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Comments: Women's World Cup

Women's World Cup

- player descriptions – article 1.
- quarter final win qualified U.S. women's soccer team for the Sydney Olympics in 2000. (10).
- Games intrigued young girls and boys alike as kids everywhere sported world cup gear, especially Mia Hamm #9 jerseys.
- POTUS, HRC and CVC went to game vs. Germany at Jack Kent Cooke stadium July 1. Brandi Chastain, later kicker of final winning shot, kicked goal into opposing team's net during this game. (10)
- Teamwork shown during last minute of regulation, while goalie was distracted, Kristine Lilly stepped in and headed what would have been China's game winning kick out of the goal. (8)
- 90,185 fans turned the Rose Bowl into a sea of red, white and blue – one of few times women have ever played at the Rose Bowl – largest crowd ever to attend a women's sporting event. (8)
- Team is about fresh faces, fresh spirits, trust, joy of living and love the game...dedicated to their team and to doing their bests – enjoying what they're doing without letting publicity get in the way. (9)
- One of first women's team with groupies (7)
- final game tickets ran up to \$1000 each in the classifieds (11)
- They are often referred to as "Team Ponytail" and "the Girls of Summer" (11)
- Julie Foudy, team comic, told Katie Couric, "We've always said this team is America's best kept secret. Now the secret is out." (11)
- Michelle Akers played on the first U.S. women's team in 1985, when players had to sew the letters "U.S.A" on the backs of their jerseys. (11)
- 6 years later, in 1991, after winning the first women's World cup, they were greeted at JFK airport by an airline representative, a U.S. soccer representative and one media member. (11)
- 1991 – First Women's World Cup Winners – referred to as the Significant Seven then: Akers was the oldest at 25, then Brandi Chastain, Joy Fawcett, and Carla Overbeck at 23. Julie Foudy and Kristine Lilly were 20, and Mia Hamm was 19. They'd been a team since 1988 and all seven still play together for the World Cup Champion U.S. Women's soccer team. They've grown up together, says Overbeck.(12)

- Chastain, who scored the winning goal, appeared on Meet the Press with Madeleine Albright and HRC. (see Atlanta Journal)...later she is quoted as saying, "One billion people watched this tournament (on TV)...The important thing about the world cup is that we've reached an audience outside of America to places where women haven't been taken seriously as athletes". (11)
- Coach DiCicco: So what we've built, not me personally but as a team, is a culture (referring to the unity and acceptance of responsibilities on and off the field). They don't have rookies carry gear on and off the field. Everyone, from major players like Hamm and Foudy to the rookies, has their name on the list to help get equipment ready for practice and do everything that needs to be done so everything's fair. (12).
- New battle cry: Girls Rule – 27 years after Title IX that mandated equal financing for girls athletics. – these women still earn substantially less than men's team. (2)
- To build team unity, DiCicco used mental exercises designed by psychologist Colleen Hacker. Newsweek examples: players lead blindfolded teammates down treacherous cliff. Days before China game, team formed line after practice and tried to move in perfect symmetry while holding balloons between their bodies. (2)
- To build player confidence, he put footage together for each player of their best moments on the field set to their favorite music which they watched alone or together. Chastain picked Ricky Martin. Inspirational quotes were slipped under the players' doors every day. Hacker, the psychologist, said "This is not a female thing. It is an elite athlete thing. (2).
- Gatorade ad pairs Hamm with Michael Jordan: Anything you can do I can do better, as they compete in everything from martial arts where she flips him over her head to challenging him in tennis to racing against him on the track. Both went to the University of North Carolina. (4)
- Hamm – this season set all – time scoring record of any soccer player = 109 goals. Official spokeswoman for new soccer Barbie. **Lacks confidence despite incredible talent.** (4)
- Four years ago in Sweden, American team beaten before a mere 3000 observers. This summer that many people showed up just to watch the team practice. (5)
- World Cup sold twice as many tickets as anticipated – approximately 600,000 tickets. (5)

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SPORTS ILLUSTRATED FOR WOMEN

Summer, 1999

Bios

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SECTION: FEATURES/WOMEN WHO WIN/U.S. WOMEN'S SOCCER; Pg. 62

LENGTH: 1702 words

HEADLINE: The Home Team

BYLINE: Dimity McDowell and Grant Wahl

BODY:

This you probably know: The U.S. team is favored to win its second Women's World Cup this decade. this perhaps you did not know: One player honeymooned in Paris (at the men's World Cup!), another was kicked off her high school hoops team, and another suffers from chronic fatigue syndrome. Let us introduce you to this star-spangled squad, complete with soccer moms and tough mothers, a world-renowned Hamm and a famously funny ham. They'll all give you cause to cheer.

THE JOKER

JULIE FOUDY, 28 [MIDFIELDER] "I'm The Watergirl," a straight-faced Julie Foudy says by way of introduction, before cracking up and revealing her true identity. Foudy is, of course, far from being the team lackey: She's a national team co-captain, an 11-year veteran of the squad and the one who provides its comic relief. "It's almost as if she's on a caffeine fix all the time," says goalie Briana Scurry. Last summer Foudy took her motor mouth--one of her nicknames is Loudy--and her quick wit to ESPN's studios, where she was an analyst for the men's World Cup. Her first week was nerve-racking, but she soon settled down and received glowing reviews for her commentary. "I think she's a natural," said John Paul DelaCamera, who does soccer play-by-play for ESPN. For now, though, her vocal cords get their biggest workout on the pitch. As a midfielder, the 1993 Stanford grad is the soccer equivalent of a quarterback, barking out instructions to teammates and occasionally woofing at refs. "If I was quiet," she says, "people would think something was wrong."

THE BRUISER

DANIELLE FOTOPoulos, 23 [FORWARD] In 1993 Danielle Fotopoulos, then a high school junior in Orlando, made a resolution: She wasn't going to get knocked down anymore. So she started lifting weights seriously, and today she's the one doing the knocking. "People just bounce off me when I dribble," says the 5'11", 165-pound Fotopoulos. "Also, I can just put out my arm and hold people off." She can hold off opposing teams with her feet as well. Last fall she broke the women's NCAA record for career goals, which had previously belonged to her national squad teammates Mia Hamm and Tiffeny Milbrett. The 118th and final goal of Fotopoulos's collegiate career came on a free kick to lift Florida to a 1-0 victory over North Carolina in the 1998 NCAA championship game.

THE LEGEND

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MICHELLE AKERS, 33 [MIDFIELD] An original member of the U.S. national team, Michelle Akers scored the first goal in the squad's history in a 2-2 tie with Denmark in 1985. But her most memorable goal came at the 1996 Olympics. The U.S. was 14 minutes from elimination, trailing Norway 1-0 in the semifinals, when a Norwegian defender handled the ball in the box. Penalty kick. Her muscles aching, Akers, who suffers from chronic fatigue syndrome, turned to coach Tony DiCicco and said, "I want it!" DiCicco nodded. The crowd of 64,196 rose to its feet. "I was thinking, This will forever be remembered in the history of soccer," Akers recalls. "So I just put my head down and pounded it. I knew it would go in." It did. And after Shannon MacMillan scored the game-winner in overtime, Akers was spirited off the field--not by her teammates but by U.S. trainers, who hooked up the deliriously weak midfielder to an IV. The U.S. went on to win the gold medal, and Akers sat out most of 1997 recovering. Now the grande dame of American soccer is back, promising to find a final burst of energy for the World Cup and the 2000 Olympics before hanging up her boots.

THE GO TO GIRL

BRANDI CHASTAIN, 30 [MIDFIELDER] After playing forward for three years, Brandi Chastain shifted to the backfield, where she played every second of every game during the U.S. team's gold medal run at the 1996 Olympics. Last year, when the U.S. changed formations, Chastain moved to midfield. This summer she will play both midfield and backfield. Mastering all those positions is a full-time job for Chastain, who is also an assistant women's soccer coach at Santa Clara University. No surprise, then, that she and her husband, Jerry Smith, the head coach at Santa Clara, found themselves too busy for two years to take a honeymoon. When they finally flew to Paris last summer, they spent their days not sharing romantic dinners but joining thousands of screaming fans at the men's World Cup. Can you say soccer overload? "If there's a game on TV, she's in front of it," says coach Tony DiCicco. "She's our best student."

Despite her diligence, versatility and especially her strong kicking toe (make that toes: "You can't tell if she's right- or left-footed, which is extremely rare," says DiCicco), Chastain doesn't get the recognition many of her teammates do. That's a mistake, says her coach, especially for her opponents. "When Brandi's playing her best and you don't take note of her," says DiCicco, "you'll pay a price."

THE WALL

BRIANA SCURRY, 27 [GOALKEEPER] A soccer goal is eight feet high and 24 feet wide. U.S. goalie Briana Scurry should not be able to blanket every corner and angle of the goal--yet she seems to do just that. "I'm pretty instinctive," the Minnesota native says. "When people are shooting on me, I sense where they're going to aim. I go there, and it ends up looking like a brilliant save."

Last year Scurry made plenty of brilliant saves, finishing with 15 wins and 12 shutouts in 17 starts. Alas, Scurry doesn't get much opportunity to show off her skills; the U.S. team tends to keep the ball in the opponent's half of the field. But she's prepared for whatever comes her way. Says Scurry, "I love knowing that I can control the outcome of the game myself."

THE BLUR

Time, Summer, 1999

TIFFENY MILBRETT, 26 [FORWARD] In grade school, Tiffeny Milbrett knew she was fast---even if lots of slow, fat guys were chosen ahead of her for touch football games. She was faster than her classmate John G., who by Milbrett's account was "superfast." Milbrett likes to tell of the day in sixth grade when she was racing in for a touchdown and John G. stuck out his arm and missed her as she crossed the goal line. John G., however, yelled that he had touched her, so the TD didn't count. (Her team scored on the next play anyhow.) Later she overheard John G. admit to a friend that he had missed her. "I kicked his butt!" Milbrett says. "Even though it was delayed gratification, I loved that I kicked his butt."

Today, she is still blowing past everybody. "People tell me my first three steps look like an explosion," says the native of Portland, Ore. The combination of that speed with her ultracompetitive nature ("Tiffeny's desire to go to the goal truly sets her apart from other players," says assistant coach Lauren Gregg) and self-confidence (the 5'2" dynamo aspires to be a point guard in the WNBA when her soccer days are over) makes Milbrett virtually unstoppable. But then, John G. could have told you that a long time ago.

Name withheld to spare subject further embarrassment.

✓ THE FREQUENT FLYER

KRISTINE LILLY, 27 [FORWARD] Growing up, Kristine Lilly had no clue that a women's national team existed. So when she was asked in 1987 to join the U.S. squad for a tournament in China, she didn't celebrate or kiss the ground. "I said I had to ask my parents if I could go," she recalls.

That journey to China was the first of five for Lilly, who as this issue went to press had played in 175 international games, more than any other soccer player in the world, male or female. Although she loves foreign travel, the chance to perform before a U.S. crowd this summer, particularly in one venue, has this jet-setter psyched. "I can't wait to play in the Meadowlands," says Lilly. "I'm a huge New York Jets fan."

✓ THE MOMS

JOY FAWCETT, 31 [DEFENDER] CARLA OVERBECK, 31 [DEFENDER] Carla Overbeck (far right) pumped iron the day her water broke in August 1997. Four days after giving birth to Jackson, she was helping oversee two-a-days at Duke, where she's an assistant women's soccer coach. Seven weeks after that, she was playing for the national team. Joy Fawcett knows the drill; she's given birth twice (to Katelyn Rose, now 5, and Carli, 2), and both times she was training within three months. Overbeck and Fawcett knew that regaining speed and strength would be tough after pregnancy, but fitness wasn't their big concern--family was. "I wanted to make sure the child could be part of my life on the team," says Mama Joy, as Fawcett's teammates call her. Since January, Jackson, Katelyn Rose and Carli have lived with their moms near the U.S. team's Orlando training site (their dads, Greg Overbeck and Walt Fawcett, visit often). On the field Fawcett and Overbeck are as focused as their teammates; off it they seem to have as much energy as their kids do. Their postpractice activities include hauling their brood to county fairs, swimming, even kicking a ball around. "I have no idea how they do it," says forward Cindy Parlow. "After practice, all I can do is collapse on the couch with a bag of potato chips."

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THE HEAD MISTRESS

CINDY PARLOW, 21 [FORWARD] "I was kicked off my high school basketball team," Cindy Parlow says cheerfully. It's hard to imagine this soft-spoken honor-roll student engaging in scandalous hell-raising and, in fact, she was guilty of nothing more than a scheduling conflict. In 1993 she made the under-16 U.S. national soccer team, whose training camp coincided with a basketball game. Parlow's hoops coach told her to choose between the two sports and, says Parlow, "I cleaned out my basketball locker that day."

Good move. Three years later Parlow, then 17, was named to the national team, where she quickly established herself. In a 1996 game against Russia in Brazil, coach Tony DiCicco sent Parlow in as a substitute for star midfielder Michelle Akers. "The fans were yelling so loud, and I was so nervous," she recalls. "The whole thing was amazing." More amazing was this: She scored twice. Parlow's range is equally astonishing. Her headers are often as accurate as her kicks, which helps explain the awards she's racked up, including two national player of the year awards (1997 and '98) while at North Carolina. "I don't think about that stuff," says Parlow. "I'm just playing a sport I love."

GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO: JULIE FOUDY PHOTOGRAPHED BY RICHARD CORMAN, COVER, WOMEN WHO WIN!, 27-PAGE BLOWOUT: Julie Foudy & the U.S. World Cup Team; COLOR PHOTO: RICHARD CORMAN, [T of C]; COLOR PHOTO: PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH WILLARDT, COLOR PHOTOMONTAGE: PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH WILLARDT, COLOR PHOTO: PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH WILLARDT, COLOR PHOTOMONTAGE: PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH WILLARDT, COLOR PHOTO: PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH WILLARDT, COLOR PHOTOMONTAGE: PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH WILLARDT, TWO COLOR PHOTOS: PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH WILLARDT, COLOR PHOTOMONTAGE: PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH WILLARDT

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SECTION: SOCIETY; Pg. 46

LENGTH: 2186 words

HEADLINE: It Went Down to the Wire

BYLINE: By Mark Starr and Martha Brant; ITALICWith/ITALIC Sam Register

HIGHLIGHT:

In a dazzling World Cup final, the team that captivated the country defeats China. Behind the win#151;and how they're taking women's sports to the next level.

BODY:

After 120 minutes, including two overtime periods, victory lay at the feet of 30-year-old Brandi Chastain, a flamboyant, ponytailed blonde known by her teammates as Holly Wood. The United States and China were locked in a scoreless tie. In a best-of-five shoot-out, four Americans had blasted the ball past the Chinese goalie. U.S. goalkeeper Briana Scurry had made a diving fingertip save deflecting a Chinese shot. The game--the Women's World Cup final--had come down to a single penalty kick. Chastain approached the ball and barely hesitated before drilling her shot perfectly into the upper right corner of the net. As frenzied fans in Pasadena, Calif.'s Rose Bowl roared, she whipped off her shirt and waved it at the crowd before being buried in celebration by a pile of her teammates. I didn't hear any noise. I didn't look at the [Chinese goalkeeper], she said of her shot. As soon as the whistle blew, I just stepped up and hit it. I just kind of lost my mind. She called stripping down to her black sports bra momentary insanity.

It was a delirious moment, a perfect ending to a journey that transformed the U.S. team--and one that has changed women's sports forever. Will this change the way we view women's sports? Join us on Wednesday, July 14, at noon E.D.T. for a live discussion on Team U.S.A.'s victory, and the future of women in sports. It was a delirious moment--one that enthralled sports fans, especially young girls, and which may mark a new high for women's sports. Some 650,000 tickets were sold to the 32 Women's World Cup matches. More than 90,000 fans packed the final game alone, making it the biggest event in the history of women's sports. Record TV audiences tuned in. In the stadiums and on the tube, the air was filled with a novel sound: the high-pitched chanting of soccer-loving, Mia Hamm-worshipping girls. It wasn't just in the stands. From suburban soccer fields far and wide came a new battle cry: Girls Rule! And for every teenage girl swept up in the frenzy, there was a dad whose love of sports was reinvigorated. And even boys donned jerseys with Hamm's number 9 on them.

The passion went beyond Hamm and Chastain and Scurry. It included the entire team--and perhaps all female athletes. World Cup Fever seemed to signal that 27 years after Title IX legislation mandated equal financing for girls' athletics, women's team sports have truly arrived. Sports fans thrilled to the spectacle of charismatic female athletes. The players, in turn, discovered that they--young, muscular women of surpassing skill--had become a new kind of national hero. We

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came to understand that this World Cup wasn't just about us making it to Pasadena and winning, said Hamm. This is a historic event far beyond any single result. If we lose sight of that, everything we did would be for nothing.

Along the way, they learned a lot--and taught the rest of us lessons, too. In an era when the egos of male athletes are dwarfed only by their paychecks, the World Cup women, minimum wagers by pro-sports standards, reminded the country that sports superstars can be gracious and grateful. On the field, the team showed us leadership and teamwork--and they kicked butt.

The World Cup women's remarkable saga began long before the triumph at the Rose Bowl, and their story sheds light on the fascinating--and increasingly popular--world of female athletes. It's a culture governed, at least in part, by a precept of Hamm's: Coach us like men, she says, but treat us like women. The journey really began at the '95 World Cup in Sweden, where America's defending champions were booted in the semifinals 1-0 by Norway. They watched, humiliated, as the Norwegians danced up and down the field in a celebratory conga line. Right there and then we vowed to never let this happen again, says assistant coach Lauren Gregg. All we talked about was what we could do individually and collectively to regain our position as No. 1.

When Tony DiCicco took over as head coach in '94, he inherited a squad of mature players--and mature women. By the time this World Cup rolled around, most of his key players were in their 30s and late 20s; many had careers, some had husbands, and two key defenders, Carla Overbeck and Joy Fawcett, had young children. DiCicco, who once coached with the men's national junior team, recognized that the women responded superbly to challenges, but terribly to chastisement. Men can absorb tough criticism because they don't really believe it anyway, he says. Women believe it and take it to heart. So I tried to coach positive.

DiCicco clung to that belief throughout the World Cup. At postgame video sessions, the team was never shown replays of its gaffes, like the goal the United States inadvertently scored for Germany. Instead DiCicco showcased only the players' best moves and winning decisions, a tactic he calls catching them being good.

To build team unity, he used mental exercises designed by psychologist Colleen Hacker. A few years ago she had players lead blindfolded teammates down a treacherous cliff. And only a few days before the China showdown, the team formed a line after practice and tried to move in perfect symmetry while holding balloons between their bodies. Hacker also worked to bolster individual confidence. Shortly before the Cup began, each player was given an imaging tape, a short video of her skills choreographed to music of her choice. Chastain picked Ricky Martin. During the week of the final, inspirational quotes were slipped under the players' doors every day. This is not a female thing, says Hacker. This is an elite athlete thing.

Roommates were switched at every stop on the World Cup road to prevent cliques from forming. As the tourney progressed, the imaging tapes, designed to be watched in private, were shown in groups. Perhaps because women athletes are often more flexible and open to innovation, these techniques seemed to work. When DiCicco gave the team a night off shortly before the final, he was pleased that they stuck together for dinner at a neighborhood Mexican joint.

The U.S. women were being asked not just to win the Cup, but also to sell it to the American public--double duty male athletes have undertaken for decades. The team was willing, but Hacker still created a permission card, a get-out-of-jail free card that players could flash to avoid promotional appearances that would cut into soccer preparations. No one used the card to better advantage than Hamm, probably the most reluctant superstar in modern sports. Though she appeared at clinics, autograph sessions and promotions, she refused photo shoots for many high-profile publications. This isn't all about me, said Hamm. I won't bear the entire responsibility for my gender and my sport. I can't carry that much weight. I'm not that strong a person. Despite evidence to the contrary--she's the highest-scoring woman in the history of international soccer--Hamm refuses to acknowledge that she's a player with unique gifts. In fact, after the semifinal triumph against Brazil, in which Michelle Akers scored on a penalty kick, Hamm volunteered the remarkable confession that she doesn't take penalty kicks because I lack confidence. Raised in a military family and married to a Marine pilot (who was granted special leave to fly home from Japan for the final), Hamm sees herself as a solid cog in a remarkably powerful machine. People don't want to hear that I'm no better than my teammates, she told NEWSWEEK. They want me to say, 'I'm this or I'm that,' but I'm not. Everything I am I owe to this team.

Despite the growing pressure of competition, the team seemed to have no trouble lightening up, at least off the field. Many a free moment was spent discussing the fine points of the latest Austin Powers movie. The finer points of defender Chastain were not neglected either, after she posed nude with just a single discreetly placed soccer ball for Gear, a lowbrow men's magazine. I ran my ass off for this body, she said.

As the tournament unfolded, the trust and selflessness DiCicco had hoped to foster took hold. Starters, even stars, from the '96 U.S. Olympic gold-medal team, accepted diminished roles without a public gripe or a snide aside. After Shannon MacMillan came off the bench to break a scoreless tie with a goal and two assists against North Korea, she refused to lobby for a starting job. Instead, she said, I'm going to do anything I'm asked for this team. My heart and soul is with it.

As the team advanced and World Cup Fever began to grow, the players found themselves dealing with new pressures, ones that couldn't be waved away with a permission card. Throughout the tourney, the team needed aliases to check into hotels. (Akers was Pig Farmer; team comic Foudy was Happy Gilmore; Memphis's Cindy Parlow was Elvis.) Last week the team needed a four-motorcycle escort to get past the throngs around the practice field. As Denmark, Nigeria, North Korea and Germany all fell to the United States, some nerves began to fray. Kate Sobrero, at 22 the youngest starter on the team, fretted about guys--breathers, she called them--hanging out in hotel lobbies. Akers, the oldest starter at 33, was more perturbed by the little girls who waited for her outside bathroom stalls. It's harder to draw the line between personal space and being respectful and friendly to the public, she said. Akers injured her shoulder when a fan in Foxboro, Mass., grabbed her hand during a high-five and wouldn't let go. Still, Akers insisted the team sign autographs rather than run for the bus after a recent practice. I've been getting hate e-mail through my Web page saying we've been mean because we're not signing, she said. People take it personally.

Hamm had insisted throughout that there was plenty of talent backstopping her, and the win over China was an ensemble triumph. The 5-foot-10 Akers

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controlled the center of the field, outjumping and outmuscling the smaller Chinese. Akers was knocked out of the final game in the second half, suffering from heat prostration and stunned by a collision with goalkeeper Scurry. With Akers sidelined during the overtime periods, the Chinese picked up their offense. Then, with only minutes to go, a Chinese attacker fired a header past Scurry toward the left corner of the net. But Kristine Lilly, positioned perfectly on the goal line, headed the ball to safety.

Scurry turned out to be the team's secret weapon. Though a five-year veteran who had started 86 international games, she was largely anonymous--until the World Cup. In the final, her critical stop of a Chinese penalty kick set the stage for Chastain's winning goal. I knew I just had to make one save, Scurry says, because my teammates would make their shots. She was right: all five of the U.S. veterans--Overbeck, Fawcett, Lilly, Hamm and Chastain--delivered, winning the U.S. team a place in sports history.

With the Cup now over, there will be both glorious predictions (a women's pro league) and dire warnings. One thing we learned in the '94 World Cup [also in the United States] is that the circus comes to town and then it leaves, says Alexi Lalas, a star of the U.S. men's team. At the very least, women's soccer should experience the Mary Lou Retton Effect. Right after Mary Lou landed her perfect vault and the gold medal at the '84 Olympics, little girls swamped gyms across the country to emulate her. With 100,000 girls taking up soccer between 1990 and 1997, there'll be no shortage of Mia wanna-bes. It wasn't just the thrilling on-field performances that made this so big. Shrewd and relentless marketing--by corporate giants like adidas and Allstate--also raised the tournament to another level. No ad helped the sport make that quantum leap more than Gatorade's ubiquitous I can do better spot, which paired Hamm with Michael Jordan. The two superstars square off in a series of sports contests, from tennis to martial arts, with Mia matching Michael move for move. You have the greatest icon of American sports put alongside this woman who's saying, 'I can beat you', says Rick Burton, a professor at the University of Oregon's Warsaw Marketing Center. That's incredibly important to the women's sports movement.

Of course, we've heard I can beat you from trash-talking male athletes for years. But the U.S. women's soccer team spoke eloquently to the country. With both their game and their behavior, they told us they care about winning, they care about excellence. And they care about their fans. It's the team's moment, and the phenomenon may just go into overtime.

90,185 fans attended the sold-out final game of the Women's World Cup between the U.S. and China, setting a record for a women's sporting event

650,000 tickets were purchased for the 32 matches, bringing in almost \$23 million

2.9 million households watched the U.S. beat Brazil on July 4, giving it a higher TV rating than game 7 of the NHL's Stanley Cup finals

19 companies ponied up \$6 million for sponsorship rights

100,000 girls began playing soccer between 1990 and 1997

With Sam Register

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HEADLINE: Learning What 'Team' Really Means

BYLINE: By Mariah Burton Nelson

HIGHLIGHT:

It's great watching our female athletes play, but team sports also teach women invaluable truths.

BODY:

What's going on here? Over 90,000 people flocked to the final game of the Women's World Cup. The Women's National Basketball Association averaged almost 11,000 fans per game last year, and that's up 12 percent this season. Even the Women's Pro Softball League recently got better TV ratings than a (men's) Major League Soccer game shown during the same time slot. How come American sports fans' fascination with female athletes has shifted from skirted skaters (Dorothy Hamill, Michelle Kwan) and tiny teenage tumblers (Mary Lou Retton, Kerri Strug) to rough, muscular women in their 20s and 30s who grunt, grimace and heave each other aside with their hips? Are we simply wild over their athletic brilliance? Or does the popularity of women's team sports tell us something deeper about how female athletes and fans are redefining themselves, what they really want and who they might become?

One obvious reason for our adoration is that American women are the best team athletes in the world. They rock. They rule. What's not to love? They're good sports, too, apparently unpolluted by the violence and greed that plague men's sports. Then there's the role-model thing: Little girls need big girls to look up to, said basketball star Teresa Edwards.

But there's something else underlying all the hype and hoopla. I know I learned about more than hook shots and rebounds when I played basketball at Stanford back in the late '70s and later as a professional, here and in Europe. Now, as millions of girls grow up playing team sports, they, too, are discovering how to embrace victory unapologetically and other essential life lessons. Older women watching the Mia Hamm generation sense this, and want to get in on the action. Here's some of what team-sport athletes know:

They know who their teammates really are. Most women are good at friendships, but how many have teammates who don't just sympathize, but help us achieve success? A friend might say, I don't want to start a business with you because it might hurt our relationship.' A teammate says, Of course I'll do it with you: we share the same vision and passion, so we'll be successful.'

