



# Tucker Center

for Research on Girls & Women in Sport

## Report and Evaluation for Women Coaches Symposium 2015

Second Annual  
Women Coaches Symposium  
“Empowering Women to Lead in the 21st Century”  
Organized by The Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport  
in the School of Kinesiology at the University of Minnesota,  
in partnership with  
Gopher Athletics and the Alliance of Women Coaches  
Friday, April 17, 2015  
TCF Bank Stadium, Indoor Club Room, University of Minnesota

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The purpose of the **Women Coaches Symposium** is to provide high quality educational programming and professional development, an avenue for networking for women, space to build community among women coaches, and to increase and retain women in the coaching profession. Women coaches of all sports and all levels are welcome.

The 2015 Women Coaches Symposium was an **overwhelming success**—72% of attendees “strongly agreed” and 26% “agreed” they enjoyed the symposium (which means 98% enjoyed this event!). In its second year, symposium attendance grew by 40% to 170 women coaches and a few male allies from all sports and all levels of competition. A large majority (97%) would recommend a colleague attend, and nearly everyone (96%) indicated they would attend a future WCS. Coupled with the fact the WCS sold out a month in advance, this unique event is clearly popular, needed, and in demand. In addition to its women-centered focus, the affordability, quality of speakers and relevancy of topics in the current climate of the coaching profession for women sets the WCS apart from other coaching conferences.

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The WCS opened with three **pre-symposium options**: a *Daring Greatly* book discussion group; a Mother-Coach discussion group; and a Managing Your Digital Brand workshop. Each pre-event had 15-20 participants and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Mother-Coaches shared their stories and detailed how they have sought work-family balance, discussed prominent issues that are unique to collegiate coaches who have children at home, and offered support to encourage more mothers to remain in the coaching profession.

The Digital Brand workshop helped coaches identify who they are, what differentiates them from others, and what makes them exceptional—as a professional and person. A digital brand makes you authentic and relevant and helps you stand out from the crowd. Participants began the process of discovering their digital brand; explored new tools to develop and launch a digital brand; and formulated an action plan for maintaining their brand as professional experiences, visions, and goals evolve.

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This year we added the opportunity for **vendors** to join us. Six vendors had the opportunity to network with coaches and share their expertise, including: Smart Women, gift products tailored to smart women; Shelly Bean the Sport Queen books; Lisa Huey, financial advisor with Merrill Lynch; Discover Strength, time-efficient, evidence-based strength-training; Premier Sport Psychology; and the Center for Sport and Performance Psychology. Coaches had the opportunity to interact with vendors throughout the day.

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The symposium opened with a welcoming address from the directors of each of the main sponsors—**Beth Goetz** (U of M Athletics), **Marlene Bjornsrud** (Alliance of Women Coaches), and **Nicole M. LaVoi** (Tucker Center).

**Diane Wiese Bjornstal**, Ph.D., CC-AASP, Director of the U of M Sports Medicine Science Lab, and Professor in the U of M's School of Kinesiology, started our group of expert speakers with a talk about "Psychology of Sport Injury: What Coaches Need to Know." Her talk was an overview of what coaches should know about the four psychosocial aspects of sports injuries among female athletes: occurrence, vulnerability, response, and coaches' roles.

**Carlin Anderson** (Dr. Carly), Ph.D., LP, CC-AASP, Premier Sport Psychology, Gopher Athletics consultant, gave a talk titled "Mind, Body & Sport: Mental Health and Athletes" in response to a growing need to better address mental health concerns among athletes. Coaches learned about the Xs & Os of managing an athlete's mental health issues and how to obtain resources, tools and methods to handle the stigma associated with these matters.

**Linda LeClaire**, author, speaker, mental coach, and energy coach, gave an inspiring talk titled "The Confidence Factor." LeClaire asserted that no single human quality in the outcome of our lives is more important than one's level of confidence, and confidence determines how we meet life's challenges. Coaches learned how to ignite their own and their athletes' confidence from within. Instead of using less confidence when challenged in competition coaches learned how to use more confidence in every situation.

**Nicole M. LaVoi**, Ph.D., Associate Director, Tucker Center, University of Minnesota, shared strategies to help coaches feel empowered and stay in coaching. Her talk, "Empowering Women Coaches," outlined the numerous barriers for women in the coaching profession that male colleagues do not encounter. Illuminating barriers is important so that women coaches are collectively aware of the complex landscape they face, and so that coaches can understand they do not face these barriers alone. Awareness of barriers is key for successful navigation of the coaching profession for women and for creating social change.



