

real
SPORTS e-Zine
The Authority in Women's Sports™



2013 Most Important Moments In Sports

Persistence and dedication are two words that continually resonate within REAL SPORTS Most Important Moments in Sports annual editions. This year is no exception. Whether you are Robin Roberts fighting cancer; are the believers of women's soccer, which embarked on a third attempt at a professional league; are part of the ongoing push for inclusion and acceptance; are our sportswoman of the year, Diana Nyad, or are any of the other moments we selected, these two words exemplify women's sports.

As REAL SPORTS enters its 16th year of publishing and its 11th year of publishing this annual edition, persistence and dedication also describe the team that brings to life REAL SPORTS Most Important Moments in Sports each year. For six years, REAL SPORTS, was a print publication with a readership base of more than 300,000, before it transformed into the online annual editions. Regardless of its form, with each release, REAL SPORTS remains committed to providing a unique history and perspective regarding the successes and challenges in women's sports.

The REAL SPORTS team now does this as a labor of love rather than the profession it once was. This provides some unique opportunities for us to continue to influence the perceptions of women's sports. To be part of the change you want to see requires persistence and dedication. You, our readers, may be surprised by how you can influence perspectives and opinions about women's sports, too.





Dec. 2013: My daughter Madison and I are season ticket holders for Stanford women's basketball.

If your company hires athletes for sales conferences, ask about including and paying a female athlete.

If your company names its conference rooms after Olympic athletes, include some female athletes, and perhaps place a picture in the room of her in action. If you are watching the Winter Olympic Games in February, strike up a conversation about the female athletes with your coworkers and engage with online conversations.

We are all empowered to be part of the change we want to see. Just ask eighth-grader Rebekah Araujo, who we spotlight in this edition. It takes more than ideas though, as the Val Ackerman report on women's basketball points out, there is a decline in women's basketball attendance, so yes it is important to attend women's sporting events. To that end, we applaud the fans of the Portland Thorns soccer team for their outstanding attendance figures.

Please take a moment to share this year's edition with your friends on social media. I also invite you to start a dialogue about this year's picks. [REAL SPORTS MAGAZINE](#) on  and [@realsportsmag](#) on  and use #RSMIMIS



Aug. 2013: Brandi Chastain, along with several other male athletes, were paid an appearance fee to interact with NetApp customers and partners during an event held at AT&T Park in San Francisco.

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#10 Making a name

For athletes seeking to participate in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, this was their year to prepare for, and in many cases but not all, qualify for the Games.

Ski Jumping

There's a great deal of buzz around ski jumping, which is making its Olympic debut, including Visa's sponsorship of the U.S. team. The United States enters the 2014 World Cup season ranked No. 1 in the world for the second straight year. Ski jumpers Lindsey Van and Jessica Jerome are joined by 2013 world champion Sarah Hendrickson. However, Hendrickson will miss the start of the World Cup season as she continues rehab for the knee she injured during a training jump. She is expected to be ready for the Olympic Games.

Bobsled

Similarly, the U.S. women's two-man bobsled team swept the podium at the World Cup on Dec. 7, 2013, a feat that has eluded an American team since 2001. Elana Meyers and Aja Evans took the gold, while Jamie Greubel and Lolo Jones, and Jazmine Fenlator and Lauryn Williams tied for second. The dominance the squad displayed establishes an expectation for Sochi. In a play taken from the men's bobsled team, the women sought outstanding track sprinters to join the team. Williams, a 4 x 100 Olympic gold medalist, was named to the national team in her first year of competition.

Short-track Speed Skating

For the first time, the U.S. will not be competing in short-track speed skating relays in the Olympics, although three athletes will compete in individual events. For a sport that has gained tremendous notoriety because of Apolo Anton Ohno, fans may be wondering, "what gives?"



Feb. 2013: Sarah Hendrickson is lifted by her teammates after taking the gold at the World ski Championships. Hendrickson finished second overall in World Cup standings.





Dec 2013: Bobsled Team U.S.A. sweeps with 1, 2, 2 finishes at the World Cup.

Making a Name Continued....

In mid-November, the Short-track speed skating World Cup was held in Russia, the second of two qualifying events. During that competition, the U.S. women were disqualified, and since the team placed seventh in its first qualifying event, it failed to qualify as one of the top eight countries.



#9 Robin Roberts Returns

In February 2013, America welcomed Robin Roberts back to “Good Morning America.” While no longer a sportscaster, Roberts will forever have an endearing relationship with sports fans because of her years at ESPN and ABC sports.