They know how to compete. Nonathletes tend to avoid competition and believe friends shouldn't compete, according to a survey in my book Embracing Victory.' Athletes don't see competition as divisive; they use it to connect. They play hard in practice, knowing their best efforts help teammates improve. They

teams

shake hands with opponents, grateful for the challenge.

They know how to lead. One day when I was 12, the girls on the playground circled around me, asking, Can we play softball? Can I pitch?' I wondered: 'Why are they asking me?' But I decided: If people are going to look up to me, I ought to become the sort of person who's worth looking up to. Later, as captain and leading scorer at Stanford, I tried to bring hope and enthusiasm to the team each day. That's how people become leaders: they practice.

They know how to bond. When I speak to women's business groups, the complaint I hear most often is, The women in my office don't support each other. Girls who learn to compete only over beauty and boyfriends grow up to be women who don't bond in the workplace, don't share information, don't mentor. Team athletes support other women. Walking side by side over many miles of tough terrain, it brings you closer, says soccer's Michelle Akers. It's a shared vision of who we are.

They know how to take risks. When we needed to score, my teammates used to pass me the ball--even though I sometimes dribbled off my foot instead. Athletes don't always succeed, but they're willing to take public risks, which inspires women whose fears of looking foolish keep them safely seated on the sidelines.

They know how to ask for help. In basketball, athletes on defense need to yell HELP! Such public pleas are humbling, and debunk the Superwoman myth. We really don't have to be the perfect worker, mother, partner, friend. We can and must ask for help--in life, as in sports.

They know how to forgive themselves. When girls start playing sports, they say I'm sorry a lot. But eventually they stop apologizing and focus on their next achievement. How appealing to those of us who torture ourselves with self-recriminations!

They know that women are strong, successful and free. With their high-fives, hugs and aggressive, competitive play, female team athletes represent who many of us want to be, or want our daughters to be. By pursuing victory in a context of friendship, support, respect and celebration, team-sport athletes are redefining what it means to be an athlete, and what it means to be female. No wonder we love them. They show us our future: female bonding, and female excellence, at its best.

Nelson is the author of the forthcoming *The Doors of My Heart: Opening Toward Forgiveness and Freedom*.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: Once we loved tiny skaters and tumblers; now it's muscle we admire

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 12, 1999

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June 21, 1999, U.S. Edition

SECTION: SOCIETY; Pg. 60

LENGTH: 1555 words

Extensive Hamm Bio

HEADLINE: Keeping Her Own Score

BYLINE: By Mark Starr

HIGHLIGHT:

The World Cup will show everyone how good Mia Hamm is. Why can't she see it?

BODY:

In soccer circles, the story has been told and retold so often that it has taken on Arthurian, sword-in-the-stone dimensions. How in the mid-'80s Anson Dorrance, then coach of the U.S. women's national team, ventured south to scout a 14-year-old Texas wunderkind. Dorrance had no idea what Mia Hamm looked like; he hoped that even though she'd be vying against college-age all-stars, the kid would somehow stand out. The ball was kicked off and, he recalls, this little girl took off like she was shot out of a cannon. I thought, 'Oh my God.' I couldn't believe the athleticism. Mia remembers it differently. She felt overmatched against fitter, faster, stronger players and spent much of the game sucking air. I really struggled, she says.

Today Hamm is women's soccer's most lethal weapon, offensive linchpin of the American team favored to win the Women's World Cup that kicks off Saturday in New Jersey's Giants Stadium. At 27, she is the No. 1 goal scorer ever--man or woman--in international soccer and a hero to millions of young, sports-minded girls. When Mia touches the ball, you just feel great things are going to happen, says U.S. team co-captain Carla Overbeck. She has scored off the field, too, a photogenic Nike icon who has sold everything from shoes to shampoo.

But though the stakes have changed, for Hamm some things always remain the same. She will never be as impressed with her game--or her hype--as everyone else is. Now America will get a chance to judge for itself. And if all goes well, this ultimate showcase for Mia and the U.S. team won't end until three weeks later in the Rose Bowl, with 92,000 frenzied fans and a national TV audience cheering America on to the championship. For us this is the pinnacle, says Hamm.

Hamm will never bring up this season's other peak moment, when she set the all-time scoring record. Where the soccer world sees a superstar forward who has scored 109 goals, Mia sees a solid cog in an exceptionally fine machine. Ask about her deft scorer's touch, and she swears it will never rival that of teammate Michelle Akers. Talk about her versatility, and Mia insists she's no Kristine Lilly, who plays behind her in the midfield. I'm no better than a lot of people on this U.S. team, says Hamm, sitting at a shaded picnic table a corner-kick away from her teammates on the practice field outside Orlando, Fla. I learn that every day when I go up against [defender] Kate Sobrero in practice. She doesn't care how many goals I've scored or what's written about me.

The staff of the U.S. team has dubbed Hamm the reluctant diva. Posing for a team picture, she avoids her rightful spot in the center and stands on the flank. Hamm dislikes interviews; her popularity in the country's suburban soccer enclaves has been built with deeds, not words. Her upbringing as one of five children in a conservative military family helps explain her disdain for trash-talking and self-promotion. I wasn't raised that way, says Hamm, who reupped for military life when she married a Marine pilot in 1995.

At the very least, Hamm, who was named one of People magazine's 50 most beautiful people after her star turn in the '96 Olympics, is uncomfortable with her singular stature and superstar income in a low-profile, low-income sport. (She is estimated to earn \$1 million annually, largely from a half-dozen endorsement deals.) Hamm is not, however, totally attention-averse: Nike just named the biggest building on its corporate campus after her; she goes one on one with Michael Jordan in a high-profile Gatorade ad; she has a new book, *Go for the Goal*, and she's official spokeswoman for the new soccer Barbie. (I can kick and throw like Mia Hamm, proclaims Barbie, whose long hair and leggy look bear little resemblance to Hamm, who is a compact 5 feet 5 with short, brown hair.) When I was little, Barbie rode around in a red Corvette and lived in a mansion, she told kids at a doll's unveiling. I sure didn't relate to that. Soccer Barbie is a lot more realistic.

In truth, Hamm wasn't much for dolls. Mia was more of a tomboy (that's what they called girl athletes in Texas back then), playing every sport, whatever was in season. The challenge was to keep up with her older brother, Garrett. (Garrett died of a blood disease, aplastic anemia, at the age of 28 in 1997; his initials are inscribed on every pair of her Nike signature shoes.) I knew I was better at soccer than at basketball, she says, but I never really had a sense I was especially good until I made the national team. At 15, she was the youngest player ever to suit up for a U.S. squad.

Personal
Hamm
Story

The early call-up could have been a disaster. Many young players blessed with exceptional speed--and, in Mia's case, an explosive first burst--depend too much on their natural gifts and never develop the other skills necessary to compete at higher levels. But Hamm has become a masterful dribbler, equally adept with either foot, and she uses her strength and low center of gravity to barrel past defenders. She is also blessed with that rarest of soccer gifts, the ability to boot the ball in the net. A great finisher can analyze in a split second what the goalie is doing, what surface of the foot to use, and then put the ball in exactly the right spot, she says. It's an ability to slow down time. You don't actually shoot any faster than other players do, but you process a lot more information in the same time. Then she adds the obligatory Hamm footnote: I'm still working on all that.

The result has been moments of absolute wizardry. More than one defender has found herself literally screwed into the ground by Hamm's spins and back cuts. She has that Michael Jordan impact, says Dorrance, who, after recruiting Hamm to the national squad, coached her at Jordan's alma mater, the University of North Carolina. She gets the ball and everyone holds their breath. You might get to see something you've never seen before.

But Hamm is driven less by her successes than by her failures, or at least what she remembers as failures. After her first tryout, she vowed conditioning would never again be a problem. U.S. coach Tony DiCicco remembers a training session a few years ago on a weedy field with ankle-high grass in Brazil's

blistering summer heat. Players were required to finish an obstacle-course drill in a certain time or run it again. Hamm crossed the finish a split second late, and her stature would have assured her a tie-goes-to-the-runner call. Mia said, 'Coach, I got to run that last one again', remembers DiCicco.

Some teammates concede that, at times, Hamm's intensity feels overwhelming. She never eases up, barely distinguishing between an Olympic gold-medal game against China and a practice match against a club team. In one recent scrimmage with a boys' team, a defender stole the ball from Hamm and turned upfield; Mia began yanking on his jersey and didn't let go till he sprawled on the ground, his shirt half off. Wow! he said in disbelief at the foul, as Hamm walked away without a glance back. Sometimes when she's too intense I might pinch her butt and say, 'Lighten up', says Julie Foudy, a star midfielder and one of Hamm's soccer soulmates. She'll laugh just to amuse me, though I know she really doesn't think it's funny. We give each other balance.

Foudy /
Hamm
relationship

There is more than just emotional balance on the U.S. team, which has compiled a remarkable record of 145 wins, 21 losses and 8 ties in the '90s. It is a veteran and very deep squad. (Some starters from the Olympic championship will now start on the bench.) The team boasts an all-out attacking style with more scoring options than just Hamm. If the defense overplays her, Mia is more than willing to dish off or simply serve as a decoy; this year she has more assists than goals. We love to go for the goal, says Lilly. It wears opponents down. Sometimes you can just see them thinking, 'Oh, God, here comes the U.S. again'. When DiCicco ran a practice drill on counterattacking, or launching into offense from a defensive posture, defender Brandi Chastain piped up, When would we ever use this?

The team's strength can be its one weakness. It has no aptitude for caution, leaving it vulnerable to swift, counterattacking teams like China. The U.S. women always play with tremendous emotion, despite the many scant crowds in second-rate stadiums. With huge World Cup crowds primed for victory, the United States will need to work hard to maintain discipline in its defensive ranks. It's going to be very draining, says DiCicco. But every team in this tournament has some kind of pressure to deal with, so I'd just as soon it be the expectation of winning.

The World Cup whirlwind, coupled with the scoring-record chase, clearly weighed on Hamm earlier this year. She went three months and eight games without scoring and admitted to a little crisis of confidence. The higher you get, the harder it gets, explains Mia, who has netted goals in her last five games. People expect you to do it every night. Don't you think even Michael Jordan struggled at times? You can bet he did. Unlike the cocky persona in their joint ad--Anything you can do, I can do better--the real Mia compares herself to Michael only when contemplating failure. But Hamm, like Jordan, is the real deal. Now's her big chance to show it.

GRAPHIC: GRAPHIC: Amazing Mia (graphic omitted); PHOTO: Ahead of the pack: Hamm is the greatest scorer (male or female) in international soccer history ; PHOTO: Oppo research: China and Norway (above) are the teams most likely to block a U.S. victory, but the Americans wouldn't have to meet either before the Rose Bowl final; GRAPHIC: Kickin' It: Team U.S.A.'s Soccer Stars (graphic omitted)

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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Time

July 19, 1999

SECTION: SPORT/THE NEW DREAM TEAM; Pg. 58

LENGTH: 1960 words

HEADLINE: Flat-Out Fantastic;

They kicked! They scored! They won the World Cup and showed everyone how strong a women's team can be

BYLINE: Bill Saporito, With reporting by James Willwerth/Pasadena

BODY:

We've already won," declared Hank Steinbrecher, the general secretary of U.S. Soccer, even before the American women's team's draining, dramatic penalty-kick shoot-out win over China on Saturday, "no matter what the score is going to be." But when defender Brandi Chastain blasted the team's fifth penalty kick past Chinese goalkeeper Gao Hong after 120 scoreless minutes, including two overtime periods, the American put a fitting exclamation point on a summer of soccer that had swept the nation off its feet. And then, before more than 90,000 screaming fans, including President Clinton, she whipped off her shirt in celebration--hey, her name is Chastain, not Chaste. "I felt very confident," she said of the kick (though that statement could easily apply more broadly). "My team trusted me."

This sweet, sweet victory was very much an act of faith--not the end of a game so much as of a crusade. The U.S. women were good, they were good looking, and they were on a mission to prove that women's team sports, and soccer in particular, deserve the same kind of attention, admiration and money that the guys' get. "I grew up watching Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, men I could never emulate," says Julie Foudy, the thoughtful, funny midfielder who leads the team in quotes. "Girls need role models." The goal of Women's World Cup is no less than the establishment of a women's professional league to create those role models, a strategy similar to one the men used to launch Major League Soccer after the phenomenally successful 1994 men's World Cup, also held in the U.S.

The women's final on Saturday had a look that observers of the men's game found familiar: a taut, defensive contest that tightens leg muscles, turns feet into anchors and transforms a 116-yd. by 72-yd. field into a postage stamp. At their own end, the Americans completely snuffed out the Chinese offense, allowing scoring star Sun Wen precious little room to maneuver. At midfield, Michelle Akers, a 33-year-old orthopedic disaster, made her last World Cup game a memorable one. On defense, she owned the air, hurling herself at anything round that moved--a recklessness that would force her out of the game near the end of regulation time, when she crashed into goalie Briana Scurry. "Akers is one of the greatest women athletes in history," said U.S. coach Tony DiCicco. "Michelle Akers inspires me."

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Late in a nerve-racking overtime, the U.S. sensed its moment and pressed the Chinese defense, but it would not break, denying a frenzied crowd a sudden-death triumph. And China almost stole the match away in the final minutes, when Fan Yunjie's header off a corner kick was cleared off the line by Kristine Lilly.

