

2014 Most Important Moments In Sports



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#10 Taurasi the Tsunami — WNBA Finals

Phoenix Mercury guard Diana Taurasi's play during the 2014 WNBA Championship, in particular the fourth period of decisive Game Three, likely left the Chicago Sky feeling as if they had just been hit by a tsunami.

The Mercury capped a season in which it won a record 29 games by sweeping the Sky in the best-of-five game series, earning Taurasi and Phoenix their third league championship in eight years.

The Sky, which was 15-19 in the regular season, had caught fire in the early rounds of the playoffs to make it to the championship series, but those early playoff heroics didn't carry over into the finals. Even though Phoenix lost Brittney Griner, its starting center and defensive player of the year, to an eye injury during Game Two, the Sky, led by injury-plagued Elena Delle Donne, could not escape the inevitable.

In Game Three, Taurasi demonstrated why, at age 32, she remains one of the greatest scorers and playmakers in league history by scoring 14 of her 24 points in the fourth period to lead the Mercury to an 87-82 win. In the end, she was the championship MVP for the second time in her career. [RS]



[Watch Diana Taurasi hit the go ahead bucket to lead her team to victory in the WNBA Finals](#)

9 America's pastime is a hit — USA Baseball

Although the number of girls playing high school baseball is low relative to that of boys (1,259 girls versus 474,791 boys in 2013, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations), baseball enjoyed several moments in 2014 where female players shined.

While the national interest was piqued by the appearance of Mo'ne Davis in the Little League World Series, the LLWS was by no means the only event of note. After a year of no competition, the U.S. National team returned to action, competing for the Women's Baseball World Cup in Miyazaki, Japan.

On Aug. 21, one day after Davis' team was eliminated from the LLWS, USA Baseball selected the women's national team after three days of tryouts at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif. Among of those selected was Sarah Hudek.

Under manager Jonathan Pollard, the roster spent just six days working together before heading to Japan. In the first round of the World Cup, the U.S. team outscored its opponents by a combined 34-7, defeating Taipei, the Netherlands and Canada while advancing to the medal round. After defeating Australia, the team twice lost to Japan, leaving Miyazaki with the silver medal. Not bad for a team that had been playing together for just three weeks.

The star for USA Baseball was 17-year-old Sarah Hudek, the daughter of former Houston Astros All-Star pitcher John Hudek. Hudek is a left-handed reliever and outfielder on her high school baseball team in Sugar Land, Texas, and she was named the most outstanding player for Team USA. She was 6-for-12 at the plate, with three walks and two runs scored, and she pitched 13 innings with a 0.69 earned-run average. [RS]



August 25, 2014, Alexa Maldonado dives into second base during a USA Baseball scrimmage held at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California
Photo Courtesy: USA Baseball, Photo Credit: © Juan Ocampo
Additional photos available on the Dec. 11 www.realsportsmag.blogspot.com post.

8 Game of firsts — The 2014 Winter Olympics

The 2014 Winter Olympics at Sochi, Russia, featured a score of multiple-medal performances by outstanding athletes, first medals for countries, and unfortunately, not the first of what has become too many figure-skating judging discrepancies.

Slovenian skier extraordinaire Tina Maze finished tied for the gold in the downhill, earning the first gold medal for Slovenia in any Winter Olympics event, and later, she won a gold medal for the giant slalom.

Belarus' Darya Domracheva was dominant in the biathlon, entering five events and taking the gold in three to become, like Maze, the first Winter Olympic champion from her nation. Domracheva brought home half of the six medals won by Belarus at Sochi.

Norway's Marit Bjoergen became the most-awarded female Winter Olympian in history, having won six gold medals out of her total of 10 medals. In 2014, she took gold for the 15-kilometer skiathlon, the 30k freestyle, and in the team sprint.

Dutch speed skater Ireen Wuest entered five events, winning silver in the 1,000-meter, 1,500m and 5,000m events and gold in the 3,000m and in the team pursuit. Wuest became the Netherlands' most decorated Winter Olympian and has suggested that she may return for the 2018 Games.


