THE ORIGINS OF WOMEN'S ATHLETICS AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY







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"The thing that impresses me most about the New York University girls sports teams is their spirit. Every time I learn the N.Y.U. co-eds are competing somewhere in the vicinity of Philadelphia, I go to see them because I enjoy their enthusiasm."

(Helen O. Mankin, "Enthusiasm of N.Y.U. Co-ed Teams Impresses Philadelphia Reporter," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, reprinted in the *New York Daily News*, April 20, 1931)

"Co-Eds May Form Basketball Team For University" blared a headline in large bold letters in the November 30, 1920 issue of *The New York University News*. Two years later an article in the *New York University Daily News* called for women interested in basketball and swimming to attend a meeting of the University's League of Women. Now, just over one-hundred years later, we may well reflect on the origins of women's athletics at New York University in light of the recent accomplishments of its female athletes: the basketball team's two consecutive NCAA Division III National Championships in 2024 and 2025, both undefeated seasons, along with its fourth consecutive University Athletic Association championship; the women's swimming squad's first NCAA Division III National Championship in 2026, following a best-ever second place finish in 2025, as well as its first University Athletic Association championship; women's cross-country's first NCAA Division III National Championship in 2025, and other recent outstanding accomplishments.[1*]

[*] These include a multiple All-American in cross-country and indoor and outdoor track; the golf team winning the 2019 NCAA National Championship, half of the last ten University Athletic Association titles (including 2025), and the Liberty League championship three out of the past four years; soccer making the Sweet Sixteen of the NCAA Championship in 2023 and 2024; a semi-finalist at the 2025 NCAA tennis championship; and volleyball reaching the NCAA Final Four in 2022 and 2023.

The 1920s

The Roaring Twenties! The Jazz Age. The Golden Age of Sports. By any descriptive phrase, the 1920s were an exciting time, an era of profound social change. Entertainment habits changed with the development of radio and motion pictures; automobiles became more affordable; the decade saw amazing achievements in aviation. There were negative aspects as well: a continuation of the post-World War I red scare, fears of immigration leading to the passage of restrictive legislation, and prohibition, which had a significant impact on social behavior and mores. But it was also a time when more Americans had the money and the leisure time to enjoy sports, which became a national obsession. Interest in golf and tennis grew and the number of clubs increased; businesses sponsored athletic programs and industrial leagues flourished; attendance at college football games rose dramatically. Notre Dame's Four Horsemen strode the gridiron. It was the decade of Babe Ruth and the New York Yankees' Murderers' Row and epic heavyweight championship boxing matches between Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney and Jess Willard which attracted tens of thousands of spectators.

The lives of women were particularly impacted by the decade's social changes. The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gave women the right to vote. There were significant changes in their behavior, dress, and life styles. It was the Age of the Flapper. "Nice" women increasingly used cosmetics, drank, and smoked ("'Gimme a Light' Is Common Query Among Co-eds; Demand Smoking Room" ran a headline in an early 1920s NYU publication.[*]). Traditionally dressed modestly and seen as "the guardians of morality," American women, as *The New York Times* noted in July 1920, had now "lifted [their] skirts far beyond any modest limitation." They wore short-sleeved dresses and, shockingly, sometimes sleeveless evening dresses with provocative decolletage. They were dancing wildly to jazz and, worse, in close embrace with their dance partner to sensuous music. With a greater prevalence of automobiles, critics lamented that women were

[*] In response to the co-eds' demand, the article reported the Dean as saying "that if the girls would give up smoking and return to 'normalcy,' they would be better off." There already was a smoking room for male students.

going out joyriding until early hours of the morning, making out at dances and in parked cars, engaging in the "unspeakable practice of petting and necking," or, even worse, sex. All decent standards of behavior were seen as forsaken. The increased independence of American women was reflected elsewhere. Continuing a practice necessitated by the drafting of men during World War I, larger numbers of women started to take jobs, as modern conveniences made housekeeping easier. An early chronicler of the decade noted that "Women were slowly becoming emancipated from routine to 'live their own lives.'" And that included participating in sports, as short skirts gave women the freedom to play without the restrictions of dress.[2]

As the post-World War I years began, the old Victorian Age view of women and physical activity had substantially faded and would continue to do so, although strong elements remained during the decade of the 1920s and, it could be argued, did not totally disappear until after the passage of Title IX in 1972 and the NCAA's assumption of control of women's intercollegiate athletics with the demise of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women in 1983.

In the 1920s, women's sports rapidly grew and for the first time sportswomen attracted major media attention. The Golden Age of Sports had its female stars including Suzanne Lenglen of France, who daringly played "in her short sleeveless dresses and without a corset," a perfect exemplar of the flapper era, as she dominated tennis between 1919 and 1927; Helen Wills, the first American woman to be a global sports celebrity, would equally dominate the courts in the latter part of the decade;[*] golfer Glenna Collett Vare made headlines with 59 of 60 victories in 1924 and multiple United States championships and other national titles in the 1920s; and Gertrude Ederle, who in 1926 became the first woman to swim the English Channel and did so in a time (14 and a half hours) over two hours faster than the previous five male swimmers. These and other prominent female athletes of the 1920s helped define and popularize athleticism as "an important component of the 'new woman's' image." Female athletes were, aside

[*] The 1926 match between Lenglen and Wills was dubbed "The Match of the Century."

from actresses, “the most highly visible group of public women” in that decade. YWCAs offered opportunities for women to engage in sports and the athletic programs sponsored by industries and local governments were open to women. The Olympics experienced a four-fold increase in the number of female participants between the 1920 and the 1928 Games, as the percentage of women among Olympians rose from about 2.5% to nearly 10%.[3]

But all was not golden in the field of women’s athletics. It was also a time of great controversy over the appropriate nature of women’s sports. Even as more women were participating in physical activities and an increasing number were becoming physical educators (as more colleges, including New York University, were offering physical education training for teachers), old nineteenth century attitudes and concerns about what was proper and physically and physiologically possible for women to do continued to assert themselves. For example, participation in the first women’s international track and field meet, held in Paris in 1922, was opposed by many female physical educators and women’s organizations, and, later in the decade, the 800-meter race at the 1928 Olympics, the first to include women’s track and field events, proved to be highly controversial due to exaggerated and false reports of participants collapsing. While feminists and others believed that, beyond enjoyment, participating in sports brought health benefits and promoted self-confidence in women, critics found it unladylike, believing competitive sports to be detrimental to a woman’s delicate body and promoting aggressive masculine behavior. To opponents, there were imagined dangers to child-bearing, daintiness, and physical strength.[4]

The opposition played out in the battle for control of women’s athletics between the Amateur Athletic Union and female physical educators. At national organizations, such as the Women’s Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation, concerns were strongly expressed about male values infiltrating women’s sports. The view was that the emphasis in women’s sports should be on mass participation and teamwork rather than the few gifted athletes. Sports were to be for the benefit of the participants, “not primarily for the amusement of the spectators or the glorification of a few stars,” nor was it to be for “the commercial

advantage of any institution or organization." As one prominent female physical educator of the time wrote, coaches should not focus on developing athletic abilities in order to win games, but on "the social quality of cooperation," on whether the abilities players exhibited in games was "of such an enduring quality that they will lead to a keener appreciation of the necessities of social adjustments[,]" that is, be of service to her community. Gate receipts should be eliminated, spectators restricted, and championships de-emphasized. The guiding principle was "every girl in a sport and a sport for every girl."[5]

While men's intercollegiate athletics started as groups of male students at different colleges challenged each other to a contest in one sport or another, and through most of the nineteenth century the games were under the jurisdiction of students, women's sports programs arose from informal recreational activities or from classes in physical education. Women's college sports in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were predominantly intramural rather than extramural, participation usually occurring at special campus "play days." Varsity competition inherently conflicted with the philosophy of women's physical educators. Appalled by the corruption they saw in men's intercollegiate athletics, they wanted to avoid the abuses and problems they saw there, such as the over-emphasis on winning, the pursuit of ever-increasing gate receipts, and illegal recruiting practices. The purpose of sports in their view was to teach female students the "characteristics of a well-rounded adult living in a democracy." These were "ethical behavior in a competitive setting, cooperation through teamwork, and the value of disciplined training." Additionally, women physical educators were afraid of losing control of their programs if intercollegiate athletics for women existed. The development of women's intercollegiate athletics and its institutional role was thus different at women's colleges than it was at co-educational institutions. At the latter, men's athletics played an important cultural role in fostering "class spirit and institutional pride[,]" while "women's sports commanded no great attention as an internal institutional force[,]" a role it played at women's colleges. In the twentieth century's opening decades, intercollegiate competition for women would develop earlier and more rapidly at Western co-educational universities than at the older Eastern women's colleges, where the

traditional views prevailed. At New York University's Washington Square campus, where its co-educational undergraduate colleges were located (including a degree program in physical education), the development of the women's athletic program would experience some of these same tensions between competing philosophies of women's athletics.[6]

New York University in the 1920s

"1920-24 was a gay, lively, busy, exciting time," recalled one NYU alumna forty years after she was an undergraduate at the University's Washington Square College, "in which we grew in knowledge and in life." She remembered female students enthusiastically engaging in the new social habits and fashion trends of the post-war decade. "[S]ome of us carried long cigarette holders….We were mad about Jazz, the Charleston, were seen in speakeasies and sometimes carried flasks." These were very active and lively years, as energetic students created all sorts of organizations, including women's athletic teams. As an undergraduate publication of the time noted, students were "building up college activities."[7]

The 1920s were indeed a time of great change for New York University. In the decade after its original undergraduate college moved in 1894 to a new campus at University Heights in the Bronx, liberal arts education had returned to its former location at Washington Square. Originally a non-degree granting Collegiate Division (1903), it was formally organized as Washington Square College (WSC) in 1913-14, joining the older School of Pedagogy (founded in 1890 and renamed the School of Education in 1922) and the School of Commerce, Accounts, and Finance (1900) in offering undergraduate studies at the Square.* Relatively small as World War I ended, the three colleges would grow exponentially during the 1920s. Their combined undergraduate enrollment was not much over 1,000 in 1920-21; by 1930-31 it was more than 14,000. This growth was driven in part by an influx of

* When the Heights campus was sold in 1973, University College was merged with Washington Square College and is today the College of Arts and Science; the School of Education is now the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development; the School of Commerce, Accounts, and Finance is now the Leonard N. Stern School of Business.

female students, as more young women, freed from the expectations and restrictions of old Victorian roles, sought educational opportunities and careers, as well as by returning GIs and post-World War I educational benefits for disabled veterans, and the development of new degree programs.[8]

The post-War influx of students changed the nature of student life at Washington Square. There really had been no student life there in the first two decades of the twentieth century. During those years, wrote Dean John R. Turner, students came to the Collegiate Division for specific courses not for a complete undergraduate curriculum or degree. There was "…no regular student body, and as a result no college life." The early Washington Square College had no permanent staff and only part-time faculty. "[T]here was no college, even if individual students had desired it." Even in the early 1920s there was no college atmosphere or college spirit as at the Heights campus, and Turner saw the necessity of developing student activities.[9]

Much of the development of a student life would come through the interest and efforts of the students themselves. This would be true in the athletics arena, although unlike the nineteenth century, when students led the development of athletics at NYU, now there was an existing athletic/physical education or physical training administration and staff which could institute and govern an official athletics program. In the first years of the 1920s, in addition to an intramural program and class teams, both the School of Commerce and Washington Square College had men's basketball teams which played external competition against other colleges; WSC also had baseball, swimming, and tennis teams which did so as well. They would continue through the decade, eventually ending as students at the Square ultimately became eligible to join the University (men's) teams based at the all-male Heights campus. With the establishment of the Department of Physical Education, Health and Recreation in the School of Education in 1925 and burgeoning enrollment in its programs, that School also had men's teams engaged in intercollegiate competition in basketball, swimming, tennis, and track.[10]