So it went to a penalty-kick shoot-out, which soccer players dread. The pressure is enormous, the consequences huge and the shoot-out no real indicator that the best team won. "There are two champions here," noted coach DiCicco diplomatically after the match. "There is only one taking the World Cup home." But the shoot-out is soccer's tie breaker: 12 yds. out, shooter against keeper, with the odds overwhelmingly against the keeper. That was true of the first four penalty kicks. On China's third shot, however, Scurry stepped forward, guessed left and threw herself in that direction, where she met Liu Ying's kick. "I just went totally on instinct," she said. "I knew if I could get one, it would be O.K." The crowd erupted and, after Lilly's left-footer beat Chinese goalie Gao, sensed something big was about to happen. China's next two shooters, Zhang Ouying and Sun, calmly found their marks, leaving it all up to Chastain, who had committed a huge gaffe against Germany in the quarterfinals when she scored in her own net. This time she found the right one, prompting the spontaneous strip. "Momentary insanity, nothing more, nothing less," she explained. "I wasn't thinking about anything. I thought, My God, this is the greatest moment of my life on a soccer field! I just lost my head."

Even before Chastain's heroics, something magical had been brewing for this team as the tournament progressed. As the NHL and NBA playoffs came and went--Dallas and San Antonio, remember them?--this was the one sports story that continued to build like a thunderstorm.

Four years ago in Sweden, the American team was dismissed in the semifinals before a scant 3,000 souls. In the days before last week's final, nearly that many fans were showing up to watch the team practice, and the players needed police escorts to make their way off the field. Foudy described this spring's frenzied postgame autograph sessions as a "Beatles-concert-slash-slumber-party." Teenagers, boys and girls, have besieged them, and several of the players tell stories of girls' breaking into tears upon receiving an autograph--or just getting near team members. "It's showing little girls that they have something to look up to if they want to play sports," said Rashad Brown, 32, of Hacienda Heights, Calif., as he led his three daughters--a future midfield perhaps--toward the Rose Bowl for the final. Said his wife Margarita: "Before, we never had this kind of support for a women's event. It's great for our daughters to see such a large crowd supporting a women's event."

Make no mistake: this is a campaign that has been carefully managed and almost perfectly marketed by the Women's World Cup Organizing Committee and such team and event sponsors as Nike, Gatorade, Adidas and Bud Light. Each of the games has been televised and accompanied by ingenious advertising.

Marla Messing, CEO of the organizing committee, had persuaded soccer's mostly male pooh-bahs at the Federation Internationale de Football Association to stage the games in big stadiums. Messing knew Americans love big events, but she also sensed that the moment had arrived. "We have established a world-class, world-caliber, stand-alone event for women like none other," she crowed. "In a small way, we have all been a part of history. The sport of women's soccer is growing around the world."

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The first taste of glory would come at Giants Stadium near New York City, where Mia Hamm helped hammer Denmark in a 3-0 win, opening the scoring with a terrific strike in the 17th minute. That was expected. What nobody expected, at least initially, was a crowd of 79,000 cheering fans. There were painted faces and flags and banners, and an entire section of fans wearing Kristine Lilly shirts. It looked as if someone had gone to suburban malls and parks and hijacked shoppers and picnickers to the stadium. The players were stunned, and after the game Hamm noted that the usually voluble Foudy was speechless. "That doesn't happen too often," Hamm said.

Reporters who wouldn't know an offside trap from a lobster pot were now descending on the team's lone media rep demanding exclusives. David Letterman pronounced himself "team owner" and began plugging away. Even Tom Brokaw went West for an on-the-scene report.

There were plenty of good stories waiting to be discovered too--"eight- or nine-year overnight sensations," said Nike president Thomas Clarke. After all, this is a veteran group whose members have known one another and played together for a decade in some cases. They won the Olympic gold medal in 1996, and some, including Akers, were around in 1991, when the team won the inaugural World Cup, held in China, where the event apparently was kept a state secret. Indeed, the team barely played the next year because U.S. Soccer couldn't afford to pay anyone.

Since then, the team and the federation have been steadily raising their profile. "We came up with a marketing plan that really tapped into the grass roots," says Alan Rothenberg, chairman of the Women's World Cup board and past president of U.S. Soccer. "We might have 2,000 to 3,000 people at those early barnstorming games," he says, in Hershey, Pa., and in New York's Long Island. Wherever the team went in those days, the hero that girls sought out was Hamm, now 27, whose speed and finesse still give defenders the shakes. As the team's best known player--a distaff version of Michael Jordan--she had the burden of not only scoring goals but also being Miss Publicity. A self-described emotional child from a military family who lost an older brother to a rare blood disease (and still wears his initials on her soccer shoes), Hamm found the soccer field a perfect outlet for her inner fire. She's been on the national team since she was 15.

For Akers, who preceded Hamm to stardom, this Cup was a test of willpower. Dogged by chronic fatigue syndrome and damaged knees, she has pursued this Cup as relentlessly as she has tracked down opposing midfielders. With the Olympics coming up next summer, Akers has said she will listen to what her body is telling her about whether to play. That would be a first for someone whose body has been screaming at her for years.

Originally, Messing figured Women's World Cup could sell a total of about 312,000 tickets for the 17 doubleheaders (the semis were staged in conjunction with an MLS game). Instead the figure will be more like 650,000. While professional women soccer players are no match for the men in skill levels, their game is great entertainment because unlike the final, most games are freewheeling shoot-outs. It was all scintillating soccer, blissfully devoid of drunks and hooligans--just hundreds of thousands of soccer-loving Americans out for good, clean fun.

~~Wendie Renard~~
~~Christine Sinclair~~
~~Lucy Bronze~~
~~Fran Kirby~~
~~Vivianne Miedema~~
~~Ada Hegerberg~~
~~Kristine Lilly~~
~~Wendie Renard~~
~~Christine Sinclair~~
~~Lucy Bronze~~
~~Fran Kirby~~
~~Vivianne Miedema~~
~~Ada Hegerberg~~
~~Kristine Lilly~~

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Now that the American team has reclaimed the championship, however, there is business to take care of. This is sports, after all. The members will take a victory tour to help prepare the defense of their Olympic gold medal in Sydney next summer. They are eager to get a pro league started, perhaps with some of the profits this tournament will have generated quite unexpectedly. And there is the matter of the players' contract with U.S. Soccer, which expires soon. Some team players earn less than \$ 30,000--coffee money for a male professional. Says Steinbrecher, sounding like a negotiator: "We can't afford to pay them what we think they're worth." He may just have to try a little harder. Welcome to the big time, ladies.

--With reporting by James Willwerth/Pasadena

BOX STORY:

THE STARS' POPULARITY...

Last year only soccer fans knew who they were--last week 2,000 came just to watch them practice

MICHELLE AKERS At 33, she's the team's oldest, toughest, heartiest champion--while her teammates do the endorsements, Akers just plays soccer. Worn down by chronic fatigue syndrome, she left Saturday's game early, but not before spearheading a China-breaking defense

MIA HAMM Despite a world-record-setting 111 goals, plenty of endorsements and a place on PEOPLE's Most Beautiful list, Hamm is still a reluctant diva

BRIANA SCURRY She made spectacular saves against Brazil, then saved the final with a dive; goalkeeper Scurry is still the team's only black starter

BRANDI CHASTAIN Chastain scored against her own team in the match against Germany--but she redeemed herself with a crucial goal; and the versatile champ made the Cup-winning penalty kick

JULIE FOUDY Her teammates call her Loudy because her incessant and witty commentary has been the voice of Team USA since its 1991 World Cup win in China; the midfielder also campaigns hard against child labor

...INSPIRES CLEVER ADS...

For Gatorade ("Anything you can do, I can do better"), Nike ("I will have two fillings"), Adidas, Pepsi and more. The ads have lured fans--and hurled Hamm into a tax bracket befitting her new fame

...AND DRIVES FANS WILD

Nobody anticipated the turnout, but 90,185 howling enthusiasts jammed the Rose Bowl last weekend, with scalpers asking up to \$ 1,000 for a pair of tickets

GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO: PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK J. TERRILL--AP, COVER, What a Kick! The U.S. women's soccer team celebrates Saturday's victory; COLOR PHOTO: GREG FIUME--DUOMO, Champions and heroines: It's not just a World Cup victory. It's

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Time

July 19, 1999

SECTION: SPORT/THE NEW DREAM TEAM; Pg. 64

LENGTH: 605 words

HEADLINE: Why It Was More Than a Game

BYLINE: Margaret Carlson

BODY:

People keep saying what a milestone it is that Elizabeth Dole is a serious presidential candidate, and while I say, "You go, girl," her accomplishment never affects me the way the sight of Mia Hamm does. I start to talk about her, and I can't because I get a catch in my throat. So much that is wonderful about being a woman in 1999 is embodied in the U.S. women's soccer team: their sticking with it, their unassuming ways, their heart. The first time my daughter and I saw that captivating Nike commercial, the one in which four teammates--and the dentist's nurse--ask to have two fillings because one player has to, we burst out laughing and then blinked back tears.

When I was young in the Dark Ages, I played field hockey with a stick that had duct tape around its base. The nun who coached us would pin up her long blue sleeves, hold an instruction manual in front of her and pray. We sewed numbers on old gym suits to make them look like uniforms, while the guys wore miracle-fabric football jerseys over molded plastic sufficient to protect them in the event of a nuclear attack.

I look back to those days and wonder what the dads devoted to Little League and their sons' football were thinking. Didn't they feel slighted that their daughters weren't in on the fun, not to mention getting their characters built? I was a tomboy, and my father spent countless hours playing catch with me. But he never expected that there would be organized softball for girls. Of course, there was a part of him that overworried about my infrastructure. Girls have babies, after all! When my brother got a detached retina playing tackle, my parents didn't blanch. One day I came home with a bloody nose, and I thought my father was going to pass out.

No one was used to seeing girls throwing, batting, kicking and catapulting themselves around the place. Because girls didn't see other girls doing it, we didn't know what we were missing. Even pros had it hard. Bobby Riggs advised the queen of women's tennis, Billie Jean King, that when playing doubles she should "stand in the alley, and don't hit anything that doesn't hit you first."

But by the time my daughter was in grade school, Title IX had kicked in. I found myself becoming a soccer mom before pollsters knew there was such a thing. Courtney became a Stoddert Stomper, playing on the team at the neighborhood school. There she was in a bright gold mesh-and-Lycra uniform, shoes with cleats. Much of the time, it wasn't pretty; the kids all went where the ball was. They were sprinting, passing, lunging and kicking with abandon, just like

the boys. I stood there amazed. A child I hardly recognized as my own hurled herself toward the goal, squealing like a maniac at the satisfaction of competing like the boys, and delighted at how much fun it was to get covered in mud without any consequences. I think it was then that the seeds of putting more of her bones in jeopardy by playing college rugby were planted.

My parents came to the last game of the season--they were quantity-time grandparents and would have come to watch her sleep if I had let them--when the Stompers had almost congealed into a team, intermittently sticking with their positions, occasionally getting a goal. We would have many other touching times together, but it is hard to think of a happier moment than watching my father cheer as his granddaughter went splat into the ground trying to block a goal. If he cringed, he kept it inside. No after-game drink of Gatorade has ever been so sweet.

So thanks, Hamm and Scurry and Chastain and Foudy. Courtney and I will have two fillings.

GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO: J. PAT CARTER--AP, In Oklahoma, 10-year-old girls compete in soccer tryouts

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July 5, 1999

SECTION: The Life Of Reilly; Pg. 100

LENGTH: 727 words

HEADLINE: The Goal-Goal Girls!

BYLINE: Rick Reilly

BODY:

Admit it. You were thinking, Joe Torre in heels.

You figured when a U.S. women's team finally broke through, one that made even the truck drivers care, it would be a bunch of women with Bronko Nagurski shoulders and five o'clock shadows.

Well, the revolution is here, and it has bright-red toenails. And it shops. And it carries diaper bags. The U.S. women's soccer team is towing the country around by the heart in this Women's World Cup, and just look at the players. They've got ponytails! They've got kids! They've got (gulp) curves!

Captain Carla Overbeck crawls across a magazine page in a leopard-skin dress. Midfielder Julie Foudy calls the team "booters with hooters." Lethal scorer Mia Hamm makes PEOPLE's 50 Most Beautiful. Midfielder Brandi Chastain shows up in the pages of Gear wearing only a soccer ball, which gets her on Letterman, who sends Late Night shirts to the whole team, which snaps a picture of the players apparently wearing only the shirts and cleats, which causes Letterman to refer to them forevermore as "Babe City."

"Hey, I ran my ass off for this body," says Chastain. "I'm proud of it."

This team is a wonderful combination of Amazonian ambush and after-prom party. "We're women who like to knock people's heads off and then put on a skirt and go dance," says Chastain.

In fact, they're one of the first American women's teams with their own groupies. Very dumb groupies, but groupies nonetheless. The other night, for instance, one came up to defender Kate Sobrero in a bar and said, "You're on the U.S. soccer team, right?"

"Right," said Sobrero.

"Sooo," he said, pawing the floor with his boot, "uhh, well, are you a lesbian?"

Just to mess with him, Sobrero said, "I'm not, but my girlfriend is."

Whoever they are, they're absolutely impossible not to watch. They were 3-0 through Sunday, and every win was decisive. Every game is a happening, a Thrillith Fair packed with girls and moms. The U.S. women play technically perfect and emotionally riveting soccer. Not only that, but they try to score,

David
Letterman
attention

Sports Illustrated, July 5, 1999

as opposed to most men's teams, who try to get up 1-nil and then pack 11 guys in their own box for 85 minutes. Nobody except the Pope put more fannies in the seats at Giants Stadium than the women's team did two weeks ago. They sold out Soldier Field last Thursday, and had more than 50,000 at Foxboro Stadium on Sunday. Are the boneheads who planned NBC's Olympic broadcast from Atlanta listening?