However, it wouldn't be the Olympics without a figure-skating controversy. With a scoring system that is overly complex, a laxness over judges' potential conflicts of interest (one judge was married to the general director of the Russian figure skating federation) and past misbehaviors on the part of some judges (Ukrainian judge Yuri Balkov has previously been suspended for prejudging events), no winter sport generates more cries of foul than figure skating.

When Russian skater Adelina Sotnikova won the gold over favorite Yuna Kim of South Korea, there were quick accusations of favoritism, followed by equally quick denials from the International Olympic Committee. Inflated scores for Russian skaters became a hot topic of debate, and the makeup of the judging panel was questioned.

The IOC needs to ensure that such controversies are avoided in future events, both to protect its reputation and to ensure fairness to the athletes. Otherwise, the integrity of the sport will continue to be questioned. [RS]




#7 Tales of the unbeaten — NCAA Div. I Women's Basketball

A photograph of Coach Geno Auriemma on the sidelines during a basketball game. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a striped tie. He has his hands on his hips and is looking towards the court with a serious expression. The background shows a crowd of spectators in a gymnasium.

In championship games, where confidence and belief in oneself and the team can be as important as the skills of the players and team, UConn's history likely cast a long shadow on the minds of the Notre Dame players and coaches — this was the Huskies' third undefeated season after all. Plus, in eight previous title-game appearances, UConn had never lost and had won three in the preceding five years before securing this one, its fourth in six years.

Couple this with the UConn men's team winning the championship the day before, the expectations were there for Coach Geno Auriemma and his team to repeat what had only been done once before — a school's men's and women's programs both winning the championship. Connecticut did it in 2004. [RS]

Publisher's note: Want to learn more about the UConn and Notre Dame rivalry, check out [this 2014 ESPN NCAA Women's Final Four rivalry feature..](#)

A photograph of two UConn women's basketball players sitting on the bench. They are wearing dark blue jerseys with "UConn" and the university logo. They are looking towards the court with focused expressions. The background shows other spectators and the gymnasium setting.

For the first time in NCAA basketball history, two undefeated women's teams — the University of Connecticut and Notre Dame — met to decide the 2014 national champion. But like so many title games, regardless of sport, this game was quickly made lopsided after UConn went on an 18-5 run in the second half after leading by seven at the half. The Huskies dominated the board, compiling a 53-31 advantage, including 22 offensive rebounds.

#6 Abiding by Your Principles — International Olympic Committee (IOC) Adds Anti-discrimination Clause to Host City Contracts

Shortly before the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, a series of anti-gay “propaganda” laws were announced by Russian authorities. Active and former Olympians began protests before the Games began and continued throughout the events. The athletes cited Principle 6 of the Olympic Charter, which states: “Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic movement.”

The U.S. government joined in the protests, with the Sochi Games becoming the first since 2000 at which the opening ceremonies were not attended by the president, vice president or first lady. President Barack Obama strengthened the protest by naming openly gay athletes to the official United States delegation, which was led by former Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano. Ice hockey player Caitlin Cahow, figure skating legend Brian Boitano and tennis legend Billie Jean King all sat with the delegation at either the opening or closing ceremonies.

In response to the protests and to pressure from organizations including Athlete Ally and Human Rights Watch, the International

Olympic Committee announced in September that an anti-discrimination clause based on Principle 6 will be included in the binding contract between the IOC and host cities. The IOC has informed the three finalist cities competing for the 2022 Winter Olympics – Oslo, Norway, Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Beijing – of the change to the final contract.



The move is expected to help avoid a repeat of the furor surrounding the Sochi Olympics, where many athletes and spectators feared an increase in arrests or homophobic attacks. In developing and announcing the anti-discrimination clause, the IOC is putting pressure on other athletic governing bodies to take similar steps when selecting sites for their events.