The women students (co-eds in the language of the time) at NYU were not far behind, even simultaneous, in expressing their desire for athletic competition, not surprisingly, as the number of female undergraduates grew to several thousand by 1930. Given the spirit of the decade, it was a new "type" of women with which the University had to deal in ways which it didn't have to previously. NYU was founded in 1831 as an all-male institution and the original undergraduate college (University College, which had moved to the Heights campus in 1894) would remain so until 1959. Women were first admitted as degree students to the Graduate School in 1888. Two years later (1890), admission was granted in the Law School and to the newly created School of Pedagogy. In the latter, they made up the majority of students but tended to be older women with two or three years of undergraduate education or a teaching certificate from a normal school, or seeking a graduate degree. With the expansion of its academic programs during the 1920s, the renamed School of Education attracted more undergraduate students of traditional age. Similarly, although the Collegiate Division had women students from its start, most were older than the usual college student and also tended to be teachers who were graduates of a normal school and wanted a bachelor's degree. This changed with the creation of Washington Square College, which had female students of typical college age from its beginning, a population which grew to approximately 2,000 by the late 1920s. The School of Commerce enrolled women from its start, but only a handful in the first decade of the twentieth century; the number of co-eds grew as the School's enrollment increased although during the 1920s still remained under 10% of the total. Overall, the number of co-eds in the 1920s grew from an estimated few hundred to over several thousand.[11]

But despite the undergraduate schools at the Square admitting an increasing number of women, NYU was still very much a male-dominated and oriented institution in the 1920s. While the Chancellor (as NYU's president was then called), Elmer E. Brown, a former United States Commissioner of Education, "supported higher education as a way for women to become the intellectual equals of their husbands[,]" he did not advocate for them to enter the professions, and thought they should use higher education "to become better

hostesses [”the queen of the salon”] and mothers….” The University’s male administrators likewise “saw women’s education as less important than men’s and therefore spent less money on facilities and programs serving women.”[12]

Used to dealing professionally with men, the University’s male administrators “felt incompetent in dealing with women [students.]” To address the needs of the growing number of female students, in 1917 a Dean of Women was appointed, Dr. Aristine Munn-Recht. Much documentary evidence of the time indicates that she served Washington Square College, but NYU bulletins of the time seem to indicate that she was a University officer serving not only WSC but the Schools of Commerce and Education as well. In either case, Munn-Recht, who resigned in 1922, lacked authority and status. In the recollection of one female alumnus, she “was just a figurehead.” Ultimately, in WSC, Dorothy McSparran Arnold, an English professor, took on those duties, serving as chair of the faculty Committee on the Interests of Women Students and Advisor to Women; she was named Assistant Dean in 1928, holding that title until her retirement in 1961. Her decanal appointment represented acknowledgement by University authorities that it was, in the words of the Dean of Washington Square College, “impossible successfully to administer to the wants of women of the university without having an administrative dean to care for their special problems.” Arnold’s many efforts to improve the college and status of women was so effective that the 1929 WSC yearbook was dedicated to her. Among the accomplishments mentioned in her biography the only reference to athletics is her role in earning for women athletes the right to wear University insignia. However, Arnold’s contributions to the development of women’s athletics at NYU were greater than that, as discussed below in the section on the organization of women’s athletics at NYU. Arnold would chair the faculty-student board which supervised women’s athletics.[*] By

[*] WSC was very much male dominated. Women, whether students or faculty, had very little status. In fact, there were very few female faculty and those were not treated with the respect due them as academic colleagues. Catherine Reighard, appointed the first female faculty member in the WSC English Department in 1922, recalled being assigned to the faculty committee on morals but not being allowed to participate because it involved “dirty” words written on a statue in Washington Square Park; Dean James Munn did not think a lady should “know of such things.” Minna R. Falk, “Recollections of Early Days in the History Department of Washington Square College,” Box 1, Folder 27; and Catherine Reighard, August 7, 1963 letter to Thomas Pollack, Box 1, Folder 69; both in NYU

the late 1920s, the School of Commerce also had an advisor to women, Gladys H. Reutiman, who also served on the women's athletic committee.[13*]

Frustrated by the failure of the administration to provide support for their interests, the co-eds at Washington Square College, helped by female faculty and staff, took matters into their own hands, even before Munn-Recht resigned and an effective replacement for her was ultimately found. Early in the 1920s, the women students founded the League of Women (the name perhaps prompted by the recently established League of Nations) for the purposes of fostering University spirit, social unity, "and for the wholesome rivalry of matching power with power." The WSC League inspired similar groups at the other schools, and an "umbrella League" was formed for the "general supervision of all matters affecting the women of the University" and to place NYU's women students "on equal footing with women at women's colleges." Starting in 1921 with fifty members in WSC, by the following year the League had 300 members University-wide. Within another year, the WSC Bulletin would state that "Social and athletic activities for University women are combined under the New York University League of Women."[14†]

First to Merit the Wearing of the Violet: Basketball

Although the League would play an important part in the early development of women's athletics at NYU, organizing a tennis tournament and basketball and swimming teams to address "[t]he long-felt need for women's athletics[,]" the

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Archives Collection of Faculty and Alumni Memory Projects, Series I. Falk was a 1926 graduate of WSC and subsequently a faculty member. The attitude of some male students of the time towards co-eds can be seen in a contemporaneous incident when members of the sophomore class petitioned for a new election for class president after the male incumbent resigned and was succeeded by the vice-president who was female, saying "that a girl was not capable of leading the class in its more strenuous activities." The Student Council denied the request based on the obviously sexist grounds that the spring activities were "purely social." "Denies Class Pleas to Oust Girl Officers," *The New York Times*, February 10, 1926, p. 10.

[*] That there was no advisor to women in the School of Education might be a reflection of the fact that despite the tremendous growth of female undergraduates in that school (over 4300 in 1929-30) they represented over 70% of the total undergraduates. Enrollment numbers in Elsie A. Hug, *Seventy-Five Years in Education: The Role of the School of Education of New York University, 1890-1965* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), pp. 134 and 171.

[†] At the same time, female students in the School of Law formed the Women Lawyers Club.

movement for co-ed teams actually started a year before its founding. There are references to plans for women's teams in field hockey, swimming, tennis, and even surprisingly baseball (unless a printing error), in 1920-21. But it was basketball which was first organized in that academic year, three years before what is currently considered the official start of a team in that sport. Whatever the impetus was, it appears to have started in Washington Square College where women students began "taking an active interest in athletics" at the same time as the College's first male teams (baseball, basketball, and tennis) were formed and approved by the University's Athletic Council. The WSC women's basketball team was being coached by an undergraduate engineering student from the University's Heights campus, Hubert Taylor, '22.[*] Games were planned against Adelphi, Barnard, and Hunter, but no evidence was found that they were played.[15]

Simultaneous with the formation of the WSC women's team, co-ed hoop teams in the Schools of Commerce and Law were also practicing. The practices of the three school teams, involving about fifty women, took place in the gymnasiums of the Judson Memorial Church on Washington Square South and the First Presbyterian Church at 10th Street and University Place., NYU having no athletic facilities of its own at the downtown campus.[†] They were going so well that organizing a

[*] How Taylor became the WSC coach is not clear. No connection on his part with basketball or athletics in general at the Heights campus was found. One possibility for Taylor's involvement is that he was an executive officer in the Student Reserve Officers' Training Corps and Prof. Henry C. Hathaway, the Director of Athletics, had been in charge of ROTC. Or he could have been known to one of the women on the team. Taylor's extra-curricular activities are listed in his biography in the Heights yearbook, *The Violet*, 1923, p. 55.

[†] Through the 1920s, the Washington Square campus severely lacked the facilities to provide for athletic teams and the undergraduate physical education requirement. At the start of the decade, a plan had been developed to construct a new gymnasium at the University Heights campus and to build one at Washington Square. But despite constant decanal expressions of the need for a "gymnasium for men and women in sufficient number to provide for the athletic and physical training requirements of the student body[,]" until the new School of Education building opened at 35-41 West 4th Street in February 1930, with two gyms, locker rooms and shower facilities for the Department of Physical Education, the downtown campus had to rely on renting space from other institutions or organizations. Chief among these was the neigh boring Judson Memorial church, 53 Washington Square South, which had, in the words of the Washington Square College yearbook, a "two by four basement gymnasium" which was "[s]hoddy, unventilated, and poorly equipped." Some of the sites used are mentioned in the pages that follow. (Sources: "A History of New York University," *The Album*, 1930, p. 35, NYU Archives Collection of Yearbooks, MC304, RG19, Box 35; "Memorial Gymnasium Plan," *New York University Alumnus*, December 1920, pp. 26-27, NYU Archives, microfilm Reel #5096; "Two Gymnasiums Will Be Built," *The New York University News*, December 7, 1920, p. 5, NYU Archives Collection of the *Washington Square Dealer*, RG39.193, Reel #5002, Box 101; and February 1, 1924 memorandum from Milton E. Loomis, Registrar, to Dean Marshall Brown, NYU Archives, Records of the Office of the Chancellor (Elmer E. Brown), RG3.0.4, Box 11, Folder 6. The quotation about the need for a

University co-ed team composed of the best players selected from the school teams was envisioned. According to reports at the time, the plan for what would "be the first girl team ever formed at New York University[,]" had the support of Prof. Henry C. Hathaway, Director of Student Welfare and Athletics. Hathaway, a U.S. Army captain, had come to NYU during World War I as commandant of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and remained in his current position from 1920-1926, appears to have been supportive of women's athletics. Writing in the last of a series of three articles in the University's alumni publication, he said that "our policy aims to give an equal opportunity for every boy and girl registered in the undergraduate colleges of the university to take part in athletics of some sort…." When he resigned in 1926, his active involvement in the organization of women's athletics was noted among his accomplishments.[16]

A University team was in fact chosen, consisting of "B. Simmons, Law School, and Lucille Marhaftig, Washington Square College, forwards; Ruth Brindsy, Washington Square College, B. Dubin, Law School, centres [*sic*]; Ruth Schneer, Law School, and Mary Firman, Commerce, guards." The team practiced 1:30 Monday afternoons at First Presbyterian and Saturday mornings at Judson, and was coached by Olga Meisel, identified at the time as "coach of the co-ed teams of the University." (She was also involved in plans that year in organizing a field hockey and swimming team. See below.) Reference was found to at least one game scheduled that year against an external competitor. It was to be played against the Savage School for Physical Education[*] in late January 1921.[17†]

The composition of this first team as indicated by the players' positions – two forwards, two centers, and two guards – reflects the nature of women's basketball

gymnasium is from Loomis. Reports from the deans of the three undergraduate schools at the Square to Chancellor Brown concerning the need for a gymnasium can be found in the Brown records, Box 57, Folders 3-5; reports of WSC renting gym facilities are also in the Brown records. See James B. Munn October 17, 1923 letter, Box 46, Folder 2, and October 20, 1923 letter, Box 56, Folder 6.

[*] The Savage School, founded in 1895 was the oldest school of its kind in New York State. In the 1920s, it was located at 308 West 59th Street. It closed in 1943 and became part of NYU.

[†] Also in the spring of 1921, women students in the School of Law formed a basketball team. The team members named are not the same as the Law students on the University team; nor is competition against an outside opponent mentioned. "Circling the Square," *The New York University News*, March 22, 1921, p. 4.

at the time. And that basketball was the first women's team established at NYU (despite early possibilities of field hockey and swimming, evidently unfilled in the first years of the 1920s) is not totally surprising. Women's basketball had been invented a year after James Naismith had created the sport for men in 1891 at the YMCA Training School (now Springfield College) in Springfield, Massachusetts. Senda Berenson, who taught physical education at Smith College, a neighboring women's institution, had observed a game and thought that, with some modifications, it would be eminently suitable for women, teaching coordination and team-building skills, and instilling confidence. Originally taught in physical education classes as an alternative to what the students thought were boring gymnastic exercises, on March 22, 1893, Berenson organized a game between the Smith freshmen and sophomores (the latter won 5-4; no male spectators were allowed in the gym). The game was instantly popular with the young women and quickly spread to other college campuses across the country, "[t]he first team game played by American women…[,]" either in campus tournaments or as a varsity sport. The first intercollegiate women's basketball contest took place on April 4, 1895, when Stanford defeated the University of California-Berkeley 2-1.[18]

According to Berenson, basketball offered physical and mental benefits; it developed "simultaneous quickness of thought and action, which enabled a woman to meet an unexpected situation, perhaps of danger, with alacrity and success." Further, it provided "the power for organization, the willingness to surrender the individual to the common good, and the ability to meet success with dignity and defeat with courage." All these necessary attributes to participate "in the affairs of the world." But as much as she saw the benefits of basketball, Berenson was an adherent of the common beliefs of the time as to the limited capability of women to engage in physical activity. The competitiveness and roughness inherent in the men's game and the propensity for attention to focus on a star player were contradictory to what she thought women's sport should be. The men's rules needed to be modified so the game was safer for women and emphasized cooperation rather than competition.[19]