Look at what our American men's international teams have done lately. Ryder Cup: humiliated. Presidents Cup: humiliated. USA Hockey: dead humiliated. World Cup: dead last.

The women's soccer team is a machine. It's a juggernaut. But most important, it's a floating slumber party. Before games lately, they've been gathering in the hotel hallway for their crucial pregame preparation: putting a dance CD on the boom box, singing at the top of their lungs and painting each other's nails. You figure the Knicks do that?

Hamm calls her teammates "a buncha goofballs," but every one of them has a college degree or is a full-time student. In Japan the minute a player gets married, she quits the game; not the U.S. women. Even when these women give birth, they only pause at 10 centimeters. Overbeck lifted weights on the day she delivered her only child. Mother of two Joy Fawcett, probably the best defender in the world, used to breast-feed in the back of huddles during breaks in practice.

Actually, they're not only fully functioning females, they're fully functioning human beings, too. This off-season, a kid knocked on the door of legendary American midfielder Michelle Akers's home outside Orlando and said, "Can you come out and kick the ball with us?"

Now, if this were the door of most American male professional athletes, the kid would've been: 1) escorted away by security, 2) rolled away by paramedics or 3) simply trying to make contact with her biological father.

What did Akers do? She went out and kicked with her, but only after bringing out an armful of pictures, books and pins. Ain't it great? Ten-year-old girls all over the country are taking down their Backstreet Boys posters and putting up the Goal-Goal Girls.

That ad is right, of course. Clinton would be crazy not to come to the World Cup final on July 10 in Pasadena.

Who else would you want presiding over Babe City?

GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO: DANA FINEMAN/SYGMA

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July 12, 1999, Monday, Final Edition

SECTION: SPORTS; Pg. D01

LENGTH: 1034 words

HEADLINE: CUP VIEW; Heads Up, And Above the Rest

BYLINE: William Gildea, Washington Post Staff Writer

DATELINE: LOS ANGELES

BODY:

Just a few hours have passed since the United States won the third Women's World Cup, and already I am waiting for the next one. I would love being wherever it will be held four years from now, but the Americans' victorious six-game tour across the country during the last three weeks was one thrilling kick after another. I didn't think the crowds could get any more enthusiastic, but on Saturday 90,185 fans turned the Rose Bowl into a brilliant sea of red, white and blue. Tension could not have been greater than when the scoreless game reached sudden-death overtime and then penalty kicks.

What I'll remember most is the 100th minute of the grand finale, when China's Fan Yunjie headed what looked like the Cup-winning shot with U.S. goalkeeper Briana Scurry momentarily out of position after tracking a corner kick. But there was Kristine Lilly, standing at the goal line in the precise spot she had to be to stop the shot with her head. In baseball parlance, it was a bang-bang play, off Fan's head and then Lilly's. It made possible Scurry's scintillating stop on one of China's five penalty kicks from the 12-yard spot, the difference in the game when all five American shooters beat Gao Hong.

It would have been more satisfying had there been a goal in the game. It would be more satisfying if there were some other way to resolve a soccer tie than by penalty kicks after two 15-minute sudden-death overtime periods. Replaying the game wouldn't be practical; you'd have to wait at least five days for the players to recover. And extending the sudden death much longer is asking a lot of the athletes, especially on a day such as Saturday when the temperature reached 95 degrees. How was it that Brandi Chastain wasn't even out of breath, didn't even look overheated, after her last shot into the net ended the tournament? Amazing athletes, these women, who ran the field for two hours.

"It's difficult to play at that pace in that heat," U.S. Coach Tony DiCicco said. "We wanted to attack and we did. To China's credit, they're a very good defensive team. It's hard to keep the ball against a defense like that.

"Trust me. I'm delighted with the outcome although I wish there were some goals so the crowd could see some of the great offensive players at their best. But penalty kicks is how it's going to be until some genius figures out a better way."

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The final played out almost identically to the 1994 men's World Cup final at the Rose Bowl, also a scoreless deadlock decided in Brazil's favor over Italy by penalty kicks. Like that one, the women's final had few great scoring opportunities, although 10 corner kicks, six by the United States, offered enough chances. Maybe the closest came in the 90th minute when Mia Hamm served one across the goal mouth to the far side toward Chastain, but Chastain slipped. At length, when 33-year-old Michelle Akers, sensational on offense and defense in the midfield, had to be replaced after regulation because of exhaustion, the Chinese sensed favorable circumstances.

Sun Wen, their star, led repeated rushes. This is when the tension mounted. This is when the Americans looked as if they would be runners-up. But the flag-waving crowd was behind them, roaring and chanting "U-S-A." Young boys with their hair painted red, white and blue, boys wearing Mia Hamm jerseys were part of the throng. Families cheering together. A group each with a letter painted on his or her back to spell (as long as they were standing in the right order) "We Love U.S.A."

The tiring U.S. team responded. "Every chance we got," said Carla Overbeck, the captain, "we got together and said, 'We don't want our dream to end here.' "

It was the stuff of Rockne and his "Gipper" speech, seven decades later. The U.S. team wanted to win the World Cup as it had in 1991 but lost in 1995. The players wanted to win for themselves and for the fans whose encouragement throughout the tournament touched them. They wanted to win for anyone who rooted for them. "We wanted to regain the Cup for the pride of our team," Chastain said, "for the pride of our country, for the pride of U.S. soccer."

Sun offered her congratulations to the U.S. players. "Both teams had a great performance," she said. "The American team was more fortunate. The reason they could win is that the development of women's soccer in the U.S. is so great." More precisely, the women's game is more advanced in the United States than in China, but the Chinese teams of the 1990s have closed the margin.

The American women have given an immeasurable boost to women's soccer, soccer itself and women's sports in general in the U.S. With that, we roll the credits for:

Hamm, who started the U.S. team on its course by controlling the opener against Denmark at Giants Stadium;

Scurry, who displayed quicker reflexes in goal than Gao, who was left motionless on two of the five U.S. penalty kicks;

Chastain, who discovered her teammates' love when she expected their wrath after accidentally kicking the ball into her own net in the fifth minute of the quarterfinal against Germany at Jack Kent Cooke Stadium. (She scored in the second half, and by the time she fired the last shot Saturday was simply irrepressible);

Lilly, who used her head;

Akers, the fearless veteran, the Dick Butkus of women's soccer;

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Tisha Venturini, for two goals against North Korea -- and the back flip;

Shannon MacMillan, for her game-winning goal against North Korea and her game-winning assist against Germany;

All the other U.S. players, who contributed to the three-week performance that President Clinton called "a gift . . . to the United States";

DiCicco, for making the right moves;

Marla Messing, head of the organizing committee -- a player;

The best of the 16 Cup finalists after the U.S. and China -- Brazil, Norway, Germany, Sweden, Nigeria, Russia and Italy;

Everyman and Everywoman as represented by the unknown driver of a well-worn pickup truck parked outside the Rose Bowl with a large American flag attached, raised smartly and flying high. After winning the World Cup, the U.S. women's soccer team went to Disneyland, where it was honored with a parade.

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July 10, 1999, Saturday, Monday, Final Edition

SECTION: SPORTS; Pg. D01

LENGTH: 1010 words

HEADLINE: For Many Reasons, This Game's a Keeper

BYLINE: William Gildea

DATELINE: LOS ANGELES

BODY:

Shortly, we will be driving out to Pasadena wishing that all roads led there. The Pasadena and the Foothill freeways won't be wide enough to keep traffic moving toward the Rose Bowl. Local authorities are urging everyone to depart at dawn or use a shuttle bus. In the classifieds, they're asking up to \$ 1,000 a ticket to see Saturday's game. You'd think the Super Bowl was being played out there. It's women's soccer. And that's good. Given the number of lackluster Super Bowls, a much more exciting day is anticipated.

Women have played a limited role in the 76-year history of the Rose Bowl, to say the least. They've almost never played there, except musical instruments. They have been queens and sometimes parade grand marshals. But play a game? Almost never. Their time finally has come in an exceptional way. The U.S.-China game to decide the third Women's World Cup is as appealing as an athletic event gets and has sold out the place, a fitting culmination to a first-rate tournament.

Times do change. NBC's Tom Brokaw has arrived to interview the players his network snubbed in its coverage of the 1996 Olympics. For the U.S. team and its fans, Saturday afternoon promises an extraordinary victory celebration. Or heartbreak. Who can say which? Both teams are outstanding, and evenly matched -- part of the essence of sports. We know about Mia Hamm. We've heard about and seen a bit of Sun Wen. The Chinese are quicker; but the Americans play with their whole hearts, and will have a stadium, and a country, behind them.

For American fans, two notes of concern have been sounded this week -- only one pertaining to the game. That would be Hamm. She arrived here from Sunday's semifinal at Stanford looking exhausted. She mustered only wan smiles at the airport when surrounded by fans. When a television reporter asked her a question as she walked along, she hesitated in the middle of her reply and stared so long I wondered if she was going to finish the sentence. This comes from playing three games in eight days and being at the epicenter of celebrity for weeks.

Tony DiCicco, the U.S. coach, admitted Thursday after training at Pomona College that Hamm has been tired, but said he hoped five days off would help her recover. Hamm seemed to say that her main concern was her mental approach -- for all her talent, she recently confessed to having sometimes fragile confidence. "Offensively, people say I haven't been as consistent," she said. "I'm okay

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with the way things are going. I think I need to stay positive." After an easy practice Friday at the Rose Bowl, Hamm said she at last was rested, that even as late as Thursday she had felt "heavy-legged."

Off the field this week, a disturbing side note. Newspaper articles have suggested that sex appeal is the reason for the groundswell of popularity being enjoyed by the team -- and more, that the players have been promoting their sexuality. What a stretch. It's true the American players are a fresh-faced group, but to me they have captured people's hearts with their freshness of spirit. Because of their upbeat attitudes, a joy in living. Because they play well as a team and play exciting soccer, and maybe most of all because they clearly are dedicated to doing their best.

They're easy to root for because no player is pouting about the difficult life of an athlete, or how taxing fame can be, or threatening not to play. As it happens, at least for now, the U.S. team is making all its news on the field, which limits reporters' topics but is another reason why the team is so popular. The game's the thing. How refreshing.

Consider June 24 in Chicago when Hamm scored the Americans' second goal against Nigeria and ignited the team, which then turned the game into a 7-1 rout. Soldier Field went wild because Hamm's shot was remarkable. Still on the run, and a long run at that, she kicked a laser of a shot from about 20 yards that found the back of the net in a blink. Michelle Akers's play in the semifinal against Brazil demonstrated the determination and courage of a great athlete. She collided head to head with an opponent and later took a kick in the head, backing off neither time despite the danger. She played fearlessly.

No wonder the American players have given young girls new ambitions in a team sport, and been an inspiration to others as well. "I'll see you in two years when I'm old enough to make the team," said a young fan to no one in particular as she turned and walked away following a U.S. practice the other day. Marla Messing, head of the organizing committee, got it just about right when she said this week, "This U.S. team has captivated hearts like no team since the 1980 Olympic hockey team."

The only problem with that is, the competition is not over. The U.S. and China are so close in talent that China has won two of three games between them this year, with all three scores being 2-1. In April, they traded victories on goals in stoppage time. The Chinese are not in the final game by accident, as a news conference Wednesday further suggested. The U.S. sent its head coach and two players but, conspicuously, the Chinese were represented only by an assistant coach. Yan Zhong Jian, the assistant, explained through an interpreter: "We're preparing well for the game and that's one reason why the head coach is absent from the press conference."

Later, Yan reemphasized the Chinese players' preparation: "They have considered every difficulty and are well organized. The Chinese realize that the American team is a strong team, but the Chinese have the quality to win this game."

From the way he sounded, the look in his eye and his smile, I got the impression that the Chinese had come with the firm purpose of reversing the tournament's 1991 outcome, when the U.S. won the Cup in China. Yet there was nothing to choose between Yan's confidence and that of DiCicco, who said: "The

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Chinese are very good, but I like my team. This is going to be a great showcase for women's soccer and women's athletics."

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July 2, 1999, Friday, Sunday, Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A01

LENGTH: 1444 words

HEADLINE: U.S. Women Play To the Crowd; President and 54,642 Fans Watch Soccer Team Win

BYLINE: William Gildea, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

Never has women's soccer created such a stir in the United States as in the past two weeks, and last night the sport's surprising, movable feast arrived in the Washington area to another banner crowd and produced one of the most riveting games of the Women's World Cup.

The likable and talented U.S. team, which is leading the recent surge of interest in the sport, overcame a crucial mistake and a strong showing by Germany for a 3-2 victory in a quarterfinal match before 54,642 fans at Jack Kent Cooke Stadium -- including President Clinton, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and daughter Chelsea.

With the hard-fought victory, the United States advanced to a semifinal game Sunday in Palo Alto, Calif., against Brazil in what has turned into a wildly popular nationwide tour for the U.S. team.

The Americans, who qualified for the 2000 Olympics by winning last night, outscored their three first-round opponents by the total of 13-1, but last night they trailed twice and needed goals by Brandi Chastain and Joy Fawcett during a thrilling second-half comeback. Chastain's goal was especially satisfying because a mix-up in the game's fifth minute had resulted in her accidentally tapping the ball into her team's goal to give Germany a 1-0 lead.

But once they recovered from the shock of the own-goal, as it is called, fans responded by continuing to cheer for Chastain -- culminating in a roar when she scored later in the game.