FIFA, soccer’s governing body, has the men’s World Cup scheduled for Russia in 2018, and in Qatar – where homosexuality is illegal – in 2022. Whether it is too late to have an effect on those events is debatable, but the IOC’s move is well received. [RS]

5 Still Playing to Empty Seats — Women's Sports Attendance Remains a Challenge



REAL SPORTS' No. 1 Most Important Moment in Sports in 2013 was that the Portland Thorns of the National Women's Soccer League drew more than 13,000 fans per home game. However, in 2014 women's sports at the professional and collegiate levels continue to perform before nearly empty stands.

The question of "why do women play before empty seats?" is raised every year, and the answer to the question depends upon your perspective and where you live.

Some will argue that there is simply a limited fan base. Others will argue that in larger cities where there is direct competition from male leagues and other entertainment choices that there are simply too many options for a limited pool of fans to gain a foothold.

In some cases, it's the quality of play and competition that limits the fan base. We are after all a country that loves winners, and just because you have a college or pro team, regardless of gender, doesn't mean a fan base will automatically materialize. In addition, smaller operating budgets for women's athletic organizations and limited exposure from the media keep them from gaining notice from local fans.

And in some cases there remains bias about gender roles and sports, as well as a lack of familiarity about women athletes in some sports. Perhaps finding more suitable venues for smaller crowds that present the appearance of the event being well attended will help. Certainly it would look better than a crowd of 2,500 in an arena built for 15,000 being broadcast on TV.

However, there are some examples where the right location makes a difference. The Pacific Northwest is a soccer haven, for both

women's and men's professional soccer, and as a result, the Thorns have thrived.

Relocating the WNBA's floundering Orlando, Fla., franchise to rural Connecticut in 2003 at first raised eyebrows, because the nearest large population center, in Hartford, was more than 40 miles away. Yet the renamed Connecticut Sun sold out its first game and has continued to draw crowds and make money. The absence of direct competition for local sports events was one factor in the franchise's success, as was the proximity to the University of Connecticut's rabid and loyal women's basketball fans in Storrs, 30 miles away.

While not being very good usually leads to low attendance, being really good doesn't necessarily guarantee good attendance. For example, Stanford has a long record of excellence in women's basketball – it has appeared in six Final Fours in the last seven years, 12 times in total, and yet the team has had only six sold-out games since 2007, with none in 2014, including its meeting with then-No. 1 UConn.

Stanford University is surrounded by a multitude of professional and collegiate sports teams and entertainment options, and there are only so many events Bay Area fans can attend. Perhaps this is why Stanford went to flexible ticket prices for marquee games a few years ago, and dynamic pricing over the last two years.

What this means is, for a 2014 Stanford season-ticket holder for a lower reserved seat, the UConn ticket cost \$47. For the Cardinal's game against Texas and for Pac-12 Conference games, tickets cost \$28, \$12 for nonconference games, \$10 for exhibition games.

Stanford's flexible and dynamic ticketing generates more income for the program given the assumption of a limited fan. [RS]



When the CBS Sports Network announced its historic new talk show featuring an all-female cast produced and directed by women, it promised something that had never before been attempted on any network. The show, which brings together women sportscasters, former executives and former athletes to discuss sports from their experiences and perspectives, is indeed something new.

We applaud the idea and the potential for this show, but as the authority in women's sports, we must also ask, has the exuberance about having the first sports show hosted, produced and directed by women created an inwardly focused show that is already in need of an overhaul?

Several weeks into the show's run, the show doesn't seem to have found its niche. The overwhelming subject matter has been focused on the NFL, NBA and MLB, with NCAA football and basketball also receiving extensive discussion. Guests have included current and retired athletes, fellow CBS sportscasters such as Boomer Esiason, and coaches from teams about to appear in major games, frequently games to be broadcast on CBS or CBS Sports Network.

Critical to any business' success is defining your target audience and delivering a product or service that your audience will pay for, whether that be with money or with time, as is the case for a TV show. You also have to pay close attention to how you brand and promote the product.