Berenson divided the basketball court into three equal areas or zones. The players, between six and nine on a team, were assigned and restricted to a specific zone, hence on the NYU roster two forwards in the zone where the opponents basket was, two centers in the middle, and two guards protecting one's own basket. Players could not run with the ball or take more than three dribbles without passing the ball nor hold it for more than three seconds. They could only use one hand when shooting. Snatching or batting the ball from another player was prohibited. Designed "to equalize play among all and to promote team cooperation[, Berenson's] rules decreased the chances for aggressive, unladylike behavior and rough physical contact" consistent with the contemporary views of the benefits, physical capabilities, and limits of physical activity for women. With some variations, Berenson's rules remained in effect until the 1960s.[20] Unfortunately, no game results for the contest against Savage were found, so it could not be confirmed if it actually took place. In fact, the following fall, a news story said that the previous year "a girls' varsity team" playing external competition had been contemplated implying that there was no such active team in 1920-21.[21]

Likewise, the documentary evidence as to whether there was a University women's basketball team playing external opponents during the next two years (1921-23) is not clear. The one reference found to a "University team," a March 21, 1922 victory over the Girl's Club, 27-15, in a game played at the Church of the Holy Communion (Sixth Avenue and West 20th Street), could have been referring to a Washington Square College team. Later that spring another news story refers to the WSC co-ed team opening their season "with several victories," although no other mention of them was found. The evidence for the following academic year (1922-23) is also mixed. One story in the fall reports on plans for the formation of a WSC girls' team, while a January 7th news article mentions that the "Co-eds at Washington Square are to have a basket-ball [*sic*] team[,]" which would likely play its first game against the Metropolitan Life Insurance Girls' Team. This article and its accompanying headline says Washington Square rather than Washington Square College, which either could refer to a team with players from more than one school at the Square (a University team) or just be space-saving shorthand for

WSC. No evidence of this game was found. During this same period, the League of Women, which actively supported women's athletics (50 cents/semester of dues went to support athletic activities), formed a basketball team, although that squad appears to have competed only in an intramural tournament.[22]

Whatever was in fact the actual situation with respect to NYU women's basketball during the 1921-23 academic years, there was apparently growing interest in and pressure to establish an official University team. It was supported no doubt by the increasing activism of the League of Women as well as any individual or collective action on the part of co-ed basketball enthusiasts. Continued agitation on the part of co-eds appears to have finally worn down any opposition or disinterest on the part of the University authorities. Receptivity on the part of the administration and faculty may also have been influenced by the recent introduction of required physical education at the Square, including for female students. In September 1922, required physical education was established for all Washington Square College freshmen (as it was at University College after it moved to the University Heights campus in 1894). A result of World War I when one-third of all men in the United States called up for the Army were physically unqualified to serve, this requirement was consistent with the general movement in American higher education between the two World Wars when an increasing number of colleges began to require physical education for graduation. Before the decade was over, physical education (or physical training) was also required at NYU for all day students in the School of Commerce and for all undergraduates in some School of Education majors.[23]

The effort to establish a recognized women's varsity culminated in a petition presented by female students to the deans of Washington Square College and the School of Commerce. In the 1923-24 academic year, "[a]fter agitation, which has been going on for some time, the authorities at the University have finally recognized the women's pleas in regard to sports, and from now on they will be able to participate in various forms of athletic endeavor under the name of New York University …instead of playing as the college teams of individual schools...." In addition to approving this action, a faculty committee also called for the

establishment of "a girls' athletic association" to be under the umbrella of the University's Athletic Association. The women athletes would also be eligible for all varsity awards currently available to male NYU athletes.[24]

The team, captained by Edith Ramsey, W'26, with Lillian Linhardt, W'24,[*] as manager, practiced twice a week, Wednesdays and Fridays, 2-3 p.m. The players were forwards Elsa Brinn (school and class unknown) and Claire Strassman, W'26, centers Rejene Landsman, W'27, and captain Ramsey, guards Kate Bodenstein, W'27, Dorothy Lord, W'29, Stella Zins, W'26 (who also played center, and was team captain the following two seasons), Ann Haber, W**'**27**,** and Mildred Simon, W'25 (like Linhardt a member of the 1921-22 team), position unknown. They were coached by Francis (Frank) Wall, who was the coach of the previous year's Washington Square College co-ed team. Wall, thirty years old, had been an athletics or physical training instructor at NYU since 1916 and would hold various positions until 1954, a year before his death. By the time he took the reins of the women's basketball team, he had coached the University's varsity football team in 1917 and subsequently its freshman teams in baseball, basketball, and football, as well as School of Commerce teams. He would later coach the men's varsity swimming team from 1926-48 and serve as director of intramurals and assistant athletic director, and was responsible for physical training at Washington Square. In the initial years of women's varsity teams, Wall's responsibilities included supervising women's athletics, in which capacity he played a "large part" in organizing women's field hockey and swimming at the University.[25]

The inaugural NYU women's varsity basketball team "did not by any means startle the collegiate basketball world[,]" ending the first season with a 1-6 record. Indeed, the first game was an inauspicious omen. On Saturday, December 15, 1923, shortly after receiving official varsity status, the team traveled to

[*] In denoting a student's school, C stands for the School of Commerce, E for Education, and W for Washington Square College. It was not possible to identify the school or class/graduation year of all students mentioned. It should be noted that student names (both first and last) were frequently misspelled in contemporary sources, and sometimes first names not reported. Some students may not have graduated and, of course, I may have overlooked some names in my search. Schools and dates were checked using graduation programs and yearbooks available in the NYU Archives.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to face Temple University, three-time Eastern States Champions, who were on a forty-five game winning streak started in 1921. The NYU co-eds became the forty-sixth victim, "annihilated," 50-5, in a game played in two twenty-minute halves. Scoring for NYU, Bodenstein had a field goal; Brinn made two free throws (or foul goals as they were called then); and Strassman one free throw. During a scramble for the ball, Captain Ramsey fell to the floor and gashed her head. A member of Temple's medical and dental faculty who was there "inserted a stitch in the injury, and play was continued."[26]

Three weeks later, Saturday, January 5, 1924, the Hunter College gymnasium "was crowded with spectators from" both NYU and the host college, as "the rafters rang with a variety of cheers." NYU was at a height disadvantage and their passing and shooting inaccurate, although they exhibited quickness. They ultimately lost 24-11 in two thirty-minute halves to a team which would be a frequent opponent into modern times. Elsie Brinn (5 points) and Claire Strassman (6 points) did the team's scoring. Other games that season included a 55-9 loss to the Oaksmere School for Girls in New Rochelle, New York; two losses to the New Jersey State Teachers Normal School at Newark (now Kean University) in a home-and-home series, by scores of 22-7 and 21-6; and a close defeat (20-18) at the hands of the White Plains Alumnae. The one victory was over the University of Pennsylvania, 25-19, in the last game of the season on March 29th. Played at the Church of All Nations gymnasium (9 Second Avenue), it was a close game. Tied at the half, the Violet women* took the lead in a fast paced third quarter, "bewildering their opponents with a clever exhibition of passing." When Penn managed to get the ball, NYU "usually intercepted their passes." Brinn was the high scorer with 17 points, including three from what was then considered the long distance of fifteen feet; Dorothy Lord made all four of her shots for the team's other 8 points. Results aside, a women's sports team was now officially recognized "as a varsity

* The earliest external reference to an NYU women's team as the Violets is *The New York Times* story about the Penn game. That year's WSC yearbook (*The Album*, 1925) does so as well. For the origins of the name Violets for NYU teams, see Barnett W. Hamberger, *Violet Roots: New York University Athletics in the Nineteenth Century* (Kindle Direct Publishing, 2024), pp. 463-465.

aggregation for the first time in the athletic history of the university, [and basketball] being the first girls' sport to merit the wearing of the Violet." [27]



First Women's Varsity Basketball Team

The following year, 1924-25, Wall was succeeded as coach by Karin Carlson, a recent graduate of the Savage School of Physical Education, who served until 1929. Under Carlson, the team went 19-32, including their first winning season in 1928-29 (5-4). Despite a losing record during the 1920s, by the middle of the decade, the *New York University Alumnus* would write that "…girls' basketball has taken a regular place for itself at N.Y.U.[,]" and a big spread with several pictures in *The New York Times* would also proclaim the sport's popularity at the University.[28]



NYU Women's Basketball Covered by the New York Times

The Second Wave: Swimming

Near the end of the decade, the editors of the Washington Square College yearbook noted that after the first season of women's basketball "…the administration was not slow to detect the pulsation of new spirit in athletics among women students." There appears to have been interest in forming both women's field hockey and swimming teams in the early 1920s, at first to be organized by Roberta Braddock and Olga Meisel, neither of whom I was able to identify as a student or a physical education instructor, and subsequently by the League of Women, under the leadership of Mary McCormick, an instructor in physical education. And while there were school teams or interclass meets early in the decade, there is no indication of a varsity team or intercollegiate competition. But not too long afterwards, swimming followed in the wake of basketball as the second varsity women's sport at NYU. And the co-ed swimmers quickly burst into prominence.[29]

Women's swimming started intercollegiate competition at NYU in 1924-25, just one year after the debut of the men's swim team and not much longer after the first women's intercollegiate dual meet which took place between Radcliffe College and Sargent School of Physical Training in 1923. The team trained two afternoons a week at the Church of All Nations pool (9 Second Avenue), coached by Frances Froatz, who had been hired the previous year as an instructor in physical education in the School of Commerce after graduating from Columbia Teachers College. She would go on to also coach field hockey and volleyball, and serve as the first director of women's athletics at NYU for twenty-five years.[30]

The first opponent was Hunter College, on Monday, April 13, 1925, at the municipal 60th Street Pool. Hunter swam to a 35-26 victory, although NYU's team captain Ethel McGary, W'28, only a freshman, won the opening race (100-yard freestyle) in dramatic fashion. After completing the 100 yards in first place in 1 minute, 13 seconds, McGary continued swimming on to 440 yards, setting a women's intercollegiate record of 6 minutes, two-fifths seconds. She also set a new women's collegiate record in the 40-yard backstroke, winning in 29.2

seconds. NYU's only other victory of the seven total events was by the freestyle relay team of Rejene Landsman, W'27, Patricia Gritzner, Virginia Linde, W'28, and McGary, thanks in large part to McGary's speed in the anchor leg. Gritzner also had second place finishes in the 40-yard breaststroke and distance freestyle races. Hunter won those two events plus the medley relay and the plunge for distance (a diving event popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries). That year's basketball captain, Stella Zins, W'26, was a member of NYU's second place medley relay team. The chief judge of the meet was Louis Handley, coach of the 1924 U.S. Olympic women's swimming team.[31]

The next week, on April 21st, the team travelled to Philadelphia to compete against the University of Pennsylvania at the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association on Broad and Pine Streets. The outstanding swimming of Captain McGary led NYU to a close 22-19 victory. Besides decisively winning the 100-yard freestyle and 50-yard backstroke, she turned in a spectacular performance in the relay race. Swimming the last leg, McGary dove into the seventy-five-foot pool at least one yard behind Penn's anchor swimmer. She swam "at such a terrific clip that when she touched the end of the pool she was the winner by several feet." The meet was not without controversy. It turned out that, "due to a misunderstanding, the teams were using different sets of rules." Abiding by intercollegiate rules, NYU entered only two swimmers in each event, while Penn, following Amateur Athletic Union rules, had three, causing one to be disqualified. The meet referee awarded the winners' trophy to the Violets.

