

Women and Sports: Lessons Learned

Women gain confidence from the integration of mind, spirit, and body

Katharyn A. May
Associate professor of nursing

I'm an "ex-jock" — perhaps an odd way for a woman and a professor to describe herself, but the label fits me and a number of my colleagues and friends. We are not necessarily easy to spot — forty-something, fighting an uphill battle to stay fit and active, busy with the other passions in our lives. We often find each other in not completely unexpected places. . . on the track clocking a few miles, in a meeting at the Cuninggim Center, or making fools of ourselves in the stands at the women's basketball games. We share a common bond. We were girls who grew up in the 1950s and '60s doing something girls weren't necessarily supposed to do — playing competitive sports and playing to win.

Those of us who played competitive sports learned some obvious lessons: teamwork, discipline, courage, clarity of purpose. We learned early on to rely on our teammates, to give and take criticism without falling apart and to link individual achievements to a larger, common goal. We learned about private victories and public failures. We learned our bodies could do some pretty amazing things.

Boys learned these lessons more

consistently and shared a common culture of sports, even if they didn't play themselves. Somehow, those of us girls who played competitive sports learned some of the same lessons, but never had quite the same comfortable culture the boys had. It certainly never occurred to us that these were lessons which would make a significant difference in our lives as women. For most of us, the value of those lessons became clear only in retrospect.

Certainly, the lessons we learned from competitive sports weren't all positive. We learned that we had to be of two worlds: the world in which we were expected to get dirty, sweat, yell and drive straight for the goal and the world in which we were supposed to be clean, pretty, quiet and to cheer the boys on. We learned that if we were too focused, too strong, too good, there was a social price to be paid. We learned that boys' sports were the ones that counted, and not to expect anyone on the sidelines for us but maybe our parents and our best friends.

In retrospect, even the negative messages may have had some positive results. Maybe our second-class citizenship as girl athletes forced us to begin to come to grips with what it meant to be female in a male world sooner rather than later. If we played sports that boys also played, we learned that no matter how good we were, we couldn't ever be "as good as

the guys." But since we already knew that was a stupid comparison, maybe we recognized the deeper lesson more readily: that the only really important competition was within.

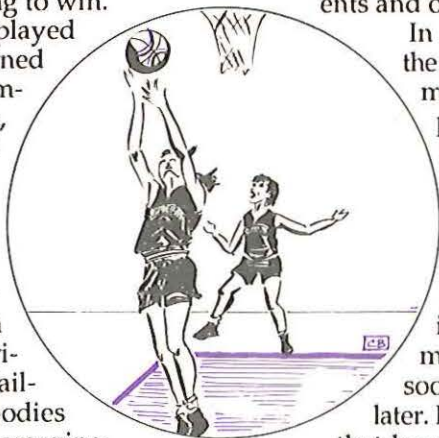
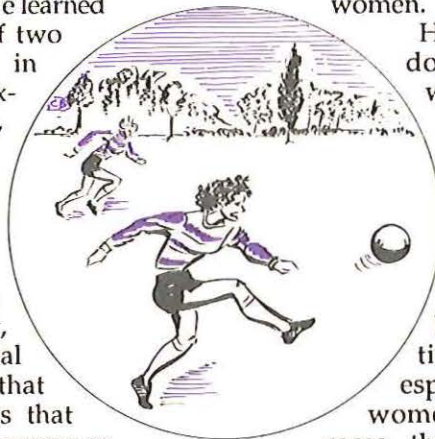
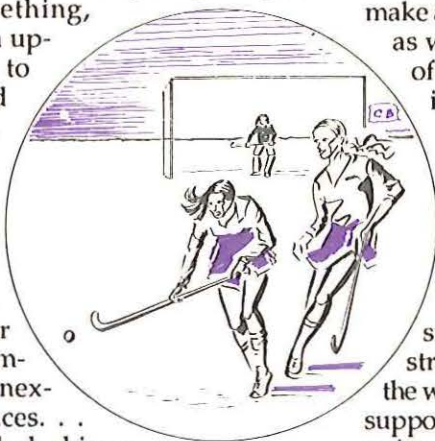
Today, some things seem to have changed for the better. While girls and young women still have unequal access to resources and opportunities to learn and play, at least the inequity is called "a problem" and not "just the way it is." There are now expert coaches and teachers at many levels of women's sports, and a growing number of them are women.

However, the downside for women in competitive sports is still there. The social price may still have to be paid. Women's successes still go largely unnoticed, perhaps especially by other women. In many

cases, this is simply a matter of different interests, different priorities. Perhaps the unique experience of being female doesn't require a place for physical challenge, stories of legendary achievements, and the practice of hero worship.