As time expired, the crowd gave the U.S. team a standing, flag-waving ovation as the players celebrated at midfield with embraces among themselves and grateful waves to the fans. Her right ankle injured, Chastain was carried from the field by teammates as the crowd continued to cheer. Clinton, who watched the game from a luxury suite, visited with the players afterward and offered his congratulations.

"The game was incredibly exciting, and to have the president come down and honor this team just was so fitting," said Tony DiCicco, 50, who has coached the U.S. team to a 97-8-7 record and an Olympic gold medal since 1994. "America saw tonight why it was so attracted to this team. They played on pure guts. They refused to be beaten. The Germans were an outstanding team. The game could

PO TVS, HRC + CVC
Went to game v.
Germany at
Jack Kent Cooke
Stadium July 1

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have gone either way."

Chastain said her own-goal "gave me an extra boost -- to do something. Thank God for Tony's trust in me and my teammates' respect for what I've done over the years."

Fans who made their way to the two-year-old Cooke Stadium overcame heavy Beltway traffic and rain in the area an hour before the 7 p.m. kickoff. Late ticket requests forced organizers to open part of the top deck of the stadium, which had been closed for two first-round doubleheaders not involving the U.S. team. A downsized 41,000 capacity was increased Tuesday when additional tickets were made available in what is ordinarily an 80,116-seat facility used primarily by the Washington Redskins.

But last night, instead of burgundy and gold decorations, the motif was patriotic and the passion all about soccer. Young girls wearing No. 9 Mia Hamm jerseys were everywhere. About 13,000 yellow-colored noisemakers (they came in pairs, to be inflated and banged together) were handed out at the gates by organizers -- and employed throughout the game. Fans -- not limited to teenagers -- used bucketloads of face paint.

Tom Stanton, 55, of Columbia had blue and white streaks painted across his cheeks, red letters "U.S.A." on his forehead and spray-on hair dye.

"I never dress like this" for other sporting events, Stanton said. "But this is it. I love women's soccer. We have a super team, we are going to win and how can you not support this?"

Cpl. Dave Redmond, a Prince George's County police officer, urged on the U.S. team, especially when Hamm touched the ball. "Let's go, Michael Jordan, do your thing," he cried out, the Jordan reference prompted by the Hamm-Jordan television commercial in which Hamm "competes" with Jordan in several sports to the chorus, "Anything you can do, I can do better."

"I've been to Redskins games where the crowd wasn't this into it," Redmond said. "Even if you were not a fan, you would enjoy this because of the vibes here tonight."

Many families brought their own picnic tables, set them up in the parking lots and gathered the children about for pregame meals. Two 11-piece bands -- one group Nigerians, the other German -- played on each side of Gate A. Another band playing American music held forth on a stage at Gate F, where a crowd dressed in red, white and blue watched and applauded before filing into the stadium to root on the national favorites. Scores of fans waved various-sized flags as they greeted the U.S. team with a big ovation.

The cheering, though, was not limited to the U.S. team.

"It was a thrill playing before such a large crowd," German defender Ariane Hingst said. "We felt some of the people supported us, too. We look forward to crowds like this for our games in Germany."

The enthusiastic turnout at Cooke Stadium on a humid night followed big crowds for the Americans' first-round victories -- 78,792 at the Giants Stadium opener, a record for women's soccer; 65,080 at Chicago's Soldier Field, and

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50,484 at Foxboro (Mass.) Stadium. The U.S. team will have to face another tough opponent Sunday in the semifinals; Brazil beat Nigeria in overtime in the second game of the doubleheader.

Cooke Stadium became a soccer venue for the first time after District officials passed on the chance to hold two first-round dates and the quarterfinals at RFK Stadium. The District bid to hold the final game. When that bid was rejected, Women's World Cup officials asked the D.C. Sports Commission to submit another bid. But the commission declined. Cooke Stadium stepped in with its bid, and last night the newer venue was turned into a festive site.

"The atmosphere at the stadiums has been great," said Marla Messing, the tournament's president and CEO. "The numbers are going to be beyond even the third set of revisions to our predictions. The U.S. team has struck a chord with young people around the country. Young girls have discovered the excitement, the passion, all the great things about sports."

The U.S. team won the first Women's World Cup in 1991, but the event, held in China, caused little stir. The second Women's World Cup, in which the United States was beaten by Norway in the semifinals, attracted only 112,000 fans in Sweden.

It was in 1996 at the Summer Olympics that the American women's soccer team began to inspire widespread fan fervor. In the gold medal game played in Athens, Ga., before more than 76,000 fans, the United States beat China, 2-1, in a tense match that signaled to Women's World Cup officials the feasibility of making their third tournament a major event to be held in big stadiums across the United States rather than small stadiums primarily in the East, as had been contemplated.

The success of the American women's soccer team marks a new plateau for women's sports in the United States. Twenty-seven years after the enactment of Title IX, the federal statute that bars sex discrimination in education, the stature of women's sports has been elevated especially by the U.S. soccer team and the professional Women's National Basketball Association, now in its third year.

"We're not going to know the full legacy of the tournament until we're deep into the new millennium," Messing said. "I firmly believe that registration [in the U.S.] numbers are going to go way up among girls and women this year and for years to come. Federations [around the world] will continue to put resources behind their women's programs. [The Women's World Cup] is going to fuel the growth of women's soccer all around the world."

Special correspondent Will Kuhns contributed to this report. Brandi Chastain (6), who earlier had scored inadvertently for Germany, exults after scoring goal that tied game at 2 for U.S. (Photo ran in an earlier edition) Pia Wunderlich of Germany holds her head in her hands as U.S. players celebrate a goal by Tiffeny Milbrett (16) in the first half at Jack Kent Cooke Stadium. The United States advanced to the Women's World Cup semifinals Sunday. (Photo ran in an earlier edition) Jeannette Belliveau (in hat), Jennifer Savin and Janet Jay cheer on the U.S. team during a Women's World Cup match at Jack Kent Cooke Stadium. After the United States defeated Germany, 3-2, in the first game of a Women's World Cup doubleheader at Jack Kent Cooke Stadium, fans among the crowd of 54,642 line up to get autographs and take pictures of their favorite

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players.

GRAPHIC: Photo, JOEL RICHARDSON; Photo, JOHN McDONNELL; Photo, JOHN McDONNELL;
Photo, RICH LIPSKI

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July 13, 1999, Tuesday, CONSTITUTION EDITION

SECTION: Sports; Pg. 1F

LENGTH: 1751 words

SERIES: Home

HEADLINE: Cover girls capture U.S. imagination

BYLINE: Jack Wilkinson, Staff

BODY:

Good morning, America. That's where we found them Monday. In Manhattan, on the set of ABC's "Good Morning America." And over in Rockefeller Plaza, just outside Studio 1A of the "Today" show. Katie and Matt, meet Brandi and Briana. Later, it was CNN, and Fox News. Indeed, wherever we looked Monday, there was Team Ponytail.

The U.S. Women's World Cup champions. The best female soccer side on the planet and suddenly, but forevermore, the Girls of Summer.

"We've always said this team is America's best-kept secret," midfielder Julie Foudy told Katie Couric on "Today." "So finally, the secret is out!"

Actually, the secret's been leaking for a month now. But Saturday in the Rose Bowl, in the most remarkable coming-out party in women's sports history, that secret was as fully exposed as Brandi Chastain's midriff. Women's sports might never be the same. Neither will the lives of the 20 players on the U.S. roster.

At least if their first 48 hours as world champions are any indication.

The whole world was watching. At least it seemed that way. A crowd of 90, 185 --- the largest ever to attend a women's sporting event --- packed the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif. An estimated 40 million more Americans were super-glued to their TVs, riveted for nearly three hours by the World Cup final. The United States vs. China. Babe City vs. the once-Forbidden City.

After 120 scoreless minutes, it had come to this. A shootout. Penalty kicks. Five apiece, more if necessary. But Briana Scurry, the American goalkeeper, had dived left and deflected Liu Ying's shot on China's third penalty kick. Briana's a keeper. It was China's only miss but the first four Americans all scored. So when Chastain positioned the ball 12 yards from the Chinese goal, more than 40 million Americans had but one thought:

You goal, girl.

And when Chastain parked the ball in the upper-right corner and hit nothing but net, the shot heard 'round the World Cup reverberated across the country. And all heaven broke loose. The ball was barely in the goal before Chastain ripped off her white shirt to reveal her black sports bra, slid to her knees, clenched her fists and shrieked for joy.

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"It was momentary insanity," Chastain said. "Nothing more and nothing less." The insanity was contagious. In Atlanta, as in cities across America, thousands rejoiced yet somehow managed to keep their shirts on. Even at Manuel's Tavern, that bastion of beer, baseball, politics and testosterone, where a full house reacted as if Francisco Cabrera had just singled home Sid Bream. Where Manuel Maloof sat and watched, transfixed not just by the game but his clientele.

"Who would have ever thought," Maloof said, "that all these people would be in here watching soccer?" Watching women's soccer.

Back at the Rose Bowl, the brittle old lady in Pasadena was back on the field, in the midst of a mad celebration with her teammates. Michelle Akers, 33, who suffers from chronic fatigue syndrome and has had 12 knee surgeries, had to leave the game at the end of regulation. She was dehydrated, and had heat exhaustion, and was hooked up to an IV in the locker room when Chastain scored. But Akers returned to have her gold medal draped around her neck, to help accept the World Cup trophy and to bathe in the adulation.

"We're at the epicenter of a big rock being thrown into a huge pond," Akers said. "We don't know what the ripple effect will be."

When Akers played on the first U.S. women's team in 1985, players had to sew the letters "USA" on the backs of their jerseys. In 1991, when the team returned from China after winning the World Cup, it was greeted at New York's JFK International Airport by a representative of the airline, another from U. S. Soccer and one media member. On Saturday, President Clinton attended the final, then came down to the locker room to congratulate the victorious Americans.

Hours after the game ended, thousands of delirious fans still lingered outside the Rose Bowl. So did one little girl, with an American flag stuck in her ponytail and a fine grasp of the significance of this sporting moment for girls everywhere. "It's going to be awesome," she said. "It's not all about men any more. It's about me!"

With the help of a police escort, the U.S. team returned to the Ritz-Carlton in Pasadena, where the Americans held their victory party Saturday night. Most players partied until 3 a.m. before grabbing a few hours sleep. When they awakened Sunday morning, they found an itinerary slipped under their hotel room doors. Sept. 26 is the opening of the first Olympic training camp; the Americans will be in Sydney next year to defend the Olympic gold medal they won in Athens in 1996.

First, though, the team will compete in the U.S. Women's Cup in the Midwest and a tournament in Germany in the fall. A trip to South Africa is being planned, and a match with an Arab all-star team in Cairo, Egypt.

Last Sunday morning, however, only one destination mattered. Disneyland.

Like every authentic American championship team, the U.S. women's team has already done its "We're going to Disneyland!" TV commercial. But before the Americans even hooked up with Mickey and Minnie, Chastain had logged some serious air time.

She did three hours of TV interviews via satellite before doing Disneyland. On "Meet the Press," she appeared on the same show as Secretary of State

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Madeline Albright and First Lady Hillary Clinton that also included talk about Medicare and the federal budget.

"I thought, 'Hi, I'm Brandi the soccer player. How do I fit in?' " Chastain said. "I guess how I fit in is that all these things touch people and soccer touches people."

At Disneyland. Two floats transported the 20 players and coaches through the park, then down Main Street. Mia Hamm, the star of the U.S. team, stood with Minnie Mouse on the second float, waving to the crowd. Later, at the Sleeping Beauty Castle, the team received a crystal trophy from a Disney executive and Hamm kissed Mickey Mouse.

That afternoon, at a rally held on the steps of the Los Angeles Convention Center, the effervescent Foudy, whose nickname is "Loudy," served as the emcee. Among her introductions:

"The Blur . . . the one they call 'The Kawasaki 5000' . . . Tiffeny Milbrett!"

"The woman with the uncanny knack for taking her clothes off . . . Brandi Chastain! She says it was temporary insanity. Do you believe her?"

"The woman with the worst redheaded dye job I have ever seen in my life . . . Kate Sobrero!"

Then it was off to Los Angeles International to catch a 5 p.m. flight to Newark. By then, some extraordinary numbers had come in. The 13.3 rating for U.S.-China made it the most-watched soccer game on network TV. In the Los Angeles market, it drew an astounding 20.8 rating and a 53 share. "You don't see these numbers unless you're watching the NFL," ABC spokesman Mark Mandel said.

"One billion people worldwide watched this tournament (on TV)," Chastain said. "It just blows my mind. I can't imagine the scope of this. The important thing about the World Cup is that we've reached an audience outside of America to places where women haven't been taken seriously as athletes."

When the U.S. team's overnight flight landed at Newark, it was 4:30 a.m. Monday. No matter. There was a small but enthusiastic welcoming party: Ten excited little girls, all wearing World Cup and USA soccer gear, had slept in the airport. "They were jumping around and asking for autographs," Chastain said. "We all obliged. They deserved them."

After busing to Manhattan, the Americans checked into a hotel and had little time to sleep before the morning talk shows.

Soccer officials raised the players' bonuses from some \$ 12,500 to \$ 50,000 each. The U.S. Olympic Committee also said it was awarding \$ 120,000 to the team --- \$ 6,000 for each player --- from its Operation Gold Fund, which rewards American athletes who win gold medals in the year's most important competitions.