Perhaps to settle the dispute as to which was the better team, arrangements were made for a return meet in May in New York City. The second contest, using the same events as in April, took place on Friday, May 15th, at the seventy-five-foot pool of the recently opened Hotel Shelton, 525 Lexington Avenue at 49th Street. It was a resounding 28-13 victory for NYU, highlighted by another spectacular performance by McGary. The freshman set three individual national collegiate records, in the 220 and 440-yard freestyle and the 50-yard backstroke. In the latter two, she broke the records she set in the first meet against Penn. Winning the 100-yard freestyle by two pool lengths, she continued swimming passing the 220

mark at 3:04 and finishing 440 at 6:20.4; her backstroke time was 37.4 seconds, almost 4 seconds faster than her previous record, finishing seven yards ahead of the runner-up. McGary joined teammates Patricia Gritzner, Rejene Landsman, and Virginia Linde in winning the 100-yard relay by six yards in the collegiate record time of 1:03.4, besting the record set by an NYU quartet in the first Penn meet by two seconds. Stella Zins won the 50-yard breast stroke. In the fancy diving, NYU's J. Lardomer and Muriel Wimpe, W'28, were second and third, respectively. Charlotte Epstein, manager of the U.S. Women's Olympic swimming team during the 1920s, known as "Mother of Women's Swimming in America," was the meet referee."[32]

The women's success in 1924-25, and no doubt the presence of Ethel McGary, who had been on the 1924 U.S. Olympic swimming team and was a national record holder, was what earned the team official varsity status after the end of the season. McGary would go on to lead the Violet swimmers as captain for two more seasons and continue on the team as a senior. She was NYU's first female superstar athlete, winning national collegiate championships in the 100-Yard freestyle and 50-yard backstroke, and setting collegiate records. When not swimming for the University, McGary competed for the Women's Swimming Association of New York (see below), winning national championships (including the Amateur Athletic Union long-distance title from 1925-1929) and setting national and world records at multiple freestyle distances and in the backstroke. McGary was again a member of the U.S. Olympic team in 1928. Unlike 1924, when it does not appear that she actually competed, in 1928 McGary swam in the 440-freestyle but was eliminated in the semi-finals.[33]

Following the initial year of intercollegiate competition, the NYU women would begin an extended period of spectacular success, including second place finishes at what was the national intercollegiate championships in 1926 and 1927, the latter year by just two points. Within just a few years, they would "hold perhaps more national and collegiate individual titles than any other undergraduate body in the East." Near the end of the decade, after an 8-0 season in dual meets, the Washington Square College yearbook noted that since its establishment in 1924,

women's swimming "has carried on a program of mowing down victories and bringing home laurels. It has grown to be the most popular sport at the university….[Under Coach Froatz's leadership, there] has built up a tradition of glory in swimming before which the other two women's varsity teams [basketball and field hockey] bow respectively." And, the editors added, although [t]he sport is sorely handicapped by the lack of a university pool, yet the administration votes an increase in the number of participants each year." The team's success continued through consecutive undefeated seasons from 1927-28 through 1931-32, with 29 dual meet victories, and from its inception until 1940 would have a total record of 62 wins and only 9 losses.[34]

While NYU's initial success in the pool may be attributed in large part to the performance of Ethel McGary, who "[r]estricted her record-breaking endeavors for the benefit of the team score[,]" she was joined and then followed by an impressive group of teammates. Among them Esther Foley, E'28, team captain in 1927-28, Ruth Bracker, W'30, 1928-29 captain, and Olympians Lisa Lindstrom, W'34, and Joan Sheehy. Foley, who also competed on the varsity basketball and field hockey teams, was a national diving and swimming champion. She won the intercollegiate championship in the former event in 1926 and 1927, along with the metropolitan AAU titles, and set an intercollegiate record in winning the 50-yard breaststroke title. Her non-collegiate accomplishments include several national AAU diving championships. After graduating, Foley coached basketball, field hockey, swimming, tennis, and volleyball at NYU, and served as director of women's athletics for twenty years. Bracker was an outstanding all-around swimmer who competed and won in diving, backstroke, and freestyle events for NYU. She also was successful in her non-collegiate competition, including finishing in the top ten at the 1925 and 1926 long-distance championship. Lindstrom, who first won swimming prominence as a young teenager, when she set two world records in the backstroke, was a 1928 Olympian (two years before becoming an NYU student), finishing fifth in the 100-meter backstroke. She won twenty national and metropolitan championships, setting twenty-four national records. With McGary, Lindstrom was a member of the world record-setting 600-yard backstroke relay team. McSheehy was also a young swimming prodigy, winning

the national backstroke championship at fifteen and, the following year, setting the world record in the 75-yard breaststroke. A student in the School of Commerce, she left NYU to train for the 1932 Olympics, where she finished fifth in the 100-meter backstroke final.[35]



Esther Foley

How did NYU women's swimming rise to immediate intercollegiate prominence in the sport? With outstanding performers like McGary and the others? One possibility may be found in a local organization that played an important role in the early development of women's competitive swimming in the United States and came to dominate the sport for nearly two decades. There was a long tradition of competitive women's swimming in New York City dating back to the 1870s; it became a very popular form of entertainment for the masses. In the early twentieth century, many women joined lifesaving crews which had been organized to prevent deaths by drowning at New York City beaches and pools. By the century's second decade, the Women's Life Saving League began holding competitions among its members and, in 1917, the Women's Swimming Association of New York (WSA) was founded specifically to support amateur women's competition. (Both organizations were founded by Charlotte Epstein, "Mother of Women's Swimming in America," who had persuaded the AAU and the Olympics to include women in swimming events.) The WSA "provided American women with their first opportunity to train for national and international competition under the auspices of an organization founded and developed by

women." Due to its rigorous training and competition, WSA members became America's premier swimmers, winning thirty national championships and setting 111 outdoor and 64 indoor national records between 1920 and 1940, and establishing seventeen world records. Its members, who included Gertrude Ederle, Olympic gold medalist and world record holder, and the first women to swim the English Channel, among other prominent competitors, "launched America into national and international swimming prominence[,]" and dominated the Olympics in the 1920s.[36]

The five Violet swimmers mentioned above were all members of the WSA, competing for it when not in the NYU uniform at intercollegiate meets. There were other NYU swimmers who were also WSA members as well. They enjoyed the benefits of training with other champion-caliber swimmers under the supervision of an Olympic coach who had himself been a gold medal swimmer. An attempt to discover whether WSA membership lists from the 1920s somehow still existed, in order to determine if additional NYU swimmers, whose names did not appear in contemporary news stories about WSA competition, were also members, was unsuccessful.

Slow to Recognize an Excellent Game: Field Hockey

It is not surprising that NYU's co-eds exhibited an interest in field hockey early in the 1920s. The decade was a time of growth for the sport in the United States. Descended from ancient games and originally a man's sport, field hockey experienced a renaissance in England in the nineteenth century, which led in 1888 to the formation of the first women's hockey club. Within a few years, women's colleges at Oxford were competing in the sport. The game was introduced into the United States in the last years of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth century. Slow to develop in this country, and mostly played by women – outside the U. S., it is more or less equally played by men and women – the sport received a boost by the fall 1921 tour of the All-England women's team inspiring the development of urban clubs, including a prominent team in New York City, college and university teams (played originally primarily at Eastern women's

colleges as interclass matches), and field hockey camps to which many colleges sent their players. The following year the United States Field Hockey Association was founded.[37]

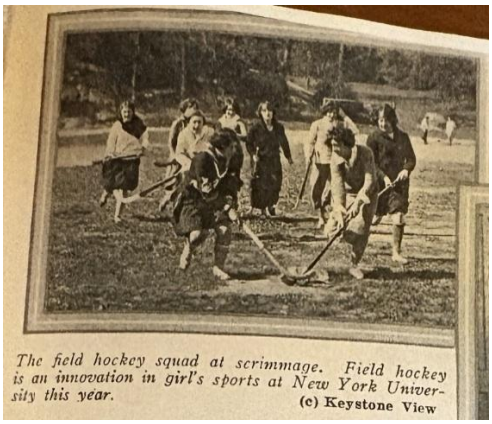
At NYU, at the same time as there were in 1921 early efforts at organizing a swimming team, the same individuals (Braddock and Meisel) were also arranging a meeting to form a field hockey team. However, nothing seems to have immediately come of it, although there was a WSC team not too long afterwards but no evidence of external competition. But three years later, when it was announced that a field hockey team was being organized to represent NYU, "it evoked an enthusiastic response from the female athletes who flocked to the first practice in great numbers." Coached by swimming coach Frances Froatz, with Edith Weil, W'23, captain and manager, it faced a veteran Oaksmere School team in fall 1924, losing 3-0 in their debut contest. Games were supposedly scheduled the following spring against Adelphi, Hunter, and St. Joseph's Colleges, as well as a second contest against Oaksmere, but no evidence of their being played was found.[38]

The following year, field hockey was voted a minor sport by the NYU Women's Athletic Association although the undergraduate board did approve the awarding of numerals to players appearing in one-half or more of the scheduled games. The team's performance in fall 1925 clearly reflected, as the yearbook noted, it being "in its infant stage." Minimal practice did not help, as the team lost all three of its games: November 14th to the Savage Institute, 4-2; November 21st to Temple University, 10-0; and November 24th to Manhattanville College, 5-1 or 6-0. Kathleen McDonald, W'27, was team captain and Olympic swimmer Ethel McGary, W'28, the goalie.[39]

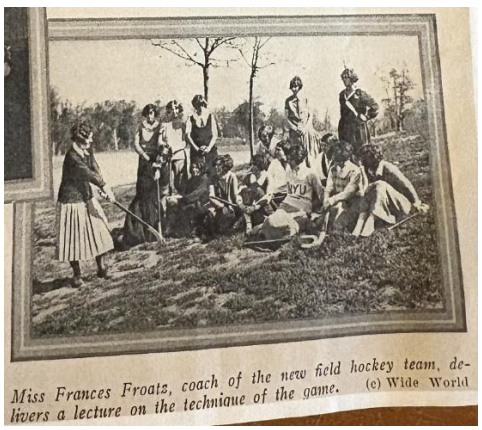
Out of its infancy in 1926-27, the team was again captained by Kathleen McDonald and won three of its six games, losing two and tying one. (Athletic Department records in the NYU Archives show three wins, one loss, and two ties against Connecticut State College, now the University of Connecticut, but an article in the *New York University Alumnus* mentions losing a game to Connecticut

State.) A winning record and the enthusiastic persistence of team members, despite the absence of a home field and limited practice, no doubt played an important part in field hockey receiving recognition as a major sport and full varsity status for 1927-28. The Washington Square College yearbook was partly critical of the administration for its "slowness…in recognizing so excellent a game and in placing it on an equal footing with the other recognized sports for women." It did appreciate the handicap of the lack of a field, as the team practiced twice a week in Central Park "on an inadequate, rocky, and irregular field [at 100th Street]." With diving champion Esther Foley, E'28, as captain, the team went 2-1-2, As another sign of the team's elevated status, NYU joined the U.S. Field Hockey Association and the New York Field Hockey Association, playing in the latter's league games in Brooklyn's Prospect Park as the Waverly Club and earning a 3-3-1 record.[40]

The decade ended with a new coach, as former player Esther Foley replaced Frances Froatz, and the team had its best season to date, 5-1-1. One freshman recalled years later that the team practiced everyday during the week from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Central Park Sheep Meadow (where home games were played) and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Prospect Park Sheep Meadow in Brooklyn. Also a member of the basketball team, she recalled that, if they won an away game, players received $5 to take a taxi home from Grand Central or Penn Station; if they lost, they took the subway. Field hockey continued as a sport at NYU, with Foley as coach, until 1949.[41]



The field hockey squad at scrimmage. Field hockey is an innovation in girl's sports at New York University this year. (c) Keystone View



Miss Frances Froatz, coach of the new field hockey team, delivers a lecture on the technique of the game. (c) Wide World

En Garde: Fencing

In the fall of 1928, a diminutive junior coed left try-outs for the NYU women's basketball team dejected that she was too short for the sport. Spying a notice on a bulletin board that a famous fencing master was coming to the University and determined to take part in intercollegiate athletics, Julia Jones, W'30, decided to show up for the fencing meeting. And, as the saying goes, the rest is history, for her personally, for NYU athletics, and for women's intercollegiate fencing, leading to national championships, Olympians, a national women's fencing organization, and continuing with today's highly ranked NCAA Division III NYU women's team.[42] Fencing can be traced back to ancient Egypt and subsequently to the training of warriors in swordplay in Greek and Roman times, and the knights of the Middle Ages. It became popular as a sport in Europe during the Renaissance of the 14th-17th centuries, and has been included in the Olympics since the first Games in 1896. In the United States, the first fencing championship was sponsored by the Amateur Athletic Union in 1888 and intercollegiate competition started in the 1890s (both for men). Before the nineteenth century, aristocratic women engaged in fencing as a form of entertainment rather than as competition. In the U. S., women trained as fencers as early as the 1870s and the following decades of that century. After World War I, there was a growth of informal women's fencing clubs which offered classes in the sport. Women's fencing made its Olympic debut in 1924 with foil competition.[43]