But sometimes I wonder if women who don't have some personal success in competitive sports or another intense and demanding physical activity don't miss something rather valuable. Those who have experienced it know there is a deep and unshakable confidence that comes from the integration of mind, spirit and body. The element of physical challenge may be key, perhaps because women are not expected to seek out that kind of experience, much less

—see *COMPETITIVE*, page 2



Sexual inequities in the classroom obvious at Vanderbilt

Last year I took a one hundred level political science course with about seventy students, of whom half were female. I had heard, but never actually investigated, the view that, on average, fewer women voiced their opinions in the classroom than men.

So in this particular class, since it was a survey course and its gender distribution was pretty equal, I developed the casual habit of tallying the number of women who spoke out loud as opposed to the number of men. By the end of the semester, the daily average was a dependable twenty-eight men to three women.

Granted my survey was completely unscientific. But in the grand scheme of this issue, my findings were a tiny example of an already expansive field of evidence exposing the reality of gender inequality in the classroom. See, I was so startled by the grossly lopsided results of my tally, that I had to go find if it were representative of most classrooms. So I went to the library at the Margaret Cuninggim Center. Here's what I found:

Kathleen Berryman,
A&S '93



The following are some of the facts from a 1986 report from the Association of American Colleges' Project on the Status and Education of Women:

- Women are more likely to be interrupted.
- Both genders pay more attention when men speak out.
- Women receive less eye contact.
- Twenty to thirty percent of undergraduate women encounter sexual harassment in some form.

This phenomenon of gender inequality in the classroom does not begin the day a student arrives at her college. According to Carol Gilligan, professor of education at Harvard, "eleven year-olds (girls) tend to be full of self-confidence. . . . By fifteen and sixteen, they start to say 'I don't know.'" And statistics from the American Association of University Women support Gilligan's observations. The AAUW's study reveals that although sixty percent of elementary school girls exude confidence, the number drops to twenty-nine percent by high school.

Dr. Sandler from the Association of American Colleges suggests what both men and women can do to make learning a fair experience for both genders:

- In the classroom, treat women and men the same.
- Study your own behavior to see if you inadvertently exclude women.
- Use similar vocabulary to describe the talents and successes of men and women.
- Women should celebrate their accomplishments.

The reader may be thinking, "There goes PC again, dictating what to say and do." But equality allows for a better exchange of ideas, and the AAUW report reminds us that by the year 2000, two out of three new entrants in the workforce will be women.

It's not only important to hear what women have to say, but we can't afford not to. ■

THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Here are provisions of the law signed by President Clinton requiring larger employers to give workers unpaid leave for a family or medical emergency.

- Employers that have fifty or more employees within a 75-mile radius will be covered by the law, which applies to non-profit and governmental organizations as well as businesses.
- Employers will be required to offer workers as much as twelve weeks of unpaid leave after childbirth or adoption, to care for a seriously-ill child, spouse or parent, or in case of an employee's own serious illness.
- Employers will have to continue healthcare coverage during the leave.
- Employers will have to guarantee employees will return to either the same job or a comparable position.
- Employers can exempt "key" employees - defined as their highest-paid ten percent of the work force and whose leave would cause economic harm to the employer.
- Employers can exempt employees who haven't worked at least one year and who haven't worked at least 1,250 hours in the previous twelve months.
- A doctor's certification must be obtained to verify a serious illness. Employer may require a second medical opinion.
- A qualifying condition is defined as the need for continuing care and the inability to perform one's job, or the need to care for an ill family member.
- Employers can substitute an employee's accrued paid leave for any part of the twelve-week period of family leave.

Competitive sports offer women a chance to support one another

—from page 1
excel in it. It may be that the struggle against the odds is the key, and that the physical nature of the challenge is irrelevant.

However, one thing seems certain. Those of us who have taken on the challenge of competition learn one lesson which has special significance for women. By competing with others and with ourselves, we learn how to support each other, how to savor victories against the odds, and how to handle failures and successes, each other's and perhaps most importantly, our own. ■



Women's VU

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Page 2 and 5 photos by Rebecca Fischer

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1993

*Calendar
of
Events*

Margaret
Cuninggim
Women's
Center



Please save and post. Individual flyers for these programs will not be sent.

For further information call the Cuninggim Center at 322-4843.

3 (Saturday)

Advisory Board Meeting for Long Range Planning, Brenda Gilmore, chair, 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Peabody's Kennedy Center, MRL, room 241.

7 (Wednesday)

Self-Image Discussion Group, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., Cuninggim Center. For more information call 322-4843. Meets again April 21.

