demonstrate skills only happens if the competition goes on.

#5

First-Timers and Powerhouses

Soccer: Stanford — a perennial powerhouse — has long been the bridesmaid and never the bride for the Women's College Cup in soccer. But in 2011, Stanford made its third consecutive final appearance count by defeating Duke 1-0 to capture the school's first soccer championship.



Left: Stanford's Teresa Noyola (7) dribbles past Duke's Kaitlyn Kerr (5). Bottom: Noyola celebrates her second half goal. Stanford won the Championship 1-0.

Cross-country: Georgetown, led by All-American Emily Infeld, captured the school's first cross-country national title with stellar team and individual performances — all five point-scorers finished in the top 70.



Lacrosse: Northwestern captured its sixth lacrosse championship in seven years, beating top-ranked Maryland 8-7.

Ice Hockey: Wisconsin dominated Boston University to capture its fourth Frozen Four ice hockey title in six years.

Field hockey: Maryland's domination continued: The Terps won their eighth national championship, defeating North Carolina 3-2 in overtime. This year, the Terps were the first unseeded team to win the title.

#4

No. 1 in More Ways Than One

Yani Tseng, the top golfer on the LPGA Tour, also happens to be the youngest player ever, male or female, to win five major championships.

The Taiwanese golfer carried forward her amateur winning ways (she won the 2004 U.S.



Women's Amateur Public Links by defeating Michelle Wie 1-up), by winning the LPGA championship in (2008 and 2011, and the Women's British Open in 2010 and 2011 to complement victories at the Kraft Nabisco Championship in 2010 and U.S. Women's Open in 2010.

While Michelle Wie embraced more hype during her teenage years, Wie has chosen to balance time on the LPGA tour with being a student at Stanford University. The challenge for Tseng going forward will be to balance success on the tour while maturing as a person.

#3

Professional Soccer's Downward Spiral

REAL SPORTS was recently asked if anyone would remember the excitement and phenomenal play of the Women's World Cup and would they care?



The answer is, basically, no. Women's Professional Soccer is now an East Coast league down to five teams., At the conclusion of the 2011 season, the league's governors voted to terminate affiliation with the MagicJack franchise, accusing owner Dan Borislow of violations that included "unprofessional and disparaging treatment of his players, and to failure to pay his bills."

Despite offering opportunities to see the best soccer players in the world, drawing attendance remains a challenge. Although the championship game, which featured the Western New York Flash vs. Philadelphia Independence, drew 10,461 spectators, just two games earlier in the playoffs, just over 2,000 were in attendance.

#2

The Upset to End All Upsets

On Dec. 30, 2010, the Connecticut basketball team's most consecutive wins streak ended at 90, with Stanford snipping that string, while also having been the last team to beat the Huskies before the epic streak began. So when the championship bracket was announced on March 14, 2011, fans dreamed of a rematch between the two teams at the national championship.



Notre Dame and Texas A&M had other ideas. A&M Coach Gary Blair, who took Arkansas to the Final Four in 1998, has quietly and efficiently built a team in a state and conference that sports past champions Baylor , Texas Tech and University of Texas. In the 2011 title game, featuring two second-seeded teams, the Aggies defeated Notre Dame 76-70.

#1

Life Lessons – Never Give Up (Works for you & against you)

This year's World Cup soccer quarterfinal match-up between Team USA and Brazil became an instant classic for sports fans around the world. Two goals in overtime, the last by Abby Wambach, led to penalty shots, where the U.S. won 5-3, no easy feat when you're facing five-time player of the year Marta.

This match had so many memorable moments and life lessons that it should be part of all sports teams' motivational arsenals. An investor in REAL SPORTS said: "I watched this game with my kids — it taught them more about never giving up than I could ever teach them."

The backdrop: the quarterfinal match up came exactly 12 years after Team USA beat China in the 1999 World Cup finals.

And In 2007, goalkeeper Hope Solo was benched in favor of Briana Scurry for the semifinals match-up against Brazil, a game the U.S. went on to lose 4-0.

This year's team sought to create its own destiny and move out of the shadow of the '99ers.



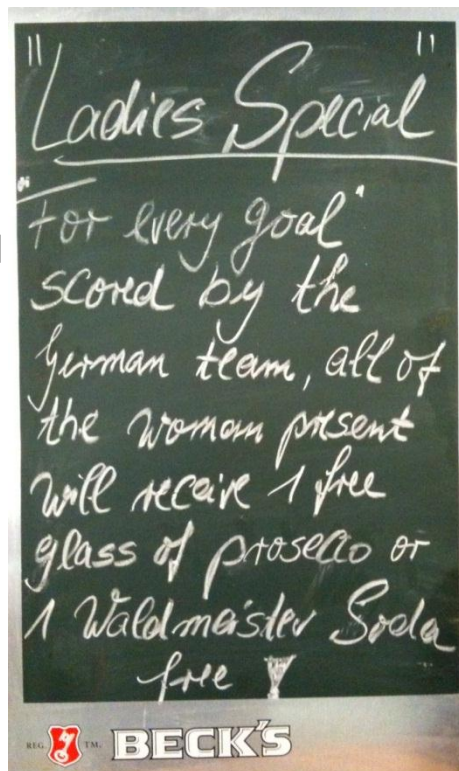
Abby Wambach and Hope Solo of team USA celebrate after defeating Brazil in the FIFA Women's World Cup Quarterfinals at the FIFA Stadium in Dresden, Germany on July 10th, 2011.

With soccer though, as in life, if you leave too much to chance or fail to capitalize on opportunities, another team of destiny can step forward. And so the finals match-up should be in the motivational arsenal as well. In the 2011 championship game, where Japan was the surprise finalist over Sweden, U.S. fans felt empathy toward Japan, a country still recovering from the devastating earthquake and Tsunami that hit the country in March.