At New York University, fencing classes were offered at the University Heights campus in the Bronx a few years after the original undergraduate college moved there in 1894. In 1922-23, a team was organized at the Heights, obviously all male as was that campus and self-coached. Downtown, where faculty from the Heights taught fencing classes once or twice a week in the early years of Washington Square College (founded 1914), the situation was more disorganized until, in 1926, upperclassman Miguel (Mike) de Capriles, W'27, and some friends formed the Fencers' Club, similar to one at the uptown campus. It was through the efforts of de Capriles (who continued his education at NYU as a graduate and law student until 1935) that in 1928 the NYU fencers "were able to secure the services of a

magnificent coach,…one of the great international competitors of his time," who was desirous of coming out of retirement, Julio Martinez Castello.[*] Castello would work with the Fencers' Club and with a re-organized varsity (men's) team which included students from both the Heights and Washington Square. It was his coming to NYU that attracted Julia Jones' attention and led her to join the Fencers' Club. Women were welcomed to join the Fencers' Club,[†] which often met at the Stuyvesant High School gymnasium (then located at East 15th Street), among other venues, and, as his diaries show, de Capriles[‡] was teaching coed fencers even before Castello's' arrival. With substantial commitment to the sport from its female members, the Fencers' Club was interested in "fostering the establishment of a co-ed fencing team of varsity ranking."[44]

The women's varsity made its debut in the 1928-29 academic year in spectacular fashion. Coached by Castello and with Jones as captain, the team won the first intercollegiate women's fencing championship. Held in Ithaca, New York, on April 27, 1929 under the auspices of the Cornell Fencing Association, Jones won the individual title and teammate Dorothy Hafner, placed third. That was not their only accomplishment on the piste. Jones and Hafner "both won national recognition despite comparatively short experience and limited training[].]" Jones "astonished the fencing world by tying for first place at the National Junior Foil Championship for Women on February 25th [1929]." In a fence-off match to determine the champion, Jones lost by only one touch to a more experienced fencer to win the second-place silver, "the first major award ever earned by a New York University girl [*sic*] fencer." Two weeks later, Hafner won the first-place gold

[*] Castello, a Spaniard had come to the United States some time before and had coached several famous silent movie stars, as well as the 1924 U.S. Olympic fencing team. He coached NYU until 1947, building the team into national prominence, when he was succeeded by his son Hugo, who was the coach until 1974. Source: undated 1938 *Commerce Bulletin* in NYU Archives, Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.3, Box 31, Folder 4.

[†] Female students in the WSC Evening Division started their own fencing club in the late 1920s. Sources: *The Album*, 1927, p. 248, and 1929, p. 249.

[‡] Miguel de Capriles would achieve his own international prominence in fencing, winning ten national championships, a world championship, being a member of seven U.S. Olympic teams and winning two bronze team medals, and becoming the first American to be elected president of the International Fencing Federation. He became a professor of law at NYU and served as dean of the Law School and then as General Counsel and Secretary of the University. Source: Miguel de Capriles files, NYU Archives Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.3, Box 31, Folder 9.

medal at the Novice Foils Championship, defeating six fencers including three from NYU. Besides Jones and Hafner, three other NYU fencers had competed in the National Championship: Marion (Mickey) Appell, Ann Jones, and Alice Wenzel. Appell had made it to the final round, finishing fourth and was second at the Novice tournament.[45]

Julia Jones' determination to participate in intercollegiate athletics wasn't satisfied by just being a member of the NYU team. In 1929, along with Dorothy Hafner and a Cornell fencer, she organized the Intercollegiate Women's Fencing Association (later the National Intercollegiate Women's Fencing Association), analogous to the Intercollegiate Fencing Association which had been founded in 1894 for men's fencing. From its four original members—Bryn Mawr, Cornell, NYU, and the University of Pennsylvania—it ultimately grew to 79 institutions. In the first decade of the NIWFA's existence, NYU would win six team championships and Jones would remain a guiding force in the organization until her death in 1993.[46]

The initial success of the NYU women's fencers led to an increased interest in the sport on the part of the University's co-eds, and Coach Castello had "begun training over twenty freshmen and sophomores in the ancient art of chivalry[.]" Practicing in a gym on Charlton Street, not far from Washington Square, the team's second year, 1929-30, with Jones again captain, saw its first two dual matches, both unfortunately losses, to Cornell and to the University of Pennsylvania Alumnae. At the intercollegiate championship, with four colleges competing, NYU failed to defend its title. The NYU fencers also competed as a team and as individuals in non-collegiate amateur competitions. Despite a disappointing second season, the future was bright and would see more NIWFA team and individual championships, and three Olympians,


JULIA JONES

including Jones in 1932 (although she did not compete),* and continued success in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as a top NCAA Division III team.[47]

Ad In: Tennis

That NYU co-eds would be playing tennis in the 1920s is not really surprising. The sport saw great growth in popularity during that decade, including among colleges, as two of the era's most renowned sports stars were women tennis players, Suzanne Lenglen of France and American Helen Wills. The sport had been introduced to the United States in the 1870s and soon attracted the interest of the general population who engaged in athletic pursuits as well on college campuses, including for both groups among women. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, their participation limited at existing athletic clubs which were controlled by men, women formed informal tennis clubs. A similar development occurred on college campuses. An intercollegiate match scheduled to occur in the 1890s between women at Bryn Mawr and at Vassar was cancelled due to the opposition of the Vassar faculty. Women's collegiate tennis competition appears to have remained confined to campus tournaments into the twentieth century.[48]

The start of a varsity team and intercollegiate competition at NYU is unclear due to a lack of definitive documentary evidence. Several biographies of female students in the Washington Square College yearbooks of the 1920s indicate that the individual was on the tennis team during 1922-25 (in one case as manager), but this could most likely have been a class team which would play in a college tournament or a school team competing against another NYU school team, as other evidence is clear that there was no varsity team. There were fall and spring tournaments at least as early as 1923-24, and again the following academic year. Where these were held (or where a team would practice) is not mentioned.

* Jones continued her involvement in the sport until her death in 1993, winning the 1931 National Junior Foil Championship, coaching NYU from 1931-41, the first woman to coach a college fencing team, and leading them to 51 wins against only 15 losses and three NIWFA titles. She later coached Hunter College for thirty-seven years. Sources: "Women's Athletic All-Time Records," NYU Archives Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.0, Box 2, Folder 4; and "Julia Jones-Pugliese," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Jones-Pugliese.

Participants included students from both Washington Square College and the School of Commerce. There does seem to have been an effort to organize a varsity team in spring 1925. The yearbook reported that the Athletic Association was "working hard to bring this about, and when sufficient playing material is assured, tennis will become a varsity sport." This effort was being helped and encouraged by several male faculty members of the University's Board of Athletic Control, namely Philip Badger, a School of Commerce marketing professor and Assistant to the Chancellor (and President of the NCAA in 1941-44); and two Washington Square College history professors, Alexander Baltzly and John Musser, the latter having coached the WSC men's tennis team. The 1926 WSC Course Bulletin cites tennis as an athletic activity for women along with basketball and swimming, although it does not specify varsity teams, which did exist in the other two sports mentioned. The 1927 Course Bulletin does say there is a varsity tennis team, along with basketball, field hockey, and swimming. However, no evidence of intercollegiate matches in 1927-28 was found.[49]

The earliest NYU women's intercollegiate match for which evidence was discovered took place on May 16, 1929, when "under unfavorable weather condition," the University varsity team tied Hunter College, 2-2. Playing at the Plaza Tennis Courts, 161st Street and the Concourse in the Bronx, team captain Helen Hawes, C'32 (6-2, 6-4) and Edna Steinbeck, W'29 (6-1, 6-2) won their singles contests. Team manager Carolyn Trott, W'29, lost her match and the doubles team of Hawes and Trott, despite "the good net work" of the former and the latter's strong serves, went down to defeat, 7-5, 6-4. Although the match was reported in the Hunter newspaper, their yearbook does not mention it but says that Hunter defeated NYU 6-3 that spring. However, no other information about that match was found. Likewise the newspaper claim that there would be a return match in September 1929 could not be verified.[50]

The team's performance in spring 1929 must have proven more than satisfactory to the Women's Athletic Committee as the team's status was upgraded from a minor to a major sport for women for 1929-30. Approximately twenty women turned out for winter practice at the Fourteenth Street Armory, NYU's home

court.* Coached by Esther Foley, who held that position until 1946 and was also coaching basketball and field hockey, the team won one of its four matches. Helen Hawes was again captain and also manager. The team consisted of Vera Merejko, Vera Roitman, Pauline Kaplan, W'30, Marjorie Jervis, Ethel Berliner, and Anne Gallagher. They lost to Beaver College 3-2, Hunter 7-0, and to Swarthmore College either 3-2 or 4-1. Their only victory was over Manhattanville College, 5-0. Despite only one victory, according to the yearbook "the results were encouraging" and a more "ambitious" schedule for 1931 was formed, with six matches including trips to Boston and Cambridge; tennis was now established as a varsity sport for women at NYU.[51]

Reorganizing Women's Athletics

As the 1920s drew to a close, the core of what would be women's varsity teams at NYU for the next half-century, until the rebirth of NYU athletics in general as an NCAA Division III program and additional intercollegiate teams were added, was in place: basketball, fencing, field hockey, swimming, and tennis. And by the close of the decade, the University's male administrators had come to an appreciation of the importance of athletic competition to their women students as well as of the role and importance of female professionals in their education. In the same year as Dorothy McSparran Arnold was appointed Assistant Dean in Washington Square College, the administration of women's athletics was re-organized with the appointment of the University's first Director of Women's Athletics.

Early in the decade, as NYU women students were flexing their muscles in advocating for a full college experience and specifically organizing athletic teams for intercollegiate competition, they had in 1924 formed an NYU Women's Athletic Association with branches in each of the colleges with female undergraduates. The WAA operated in some respects as a typical college club. At some point during the 1920s, Francis (Frank) Wall, who held various positions in the Department of

* Located at 125 West 14th Street, between 6th and 7th Avenues, not far from NYU, the building has since been demolished and is now the site of the McBurney YMCA.

Athletics and was the first women's basketball coach, was given the responsibility to oversee women's athletics as more varsity teams were added. Now, in 1928-29, with five women's varsity teams in intercollegiate competition, it seemed time for a more formal administrative structure for women's athletics.[52]

The announcement was made on Tuesday, May 7, 1929 at the fifth annual women's athletic dinner at which varsity letter awards and three special prizes (what today we would call most valuable player awards) were presented to members of the 1928-29 basketball, field hockey, and swimming teams. Aside from student-athletes, coaches, the donors of the special awards, those present also included several faculty members, the two college advisors to women (Assistant Dean Dorothy McSparran Arnold of Washington Square College and the School of Commerce's Gladys H. Reutiman), and Francis (Frank) Wall, director of intramural athletics, who had been involved in NYU women's athletics during the past decade. The announcement was most likely made by another attendee, School of Commerce Assistant Dean and Professor of Marketing George Rowland Collins, who was the chair of the University's Board of Athletic Control, which at the time oversaw all of NYU's men's athletic programs. According to Collins, women's athletics would now be under the Board's supervision and would operate through a faculty advisory committee and administered by the newly created position of Director of Women's Athletics, a position to be filled by Frances V. Froatz, who had been coaching the swimming team since its inception in 1924 and field hockey since its start in 1925. There would also be a student athletic committee. The faculty committee would consist of three members, the Washington Square College Dean of Women, the School of Commerce Advisor to Women, and one member appointed by the Board of Athletic Control. The initial three were Arnold, Reutiman, and Wall. Its function was to advise the Director of Women's Athletics regarding "schedules; budgets; the engaging of coaches; eligibility and relations to the other institutions with whom the women's teams compete." Budget requests were to be submitted to the Board, to which the committee reported. The duties of the Director, appointed by the Board, were "to direct, encourage and foster athletics among the women students at New York University….[,] to recommend coaches for appointment, draw requisitions for

operating expenses and the purchase and care of equipment[,]…and was responsible for the conduct of all teams." The women students' athletic committee was to consist of two members from Washington Square College and two from the School of Commerce plus the captains and managers of each of the major women's sports. Its duties were awarding varsity letters and determining the requirements for such awards, "preparing all petitions for the recognition of teams, [and] the encouraging and fostering of participation in athletics by all women students." The committee was also charged with drawing up "an athletic code with by-laws covering all rules of participation." *The New York Times* article which reported on the new organization for NYU women's athletics named the following as the first (1929-30) students as committee members: swimmers Evelyn Allen, W'30, Ruth Bracker, W'30 (who had also been on the field hockey team), Lucille Mintz, W'30, and Ada Munroe W'31. However, the accuracy of this list is open to question, as all were from Washington Square College and there was supposed to be two students each from WSC and Commerce. No other mention of student names was found.[53]

It is not absolutely clear who initially proposed this structure to govern women's athletics at NYU, but it is likely that it was Dean Arnold. The only copy of the organizational plan with the specifics quoted above was found in her files in the University Archives in the form of a petition to the Board of Athletic Control with a first person sentence in the introductory paragraph: "Women's athletics at New York University has now reached a point in its development and importance where a different method of control than that which exists at the present time would be advisable. *I would like to recommend that the following be granted*." (emphasis added)

The Faculty Advisory Committee held its first meeting on Friday, September 30, 1929 in Dean Arnold's office in what was then referred to as the Main Building (now the Silver Center). All three members – Arnold, Reutiman, and Wall – were present, along with Frances Froatz, the Director of Women's Athletics. Arnold, perhaps in recognition of her key role in establishing the new organizational structure governing women's athletics at NYU, was elected chair. They had much

to discuss: eligibility criteria, participation permission, team schedules, travel arrangements. Students desiring to play on a varsity team would need to be enrolled in at least nine credits, be a degree candidate, and maintain a C average. They would need to submit a doctor's certificate and a letter from a parent giving permission to engage in competition. The committee divided sports into two groups – winter (basketball and field hockey) and spring (swimming and tennis) – and, reflecting what was then the concerns about women's participation in competitive sports and "the general trend in athletics[,]" voted to institute a limit on participation, which had not previously been in effect. A student could play on only one varsity team during the academic year. While on a varsity team, she could not play on a class team in that sport. However, in the season (winter or spring) when not on a varsity, she could play on an intramural team.

