

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a woman's eye, looking directly at the camera. The eye is brown with long, dark eyelashes. The skin around the eye is fair. The overall tone is warm and dramatic.

SHE'S GOT NEXT

SEASON 1: 2023

WHAT IS

SHE'S GOT NEXT?

Devised as an ongoing content series by The Martin Group, each piece illuminates the accomplishments and wisdom of women in sports and sports-adjacent fields while amplifying their voices and experiences.

In our first season, we spoke with women from all backgrounds and all job titles—from leaders in sports brand marketing, to presidents of organizations and sports teams, to advocates and athletes. Each shared their own unique experiences, helping us understand the nuances of diversity in sports while demonstrating the commonalities of being a woman in this space.

FROM MOMENT TO MOVEMENT



"People are watching, and opportunities for women in all corners of the sports industry are growing. We're paying attention—and with this series, we hope to help this moment for women in sports turn into a movement with momentum, highlighted by inclusivity and diversity."

AMY MORITZ
CREATOR AND MODERATOR OF SHE'S GOT NEXT
THE MARTIN GROUP



SEASON ONE

"You must speak up and be an active part of change."

LIZ DILULLO BROWN

"Stay anchored to the innocence and the why behind what made you fall in love with the game."

NIKKI BARTHOLOMEW

"As transformational as Title IX has been, its full promise has yet to be met."

DANETTE LEIGHTON

"Reading the comments fuels me and makes me want to celebrate women louder."

JESSE LADOUÉ MCMULLEN

"Women athletes tend to be more educated, civic-minded, and aware. They have gone through more in terms of sexism, discrimination, being lightly regarded, being scoffed at."

CHRISTINE BRENNAN

"Sports organizations and businesses can be at the forefront of change."

RUSHIA BROWN

HIGHLIGHTS

SEASON

1

ROSTER

**JESSICA
GELMAN**

Kraft Analytics Group,
MIT Sloan Sports
Analytics Conference

6

**CHRISTINE
BRENNAN**

USA Today

7

NAOMI SILVER

Rochester
Community Baseball

8

RUSHIA BROWN

SERVCOM,
Young Black Entrepreneur

9

**NIKKI
BARTHOLOMEW**

FC Buffalo,
Algonquin Sports

10

**DANETTE
LEIGHTON**

Women's Sports
Foundation

11

**LIZ DILULLO
BROWN**

Little League
International

12

VERNA VOLKER

Native Women Running

13

**CHRISTINE
DE LA ROSA**

SPARTAN

14

**JESSE LADOUE
MCMULLEN**

New Era Cap

15

**MIKYLA
GRANT-MENTIS**

Buffalo Beauts

16

JESSICA GELMAN



- CEO of Kraft Analytics Group (KAGR)
- Co-founder and co-chair of the MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference
- Minority partner in the Utah Royals of the National Women's Soccer League and alternate governor on the NWSL board
- Previously led business operations, marketing, and strategy for Kraft Sports & Entertainment
- Played DI basketball at Harvard

FROM JESSICA:

"Sponsorship based on how many people are seeing or watching [the game] from my perspective, is probably the wrong metric. Women's sports haven't received enough coverage for long enough for people to have an opportunity to watch it... We need to evolve and reset how sponsorships are measured."

"It's important for girls to be playing sports given the lessons and skills learned from playing...As importantly, for boys, they see the inclusivity and learn to be OK with a woman leading. They learn respect."

CHRISTINE BRENNAN



- Award-winning national sports columnist for *USA Today*
- Commentator for CNN, ABC News, PBS NewsHour, and NPR
- Best-selling author and a nationally known speaker
- Recognized as one of the country's Top 10 sports columnists multiple times by the Associated Press Sports Editors
- Past president and current board chair of the Association for Women in Sports Media

FROM CHRISTINE:

"Women athletes, for the most part, have stayed in college and gotten their degrees before having a professional opportunity—if they have a professional opportunity. I think that they tend to be more educated, more civic-minded, and more aware. They've also gone through more in terms of the issues—sexism, discrimination, being lightly regarded, being scoffed at—than male athletes have, although that's getting better by the day."

"I'm so fortunate in that I've always been heard. I've always been treated equally. I've always been given great opportunities, and I've never felt that I didn't have the support of my editors. One of the reasons I became president of AWSM (Association for Women in Sports Media) was because I wanted to fight for those women who haven't had the opportunity that I had. So many women don't get those opportunities, or are treated unfairly, or are minimized by a sports editor. I'm fighting for them."

NAOMI SILVER



- President CEO and COO of Rochester Community Baseball, which owns the Triple-A Rochester (N.Y.) Red Wings.
- First woman to lead a minor league baseball team
- Daughter of Morrie E. Silver, credited with saving professional baseball in Rochester

FROM NAOMI:

"A woman's voice is important in sports, just as it is in any business. People forget that half of our customers are women, and women most often make the decisions about how to spend family time and date-night time. We can't afford not to take a woman's perspective into serious account."

"I love the fact that we have a significant impact on the community. We are an important piece of family tradition and history for a LOT of people. Creating the environment that leads to an enjoyable time and a lasting memory means everything to me."

RUSHIA BROWN



- Six-year WNBA player
- 10-year European professional player
- Entrepreneur involved with several companies, including ServCom, a nonprofit that strives to improve communities with educational and enrichment activities
- Director of Public Relations for *Young Black Entrepreneur* (YBE) Magazine, a quarterly publication that serves as an educational platform encouraging minorities to start their own businesses

FROM RUSHIA:

"The issues of gender and racial inequality are sown into the fabric of American society. We've made so much progress over the years but there is so much more work to do. I'm confident that sports organizations and businesses can be at the forefront of change moving forward."