8 (Thursday)

Organizational meeting of support group for rape survivors. Women faculty, staff, and graduate students interested in a group to meet on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month can express interest either by attending this meeting from noon until 1:00 p.m. or calling the Cuninggim Center.

12 (Monday)

Book Group discusses *Clover* by Dori Sanders. Facilitator is Margaret Meggs. New members welcome. 5:15 p.m. to 6:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

13 (Tuesday)

Lunchtime Book Review. Carroll Young, Clinical Psychologist, VA Hospital, reviews *You Must Be Dreaming* by Barbara Noël with Kathryn Watterson. The book describes the 1984 charges of malpractice against psychiatrist Dr. Jules H. Masserman, former president of the American Psychiatric Association, by his patient, Barbara Noël. 12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

14 (Wednesday)

Writers Workshop meets from 5:15 p.m. to 7:15 p.m., St. Augustine's Chapel. New members welcome. Meets again April 28.

Women's Studies Discussion Group, "The Men's Movement." Last in the series for this semester of discussions at the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center. Facilitated by Melissa Fraser, A&S '93. Especially but not exclusively for undergraduates. Open to everyone. 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., Cuninggim Center. Co-sponsored by Women's Studies.

19 (Monday)

Dissertation Writers Group meets at 4:30 p.m., Cuninggim Center. For more information call 322-4843.

22 (Thursday)

New Approaches To Problem Solving Through Creative Journal Writing led by Miriam Bassuk, L.C.S.W. This workshop combines active practice in solving problems through journal writing. 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., David K. Wilson Hall, room 113. Fee \$10; \$5 students; registration required by April 19, limited to 40 registrants. Scholarships available.

23 (Friday)

The Women in Gold Sneakers Have Arrived: Women's Networks in the Upper Levels of Government. Arlene Holen, Commissioner of the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, lectures on ways to structure a career in government. 12:15 to 1:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center. Co-sponsored with the Center for Health Services.

27 (Tuesday)

Begin Now To Prepare for Retirement. Jean Johnson, Benefits Administrator, Human Resource Services, leads a workshop outlining ways for women to plan as early as possible for retirement. 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., Cuninggim Center. Reservations required.

Gender politics and the MTV generation

Lisa Lewis looks at Madonna, Tina Turner, and others

Barbara Clarke
Women's Center librarian

Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference (Temple University Press, 1990) by Lisa A. Lewis is a study of gender as portrayed on a popular youth-oriented cable television station which commenced broadcasting in 1981.

Many of the videos and programs on MTV are sexist and are aimed primarily at young males, but there are some notable "female-address videos." Lewis' goal was partly "to refute the charge that MTV's visual discourse constitutes an overwhelmingly and uniformly sexist address." She concentrates on the songs and videos of 1983 to 1986, and focuses on four well-known singers: Cyndi Lauper, Tina Turner, Pat Benatar, and Madonna. Lewis shows how their videos can be considered female-address videos; they are aimed primarily at young girls, and often show women and girls in non-traditional roles.

There is a very interesting section on fans and fandom. The writer shows how and why young fans identify with entertainers, and why they often copy their clothing and hairstyles. Lewis also gives a brief history of women in music, and shows how they were often denied a thorough musical education and discouraged from playing certain instruments. Even today girls are handicapped because they are not socialized to understand the mechanisms of sound equipment and electronic instruments.

Gender Basics: Feminist Perspectives on Women and Men (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993) edited by Anne Minas is designed as a textbook for women's studies classes. The editor,

IN THE LIBRARY

New acquisitions in the
Cunningim Center library

who teaches philosophy and women's studies at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, has included about ninety articles on a wide variety of topics. These selections have previously appeared elsewhere, and about one-fourth of the authors are men. The oldest article, by St. Thomas Aquinas, was written in the thirteenth century, but most of the contributions date from the last ten years.

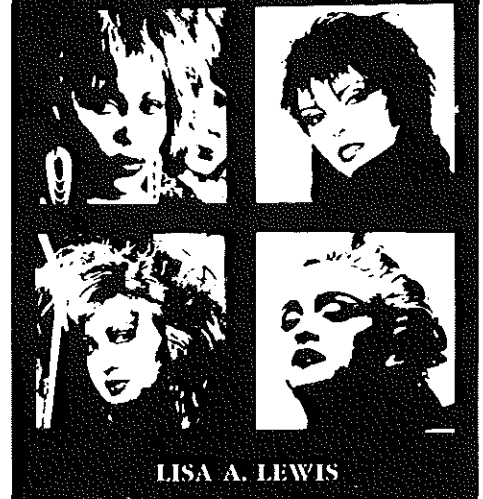
The articles are organized into thirteen main topics, including oppression, love, reproduction, childrearing, sex and sexuality, and rape and sexual harassment. Among the contributors are Gloria Steinem, Susan Brownmiller, Audre Lorde, Robin Warshaw, Simone de Beauvoir, and bell hooks.