To date, the majority of guests have represented male sports, including this segment with Marcus Mariota.

In the case of “We Need to Talk,” which premiered Sept. 30, it's unclear who the show is seeking as its target audience. Men and women watch and consume sports differently. Just watch Sunday afternoon football or the Olympics – are we talking stats and fantasy leagues or compelling stories?

With this show, the participants are presented in an “eye-candy” manner, with fashion tops, dresses and heels that are off-putting to many men and women from a contextual point of view, as they discuss personal stories about domestic violence and deeper conversations with, primarily, male athletes oftentimes sitting on a couch.

Key to success is also sports knowledge and insight credibility. The women involved with the show all have great sports



or professional pedigrees, yet key to the onscreen-credibility test is developing trust and rapport with your audience.

There's a proven broadcast model where acclaimed athletes transition into being successful color commentators. But just because you're highly acclaimed in your sport, does not necessarily make you the sportscaster superstar that positions you to speak across a wider berth of sports and topics. Gaining confidence and trust with the show's audience will not be easy. The bar is high and viewers will watch if this bond is created for insight and perspectives about the sports this show covers.

We wonder if a more effective model for building a solid viewership for the show's 10 p.m. Eastern time slot might be to bring together passionate and purposeful women who can speak to the games and sports in a fluent way while leveraging color commentary from the star cast.

And lastly, we must ask about the decision for the name, and thus its brand. This goes back to the basic premise of who's your target audience. If it's women, then "We Need to Talk" might work if you build the associations to it quickly and deeply. Yet, if

your audience is men, basic audience research should have highlighted that that particular phrase, "We Need to Talk," stereotypically strikes fear in most guys.

This show has the opportunity to capitalize on being different and bring an audience together that values the thoughts and perspectives of women while discussing both men's and women's sports. It's early, and interest and momentum are still high, so it's important to act quickly. The CBS team should take a step back and reassess its game plan and come out with a revised look for the second half! There are a lot of fans who want to see the show succeed, including REAL SPORTS. [RS]

Publisher's note: If CBS Sports network is not part of your broadcast lineup, you can see a variety of "We Need to Talk" segments on [YouTube](#).

#3 Biggest single payday in professional tennis — \$4 million goes to Serena





The 2014 Women's Tennis Association campaign was especially financially rewarding for Serena Williams as she pocketed \$4 million in a single day. Williams earned \$3 million plus a \$1 million bonus after winning the U.S. Open, because she had won the U.S. Open Series before the start of that major. That is the single biggest payday in the history of professional tennis.

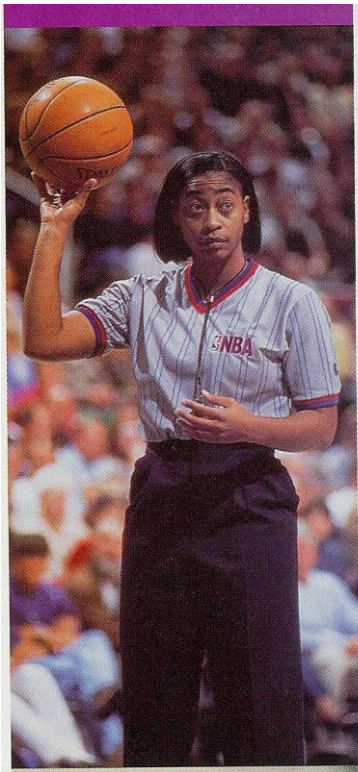
Finishing the year ranked No. 1 was not a foregone conclusion given her early exits in the first three majors — viral infections and injuries plagued Williams during the early part of the year. But despite these challenges, 2014 marked the fourth time she has ended the season ranked NO. 1 (2002, 2009 and 2013), and she became the fifth player to hold No. 1 the whole season, joining such vaunted company as Chris Evert (who did it first in 1977), Martina Navratilova, Monica Seles and Steffi Graf.