"Increased visibility comes not just from media coverage but from marketing strategies. Another important piece to the growth of the [WNBA] is more in-depth marketing of the women that play the game, giving fans the ability to connect with them on a different level."

NIKKI BARTHOLOMEW



- Head coach,
FC Buffalo Women
- Former player, University
at Buffalo and Rochester
Lady Rhinos (W League)
- Senior manager,
Algonquin Sports for Kids
- National trainer,
US Soccer Foundation

FROM NIKKI:

"My advice for young women who want to pursue a career in the sports industry is to stay anchored to the innocence and the why behind what made you fall in love with the game in the first place. Continue to increase your inner strength with your success so you can develop into your full potential."

"When companies dedicate attention to showcasing women's teams, not just as an add-on to the men's teams, it will only grow the exposure and fast forward the reputation of women's soccer."

DANETTE LEIGHTON



- CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation, an organization founded in 1974 by Billie Jean King to strengthen and expand participation and leadership opportunities for women in sports
- Former chief marketing officer, Pac-12 Conference
- Former vice president of business operations, Sacramento Monarchs (WNBA)
- Former VP of marketing and brand development, Sacramento Kings (NBA)

FROM DANETTE:

"As transformational as Title IX has been, its full promise has yet to be met. It is vital for everyone — especially younger generations — to understand their rights to equal access and opportunity, to be vigilant in ensuring those rights are upheld, and to not take them for granted."

"Do not forget there is plenty of room at the table for strong leaders striving to create a more equitable future for those on and off the field of play. At every step of your journey, strive to be a role model, because you never know who could be looking to you for inspiration."

LIZ DILULLO BROWN



- First female senior executive at Little League International, serving as the organization's chief marketing officer and senior vice president of marketing and communications
- Mother of two and is a lifelong believer in the power of how sports can change lives

FROM LIZ:

"When I think about leading or building a team, in particular coming out of the pandemic when we were rebuilding in so many ways, it's really important that people know where they stand, what role they play, and how their talents can be best utilized to benefit the team. That feels so important to me today, because what we do every day at Little League is in support of the idea of team."

"It is incumbent on individuals, leaders especially, to use your voice to make change. Sometimes this makes you feel like the "squeaky wheel" but when I see something or feel something that needs to change to create more inclusion, you must speak up and be an active part of change."

VERNA VOLKER



- Member of the Navajo Nation
- Advocate for Native women in the running community—from advertisements to product ambassadors, to podium finishers
- Created the social media account Native Women Running to support others like herself and amplify their stories. The account has become a movement and an organization, helping to shine a light on Native women runners

FROM VERNA:

“Native women run for competition but our views on running are so different. It’s more spiritual. A lot of women share their journey of loss and trauma, and that extends to historical trauma. Running is a way of healing.”

“When I started running, I never saw myself reflected in the running community. In the industry and in ads, the only type of runner I saw was white, skinny, blonde, and a Boston qualifier. I created the account Native Women Running as a space for others to share their journey.”

CHRISTINE DE LA ROSA



- Former Head of Media for SPARTAN
- Former producer/manager of Vice Sports
- Extensive experience working with a variety of sports-affiliated brands, including New Balance, the National Basketball Association (NBA), and National Football League (NFL)

FROM CHRISTINE:

"The biggest challenge when I started in the sports world was having to work harder to not just have a seat at the table but to make sure my voice was heard and valued...The more I spoke up, the more I noticed how positively people responded. I grew a lot once I realized that my voice was important, and I hope more women realize the same sooner than I did."

"I see a future where we have normalized conversations around things like periods, pregnancy, and maternity leave to name a few. My hope for women's sports in the future is to simply be recognized for our talents. Not because we stand out for being a talented woman, but simply because we're talented."

JESSE LADOUÉ MCMULLEN



- Marketing director of Licensed Sports at New Era Cap
- Began as a marketing manager within New Era's Baseball division
- Former Miss New York and Miss International, 2013

FROM JESSE:

"How can women's sports grow without exposure? The more fans are introduced to faces, names, teams, rivalries, etc. the more they will continue to connect and invest time and money into women's sports. Metrics are favorable."

"Reading the comments fuels me and makes me want to celebrate women louder. It motivates me to continue to forge my own path so more women see themselves in this industry without limitation."

MIKYLA GRANT- MENTIS



- Professional women's hockey player who's played in the Professional Women's Hockey League (PWHL) with Ottawa and the Premier Hockey League (PHL) with Toronto and Buffalo
- First Black player to win PHL's Most Valuable Player award (2021)
- Was the highest paid player in the PHF in 2022-23, making \$80,000 with the Buffalo Beauts
- All-time leading scorer for Merrimack College women's ice hockey

FROM MIKYLA:

"The biggest thing is just trying to break that stereotype that women can't play hockey. We have our own skills. ... We need to show everyone that, yes, we are female hockey players and we can perform just as well as the men if you give us the chance and the opportunity. If you don't want to watch, keep scrolling."

"When I went to an all-girls team, it was just more inclusive. It didn't matter who you were or what your last name was. If you're coming to this team, for the seven months you're playing together, you're a family. That was the change from playing with the boys because the boys were so competitive. Everyone always wanted to be better than the others. Whereas females, we lifted each other up."

WHAT'S NEXT?

Our second season of **She's Got Next** has another round of inspiring interviews with advocates, researchers, and connectors from all over the sports world. We'll continue to offer Q&A insights on The Martin Group's blog and through special events, like our Spring 2024 panel discussion at our Buffalo headquarters.

Read the whole series [HERE.](#)

Nominate someone for inclusion [HERE.](#)

THANK YOU

martin.