Roberts was selected for this year’s Most Important Moments in Sports edition because of her tenacity, openness and commitment to being such a formidable competitor against cancer.

In the summer of 2012, Roberts announced that she was battling myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS), a collection of medical conditions involving ineffective production of blood cells in the bone marrow. She took on the fight like any top athlete seeking to be top-ranked; however, this had far greater implications. It wasn’t Roberts’ first time facing cancer: in 2007, she beat breast cancer with surgery, chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

While going public with her latest health challenge, Roberts elevated visibility for “Be the Match” donor registry in a staggering way — the National Marrow Donor Program, which operates the program, experienced a 1,800% increase in donors overnight.



#8 Head Games



Jun. 2013: Abby Wambach celebrates scoring her second goal of the match, tying Mia Hamm’s record during an international friendly between the U.S. and the Korea Republic.

Sports language is filled with clichés. Two of the most frequently heard are: “Records are made to be broken,” and “You’ve got to keep your head in the game.”

In 2013, soccer star Abby Wambach took both literally. On June 20, she used her head to set the record for goals scored in international play, breaking the record held by Mia Hamm.

Wambach, representing the U.S. national team, entered play against North Korea with 156 goals scored, two goals behind Hamm’s record. Of that total, 68 had been attained using her head, the trademark of her attacking and fearless style of play.

It is just fitting then that on a four-goal night, Wambach broke the record on a perfect header fed by a corner kick from Megan Rapinoe.



Jun. 2013: United States forward Abby Wambach scores her third goal of the game off a header beating Korea Republic (KOR) defender Cho Sohyun (8). In doing so, Wambach established the new record for most goals scored in international competitions.



Head Games Continued....

Wambach achieved 160 goals in 207 games, compared to Hamm's 159 in 275 games. The men's record is 109 goals in 148 games, held by Iran's Ali Daei, which makes Wambach the leading scorer in all of international soccer.

Her record currently stands at 164. Barring injury, the distance between her mark and Hamm's will undoubtedly continue to grow. And we might just expect her to pick up a few more U.S. Soccer Female Athlete of the Year awards. 2013 also marked the sixth time Wambach received this honor, a record which, coincidentally, surpassed the five awards held by Hamm.

#7 No Bellyaching Just Action

Five years ago, EA Sports asked fans of its FIFA game whether women's teams should be included in the game. Apparently the answer was no. However, EA Sports says it is again asking fans if women should be included in future editions of their popular game. According to *Videogaming 24/7*, an EA spokesperson has said, "Fans just need to be more vocal."

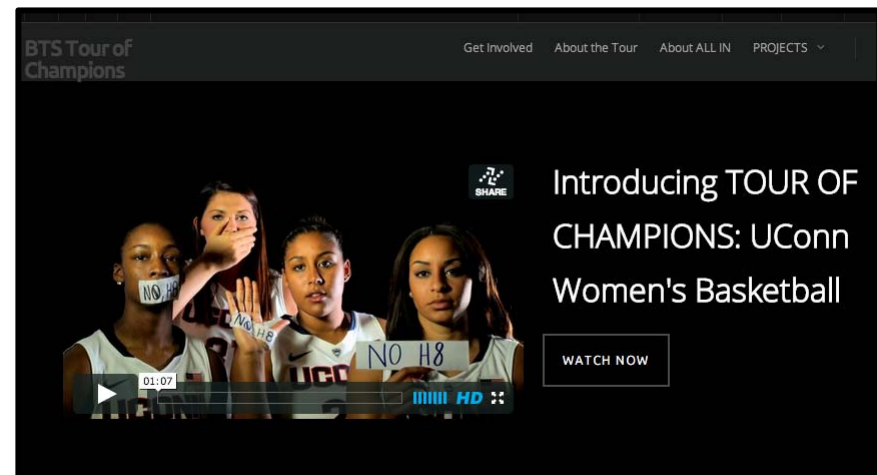
Well, one U.S. eighth-grader could be a catalyst for being more vocal. Rebekah Araujo, of Highland, Md., plays soccer on two teams and has more than 100 goals since she began playing in organized leagues eight years ago. She took action in 2013.

Rather than simply complain that there are no women players in FIFA Soccer 13, Rebecka created a petition on change.org. Her petition, which currently has more than 47,000 signers, is the third one on change.org seeking women's inclusion (one is from Spain).

Keep in mind, this is a global game, with the majority of the EA Sports FIFA titles selling outside the United States. So, readers of REAL SPORTS, if you are willing to be "vocal", go to www.change.org and search for EA Soccer to review the petitions. While you are at it, spread the word on your own social networks.



