**CHAPTER 3:**

**Ready! Set! Go!**

**Women Athletes Take the Starting Line**

After women won the right to vote 100 years ago, they were able to weigh in on many issues that affected personal freedoms and equal rights. Yet even after many advancements in employment and politics, women discovered that they were still second-class citizens when it came to sports. Where school athletic programs existed for women, these programs often took a backseat to those for men.

In 1972, two important laws decreed that women deserved an equal share of public resources, including funding and access to facilities. First, Title IX — a federal law that mandated gender equity for any federally-funded educational program or activity — was passed. And in Washington, an Equal Rights Amendment was added to the state constitution. But it wasn’t until seven years later, when Washington State University track athlete Karen (née Blair) Troianello and Coach Sue Durrant sued the university, that true statewide reform (and increased funding) for women athletes in public four-year universities was enforced.

Troianello, Durrant and many women in Washington state history have been advocates for women’s right to compete as equals and a natural leader — so when the principal of her elementary school told her girls could not play basketball, she organized a girls’ basketball program herself. Later, her program evolved into a citywide basketball league for women.

**Hazel Wolf** was born in British Columbia in 1898 and lived to be 102 years old. She is well known as an advocate for the protection of the wilderness, wetlands and wildlife in the Northwest, as well as for the rights of workers, women and minorities. Wolf’s activism began when she was a young girl. She was an athlete and a natural leader — so when the principal of her elementary school told her girls could not play basketball, she organized a girls’ basketball program herself. Later, her program evolved into a citywide basketball league for women.

**Helene Madison** serves as an inspiration for young women to work hard and dream big. She began swimming as a small child in Seattle Park Department classes at Green Lake. Her natural talent was recognized by Washington Athletic Club (WAC) coach Ray Daughters, who encouraged Madison to swim competitively. By the time she was 15 years old, she had broken 117 United States and world records and qualified to swim at the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles. She won three gold medals and returned home to a ticker-tape parade. Shortly after her success at the Olympics, Madison performed a swimming routine for her hometown fans. As a result, she lost her amateur standing, and while her former teammates competed in the Berlin Olympics, Madison worked at the Green Lake hot-dog stand. The swimming pool at the WAC was renamed in honor of one of their most famous swimmers.

**HistoryLink.org**, the free online encyclopedia of Washington state history, is a valuable resource for additional information on Hazel Wolf (see essay #8794), Helene Madison (see essay #293) and other women featured in this series. HistoryLink.org currently features nearly 6,000 essays on historical events and people, with more added each week. See the website’s Advanced Search page (http://historylink.org/Index.cfm?DisplayPage=search.cfm) to look up essays by number, date or topic and learn more about the women who shaped the history of Washington state.

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