With the 2014 U.S. Open title, Williams is now tied with Evert and Navratilova with 18 Grand Slam titles; only Graf has more Grand Slam titles (22). No doubt Williams has her eyes set on surpassing that mark.

In her quest to be the all-time best, it's interesting to note that the top 100 currently ranked women's singles tennis players only one, her sister Venus, is older. [RS]

#2 Hiring the Best — Women in the NBA





While sometimes improved gender equity might have been in response to legal pressures or competitive encroachment, National Basketball League executives, players, owners and coaches have demonstrated over time a desire to simply develop and hire the best in ways other major pro leagues don't.

Take Violet Palmer and Dee Kantner, who in 1997 as the league faced an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint by referee Sandra Ortiz-Del Valle, became the first women to officiate male major-league games. The WNBA also responded to the American Basketball League challenge with the WNBA. In both cases, irrespective of instigation or

contributing factors, the NBA's moves have stood the test of time. Palmer remains an active NBA referee, and the WNBA's longevity is remarkable for women's professional team sports.

In 2014, 17 years after Palmer and Kantner oversaw their first games, Lauren Holtkamp became the NBA's third female referee. Holtkamp advanced through the referee training program, which includes experience in the D-League, that was established in 2001 and has developed 40 refs in that time.

Former WNBA All-Star guard Becky Hammon was hired as an assistant coach by the San Antonio Spurs, becoming the first full-time female assistant coach in the league's history. Former trial lawyer Michele Roberts became the first woman to be named Executive Director of the NBA Players Association in July 2014. And after a raucous summer that saw the Los Angeles Clippers sold, new owner Steve Ballmer's first hire was Gillian Zucker, to oversee business operations.

The trail blazed by these women is marked by skill and experience as well as the power of networking and influence. Unlike many senior roles in professional sports, whether held by men or women, neither of these women had family ties to the organizations.

Becky Hammon was a three time All-American at Colorado State, yet was undrafted by the WNBA. In 1999, she signed with the New York Liberty as a rookie and eventually was traded to the San Antonio Silver Stars in 2007. It wouldn't be the first time she would be passed over. Overlooked for the U.S. Olympic team for the 2008 Beijing Games, Hammon drew considerable criticism (her patriotism was even questioned) when she became a naturalized Russian citizen and played instead for Russia, winning a bronze medal.

During her 16-year WNBA career, Hammon maintained ties with the Spurs, and while recovering from a knee injury in 2013 was a coaching intern and observed Spurs practices and joined the team and coaching staff watching scouting films. Her hiring this year makes her the first woman coach in any of the so-called big four



United States sports leagues – Major League Baseball, National Hockey League, National Football League and the NBA.

Michele Roberts was selected out of more than 300 candidates to revamp the NBA Players Association despite no previous experience with either professional sports or labor union management. Roberts, who grew up in public housing in the Bronx, studied law at Berkeley and rose to full partner at a prestigious Washington law firm, where her skills as a lawyer have been highly praised, before applying for the NBA job. She had to convince union representatives from each NBA team that she was the person for the job. She received 32 of the 34 votes cast and became the first woman to lead a North American pro sports union.

New owner Steve Ballmer hired Gillian Zucker as president of business operation when he acquired the Los Angeles Clippers. She

previously was president of Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, Calif., the largest racetrack on the West Coast. Zucker has a varied background in sports, working for baseball and hockey teams and public relations for the NFL, and she was an outside-the-family, outside-the-industry hire for Ballmer.

Zucker joins a special group of women sports executives, including Jeanie Buss, a part owner and president of the L.A. Lakers, and Nancy Lieberman, the assistant general manager for the Dallas Mavericks' D-League team, the Texas Legends; Katie Blackburn, executive vice president for the NFL's Cincinnati Bengals and Rita LeBlanc, vice chairwoman of the board for the New Orleans Saints; Lesa France, CEO of the International Speedway Corp. and board member of NASCAR; and Kim Ng, senior vice president of baseball operations for MLB. [RS]

#1 Most Important Moment in Sports for 2014: Women Drivers, It's No Joke — 4-man Bobsled Goes Gender Neutral



It might become necessary to come up with a new name for four-man bobsledding. It was introduced into the Olympics in 1924, and the two-man event followed in 1932. It wasn't until 2002 that the two-woman event entered the Olympics. In the four-man cars, the drivers have always been men.