#6 Towards Inclusion and Respect



Oct. 2013: UConn women's basketball partners with Br{ache the Silence Campaign as the first team to kick off "Tours of Champions", a national initiative to advocate for LGBTQ inclusions in women's college sports.

When basketball player Brittney Griner announced her sexual orientation in April 2013, it caused barely a stir. The same seeming lack of interest followed Abby Wambach's October civil union to teammate Sarah Huffman.

Throughout the year, more and more evidence mounted that this generation is less concerned about an individual's sexual orientation and more dedicated to inclusion and respect for all, at least as far as high-profile athletes are concerned. However, in certain portions of the country, and even among older generations in the more progressive regions, this is not always the case. So, athletes and coaches fear reprisals if they publicize their sexual orientations.

At the University of Connecticut, the men's hockey team and the women's basketball team produced videos for Br{ache the Silence,



Inclusion Continued...

a public awareness campaign. Through campus initiatives and diversity consulting, BTS offers platforms for individuals to share their experiences and voice their concerns, with the goal of inclusion for all. With the launch of the BTS Tour of Champions in October, BTS offers pro and collegiate athletes and coaches a platform to use their fame to influence social change.

Total inclusion for all remains an elusive goal, but with some progressive institutions, change is coming: North Carolina's NCAA champion soccer and lacrosse teams will be featured in a future Tour of Champions, Stanford and the University of California are instituting awareness issues, and the NCAA is a full partner through its NCAA Inclusion Program.

There will be trials for athletes and coaches, gay or straight, who come forward to support the concept that if you can play, you can play, regardless of your sexual orientation. We recognize these efforts, and others throughout the world of men's and women's sports.



Br{ache the Silence co-founders
Colleen McCaffrey and Nevin Caple

Br{ache the Silence:

www.freedomsounds.org

UConn Tour of Champions:

[www.btstourofchampions.org/
/portfolio/uconn/](http://www.btstourofchampions.org/portfolio/uconn/)

Stanford If You Can Play, You Can Play:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=
SArCrXjVOr0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SArCrXjVOr0)

#5 Turf Wars

Led by the Americans, 2013 brought an outcry by women's players that the 2015 Women's World Cup would be played — all 52 matches — on artificial turf. Among the complaints were charges of discrimination, including the statement that men's matches would never be allowed on anything but good, green grass.



Actually, men's matches have been played on artificial surfaces, including hybrid surfaces during the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. World Cup qualifying matches have been played on wholly synthetic surfaces, and Olympic venues have used both synthetic and hybrid, as well as natural grass.

However, there is no dispute that an artificial surface affects the game. Sliding on a synthetic surface often leads to "strawberries" which changes the aggressiveness with tackling. The ball bounces higher. And the impact on the body, particularly knees and ankles, increases fatigue. It is also more difficult to slow down the game, but these issues will exist at all venues and affect all teams.

What makes "Turf Wars" a Most Important Moment in Women's Sports for 2013 is the way in which FIFA responded to the criticism and what FIFA is or is not doing to market host country interest for the Women's World Cup.

The official FIFA response has been to state that the playing surfaces were defined in the proposal to host the World Cup and are a done deal. FIFA's response failed to acknowledge the players concerns for





For the inaugural season, three of the eight NWSL teams played on artificial turf, three on field turf, and two on natural grass.
Aug. 2013: Boston Breakers midfielder Heather O'Reilly dribbles down the wing at Dilboy Stadium, which uses artificial turf.



Turf Wars Continued....

their safety and the integrity of the game. Their response also demonstrates that FIFA failed to push for natural turf during the process. For example, nearly 20 years ago, the artificial surface of the Pontiac Silverdome was covered with sod in preparation for the World Cup.

Canada was awarded the World Cup after presenting its proposal in 2011. They were the only country to bid to host the 2015 Women's World Cup.

Given that only one country bid to host the Women's World Cup points to a breakdown in FIFA's marketing and education to potential host countries.

Aggressively marketing the benefits of hosting an event such as the Women's World Cup ensures that communities are aware of the advantages of investing in them. FIFA's own study points to 26 million women playing the game worldwide. As the governing body, it is FIFA's responsibility to do so. However, the women's game dwarfs in revenue and attendance compared to the men's. So, the message to national team players around the world is, "if you want to play on grass in 2019, you all should ban together and pitch countries that have expressed interest about the merits of hosting the World Cup and the importance of playing on grass." Countries that may bid for the Cup include Australia, Japan, Poland, South Africa, Sweden and Brazil.