The U.S. team had a series of chances to put the finals out of reach, yet failed to do so, and despite being down 2-1 in extra time, Japan produced its own heroics, tying the score in the 117th minute to force penalty kicks. Team USA simply failed to handle the pressure of the moment, and Japan dominated the penalty kicks 3-1 to seal the deal for its first Women's World Cup Championship.

A few side-notes: what happened to Canada – a former powerhouse? And wow, China didn't even qualify? And the real questions are – does anyone remember and will anyone care? These questions were posed to REAL SPORTS publisher by longtime REAL SPORTS contributor Brian Straus.

Amy Love's, REAL SPORTS publisher, response was: "I can say that during the tournament, the answer was yes they cared. During her recent business travels to Germany (her day job is running brand and communications on a global basis for a public tech company), Lufthansa Airlines distributed Women's World Cup chocolates to passengers, and even the



Frankfurt airport bar got caught up in the excitement, but when Love recently asked a colleagues in Japan about the Women's World Cup, including a working mother whose daughters play soccer, their reply was much like those in the United States — no one remembers, and no one really cares.

This is the biggest issue with women's sports. Women's World Cup happens every four years, and every four years there are the summer Olympic Games. But with women's pro soccer unable to gain a foothold in this country, the ability to create a passionate, sustainable fan base seems out of reach. So what works for us, is we have a dedicated group of young women willing to give it their all for a piece of the national spotlight during these international events; what works against us is our inability to sustain professional options in women's athletics.



Japanese captain Homare Sawa (10) raises the trophy and celebrates with her teammates following the final of the FIFA Women's World Cup at FIFA Women's World Cup Stadium in Frankfurt Germany. Japan won the FIFA Women's World Cup on penalty kicks after tying the United States, 2-2, in extra time.

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Sports Person of the Year: Pat Summit



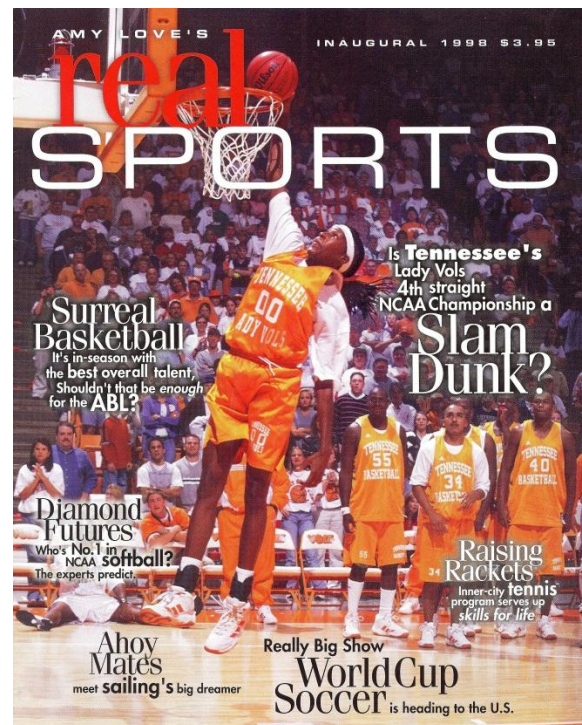
Tara VanDerveer greets Pat Summit before the Stanford women's basketball team beat Tennessee 97-80 at Maples Pavilion on December 20, 2011.

In 1997, when REAL SPORTS was conceived, the University of Tennessee basketball team was on a roll, having won the NCAA Women's titles in 1996 and 1997. As we prepared for the inaugural issue, to be released at the start of the 1998 college basketball season, the Lady Vols were riding a three-year consecutive championship run and it was clear who or what should be on our inaugural cover.

As an upstart magazine based in California, competing with two larger, better-funded brands (Sports Illustrated for Women and Conde Nast's Women's Sports and Fitness), it was unclear if Tennessee would grant us access to its midnight madness event to capture the season kick-off.

All concerns were quickly dissipated as Pat Summit and her basketball program welcomed us and the REAL SPORTS mission to change the way mainstream media cover women's sports. Amy Love, founder and publisher, sent the magazine's lead editorial director, Tracie Cone, and photo director, Ana Marie dos Remedios to Knoxville to capture the moment, and the REAL SPORTS staff will never forget the stories the two of them shared of how great Summit and her team were.

The image dos Remedios captured for the inaugural cover photo epitomized the heart of what REAL SPORTS was going to be about. It was a shot of Michelle Snow going up for a dunk, with the Tennessee men's basketball team (it was a joint midnight madness session) watching in awe and anticipation. We were proud to be the first magazine committed to the active, real portrayal of women athletes, and



we enjoyed breaking the stereo-type that an amazing number of people has as they assumed the cover shot was of a guy throwing it down.

One of our direct competitors offered advice the week of the launch and said the cover choice was a complete miss, while complimenting us on our content. But nothing could have been further from the truth. The inaugural cover asked: “Is Tennessee’s Lady Vols 4th Straight NCAA Championship a Slam Dunk?”

Ultimately, the answer was no, but a statement was made. Pat Summit provided the anchor story for REAL SPORTS, lending credibility from the start.

Now, as Pat valiantly fights an opponent far more challenging than any sports foe —Alzheimer’s disease — we at REAL SPORTS want her to know we join fans across the country (and beyond) who say, “We have your back.”

Thank you Pat for all that you have done, and will continue to do, for the game and for the people associated with it. [RS]

REAL SPORTS Most Important Moments in Sports is published each year and provides a unique history and perspective regarding the success and challenges experienced in women’s sports.

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