This year featured the inaugural **Jean K. Freeman** keynote address. Jean served for 31 years as the women's swimming and diving team head coach for the Gophers from 1973-2004, before passing away in 2010 from cancer. Freeman was a highly successful coach, cared deeply about her athletes, and was beloved by all. This keynote serves to honor her legacy of excellence and to pay it forward. The goal of the Jean K. Freeman keynote is to bring in a highly successful, high-profile female coach who reflects Jean's values and commitment in striving for excellence while maintaining good sportsmanship. This keynote increased the visibility, marketability and reputation of the WCS.

To introduce the keynote and the keynote speaker, former Hall of Fame Gopher swimmer and now Head Women's Swimming Coach for the Gophers, **Terry Ganley** gave some remarks about the impact Jean made on athletes, the swimming world, and coaches. She then introduced the keynote speaker.



Motivational speaker and 11-time NCAA Division-I National Champion and former UCLA softball coach **Sue Enquist** was a fitting choice to deliver the first Jean K. Freeman keynote. Her keynote titled "Competitive Greatness 24/7: Excellence Never Blinks" was the hit of the WCS—81% of the coaches felt her talk was "very worthwhile." Sue entertained and inspired the coaches with her energy and passion. When asked what they liked best about the WCS, many coaches responded writing: "Sue Enquist!"

After lunch a panel titled "Insights for Coaches from Athletic Administrators" convened and four women athletic administrators from all levels of competition provided coaches' insights from their unique perspectives. **Kim Chandler**, Director of Athletics, Macalester College, NCAA-III; **Jenn Fraser**, Assistant Commissioner, Northern Sun Conference, NCAA-II; **Beth Goetz**, Senior Associate Athletics Director/SWA, University of Minnesota, NCAA-I; and **Jody Redman**, Associate Director, Minnesota State High School League shared personal and professional insights which coaches found very worthwhile.

**Marlene Bjornsrud**, Executive Director of the Alliance of Women Coaches, spoke to coaches about "Engagement Strategies for Women Coaches" and ways they can get and stay involved in the coaching profession.

The day ended with a raffle and entertaining session with **Cheryl Reeve**, Head Coach of the WNBA Minnesota Lynx. Her candor and insights were a hit last year and she didn't disappoint this year!

Finally, coaches were invited to stay and continue the conversation and network at a Happy Hour.

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**In our post-event evaluation, we asked WCS attendees *what they liked best* and some of the feedback we got included:**

- *The whole day was motivating and inspiring! I really enjoyed the time to network!*
- *The speakers were inspirational, practical, and empowering. Great choices!*
- *Fellowship with other women coaches was a highlight.*
- *The lineup of speakers! I am still feeling inspired a week later and have shared what I learned with many of my colleagues.*
- *Various topics and the amount of passion and inspiration in the room.*
- *The networking tables and small table discussions.*
- *I thought the presenters were all INCREDIBLE!*
- *The networking opportunities and being in a room filled with other female coaches.*
- *The variety of coaches in the room and the venue!*



Many attendees emailed us unsolicited, with thoughts about their experience at the WCS. A snapshot of their feedback is below:

- ❖ *Thank you for your sustained commitment to shining a light on the challenges women coaches face and taking action to improve their lives and careers.*
- ❖ *I realized that "staying in the game" is a marathon, not a sprint; and I think I'm finding my stride again. (That was HUGE for me—THANKS! I certainly have been smiling a lot more recently.)*
- ❖ ***Awesome, awesome** conference! Your work on this was outstanding and the day flew by. Came home wishing I was still coaching!! (sent by an Athletic Director)*
- ❖ *Wonderful and important event. Very well run and organized! Thank you to Dr. LaVoi and the Tucker Center.*
- ❖ *First, thank you for putting together such a fantastic conference for the second year in a row! I brought a team of coaches with me this year and they all loved it! Such high quality all the way around.*
- ❖ *I just wanted to drop a quick thank-you for hosting an amazing event on Friday. Out of the 8+ professional development events that I have been to in the past few months, that event was BY FAR the best. I thoroughly enjoyed every speaker and was engaged the entire time. I felt so honored and blessed to even be in that room with the amount of success from not only the speakers, but the other coaches in the room. The things that you and the Tucker Center have accomplished for women in sport is very inspiring and I am excited to see what is to come for the future of women leaders. Thank you again for an incredible day.*
- ❖ *The symposium was great today. It was very cool to be in the presence of so many powerful and inspiring women! Am looking forward to keeping in contact with some ppl I've met today. And implementing stuff we've learned with our girls' teams and with our organization!*
- ❖ *Wow! Yesterday was amazing. The quality of speakers was unbelievable. I also enjoyed the women I met at my table. You should be very proud of what you put together and how you're empowering women coaches to succeed.*
- ❖ *We really appreciate all you put into organizing the event and finding excellent speakers for the interesting topics of each session. It was an informative and inspirational day. It was motivating to connect with so many women with similar missions in life—at all levels of competition.*