Another new acquisition is *Justice, Gender, and Affirmative Action* (University of Michigan Press, 1992) by Susan D. Clayton and Faye J. Crosby; Eleanor Holmes Norton wrote the foreword. This book is a detailed study of affirmative action policies established by companies and organizations to implement federal laws requiring equal employment opportunity.

While affirmative action has been challenged by some, the writers believe that "affirmative measures must be implemented to seek out and correct for the subtle and persistent factors that disadvantage some groups and advantage others." Women and minorities often do not have the same access as

GENDER POLITICS and MTV

Voicing the Difference



white men to education and jobs, and "when the opportunities that people have had to demonstrate their capabilities are not equal, then affirmative action is needed."

Many women believe that they themselves have not been discriminated against, but that females in general are often victims of discrimination. Women tend to feel that their failure to be hired or promoted is not gender-related. One reason for affirmative action is to prevent discrimination against those who do not realize that they are victims.

Many people dislike quotas and mistakenly assume that they are normally part of affirmative action programs. Plans which rely heavily on quotas are usually not effective, as they cause a great deal of resentment. ■

'Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman' at Blair

The Blair School of Music will sponsor "Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman," a symposium highlighting the contributions of women in classical music. The symposium will feature concerts, presentations, discussions and a master class with nationally-prominent composers, performers, conductors, and scholars.

The program is April 15-17 and will feature keynote speaker Joan Tower, a BMI composer. Other participants include Adrienne Fried Block, James Briscoe, Mary Bufwak, Beth Nielsen Chapman, Kate Tamarkin, and others. Blair faculty participants include Amy Jarman, Dana Burnett, Marilyn Shields, Amy Dorfman, Enid Katahn, Maureen Needham Costonis, Lynn Holding, and the Blair String Quartet.

Program is cosponsored by the Margaret Cunningim Women's Center. Registration is required. Call 322-7651.



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MEDICAL CARE ♀ SPIRITUALITY ♀ AWARENESS ♀ LOVE ♀ INTELLECTUAL INTERESTS

Undiagnosed chlamydia can lead to serious complications

One of the most prevalent sexually transmitted diseases in the U.S. is one about which you may not have heard. Chlamydia trachomatis causes three to four million infections every year. Despite these numbers, this infection rarely causes symptoms in women, and therefore often goes undiagnosed until later complications arise.

Risk factors for chlamydial infection are related to sexual activity: women who have a new sexual partner or have a male partner with symptoms of the infection (painful urination, urethral discharge) or have another sexually transmitted disease (especially gonorrhea). Birth control pills may increase the risk because the cervix is unprotected from disease transmission. Barrier methods of birth control like condoms, diaphragms, and spermicidal creams lessen the risk.

Chlamydia is passed from the mucous membranes of the male urethra and penis to the tissues of the female cervix. There, the infection may spread to the uterus and fallopian tubes. If this occurs, the woman may experience severe low abdominal pain and fever, indicating an acute infection in the pelvis.

Hospitalization may be necessary for intravenous antibiotic therapy. Surgical removal of the infected tube and/or ovary may be necessary if an abscess forms.

As mentioned above, many women will have no symptoms of chlamydial infection. However, vaginal discharge, painful urination, and low abdominal pain may indicate its presence especially if there has been exposure to an infected partner within three weeks.

The biggest long-term risk to women is the scarring of the fallopian tubes that results from an infection. The scarring leads to infertility and an increased risk of ectopic pregnancy.

Beth Colvin Huff, RN, MSN



If untreated during pregnancy, the infection can be transmitted to the baby during birth. Pneumonia and conjunctivitis (infection in the eyes) may affect the child. For this reason, most women are tested for chlamydia as a part of their prenatal care.

Testing for chlamydia is done in the office and feels similar to having a Pap smear taken. If present, chlamydia is treated with oral antibiotics. Treatment of the sexual partner at the same time reduces the risk of re-exposure.