#4 Darling of the Dance, Feeling Fatigued

In June 2013, Val Ackerman, former WNBA president and USA Basketball president, shared the findings of her six-month investigation into the state of women's college basketball. Her investigation included more than 100 interviews of coaches, athletic directors, university administrators, media representatives and sports executives.

To many a casual viewer of women's basketball, this may seem odd given the hype and excitement that surrounds ESPN's presentation of March Madness. Yet, those fans close to the game, and those who watch it with a bit more interest, know that the health of the game is in question. Lopsided wins, empty stands and program expenses are more times than not the norm outside the Top 20, if not the Top 10.

Ackerman's white paper provides a frank assessment of women's college basketball. Her findings reveal serious problems regarding the overall health of the game, as well as recommendations on how to move forward to improve it.

Among the recommendations: changing the way the NCAA tournament is scheduled; limiting the number of scholarships per school to try to achieve greater parity; and exploring new ways of seeding the tournament to enhance attendance.

Ackerman's report also suggests changing the way the game itself is played, including a shift to four 10-minute quarters instead of two 20-minute halves, and changing to a 24-second shot clock. The report also noted that interviewees consistently cited the quality of officiating as an ongoing concern.

The Ackerman report makes the Most Important Moments in Sports list for 2013 because of its frank assessment. We wonder, though, will it make a future list? It will if those involved with women's basketball take action on many of Ackerman's recommendations.

Read the report by visiting:

www.wbca.org/includes/media/docs/ncaa_white_paper.pdf



#3 New League, New Approach

The third time seems to be working for pro soccer. With the failed models of the Women's United Soccer Association (2001-03) and Women's Professional Soccer (2009-11) as guides, in 2013, the National Women's Soccer League embarked upon a different approach to ensure a successful return for professional soccer.





Aug. 2013 Portland Thorns goalkeeper Karina LeBlanc (1) punches the ball clear during the championship game.

New League continued...

Recognizing that overhead costs, including player's salaries, caused huge challenges for earlier leagues, NWSL sought the support of national federations — U.S. Soccer Federation, the Canadian Soccer Association and the Mexican Football Federation.

NWSL pays its players \$6,000 to \$30,000 for a five-month season, and this compensation alone would make it tough to recruit the best players when larger dollar amounts are in play internationally. Reportedly, Megan Rapinoe earns \$14,000 a month playing for a team in France. So joining forces with the federations, the national team players also earn their regular salaries, thus making for a palatable relationship. It has proved to be a stronger business model.

With national team members' total compensation subsidized, 55 national team players were allocated in January to eight teams, allowing the fledgling league and its owners to field competitive teams at significantly reduced costs.

Lowering overhead for owners is but one benefit of the involvement of the sport's ruling bodies. The financial involvement of the USSF, CSA and FMF signals recognition that the success of their national teams is, in part, dependent upon the existence of a North American women's professional league.



Aug. 2013 Portland Thorns defeated Western New York Flash 2-0 to win the inaugural National Women's Soccer League championship.

Photo caption prior page:

Aug. 2013 Portland Thorns defender Tina Ellertson (24) goes up for a header with Western New York Flash forward Samantha Kerr (4).

#2 Age Defy





Photo caption prior page: Oct. 2013: WTA Championships – Istanbul. Williams defeats Li La of China 2-6, 6-3, 6-0. The title was Williams' 11th of the season, a new personal record (previous best was eight in 2002).

2010: Serena Williams shown on an outreach trip to Africa.

Age Defy Continued....

After first ascending to the Women's Tennis Association No. 1 ranking in 2002, Serena Williams has assembled an impressive resume. The only woman player to accumulate over \$50 million in prize money, she has won 17 Grand Slam singles titles, 13 Grand Slam doubles titles and two mixed doubles titles. She has been top-ranked in the world six times, most recently in February 2013.

The fact that the 32-year-old is the oldest WTA player to hold the top ranking is why she makes this year's list. Last year, she made REAL SPORTS' list for her triumphant return from injury in 2011 to have a stellar 2012 season, and we said then that we anticipated she had no plans of slowing down. In 2013, Williams won singles titles in the French and U.S. opens, along with the WTA Championship. She retained the number one ranking at the end of this year's season.

We also want to acknowledge that perhaps part of her ability to keep so sharp on the court has been her commitment to also have an impact off the court. Williams is active in numerous pursuits, including building schools and clinics in Africa, working to raise awareness of breast cancer, establishing charity events for victims of natural disasters, and supporting Big Brothers and Big Sisters.