The committee established schedule limits for several sports. That year, basketball would play ten games (five home and five out of town, defined as any game requiring travel by train); however, Froatz was allowed to add an eleventh game if a request was received from a "desirable school," the meaning undefined in the minutes. Field hockey would have eight games, evenly split between home and out of town. The number of swimming meets was increased from eight to ten since, likely due to the prominence of the NYU women's team, requests were frequently received from schools not on the schedule. No match limits for tennis appear to have been discussed at this meeting. Reflecting the attitudes of the time, the committee did require that any team playing an away game be accompanied by a chaperone in addition to the coach unless Froatz went with the team.

The committee also discussed women's fencing, which at the time was administered together with the men's team and the previous year had not competed in any dual matches but only in the first women's intercollegiate championship. Based on the belief that the team would engage in college competition, it was the committee's view that women's fencing should be under its control, and they voted that the same requirements for a physician's certificate and family permission be extended to women wishing to participate in fencing as

in the other sports. Full recognition of fencing would depend on the team applying for it and demonstrating "that it is competitent [*sic*] of obtaining meets with other colleges." This would in fact occur and by the end of the following academic year, women's fencing was recognized "as a varsity sport under the control of the Director of Women's Athletics."[54]

Over the course of the academic year, the committee obviously discussed these policies further and made adjustments, as a formal document outlining rules and regulations governing women's athletics are also to be found in Arnold's files in the University Archives. (It is not clear if the student committee, which was charged with writing an athletic code including rules of participation had any input into their development.) Some changes were made from what was previously approved and in a few cases more detail provided:

> (1) All full-time female students matriculated in either the School of Commerce or Washington Square College,* in good academic standing, and a member of the NYU Athletic Association were eligible to be on a team. It was now required that a student be enrolled in twelve credits, unless a senior who needed less to graduate.
> (2) In addition to medical approval by a team or family physician, a student was also required to submit a signed parental waiver absolving the University of legal responsibility for an injury received during competition, although wherever possible the Board of Athletic Control would attempt to provide medical or other professional health services for a varsity player injured in a regularly scheduled contest or practice.
> (3) A chaperone was still required to accompany any team traveling for away competition, which could be the team coach or a faculty member approved by the Board.

* The unexplained absence of mention of the School of Education could be related to the issue discussed in the section below, "Who Represents the University?" There were, in fact, Education students on the teams.

(4) Team members were required to travel as a group and only on forms of transportation which carried liability for each passenger. Students needed written parental permission to go on team trips.
(5) The rules repeated that all athletic competition with outside groups was to be handled by the office of the Director of Women's Athletics with ultimate approval of each team's schedule by the Board.

The rule limiting students to one varsity team per academic year appears to have been rescinded. It is not mentioned in this document and at least two multi-sport athletes were found in both 1929-30 and 1930-31.

The document places the same limits on the number of competitions allowed for basketball (10) and field hockey (8) as voted on at the September meeting, reduces swimming's limit back down from ten to eight, and adds limits for fencing (10) and tennis (6). Although no document limiting the number of competitions for men's varsity teams was found, a comparison with the actual number of competitions during 1929-30 and the next few years shows a mixed picture. While the limit in women's fencing is higher than the actual number of men's matches and the women's swimming limit is only slightly lower than the number of men's meets, in basketball and tennis the men had substantially more competitions than the women's limits. Perhaps only in those two sports was there continuing concern and prejudice about the limits of women to engage in strenuous physical activity or competition. [55]

At the end of the first year of the new organizational structure (1929-30), the Washington Square College yearbook praised it for having "contributed greatly to the importance and prestige of Women's Athletics at New York University…." Furthermore, it added, "the promotion of Miss Froatz has brought with it a real recognition of the growth of Women's Athletics and the desirability and need for additional coaching help." This help was secured by the hiring of alumna Esther Foley, E'28, former champion diver, as an assistant to Froatz and coach of basketball (which she coached until 1965), field hockey (succeeding Froatz), and tennis. (Upon Froatz's death in 1952, Foley succeeded her as Director of Women's

Athletics, serving until retirement in 1971.) The new organization and appointments were swiftly followed by an expansion of women's athletic activities. As noted, women's fencing, which had been associated with men's fencing was placed under the jurisdiction of women's athletics. Besides the varsity teams, a large program of women's intramurals was developed, including interclass tournaments in indoor baseball, basketball, field hockey, tennis, and volleyball, and an athletic league for sororities with competition in every sport.[56]





Dorothy McSparran Arnold

Athletic Scholarships for Women?

From the beginning of intercollegiate athletic competition in the United States into current times, the corrupting influence of money has been a source of concern and criticism for both adherents and opponents alike. It was one of the reasons women physical educators while believing in physical activity and sports for women were opposed to female students engaging in intercollegiate competition and sought to limit women's athletic programs to intramural competition and campus field days. As college sports, notably football, achieved a new level of prominence among sports enthusiasts in the 1920s, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, seeking to address the various issues of concern, issued a series of reports on the role of athletics in higher education. In 1925, New York University, having fallen prey to the philosophy of big-time sports, decided "to build up a major football team and so gain wider

advertising for the university." In the view of the University's Board of Athletic Control, the availability of at least sixty tuition scholarships was "necessary to the success of intercollegiate athletics." While this effort was successful, the 1929 Carnegie Report criticized NYU (among other institutions) for its practice of recruitment and athletic scholarships and other financial subsidies for student-athletes. Soon opposition by faculty and students developed, and within two years a new policy eliminating organized recruitment and subsidizing of football players was adopted.[*57]

I was aware of all this and thought the issue of financial aid for student-athletes to be irrelevant to the story of the early period of women's athletics at NYU. I was, therefore, greatly surprised upon reading the 1977 reminisces of Sylvia Stern, W'33, an alumna who was at NYU during this time, in which she talked about having an athletic scholarship to play basketball and field hockey, "and if needed…to be on tap for tennis, swimming and fencing…." Few knew Stern "was a 'subsidized' athlete [who had been recruited]. I was in my senior year at Erasmus Hall High School [in Brooklyn]…and in the spring was called down to WSC and met the Secretary of the School, Charles Patrick Barry, who offered me the athletic scholarship. I accepted at once, even though the two other women's colleges in NYC wanted me – because the WSC-NYU offer meant an extra $300 a year…." That amount together with a New York State Regents Scholarship provided the $720 which covered all her financial needs. ($300 in 1929 is $5842 in 2026 dollars.) Ultimately Stern found that the forty minute travel time each way from home to campus and back after a three hour practice left little time for "academic life" so she quit sports at the end of her junior year, making Coach Foley and Director of Women's Athletics Froatz unhappy, but she withstood their "gentle pressure" despite losing the $300 athletic scholarship which she needed. Stern found a part-time secretarial job in the Sociology Department for the same amount. Were athletic scholarships for women at NYU as prevalent as it was for football players in those years? In her memorandum, Stern mentions that she and Lisa Lindstrom,

[*] Under Coach John (Chick) Meehan, from 1925-31, NYU's football team had a record of 51-17. Home games had to be moved from Ohio Field on the University Heights campus to the Polo Grounds to accommodate crowds.

the Olympic swimmer, “were the [only] two women who received these athletic scholarships in those years that I know about.” No other mention or evidence of athletic scholarships for women (or those of Lindstrom and Stern) was found.[58]

Who Represents the University?

“I fooled them,” Mary Washburn, W’29, boasted proudly nearly sixty years later, about her experience participating in intercollegiate athletics as an undergraduate at New York University. An accomplished athlete who distinguished herself both in college and afterwards in several different sports, Washburn first achieved national prominence in track, winning championships and a silver medal at the 1928 Olympics as a member of the first United States track and field team. (This was the first Olympics at which women competed in track and field.) Originally enrolled at DePauw University in Indiana, in 1927 she transferred to NYU because of the School of Education’s physical education program and her desire to become a physical education teacher (an opportunity not available at DePauw) and to train for the Olympics with the well-known Millrose Athletic Association in New York City. While at NYU, Washburn also wanted to play basketball and field hockey, sports at which she was also outstanding. But she was disappointed when the chairman of the physical education department told her that “women should not compete in intercollegiate sports.” But Washburn found a way to do just that: enrolling in Washington Square College as a French major and registering for physical education courses in the School of Education.[59]

That Mary Washburn (and other School of Education women who wanted to join the fledgling NYU women’s teams and participate intercollegiate athletics) should have faced an obstacle in doing so is not surprising, particularly if they were intent on majoring in physical education as she had been. While no written statements by the female instructors in NYU’s Department of Physical Education were found, it would not be unusual if they shared the philosophy of women’s athletics then prevalent in their profession, that intercollegiate competition for women was to be avoided. I did find a relevant article by Professor Jay B. Nash, an NYU faculty member since 1926 and chair of its physical education department from 1930-

1953. Nash was mainly responsible for developing the physical education program at NYU and was a dominant figure in the field in the United States. Writing in 1928, he expressed his support of athletics for women, but only to the extent that it was beneficial to the individual throughout life, that programs eschewed championships, gate receipts, and spectators, and were ”conducted as a phase of education.” His view was consistent with those mentioned previously who opposed the emphasis on competition implicit in varsity athletics.[60]



Mary Washburn

The restriction which Mary Washburn faced in participating in intercollegiate athletics seems only to have applied to female physical education students. Male students in the School of Education were members of NYU varsity teams and the Department of Physical Education sponsored its own men’s teams in numerous sports which competed against other colleges. The description of the Department in the 1929 School of Education yearbook clearly states that “Girls [*sic*] are restricted to intramural activities in accordance with the national policy among Physical Educators regarding women.”[61]

And yet, the existing evidence as to when this restriction was initiated, how long it lasted, or how faithfully followed is contradictory and incomplete, confusing to say the least. First, whether the policy somehow also applied to female Education students in other majors is not completely clear, as it was not possible to identify the school of all the members of women’s teams most of whom were enrolled in

Washington Square College) or, if an Education student, what her major was. Second, there were in fact physical education majors on varsity teams in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Two Education students were on the 1927-28 field hockey team, including captain Esther Foley, E'28, a physical education major. (The other was Janice Immerman, E'31, major unknown, who was also on the team the following year.) Foley, a national diving champion, also captained the swimming team, on which she competed for three seasons, in 1927-28. Perhaps her national prominence earned her an exemption from the restriction.[62]