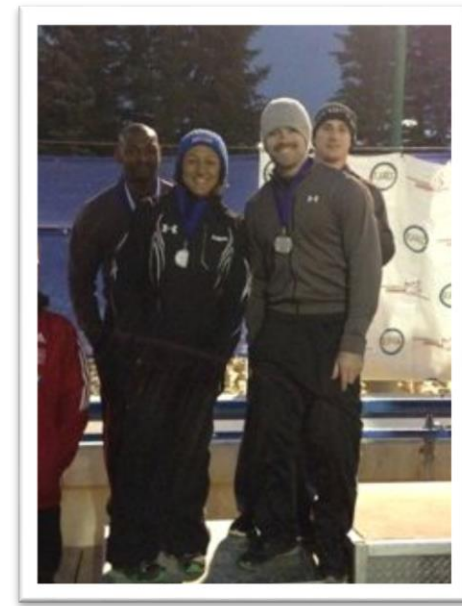
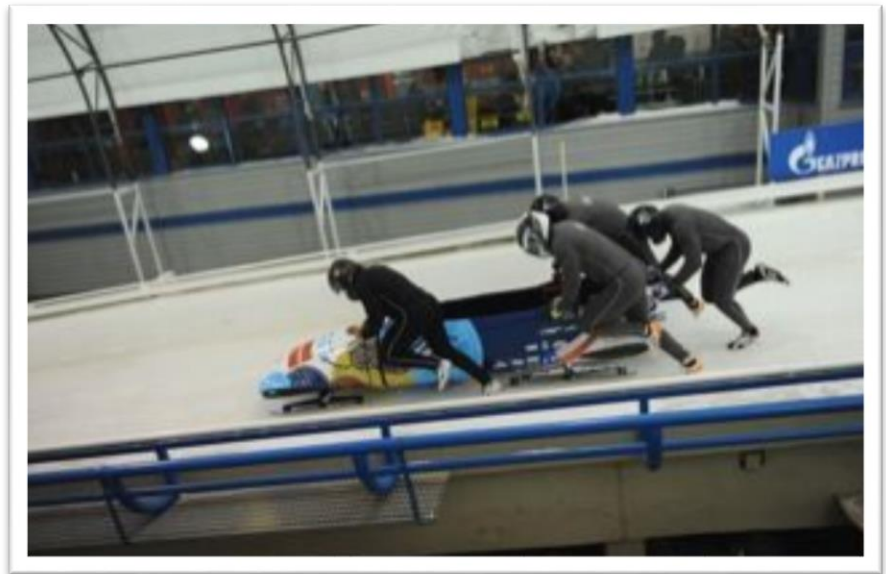
Fast-forward to 2014, and the sport's governing body, the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation (FIBT), announced that women will be allowed to drive four-member sleds. The FIBT calls this new configuration "pilots and push athletes." This theoretically allows female drivers to compete

against male drivers without losing the advantage of the strength and the weight of the of the push athletes. Thus four-man bobsledding – which the FIBT refers to as bobsleighting – is now gender neutral.

At the North American Cup in Park City, Utah, in mid-November, this new configuration was used with female pilots. Former Olympic two-woman champion Kaillie Humphries piloted the Canadian four-seat bobsled to a sixth-place finish, and Sochi Games silver-medalist Elana Meyers Taylor was seventh in the U.S. sled. At the North American Cup held on November 23, 2014 in Calgary, Meyers Taylor and her teammates, Dustin Greenwood, Adrian Adams and Carlo Valdes, improved their performances and won two medals, a silver and a bronze.