#1 Yes Virginia, Pro Women's Sports Can Draw



Pro Women's Sports Can Draw Continued...

On Aug. 31, 2013, when third-seeded Portland Thorns defeated Western New York for the first NWSL championship, many might think it was the crowning achievement for the team in its inaugural season.

But what set the Thorns apart, not only from its sister clubs but in women's sports, was the team's ability to draw more than 13,000 fans per home game. The WNBA, which just completed its 17th season, averages close to 8,000 fans per game.

Portland has long been recognized as a soccer town. Clive Charles, now deceased, and Tiffeny Milbrett from the University of Portland were NCAA contenders in the early 1990s, and both were supporters of grassroots soccer efforts.

Gaining traction in women's sports is not easy. While neither previous women's soccer leagues placed a team in Portland, the ownership and leadership of Major Soccer League's Portland Timbers saw a market ripe for the start-up National Women's Soccer League.

Even though the Timbers boast a database of 15,000 season-ticket holders, those close to women's sports know that men's sports fans aren't necessarily fans of women's sports. This is part of what makes the Thorns' average attendance such an accomplishment. In their home season finale, they drew an astonishing 17,619 fans.

While hiring an internationally recognized and respected coach (Cindy Parlow Cone) and having players such as Alex Morgan and Christine Sinclair, team leadership needed to leverage the knowledge associated with running a Tier 2 professional sports franchise while connecting with a broader, and at times different, fan base.

Unlike NBA/WNBA teams that were unable to forge a successful symbiotic relationship, the success of the Timbers/Thorns connection has been noticed. On Dec. 12, 2013, the MLS Houston Dynamo were awarded the NWSL's first expansion franchise. The Houston Dash will play in BBVA Compass stadium and be operated by the same front office as the Dynamo.

As for next year, the Thorns have dealt with the unexpected resignation of Cone, who cited the need to spend more time with her family, by hiring veteran coach Paul Riley. Given that the Thorns were able to draw over 12,000 fans even though their star players were absent because of national team duties, it is expected that the Thorns and their fans will continue to raise the bar in 2014.



2013 Sportswoman of the Year: Diana Nyad

Touch the other shore

Starting out on Aug. 31, 2013, 64-year-old Diana Nyad swam 103 miles between Havana and Key West, Fla., in 53 hours, reaching the beach in the early afternoon of Sept. 2. It was her fifth attempt, and her fourth try since turning 60.

She immediately faced criticism centering on the level of support she had, as well as the fact that she wore a protective suit that helped limit dehydration and hypothermia and protected against stinging sea animals. We will leave it to the reader to decide if a bodysuit detracts from the achievement of swimming 103 miles, after being forced to quit four times previously.

Nyad is recognized as REAL SPORTS Sportswoman of the Year for her commitment to accomplish her athletic goal despite age, health, safety, and oftentimes the most threatening obstacle of all, human detractors.

In 1978, having established numerous world records for long-distance swimming, Nyad made her first attempt to swim from Havana to Key West. Swimming within a shark cage, she covered 76 miles before weather forced her to abandon the attempt when the rough seas repeatedly slammed her into the sides of the cage, as well as driving her irretrievably off course. The following year, she set a world record for a long-distance swim, covering 102 miles between Bimini, Bahamas, and Juno Beach, Fla., in less than 28 hours. She accomplished that seemingly superhuman feat on her 30th birthday.

Three decades later, Nyad began training for a second attempt to swim from Cuba to Key West. Determined to prove that the age was not a detriment and that mental preparation was as important as the physical, she was ready by midsummer 2011. This time, there would be no shark cage, instead, escorts would provide shark protection, as well as towing a guide bar over which Nyad would swim to maintain her course.

On Aug. 7, 2011, Nyad set out from Havana, but was forced to abandon this attempt when her asthma flared up. In her third attempt the following month, jellyfish stings caused severe breathing problems, forcing the swim to be aborted after covering 67 miles in 41 hours.

The sea is the ultimate opponent. It knows no sportsmanship, offers no respect, cannot be tricked with wiles, cannot be outrun. The only victory to be won is to reach the other shore.

Despite abandoning the effort three times, and facing growing skepticism, Nyad made a fourth attempt in August 2012, again encountering strong currents and jellyfish stings, as well as dehydration and hypothermia.

Nyad's determination to achieve that victory, for no other reason than to prove that she could, is what makes her REAL SPORTS Sportswoman of the Year.