The issue as to whether or not women physical education majors could participate intercollegiate competition and, therefore, could be members of the University's varsity teams was not just an intellectual or purely philosophical question about women and their athletic ability or physical stamina. If NYU was to have varsity teams truly representative of the undergraduate body, truly University teams, then students from all of the undergraduate schools needed to be eligible to participate; if it was to have competitive intercollegiate women's teams which added prestige to the University, then it was important, indeed necessary, that the most experienced and skilled players should be able to participate. And these students were not unreasonably most likely to be physical education majors. The decade's last academic year, 1929-30, clearly demonstrates this and yet evidence around that year indicates the confusing nature of the actual situation with respect to the participation of physical education co-eds. That year, the basketball team's roster had four physical education students out of a total of thirteen members. (Four players were identified as Washington Square College students; the schools of five are unknown.) They included Mary Carter, E'30, Louise Marshall, E'31, and Alice Tesar, E'32, who also played field hockey; and Eileen Magee (year unknown). Carter and Tesar were the team's star forwards as the squad posted its best record (7-5) in its brief six-year history. The 1929-30 field hockey team, with a roster of fifteen, including seven Education students, six of whom could be identified as physical education majors: the three basketball players mentioned above, plus Helen Schroeder, E'31, team captain the next season, Dorothy Welch, E'31, and Frances Welch, E'30. (The other players were from WSC.) It, too, had its best season so far, 5-1-1. Swimming also seems to have

had an infusion of School of Education students in 1929-30, as at least four of the thirteen team members were enrolled in that school and two were physical education majors, including basketball and field hockey player Louise Marshall. The other was Pearl Cooper, E'32. The team was undefeated (6-0).[63]

Swimming aside, as that team had winning seasons from its inception and had been undefeated the previous two years, what led to the notable improvement in the other varsity teams and their unusual success in 1929-30? It was clear to the Washington Square yearbook that one of the "two very important changes…[which] contributed greatly to the importance and prestige of Women's Athletics at New York University" was the lifting of the ban on physical education majors participating in intercollegiate athletics. (The other cited was the appointment of Frances Froatz as Director of Women's Athletics.) For basketball, the removal of the restriction on female phys ed majors "opened to the varsity team a number of seasoned, experienced and skillful; players, notable among whom are the star forwards – Mary Carter and Eileen Magee." It had the same impact on field hockey, as the "excellent material among the Physical Education students …contributed astonishingly towards making a speedy and aggressive team." Even swimming, which had been so successful in the preceding years, greatly benefited from the "new field of excellent material from which to choose [a team] in the Physical Education students, who before could not enter the competition."[64]

But this surfeit of talent apparently did not last long, as the Department of Physical Education decided to limit the participation of its women students in varsity athletics, causing the teams to lose some talented members. Even swimming would find itself the next year with a "sadly depleted squad."[65]
The co-ed physical education majors were confused and upset. What was the restriction all about? Could they play on varsity teams or not? Why were they being denied the opportunity to do so if that was what they wanted to do? The women felt they were being discriminated against and took their complaints to School of Education Dean John Withers and to Dorothy Arnold, who they knew to be the chair of the faculty advisory committee on women's athletics. Although

there is no relevant record in Dean Withers' files in the University Archives, there are minutes of several meetings of the women's athletics committee concerning this issue, including with Professor Jay Nash, Department of Physical Education chair, and with Emma Frazier, a physical education instructor who was the faculty sponsor of the Physical Education Women's Organization and a key player in this drama. Frazier was a graduate of Mount Holyoke College (a women's institution which did not have intercollegiate teams only interclass games) where she had played basketball and field hockey. It was Frazier, according to her comments at one of the meetings, who, upon coming to NYU in 1929, first allowed phys ed women to play on varsity teams but subsequently posted a notice that they could not.

Unfortunately, the typewritten minutes from this series of committee meetings in December 1930 (possibly into January 1931) – the first between Arnold and Frazier on December 5, 1930, then of the committee (Arnold, Gladys Reutiman, Frank Wall, plus Director of Women's Athletics Frances Froatz) with Frazier, of the committee including Froatz, and finally the committee with Nash – are at times, incoherent, words missing, half sentences, inconsistent thoughts, contradictory statements by the same person, etc. But there is enough substance to understand what the issues were with regard to having a truly *University* women's athletic program and to provide a sense that this was not just a disagreement over differing philosophies of women's athletics or education philosophy but also a turf war (a not unusual occurrence in academia), a dispute over control.[66]

Frazier, in her two meetings, makes it clear what it is she wants and her position with respect to the question of physical education co-eds playing on varsity teams, indeed her view of varsity teams themselves. She wants her students to play on the department teams and, in addition to joining other colleges in play days, where presumably there would be no intercollegiate competition, to in fact also compete against other colleges in basketball, requesting permission to have three such dates of competition (contradicting her opposition to intercollegiate competition in other statements). Her rationale is both pedagogical – that physical education students playing on a department team coached by her is part of their

teacher training – and practical – that the new School of Education building, which opened in February 1930 at 35-41 West 4th Street, had two gyms (with locker rooms and showers) for the department's use. Furthermore, Frazier stated, the students would not have time in their schedules, which included physical activity classes, to participate on a varsity team. It was her view that if a student did more than the 10-12 hours of physical activity a week "[h]er health might be a question." She further did not approve of all the traveling varsity teams did.[67] The conversations in these two meetings appear at some points to have been tense, as Arnold and the rest of the faculty committee made it clear that there could only be one varsity team in a particular sport, only one team representing the University. The fact that the Department of Physical Education had its own gym and that Frazier had time to coach was not sufficient to allow separate phys ed teams to play external competition, nor for Frazier to withdraw phys ed students from varsity participation. Furthermore, in Arnold's view, "[i]t does not take into account the personal desires of the girls." The physical demands of the department schedule were not sufficient to satisfy the students; they wanted to play on the varsity teams.[68]

Besides the students' time commitments, another major issue discussed in these meetings was who actually had the ultimate decision-making authority. What was the power of a school to bar its students from varsity participation? What was the committee's responsibility and that of the University Board of Athletic Control with respect to schools sponsoring athletic teams engaging in external competition? Frank Wall was very clear that the "power for the conduct of all athletics of New York University" was given by the University Council (Trustees) to the Board of Athletic Control, which "has delegated the power for the control of all athletics pertained to women to this Faculty Advisory Committee….[The School of] Education and Physical Education are a part of New York University, and there is that doubt whether the Dean of any individual school has the power to say that his students cannot play on any team…."[69]

At some point during this time, most likely after meeting with the full committee, Frazier requested that her team (presumably basketball*) be given permission to play three intercollegiate games. The committee went back and forth on whether or not to sanction these contests, Professor Philip Badger, chair of the Board of Athletic Control, having indicated that it was up to the faculty committee to resolve this issue. Wall expressed concern about there not being enough women for the varsity team, that "no team can properly represent the University as a varsity unless it gets the better material from all the girls in the schools." One of the schools Frazier wanted her team to play was the State Teachers College at East Stroudsburg in Pennsylvania (now East Stroudsburg University). Wall had previously mentioned that there was "a regulation that no individual school in the entire university may maintain a team which plays an outside school unless that school or department has applied for special permission to the Board of Control, and we have had a lot of difficulty with that….And it is policy to discourage that practice as much as possible." He or one of the other committee members no doubt also recalled the policy they had established the previous academic year when the group was first formed that "[n]o individual department or school may compete with any outside groups represented on any of the schedules of any of the Varsity teams or with any group which the Varsity may wish to compete in the future or has competed in the past." The committee members were no doubt aware that the women's varsity basketball team had competed against East Stroudsburg in each of the previous three years; the team would do so again six times in the 1930s.[70]

The conflict with the Department of Physical Education was not resolved that year (1930-31) or any time soon. From the evidence in the University Archives, it appears to gone on for some time at least into the 1940s, on occasion with "marked belligerency on the part of" the faculty member responsible for women's athletics in the department, Elizabeth Yeend (successor to Emma Frazier), toward Frances Froatz, the University's Director of Women's Athletics. In

* While it appears that much of the conversations when referencing a team meant basketball, there were some references to teams or competition in field hockey and swimming.

fact, in the mid-1930s, likely responding to both continued friction with that department and continuing concerns from other sources about women engaging in intercollegiate athletics, Dean Arnold felt compelled to write to Froatz: "We never know when the old question of intercollegiate competition may come up for new discussion, and I have thought that although you and I are in agreement on the desirability of competition, it might be well to be prepared for those who do find it a problem of debate." She suggested that, in addition to the pre-competition physician's report on each student, Froatz arrange for a year's end medical report on the physical condition of each team member, as it might give us some interesting information."[71]

We are now, however, beyond the scope of this study.

Afterword

With the end of the 1920s**,** five varsity teams in intercollegiate competition, a director of women's athletics, and recognition as part of the University's overall athletic organization, the core of what would become today's prominent and highly successful NCAA Division III women's athletic program, was in place. Although field hockey would ultimately be ended, new varsity sports were added: cross-country, golf, soccer, softball, track and field, and volleyball have joined four original sports (basketball, fencing, swimming and diving, and tennis). Modern gymnasium facilities and arrangements for outdoor sports provide excellent venues for current NYU student-athletes. As a result of Title IX and affirmative administrative decisions, the women's program became fully integrated with the men's. With the assumption by the NCAA of control of women's intercollegiate athletics in 1981 and 1982, the separate director of women's athletics was replaced by the official mandated position of senior women's administrator. A separate NYU Women's Athletic Hall of Fame – into which four of the women mentioned above were among the first eight inductees in 1976: Esther Foley, Frances Froatz, Julia Jones, and Ethel McGary – was combined with the NYU Men's Athletic Hall of Fame. (Of those students also mentioned in the text, Lisa Lindstrom was inducted in 1977 and Mary Washburn in 1979.)

As described at the start, the last few years have seen unparalleled success for women's intercollegiate athletics at NYU, with multiple University Athletic Association and NCAA championships by teams and individuals. They have been a key part of the overall success of NYU athletics. One sign of the stature of a college intercollegiate athletics program is its standing in the rankings for the prestigious Directors Cup awarded by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics, honoring success in a broad-based athletic program. More than half of the points earned by NYU in 2026 (55%), when it ranked seventh, were earned by the women's teams.

The path to this success began just over a century ago when the women of New York University, in a decade of great social change and opposing social expectations about the ability of women to engage in physical activity and competition, sought to fulfill their "long-felt need for women's athletics."

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Jennifer and Annika Berkey (and Steve's proof reading and suggested edits). If I have forgotten anyone, my apologies and thank you all.

Barnett W. Hamberger
October 2026

NOTES

[1] "Co-eds May Form Basketball Team For University," *The New York University News*, November 30, 1920, p. 1, NYU Archives Collection of the *Washington Square Dealer*, RG39.193, Reel #5002; and "Women's League Plans to Form Basketball 5," *New York University Daily News*, November 15, 1922, p. 2, NYU Archives Collection of Publications and Ephemera, MC334, RG1.0, Box 46. Helen Mankin was a sports reporter for the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*. A copy of the *Daily News* reprint of her full article was found in the NYU Archives Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.10, Box 48, Folder 15.

[2] Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Reprint Edition, 1997, originally published 1931 by Harper &Row Publishers); David J. Goldberg, *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); and Betty Spears and Richard A. Swanson, *History of Sport and Physical Education in the United States* (Dubuque, Iowa: Championship[p Books, Third Edition, 1988). The quotations are from Allen, pp. 67-68, 69, and 73, except for the news headline, which is from *The New York University News*, March 14, 1922, p. 1, NYU Archives Collection of the *Washington Square Dealer,* RG39.193, Box 101, Reel 5002.

[3] Caryne Brown, "Taking the Track," *American History*, Vol. 31, No. 2, May/June, pp. 43-44; Cindy L. Himes, "The Female Athlete in American Society: 1860-1940 " (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1986), pp. 175, 190-206, and 223; Steven A. Riess, editor, *Sports in America from Colonial Times to the Twenty-First Century: An Encyclopedia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 953 and 955; Jaime Schultz, *Women's Sports: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 81; and Paula D. Welch, *History of American Physical Education and Sport* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, Third Edition, 2004), p. 87. The quotation about Lenglen is from Schultz; the quotations about female athletes are from Himes, p. 223. Olympic numbers are from Olympics.com and Wikipedia.