Meyers Taylor and Humphries probably will be the only women to compete in this year’s World Cup competitions. Although there is no shortage of women who want to drive four-seaters, there is insufficient time to develop resumes for 2015 cup events. A set number of lower-tier races is required before being allowed to enter World Cup events, and Meyers Taylor and Humphries plan to fulfill the requirements by racing in Canada and France.

So as we embrace a winter wonderland in the northern hemisphere this year, girls and boys all over can jointly embrace sledding and can dream of teaming together for Olympic gold. [RS]



Top photo: December 20, 2014 World Cup competition in Calgary – sleds piloted by Humphries (not shown) finished 15th and Meyers Taylor 16th out of 17 total sleds.

Photo credit: Charlie Booker

Bottom photo: December 7, 2014. Meyers Taylor piloted her team to silver medals in a World Cup qualifying race.

Photo credit: Meyers Taylor

MO'NE DAVIS
SHOWS US THAT IN BASEBALL,
anything is possible.



While there were many outstanding performances in sports in 2014, one athlete, with the support of her team, the Taney Tigers, electrified the country. Her performances garnered wins, presidential acknowledgement, Major League Baseball first-pitches, and even a TV commercial. All of which came about after the NCAA confirmed doing so wouldn't alter her college eligibility status, even though she's not yet in high school.

At the 2014 Little League World Series, Philadelphia 13-year-old Mo'ne Davis was the star of the show, not solely because of her sex, but because of her pitching. Most pitchers her age at the LLWS level throw a fastball at 50-60 mph; Davis' heater averages about 70 mph. On the smaller little-league diamond, that is equivalent to a 93 mph big-league pitch. She also has a curveball that breaks 12-6, which keeps hitters off balance.

In August, Davis used her pitching repertoire to earn an 4-0 win, leading Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett to predict she would one day pitch in the major leagues.

One might think after such a summer in which she proclaims pride in “throwing like a girl” that baseball would be her preferred sport. Davis told reporters at the LLWS that pitching isn’t her primary baseball position, preferring to play shortstop and centerfield. She also explained that baseball in fact comes third, after basketball and soccer, in which she is a midfielder.

But her true love is basketball. When she discusses her career goals, they include the WNBA, after running Coach Geno Auriemma’s offense as a point guard at the University of Connecticut, with the expectation of leading it to yet another NCAA basketball championship. It is a goal that may well be feasible, because in December, the eighth-grader made the girls varsity basketball team at Springside Chestnut Hill Academy in Philadelphia.

Davis is not the first girl to participate in the LLWS, nor even the only girl in the 2014 championship (Emma March was at first base and pitched for Vancouver). The first girl to play in the Little League as Maria Pepe in 1972; the first girl to reach the World Series was Victoria Roche, who played on a team from Belgium in 1984. All told, 18 girls have participated in the LLWS, but none generated the excitement like Davis’ appearance, who became the first Little League player to appear on the cover of Sports Illustrated as an active player; it was also the first time any Little League player appeared on the cover page of any major national magazine. Davis also appeared on the front page of the Philadelphia Inquirer for five consecutive days in August, and ESPN

recorded the highest ratings for the LLWS in its history on Aug. 15, the day of her shutout victory.

Maria Pepe’s experience was decidedly different when she broke the league’s gender barrier — protests from opposing teams forced her removal from the field. Legal action to reinstate her was successful, but by the time it was completed Pepe was too old to participate in Little League. Subsequent appearances by girls in the LLWS have been mostly overlooked. However, It was Davis’ dominant performance that drew attention to her participation, and her success at the national level should open the door a bit wider for other girls to compete in baseball. However, given that youth sports are still governed by local leaders who bring their own perspectives about gender neutrality to the oftentimes volunteer role, gender discrimination can remain an issue.

Whether Davis competes in high school baseball or beyond is inconsequential, although we anticipate USA Baseball plans to keep in touch with her, she has made an indelible mark in sports, as well as on the issue of access and participation. Because those who visit the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum will see the jersey Davis wore when she made history.