It's probably just the beginning. "Let's be real," said Hank Steinbrecher, U.S. Soccer secretary general. "This is lightning in a bottle. The Queen Mother doesn't have enough money to pay them what they're worth right now."

The Atlanta Journal, July 13, 1999

On Monday, the U.S. team hopscotched from "Good Morning America" to "Today" to CNN and Fox News. The players wore matching lavender shirts, walked the sidewalks of New York, stopped traffic and linked arms and sang, "We Are the Champions!"

"We're sharing it with New York City because big things happen here," said Chastain. Full-page newspaper ads from Budweiser, Chevrolet and Nike hailed the victors. HarperCollins already is pushing a new book by Hamm. The team is featured on the covers of Time and Newsweek due out today, and Sports Illustrated later this week. Today in Central Park, New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani will be the host of a rally for the team at noon. On Wednesday, Hamm, Chastain and Foudy will play in the LPGA JAL Big Apple Classic Pro-Am in suburban New Rochelle; other players will attend the WNBA All-Star Game that night at Madison Square Garden.

The only disappointment: David Letterman's show is not taping this week. No problem. The U.S. team will return to New York next week and appear Tuesday with Letterman, who was captivated by Chastain when she appeared on the show earlier this year; he nicknamed the U.S. team "Babe City."

Will American women have a league of their own? That's a distinct possibility for 2001, to capitalize on the extraordinary response to this World Cup. To this team. "We're at the cutting edge of one of the most significant cultural revolutions in the world," Steinbrecher said. "And it states that in team sports, women are absolutely equal, full partners to men, not subordinates. . . . And we're exporting (the message) around the world."

On Monday, Team Ponytail was looking for some additional international flavor. During training and the World Cup, the U.S. women ate pasta and other foods loaded with carbohydrates. Not Monday in Manhattan. "I think," said Chastain, "we're having Chinese food tonight."

Our news services contributed to this article.

ON THE WEB

Starting Wednesday, Sunday's front page and today's soccer page will be available for sale as commemorative pages in sizes from 7-by-11 inches at 12.95. 14-by-22 at \$ 49.95 and 28-by-44 at \$ 69.95 on our online photo store at www.ajc.com/photos@ajc.
Voicemail orders: 404-582-7562 or 1-888-511-9947.

GRAPHIC: Photo

The U.S. women's victory is on the covers of Newsweek and Time.

Photo

A kodak moment: Brandi Chastain (left) and Mia Hamm on the "Today" show set. / LYNSEY ADDARIO / Associated Press

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HEADLINE: IT'S BEEN HEAVEN FOR THESE SEVEN;
SOCCER: CORE OF U.S. NATIONAL TEAM, TOGETHER SINCE 1988, HAS GROWN INTO A MOST
HAPPY--AND SUCCESSFUL--GROUP.

BYLINE: GRAHAME L. JONES, TIMES STAFF WRITER

DATELINE: BALTIMORE

BODY:

Ask Michelle Akers where her gold medals are and the answer you'll get might be surprising.

"The '91 one is framed with my jersey," she said, "and the gold Olympic one is just sitting in a drawer. When people ask me for it, I get it out, but otherwise that's just past. The memories are there."

This is not to say Akers regards her 1996 Olympic gold medal as less of an achievement than the medal that was draped around her neck at Tianhe Stadium in Guangzhou, China, in 1991, when the United States won the first Women's World Championship.

On the contrary.

It's just that for her and six other starters on the U.S. team that plays Germany tonight in the quarterfinals of the 1999 Women's World Cup, China '91 is a glittering memory that time cannot erase.

They were much younger then, the significant seven, and after being the heart and soul of the first American team to win a soccer world championship, they partied deep into the night at the White Swan hotel beside the Pearl River.

Akers was the oldest at 25. Next came Brandi Chastain, Joy Fawcett and Carla Overbeck, each of them 23. Julie Foudy and Kristine Lilly were only 20. And the baby of the group was Mia Hamm. She was 19.

Tonight, at Jack Kent Cooke Stadium in Landover, Md., the seven will line up together again, just as they have every year since 1988.

Regardless of being soccer's first women's world champions, of being soccer's first women's Olympic champions, of all the other honors that have come their way, that they have stayed together and kept playing at the highest level is perhaps their most remarkable achievement.

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"That is pretty amazing," U.S. Coach Tony DiCicco said. "But the thing you've got to remember is that they were all teenagers when they started. The core of the team, in many ways, is not even 30. Some of the players are just getting into their 30s."

"This has been their league. These are professional players who wanted to play at the highest level. If somebody played 10 years in a top league, we probably wouldn't think much of it. But they haven't had a league to play in. . . This is where they've been able to realize their competitive drives and dreams and satisfy those types of energies within them."

But it is more than competition. It is also very much about camaraderie.

"This team has been together, gosh, since '87 or '88," Overbeck said. "We've grown up together. We go through hard times. We have great times. I think this team is unique in that we all get along. It's amazing how much we genuinely like each other, and we have so much fun together."

"I think when you stop having fun is when it's time to stop. But this team continues to have a great time every time we're together."

In 1991, Overbeck was still Carla Werden. She had not yet married. She had not yet given birth to a son, Jackson, now 1 1/2. And yet here she is, only two victories away from returning to Pasadena, the city of her own birth, for another world championship final, this one at the Rose Bowl.

Five of the seven have married since '91. Fawcett, who was Joy Biefeld in '91, also has children in tow, her daughters Katelyn Rose and Carli, and their nanny, being very much a part of the U.S. team's entourage.

Lilly has become the world-record holder in number of international appearances, just as Hamm has become the world's all-time leading goal scorer.

"We love the game and we love to play at the highest level," Lilly said. "We're competitive and we love each other. We love seeing each other, playing with each other."

"When you've known people for so long, you don't want it to end. Whatever it may be. But we still love the game of soccer, and I think that's what keeps us coming back."

Chastain sees something more at work.

"I think it's a testament to not only the hard work that each one of those players puts in, but I think it says something about women athletes in general," she said. "I mean, I don't think you see too many players in men's athletics who are on one team for 10 years, even if their career lasts that long."

"To play at the highest level for that long is pretty impressive, I think."

Especially since the U.S. women, despite the championships they have won and despite the crowds they draw, do not get much in the way of financial reward.

"That's even more impressive, isn't it?" Chastain said.

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"I think that's the bottom line for this team," she added. "Fans know that we go out there and work hard for ourselves and our teammates and our country. And we're doing it because we want to put a good product out there, not because we're making millions of dollars."

"It's because we love soccer and we love what soccer has given to us and now we're going to give it back. It's a simple equation. It's so simple."

Simple to say, yes, but not simple to achieve. A great deal of thought and large amount of work has gone into building the closeness that is the hallmark of the U.S. team.

"It comes down to the very basics of the stuff we do," DiCicco said. "If you see the equipment list for practice, you'll see Hamm's name up there, Akers' name up there, Foudy's name up there, water, ice, bibs, cones. We don't have a rookie responsibility to handle those things, because we ought to do it together on the field and we ought to do it together off the field."

"That's the way they want it. Carla Overbeck doesn't want somebody else doing these jobs. She wants to be part of it. And when we're unloading a bus, you're going to see Carla and Lil Lilly and the veterans there first. So what we've built--not me personally, but as a team--is a culture."

"Because if I'm a young player and I see Kristine Lilly going over to take bags off the bus without being asked, or to help load bags onto the belt at the airport, the message has got to sink home or else it's going to come home down the road and bite me."

"If you're not ready to share the responsibilities, both on and off the field, on this team, you're going to have trouble living in this culture. That's something that I think the team leadership creates."

Can the next generation do as well, or is this a unique team, a once-in-a-lifetime coming together of all the elements that make for sporting success? Were Overbeck and friends so much better in '91 than the young players now waiting to take their place?

"It's been so long I can't remember back that far," she said. "But I know there is some great talent coming up."

"It makes us feel comfortable as veterans knowing that when we go and finally retire and give up the national team, they'll just step right in and continue the success because the federation has started women's under-16, under-18 and under-20 teams. They understand that the development of the youth is critical to the team's success."

Indeed, once World Cup '99 has disappeared from the front page and the nightly news, the American stars of 2003 and 2007 will be out there trying to match their predecessors' success.

In August, assistant coach Lauren Gregg takes the U.S. under-20 national team to Iceland for the Nordic Cup. Later that month, Shannon Higgins-Cirovski takes the under-18 national team to Canada to compete in the Pan Am Games in Winnipeg.

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Shannon Higgins-Cirovski was Shannon Higgins in '91, a starter on the world championship team. The legacy is being passed on.

But no matter what happens tonight or in the rest of the World Cup, it won't be until after the 2000 Sydney Olympics that the seven stalwarts--Akers, Chastain, Fawcett, Foudy, Hamm, Lilly and Overbeck--will bid their adieus.

They're still having too much fun.

"I have a tremendous respect for this team," DiCicco said. "It's an honor, an absolute honor, to coach them. It's a privilege.

"I think the world of them, not only as players but as people. I'm proud of them."

Best of all, when the inevitable does happen, the bonds that have been formed over the last decade will continue to keep the players and coaches together.

"It's a good feeling," Overbeck said. "These are the friends we're going to have for life."

WEDNESDAY'S SCORES

China: 2

Russia: 0

Norway: 3

Sweden: 1

TONIGHT'S GAMES

Landover, Md.

United States vs. Germany / 4, ESPN

Brazil vs Nigeria / 6:30, ESPN2

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HEADLINE: Make No Mistake, Chastain Has an Answer

BYLINE: Thomas Boswell

BODY:

Every sport has its own worst nightmare and, usually, an unforgettable illustration to prove the gruesome point. Fred Merkle forgot to touch second base long ago and -- almost 100 years later -- every bonehead play in baseball is still a Merkle Boner. Roberto De Vincenzo signed an incorrect scorecard and, so, lost the 1968 Masters. Roy Riegels ran the wrong way in the 1929 Rose Bowl. Chris Webber called a timeout that Michigan didn't have in the closing seconds of the 1993 NCAA title game. Perhaps Bill Buckner, letting a routine grounder dribble between his legs in the 1986 World Series is in some special category of its own.

In soccer, the incomprehensible blunder -- the gaffe you cannot even imagine until it happens to you -- is the own-goal: kicking the ball into your own net by accident. Perhaps the most infamous own-goal -- until Brandi Chastain's last night at Jack Kent Cooke Stadium -- came in the 1994 World Cup. Colombia's Andres Escobar did the deed in a 2-1 loss to the United States. Soon after, Escobar was murdered in front of a restaurant. A passionate fan, a furious gambler or perhaps even a hit man?

Usually, in those moments of supreme mortification, your fate is sealed. Merkle never got to go back and tag that base. Buckner couldn't say to Mookie Wilson, "Hit me another one like that." Nobody said to De Vincenzo, "Maybe you ought to add up that card just one more time." Riegels never got a chance to run the right way. The referee never said to Webber, "Did you say, 'Time out?'" I couldn't hear you." As for Escobar, the gunman gave him no second chance.

None of these legendary rockheads was as lucky, or, equally important, as resilient, as Chastain last night. For much of the evening, it seemed the 30-year-old veteran of the U.S. Women's World Cup team might go down as the biggest goat in the history of women's soccer. She would be remembered, for who knows how long, for turning and -- under no pressure -- nudging the ball back toward her own goalie for safekeeping. Instead, she kicked a bit too hard and a bit too wide. The ball rolled into the right corner of her own goal, giving Germany an early 1-0 lead.

In the game's 49th minute, Germany still led 2-1, by that haunting Chastain margin. Of such mishaps are upsets made, especially in a low-scoring sport where goals are at such an incredible premium. Sometimes you disgrace yourself or slay your team. How could you measure the weight on Chastain's back? The future of her sport -- booming phenomenally in this World Cup, all but hinged to the

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U.S. team's success -- seemed to be at stake.

Then, just as it became possible Germany might shock the soccer world, and bring black clouds of gloom over America's blossoming romance with women's soccer, who should score the second-half goal that tied the game at 2?

Why, Chastain, of course.

With a whirling right-footed redirection of a corner kick, she booted the ball into the same side of the same goal into which her notorious "own-goal" had trickled half-a-game before. Properly inspired, or perhaps just incredibly relieved, the U.S. team rallied for a 3-2 win. Who says women's soccer isn't perfect? Even the endings are happy.

"Thank God I was in the right spot," Chastain said. "It gave me the confidence I needed. . . . I got a few pats on the back in the locker room at halftime."

Actually, Chastain needed more than pats and confidence. Guts helped. In the first half, she went down in pain with a sprained ankle. She played through it, although she limped when she walked and had to leave the game in the last 15 minutes. But she scored her goal with that injured right foot.

"I wasn't going to let that little ankle keep me out," she said. She'd have stayed in the game on crutches, given her need to redeem herself.

In some ways, Chastain has the perfect personality to withstand such a mortifying moment and bounce back. She puts herself "out there," as they say, taking chances, believing in herself. Actually, she was fairly famous before last night. She's a favorite upbeat guest on David Letterman. She recently posed, clad only in one soccer ball for Gear magazine -- a publication a bit racier than she may have imagined when she did the posing. She thought she was showing her muscles. Recently, she got attention by joking that, if the U.S. team won the Cup on July 10 at the Rose Bowl, she'd run naked through the streets of Pasadena.

That escapade, as it proves, would be considerably less mortifying than what she did in the first half of last night's quarterfinal. "Oh, we practice that play all the time," laughed U.S. Coach Tony DiCicco. Then he added, seriously, "The tension of the game can do things to you. I felt so badly for them. I've seen very big time pros make mistakes like that and they were out of the game [mentally] the rest of the day. Brandi came back and got us the tying goal."