Sexually-active women who consider future pregnancies can protect themselves with barrier methods of birth control. Periodic testing may also prevent problems with infertility. If you are concerned about the possibility of chlamydia, discuss these issues with your health care provider. ■

Reader responds to 'inaccuracies' in Pope-Cordle letter

To the Editor:

I am responding to the letter written by Jamie Pope-Cordle in the January 1993 issue. Ms. Pope-Cordle apparently does not understand the Constitution of the United States nor the role of the Supreme Court. She stated your publication selected "a news quote slamming the U.S. Supreme Court's amendments restricting access to abortion." The Supreme Court issues decisions, not amendments. It upholds or overturns lower court's rulings and interprets the Constitution.

Our Constitution has not been amended to protect the "fundamental right to life of any unborn child." Nor has the Supreme Court ruled there is such an implied right in the first trimester. Abortion is still a legal procedure in the United States, although it has been restricted since the landmark decision in *Roe v. Wade* in 1972.

Ms. Pope-Cordle has a right to her opinion and the free expression of it. She should, however, be more accurate in her depiction of legal decisions. Perhaps if she had been involved in the attempt to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, as many of us were, she would have realized the process required to amend the Constitution.

I applaud your publication and its presentation of articles of concern to women. Let's hope there is room for a wide range of expression in a university of Vanderbilt's reputation.

Leslie Boone
Director, Executive Seminars
Owen Graduate School of Management

PERCENT OF PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE ABORTION SHOULD BE LEGAL. . .

A Washington Post-ABC News Poll

	3/31/92	1/17/93
When the woman's life is endangered	87%	91%
When the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest	79	86
When there is a chance the baby will be deformed	63	73
When the women may suffer severe physical health damage	80	86
When the woman's mental health is endangered	70	79
If the parents do not want the child	32	45
If the family cannot afford to have the child	39	49

SOURCES: ABORTION FACT BOOK, 1992 EDITION, THE ALAN GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE AND WHO DECIDES? A STATE-BY-STATE REVIEW OF ABORTION RIGHTS, FOURTH EDITION, 1993, NARAL

Announcements

Additional information on items listed below is available at the Cuninggim Center.

CONFERENCES/SEMINARS

19th Annual National Women's Music Festival, June 3-6, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. Music, comedy, workshops, and special guests including Angela Davis and Patricia Ireland.

"Women and American Politics, 1920-1988," Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, seven-week seminar for college teachers, explores the role of women in modern American political life. June 14 to July 30, 1993.

Balancing Career and Family: Maternity and Parental Leave at Vanderbilt. A forum sponsored by the Women's Faculty Organization. The forum will address the maternity and parental leave policies/options at Vanderbilt. The forum is Tuesday, April 20 at 4:00 p.m. in Furman 114.

Rape survivors support group for women faculty, staff, and graduate students at noon on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month. Come to organizational meeting at noon on April 8 or call 322-4843 for information.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Be a volunteer at the Rape and Sexual Abuse Center.

Ways you can help:

- answer the 24-hour crisis hot line (can be arranged to ring at your home or dorm room)
- be an advocate of a rape survivor by accompanying her to the hospital or to court
- work as a public policy advocate

To volunteer call Kim Troup, Volunteer Coordinator, at 259-9055.

Wanted: young women (18 to 24) willing to share their international travel experiences with authors writing about women traveling alone or with another woman.

This request comes from Susanna De La Garza, VU A&S '94, studying in Cambridge, England this semester. Her job is to assist two women writing a book entitled *Maiden Voyages*, written in memory of a friend who disappeared in Indonesia in 1989. The belief behind the book is that women can and should travel alone, but that they should be as aware and prepared as possible.

A list of research questions is available at the Cuninggim Center. All contributors will be credited in the book.

The Southeastern Women's Studies Association (SEWSA) 17th Annual Conference April 16-18 at Vanderbilt

"The Intersection of Differences: Women Creating the New Social Order." Plenary speakers include Margaret K. Bass, Vanderbilt; Josephine Beoku-Betts, University of Georgia; Veronica Gerald, University of South Carolina; and Vivien W. Ng, University of Oklahoma.

On Friday, April 16, from noon until 1:30 p.m. an organizational meeting of the Student Interest Group will meet at the Cuninggim Center. This is a brown-bag lunch, drinks provided. Vanderbilt students and staff are welcome to attend this event and plenaries without registering for the conference.

The President's Reception on Friday from 5:00 until 6:30 p.m. will also be held at the Cuninggim Center. Members of the Middle Tennessee Women's Studies Association are invited.

Registration includes lunch on Saturday. Lunch can be guaranteed only for registrations postmarked before April 5. \$55, SEWSA members and others; \$25, full-time students.

For more information call Sherre Harrington, conference coordinator, at 343-6043.



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Women's VU

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- A yearly subscription to off-campus addresses is \$5.00. Please make checks payable to Vanderbilt University.

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