In the past 12 months, Mo’ne Davis has achieved a never-before-performed feat in baseball, became the subject of a mini-documentary by Spike Lee, won a position on a high school varsity basketball team (and was named a captain by her older teammates) and was named Sports Illustrated Sports Kid of the Year.

We can’t help but wonder what comes next for REAL SPORTS 2014 Sportsperson of the Year. [RS]

Publisher’s Note: In June 2014, Always, a P&G branded product, produced a video about what it means to do something #LikeAGirl. The video spotlights how girls’ confidence can be impacted by other’s opinions and stereotypes. Watching this video brings into focus why Mo’ne Davis’ performance at the Little League World Series and the resulting media attention should have far-lasting impact on the opinions of all.

We here at REAL SPORTS are honored to recognize **Mo'ne Davis** as our 2014 Sportsperson of the Year. Her performances and maturity during and after the Little League World Series got the American public talking on a multitude of levels. The grace with which she, her teammates and coaches, as well as the opposing teams, handled it all are to be applauded. America's pastime clearly has a new superstar who will be remembered for her on-field accomplishments.

As we conclude 2014 though, there were also many other outstanding performances during the year in women's sports other than the 10 we are highlighting, and my letter provides the opportunity to recognize several of these great athletes.

This year, **Lindsey Vonn** overcame a career-threatening injury to lead American women skiers to a sweep of the World Cup downhill event at Lake Louise, Alberta, on Dec. 7, a historic first. And in April, forward **Breanna Stewart** concluded her sophomore year by starting all 40 games for the University of Connecticut and winning the NCAA championship, leading it in scoring (19.4 points) and blocks (2.8) per game. She was also name Associated Press Player of the Year, the third sophomore ever to be so honored (one of the other's was former Husky Maya Moore).

Other notables events and personalities:

- Florida Gators softball pitcher **Hannah Rogers**, who capped her senior year with a 127-30 record, the most wins among active NCAA players. She led her squad to its first Women's College World Series title, was the tournament's most outstanding player and was named Southeast Conference Female Athlete of the Year.
- Maryland teenager **Katie Ledecky**, who set world records in the 1,500- and 800-meter freestyle events and seems to have overtaken Missy Franklin as the world's best female swimmer, given her range from the 200 to the 1,500.
- UFC bantamweight champion **Ronda Rousey** has dominated mixed-martial arts, where she is unbeaten, and she was just signed by Reebok to represent their UFC apparel line. A fighter all her life, Rousey won a bronze medal in judo in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, as well as medals, from bronze to gold, in the Pan Am Games and World Championships.



Amy Love,
Publisher/Founder

- **Lin Dunn** announced her retirement in May, after 44 years of coaching, just a month before her induction into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. Dunn coached the Portland Power in the American Basketball League, the Seattle Storm and Indian Fever in the WNBA, as well as an assistant or head coach for several U.S. national teams. She had a 447-257 record as a college head coach at such schools as Austin Peay University, Mississippi, Miami and Purdue. She reached the NCAA championship seven times and the Final Four in 1994 with Purdue. She is in the halls of fame at Austin Peay and Miami and a past president of the Women's Basketball Coaches Association.

- **Lauren Hill**, the basketball player at Division III Mount St. Joseph in Cincinnati who has diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, a rare and inoperable brain cancer, inspired thousands with her drive and determination. The V Foundation for Cancer Research issued a \$100,000 special grant for pediatric cancer research in her name.

One of the many joys of producing the 14th annual Most Important Moments in Sports edition for REAL SPORTS, is following the amazing accomplishments of outstanding athletes. These annual editions are designed to serve as a historical perspective of the year in women's sports, and the countdown maintains our commitment to being "The Authority in Women's Sports".

Long live sports,

Amy Love
Publisher
Founded 1997

I invite you to expand the discussion around women's sports. 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 at www.realsportsmag.blogspot.com , @realsportsmag on Twitter, or on Facebook: Real Sports Magazine company page