Obviously, soccer teams practice how they want defenders such as Chastain to pass backward to their goalies -- proper angles, never shoot directly at the goal, always communicate verbally. Then, under pressure, it goes awry.

"There's a lot of noise -- high intensity and pressure. Sometimes, you let your emotions get the better of you and make a bad decision. . . . I looked up and she wasn't there where I expected," Chastain said of goaltender Briana Scurry. "Maybe it was my fault. Maybe hers. But it worked out. That's all that matters now."

Many of us involved with sports are probably guilty of claiming too much for the character-building aspects of games, especially when it comes to those

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down-pat life lessons. Late last night, Brandi Chastain said words that we have heard athletes say countless times. Yet she really sounded like she meant them. That probably means they're actually true.

"You're going to make mistakes in life," she said. "It's what you do afterward that counts." United States' Brandi Chastain exults after atoning for mistake with goal that tied the score at 2. "Thank God I was in the right spot," she said.

GRAPHIC: PH,,JOEL RICHARDSON

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
VIDEOTAPED REMARKS FOR
OPENING CEREMONIES OF 1999 WOMEN'S WORLD CUP
GIANT'S STADIUM, NEW JERSEY
JUNE 19, 1999**

AS HONORARY CO-CHAIRS OF THE 1999 FIFA [FEE-FA] WOMEN'S WORLD CUP, THE PRESIDENT AND I ARE HONORED TO WELCOME THE TEAMS AND FANS FROM AROUND THE WORLD TO GIANTS STADIUM FOR THESE OPENING CEREMONIES.

OVER THE NEXT 22 DAYS, SOME OF THE FINEST ATHLETES IN THE WORLD WILL COMPETE IN 7 CITIES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES.

THEY WILL BATTLE FOR THEIR NATIONS, FOR THEMSELVES, AND FOR THE GREATEST PRIZE IN THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR SPORT: THE WORLD CUP TROPHY.

OF COURSE, THE REAL WINNERS WILL BE ALL OF US FANS. BECAUSE WE WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO ENJOY THE TREMENDOUS SKILL, COURAGE, AND PASSION OF WOMEN WHO HAVE OVERCOME OPPONENTS ON THE FIELD AND GENDER BARRIERS OFF THE FIELD.

WE WILL SEE ROLE MODELS WHO ARE INSPIRING YOUNG GIRLS -- AND YOUNG BOYS -- THAT THEY CAN COMPETE AND THEY CAN WIN, NOT ONLY ON THE SPORTING FIELDS, BUT ALSO IN THE CLASSROOMS, THE BOARDROOMS, AND EVERY ASPECT OF THEIR LIVES.

AND THROUGH IT ALL, WE WILL WITNESS THE LARGEST WOMEN'S SPORTING EVENT IN HISTORY.

THE PRESIDENT AND I WANT TO THANK THE FIFA FAMILY OF INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND VOLUNTEERS, AS WELL AS THOSE IN THE U.S. WHO HAVE NURTURED SOCCER AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL, AND MADE THIS TOURNAMENT POSSIBLE.

WE ARE PROUD THAT THE UNITED STATES IS HOSTING AN EVENT THAT IS CAPTURING THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE ALL AROUND THE WORLD -- AND CHANGING THE FACE OF WOMEN'S SPORTS FOREVER

TO ALL THE TEAMS AND PLAYERS, WE WISH YOU THE BEST OF LUCK...

AND NOW, LET THE GAMES BEGIN....

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT LAB SCHOOL
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
MARCH 4, 1999

Thank you all. I am delighted to be here at the Lab School. I want to thank Sophia Totti [Toe-Tee], for all she said today...and for all she's done over the years to bring leadership, style and victory to the Lady Gators.

Now, I have to confess that earlier, a few people told me that you might appreciate it if I started my remarks with my own version of the song, "YMCA." What they didn't realize is that the only area where I have less talent than sports is in singing. But I do have a deep appreciation for other people's talent -- and so I am delighted to have brought along some great athletes and role models. Not just great female athletes. But, some of the greatest athletes of all time: Billie Jean King, Nikki McCray, and Dominique Dawes. Thank you so much for coming.

I am also very pleased that we are joined today by so many elected officials [the Manhattan Borough President Virginia Fields; State Senator Thomas Duane; Assemblymember Richard Gottfried; Councilmembers Kathryn Freed, Gifford Miller, Ronnie Eldridge, Bill Perkins, and Guillermo Linares.]

I want to thank our hosts -- Sheila Breslaw and Rob Menken -- who have brought excellence and teamwork to the classrooms and the playing fields of the Lab School.

And I want to thank Seth Abraham of HBO for showing us an excerpt from the extraordinary new documentary that we're premiering at the White House tonight. I hope all Americans will be educated and inspired by the women athletes in this film, women who dared to compete and competed to win. Because their story is not only the story of women's sports -- but also of women's rights. And I can't think of a better time to tell them than right now, during women's history month.

I'm sure this will date me, but back when I was in high school, there were very different rules for girls basketball. You could only let the ball bounce twice before you had to pass it. And you could only play half-court. Because they claimed our hearts were too weak to bear the strain of playing full-court basketball.

Well, times have certainly changed. In this city last summer, Madison Square Garden was filled with people who came out to watch the big stars play. And their names weren't Ewing [U-ing] and Houston [Hue-ston], but Lobo [Low-bo] and Weatherspoon. [Weather-spoon] It's incredible. At WNBA games across the country, you see children of all races and sizes, boys and girls, wearing jerseys, often down to their ankles, adorned with the names of their favorite WNBA players. You see boys and girls lining up patiently after the game, hoping to get an autograph and praying that one day they'll be able to follow in their hero's footsteps. And now they can.

More than ever before, young girls and boys today can reach as far as their dreams and abilities will take them....And that's because a law called Title IX opened the floodgates of opportunity to college players who are tomorrow's professional champions. And it's because women playing today stand on the shoulders of countless pioneers, who sacrificed to break down barrier after barrier so that they could more easily follow. Just think about the three athletes who are with us today.

Every time a high school student finds out she's earned a tennis scholarship to college, she can thank Billie Jean King who took on not only Bobby Riggs, but the stereotypes and discrimination that had plagued women athletes for far too long.

Every time a girl wonders whether she has what it takes to make her high school basketball team, she can look to Nikki McCray. As a child, Nikki refused to give up when her male cousins said she couldn't play with them because she was a girl. And, whether she's playing at the Olympics or leading her team, the Mystics, in the WNBA, she has never given up since.

And every time a gymnast leaves her house at the crack of dawn to train, she can find inspiration in Dominique Dawes, who has shown boys and girls that they should go for the Gold in every aspect of their lives. I'll never forget a town hall meeting at the White House that Dominique participated in with my husband, Peter Jennings, and a group of young

people. The topic was drugs. And after the event, Dominique was surrounded for almost an hour by young people who see her as a role model, regardless of whether they're athletes or not.

What these role models and others like them have taught us is that you don't have to be an all-star athlete. You don't have to finish a marathon. Or even play on a team. But all of us can get active and stay active. And all of us should have that opportunity.

We know that girls who engage in sports and physical activity are more likely to be confident, to excel in school, and to stay healthy. And we know that every woman who makes it in sports, opens up the door a little wider for girls to be anything they want -- teachers and scientists, CEOs and Supreme Court Justices...and yes, the President of the United States.

So, I hope all of us will continue to work for the day when sayings like "You throw like a girl" or "You run like a girl" are meant as compliments, not insults. I hope there will be a day when strong and feminine are always considered one and the same. And when our ability

to compete is determined not by our gender, but by our spirit, skill and strength. And I hope we'll finally reach the day when every child, boy and girl, doesn't have to look any further than the mirror to spot a champion.

No one has done more to bring us to that day than our next speaker. Billie Jean King's tennis achievements are legendary -- including 20 Wimbledon Titles...and five #1 rankings. But, what is perhaps most special about her, is that she is a true champion both on and off the court.

It was Billie Jean who first came up with this idea for a documentary about the history of women in sports. Which is only fitting. For she shaped that history by continuously standing up and speaking out for women's rights...and clearing the path for every woman and girl in this country.

It is my great honor to introduce Billie Jean King.

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT HBO WOMEN'S SPORTS EVENT
THE EAST ROOM
MARCH 4, 1999

Welcome to the East Room. I want to thank all of you for joining us for the premier of HBO's Dare to Compete: The Struggle of Women in Sports. Looking around the room, I don't think I've ever seen a more extraordinary group of athletes -- not just women athletes -- but athletes ever assembled at the White House. Thank you all for coming.

We are also honored to joined by many members of Congress [Senator Arlen Specter; Rep. Carolyn Kilpatrick; Rep. Zoe Lofgren; Rep. Patsy Mink; Rep. Constance Morella; Rep. Nancy Pelosi; Rep. Ellen Tauscher; Rep. Maxine Waters]

I want to thank Ernestine Miller for lending us her wonderful collection of women's sports memorabilia, which I hope you've had -- or will have -- a chance to see in the foyer.

I am also delighted to be here with Billie Jean King, who is such a true champion on and off the court. It was her idea to create a documentary about the history of women in sports. Which is only fitting. For she shaped that history by taking on not only Bobby Riggs, but discrimination...and by clearing the path for every woman and girl in this country. Thank you.

And I want to thank Jeff Bewkes [Bue-kiss], and all of HBO for once again bringing us the history that defines us as a nation and a people. Last year, we gathered in this room to watch the HBO mini-series, Earth to the Moon. But, tonight's documentary focuses on a goal that has taken longer to reach than putting a man on the moon. And that is putting a woman on the basketball court, the soccer field, the running track, anywhere and everywhere that she wants to compete.

Back when I was in high school, I remember being told that we could only play half-court basketball. Because they claimed our hearts were too weak to bear the strain of playing on the full-court. Can you imagine anyone saying that Lisa Leslie's heart is too weak? Or Sheryl Swoops? Or Cynthia Cooper's?

Times have certainly changed. Earlier today, I went with Seth Abraham of HBO Sports, Billie Jean King, Dominique Dawes and Nikki McCray to a school where the girl's basketball team is the pride of the campus. Nikki talked to the students about how, when she was growing up, her male cousins didn't let her play basketball with them because she was a girl. And how if you wanted a hero, you generally had to look to men like Michael Jordan. Today, she is one.

At the MCI Center last summer, the seats at the WNBA games were filled with children of all races and ages, boys and girls. Both boys and girls proudly wore Nikki McCray's jerseys and signature shoes. Both boys and girls lined up patiently after Mystics games, hoping to get an autograph and praying that one day they'll be able to follow in the footsteps of players like Nikki. Now they can.

That's because Title IX opened the floodgates of opportunity for countless college women. And, it's because of the role models in this room.

Every time a girl is told that she's just as good as a boy, she can thank women like Mamie "Peanut" Johnson, who wanted to be a baseball player her whole life...and saw her wish come true when she played right alongside men in the Negro Leagues.

Every time a girl breaks another record, she can thank women like Bobbie Gibb, who became the first woman to unofficially run the Boston Marathon. Back then, women weren't allowed to run. So she snuck in, dressed not-so-conspicuously in a black bathing suit, shorts, and nursing Bermuda shoes. But she finished that race. And paved the way for all those who followed.

Every time a young athlete refuses to give up, even after defeat, she can thank Olympians like Dominique Dawes. This afternoon, she talked about what she used to do when she got discouraged, as we all do. How, after waking up every day at 5:00 a.m., she'd sometimes ask herself, "Why am I doing this?" And so she'd take a can of shaving cream -- and write these three words on her mirror: Determination, dedication, desire. She called them her three D's. And they are what it

takes to be a champion in any walk of life.

So every single time a girl believes she can go as far as her dreams will take her, we should give thanks to all the female athletes who came before us, many of whom are here. They were told playing sports wasn't ladylike or feminine. But, thank God, they didn't listen. They were ridiculed, but they didn't back away. They were discriminated against. But, they kept standing up and speaking out, demanding nothing less than justice and equality.

There are three generations of women pioneers in this room tonight. And I'd like you all to stand. Every girl born in America stands upon your shoulders. And we are all profoundly grateful to you.

Because, as you will see in the film, the story of women's sports is also the story of women's rights. And I can't think of a better time to tell that story than now, during women's history month.

Whenever a woman dares to compete, she opens up the door a little wider for all girls -- who can look to the women on this film and in

this audience and think: “I can be a teacher or a scientist. I can be a CEO or a Supreme Court Justice. I can be an Olympic athlete...or, the President of the United States. I can be anything I want.”

Tonight we will watch an extraordinary history of women in sports. But, in the days and years ahead, it is up to us to write its sequel. It is up to us to honor these generations of pioneers by helping to finish their work.

So, I hope all of us will continue to work for the day when sayings like “You throw like a girl” or “You run like a girl” are meant as compliments, not insults. I hope there will be a day when strong and feminine are always considered one and the same. And when our ability to compete is determined not by our gender, but by our spirit, skill and strength. And I hope we’ll finally reach the day when every child, boy and girl, doesn’t have to look any further than the mirror to spot a champion.

Thank you all very much for making that possible.

And now, it is my great honor to introduce HBO’s chairman, Jeff

Bewkes [Bue-kiss]. He understands the power television can have to teach us about our past and shape our future. And under Jeff's leadership, HBO has addressed some of the most important stories of our time -- from AIDS to civil rights to war. Please welcome Jeff Bewkes [Bue-kiss]