[4] Brown, pp. 42-49; Ellen Gerber, "The Controlled Development of Collegiate Sport for Women, 1923-1936," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1975, p.15; Allen Guttmann, *Women's Sports: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 135-137; Himes, pp. 206-209; "Women's Athletics," *The New York Times*, April 6, 1925, Sports section, p. 24, col. 4; Riess, p. 31; Welch, p. 87; and https://flamealivepod.com/the-race-that-kept-women-from-running/. An early rebuttal to those who feared participation in athletics was harmful to a woman's physical well-being and ability to bear the burdens of motherhood was published by a former (male) New York University student-athlete, Henry Noble MacCracken (Class of 1900), then in the early years of his thirty-one-year tenure as president of Vassar College, at that time an all-female college. See "College Sports and Motherhood," *The New York Times*, July 3, 1921, Section III, p. 23. *The Times* published an editorial a few days after the 1922 Paris meet disagreeing with those who believed that women were not capable of participating in track and field, noting that one often saw men exhausted after competition. See "Effects of Athletics on Women," August 23, 1922, p. 12, col. 4.

[5] Richard C. Bell, "A History of Women in Sport Prior to Title IX," *The Sport Journal*, March 14, 2008, https://thesportjournal.org/a-history-of-women-in-sport-prior-title-ix/; Brown, p. 45; Himes, pp. 176-177; Ethel Perrin, "Introduction," in Helen Frost and Hazel J. Cudderley, *Field Hockey and Soccer for Women* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. xiv; "Oppose Star System in Girls' Athletics," *The New York Times*, April 8, 1925, p. 22, col.

2; "Athletics for the Girls and Women of America," *The Playground*, Vol. 17, May 1923, pp. 116-118; Riess, pp. 41 and 953; Schultz, p.81; Spears and Swanson, pp. 239-241; and Welch, p. 229. The quotation beginning "not primarily" is from *The Times* but also appears in other sources. The quotation about coaches is from Perrin, a leading physical educator who believed strenuous physical activity was detrimental to women's health.

[6] Bell; Gerber, pp. 1-3; Guttmann, p. 136; Himes, pp. 64 and 87-88; Riess, pp. 718; and 952 Spears and Swanson, pp. 144-145, 192-193, and 238; and Welch, p. 229. The quotations about the characteristics of a well-rounded adult are from Reiss, p. 78; those about the campus roles of men's and women's athletics are from Himes, p. 88. On the origins of men's intercollegiate athletics in general and at NYU in particular, see Barnett W. Hamberger, *Violet Roots: New York University Athletics in the Nineteenth Century* (Kindle Direct Publishing, 2024).

[7] Marion W. Oppenheim, NYU Archives Collection on Faculty and Alumni Memory Projects, MC226, Series I, Box 1 Folder 64; and I. R. Jacobs, "Competitive Athletics," *The Arch*, Vol. I, No. 3, January 1922, pp. 29-30, in NYU Archives Collection of Publications and Ephemera, MC334, RG39.209, Box 410, Folder 6. A fellow student of Oppenheim, Martin L. Bernstein, '25, likewise remembered a great increase in student activities similar to "a normal college." NYU Archives Collection on Faculty and Alumni Memory Projects, MC226 Series II, Box 3, Folder 1. For another view of NYU in the 1920s, made by an alumnus thirty years later, see H. Thomas Austern, "How High Should the Ivy Grow in Washington Square," and "Washington Square College in the Mid-Twenties," NYU Archives Collection of Faculty and Alumni Memory Projects, MC226, Series I, Box 1, Folder 7.

[8] Edwinna Hagstrom, WSC 1922 graduate, NYU Archives Collection on Faculty and Alumni Memory Projects, MC226, Series I, Box 1, Folder 36. Enrollment estimates based on numbers in Theodore F. Jones, editor, *New York University, 1832-1932* (New York City: The New York University Press, 1933), pp. 343, 352-353, 371, and 383.

[9] Hagstrom; Margaret Fuller Karlin, NYU Archives Collection of Faculty and Alumni Memory Projects, MC226, Series III Box 7, audiocassette 226_053; and John R. Turner, "The Washington Square College," Munn Papers, NYU Archives, MC2, Box 5, Folder 45. Turner was the WSC Dean from 1917-1928. His undated paper was probably written in 1919 or 1920.

[10] *The Album*, 1922, pp. 123 and 125 (WSC), NYU Archives Collection of Yearbooks, MC304, RG19; *The Bluebook*, 1922, pp. 21-22, and *The Waverly*, 1927-28 (WSC student handbooks), pp. 71-72, NYU Archives Collection of Student Handbooks, MC301, RG19, Box 7; *The Commerce Violet*, 1922, p. 12, NYU Archives Collection of Yearbooks, MC304, RG27; Elsie A. Hug, *Seventy-Five Years in Education: The Role of the School of Education of New York University, 1890-1965* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), pp. 108 and 127-128; *The Prometheus*, 1929 (Education), NYU Archives Collection of Yearbooks, MC304, RG26; "Commerce Basketball Schedule Announced," and "Commerce Five Defeats Tech Institute," *The New York University News*, January 18, 1921, p.2; and "Wash. Sq. Basketball Team Schedule Ready," *The New York University News*, November 22, 1921, p. 6. The establishment of the physical education department was part of a national trend, as the preparation of physical education teachers moved from medical schools to schools of education in the early twentieth century. Reiss, p. 718. At one time, the Evening Division of WSC had its own men's basketball team (apart from that of the day students) which played other institutions, presumably their evening division. See "Athletics," *The Album*, 1927, pp. 247-248.

[11] Jones, pp. 227, 345, and 386; and Pamela Nelson and Karen Sotiropolous, "An Uneasy Alliance: NYU and Its Communities Since 1900: Women at NYU from 1890-1930," p. 1, NYU Archives Records of Public History Program, Series IVA, RG20.9, Box 4, Folder 11. Estimates of the number of women undergraduates was also made from class lists in the yearbooks of the decade.

[12] Pamela Nelson, "Women and the University in the 1920s: The Early Career of Dorothy McSparran Arnold at New York University," p. 17, NYU Archives Records of Public History Program, Series IVA, RG20.9, Box 4, Folder 11; and Nelson and Sotiropolous, pp. 1-2. The quotation about Brown is from Nelson; the one about male administrators is from Nelson and Sotiropolous.

[13] "Dean Arnold," *The Album*, 1929, p. 337; *The Commerce Violet*, 1930, p. 245; "Recollections of Margaret L. Brown," NYU Archives Collection of Faculty and Alumni Memory Projects, MC226, Box 3, Folder 6; Nelson, pp. 1 and 23; Nelson and Sotiropolous, pp. 1-2 and 11; and "Mrs. Arnold Named A Dean At N.Y.U.," January 4, 1929, p. 10, "Miss Froatz Named Director At N.Y.U.," May 8, 1929, p. 25, and "N.Y.U. Women Organize," October 3, 1929, p.36, *The New York Times*. The quotation about male administrators is from Nelson, p. 23; the comment about Munn-Recht is from Margaret Brown, WSC Class of 1922; the quotation about Arnold's appointment is from the January 4, 1929 *Times*. For evidence that Munn-Recht served all three undergraduate colleges at the Square, see the all-University bulletins in the NYU Archives Collection of Course Bulletins, MC286, RG1, Box 199. Arnold's titles

can be found in the WSC bulletins in the NYU Archives Collection of Course Bulletins, MC286, RG19, Boxes 199 and 211. Reutiman is listed in University catalogues in MC286, RG27, Box 206.

[14] "League of Women's Organizations," *The Album*, 1925, p. 186; Nelson, p. 20; Nelson and Sotiropolous, pp. 1-2, 11; and "Co-eds Organize a New York University League of Women," *The New York University News*, March 8, 1921, p. 4. The membership numbers are from *The Album*, 1922, p. 78. The quotation about "equal footing" is from *The Album*; about "umbrella" and "general supervision" from Nelson; and about "wholesome rivalry" from *The NYU News*. The final quotation is from the *New York University Bulletin: Washington Square College 1923-1924*, p. 33, NYU Archives Collection of Course Bulletins, MC286, RG19, Box 210.

[15] *The Album*, 1922, pp. 123 and 128; "League of Women," *The Album*, 1926, p. 249; and "Sport Talk," February 22, 1921, p. 2, and "Candidates for New Co-Ed Basket-Ball Team, "November 23, 1920, p. 2. *The New York University News*. The quotation "about active interest" is from *The Album*, p. 123; about "long-felt need" from *The Album*, p. 249. The yearbooks of the three colleges lists their basketball results and NYU is not among them.

[16] "Editorial," October 13, 1926, pp. 3-4, and Henry Cook Hathaway, "An Athletic Policy and Program for New York University," April 1925, p. 13, *New York University Alumnus*, NYU Archives, microfilm Reel #5097; and "Co-Eds May Form Basketball Team For University," November 20, 1920, p. 1, *The New York University News*. Hathaway's first two articles appeared in the February and March 1925 issues of the *Alumnus*, which was published monthly at the time.

[17] "Girls' Varsity Team Will Meet Savage," January 11, 1921, p. 1, and "Sport Talk," p. 2, and "Coach Selects Co-Ed Varsity Team," p. 6, February 22, 1921, *The New York University News*.

[18] Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackelford, *Shattering the Glass: The Remarkable History of Women's Basketball (*Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 9-10, 17, and 19-20; Ralph Melnick, *Senda Berenson: The Unlikely Founder of Women's Basketball* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp. 26-27; Roberta J. Park & Joan S. Hult, "Women as Leaders in Physical Education and School-Based Sports, 1865 to the 1930s," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, March 1993, p. 37; Reiss, pp. 32, 158, and 165-166; and Spears and Swanson, p. 193. The quotation is from Park and Hult.

[19] Guttmann, p. 115; Himes, pp. 94-95; Melnick, pp. 76-77 and 86; Park & Hult, p. 37; Reiss, p. 158; and Spears and Swanson, p. 176. The Berenson quotations are from Melnick, pp. 76-77.

[20] Grundy and Shackelford, pp. 13, 17, 26-28; Himes, pp. 94-95; Park and Hult, p. 37; Reiss, pp. 158 and 165; and Spears and Swanson, pp. 176-177.

[21] "A Year Ago Today," November 29, 1921, p. 2, *The New York University News*. That the roster was announced over a month after the story about meeting Savage "within a fortnight" might also indicate that the game never occurred. See Note 17.

[22] "Co-Ed Quintet Beats Girls' Club, 27-15," March 28, 1922, p. 3, and "Wall Will Coach Only Football Next Year," April 11, 1922, p. 5, *The New York University News*; "Campus and Square," October 13, 1922, p. 2, "Girls Prepare for Basketball; Practice at Judson," November 13, 1922, p. 3, "W.S. Girls Will Play Basketball After Exams," p. 2, "Women's League Plans to Form Basketball 5," November 15, 1922, p. 2, "Women's League After New Members," February 16, 1923, p. 4, *New York University Daily News*. The quotation about the WSC team's "several victories" is from the April 11, 1922 *News*; that about Washington Square co-eds from the November 13, 1922, *Daily News*. Reference in the headlines to "Quintet" and to Basketball 5" likely reflect a male editor's use of terms for men's basketball.

[23] March 4, 1922 letter to WSC Dean John R. Turner, NYU Archives, Records of the Office of the Chancellor (Elmer Ellsworth Brown), RG3.0.4, Box 69, Folder 8; "Physical Education is Now Required," *New York University Daily News*, October 8, 1922, p. 4; Spears and Swanson, p. 228; and *The Violet*, 1923, p. 31, NYU Archives Collection of Yearbooks, MC304.

[24] "Varsity Letters for Varsity Co-Eds," *New York University Alumnus*, January 1924, p. 187.

[25] "Girls' Basketball," *The Album,* 1925, p. 255; "Girls Varsity Basketball," *Commerce Violet*, 1924, p. 214; "N.Y.U. Has New Coach," *The New York Times*, October 10, 1917, Section D, p. 23; *New York University Alumnus*, November 1924, p. 7, and June 1955, p. 7; "Co-Eds Choose Leaders For Basketball Team," *New York University Daily News*, April 18, 1923, p. 3; and *The New York University News,* December 6, 1921, p. 3. The description of Wall's role in women's field hockey and swimming is in the November 1924 *Alumnus*. The roster of players is drawn from *The Album*, the *Commerce Violet*, news stories about specific games referenced in Notes 26 and 27, and "Women's Athletic Association Awards Letters to Girl's Basketball Team," *New York University Alumnus*, May 1924, p. 432.

These sources have various spellings of the players' names; I have used what I believe are the correct ones based on all the evidence.

[26] "Girls' Basketball," *The Album*, 1925, p. 255; *The Templar*, 1924, p. 163 (Temple yearbook); and "Girls Start Ball Rolling with Victory over N.Y.U.," *Temple University Weekly*, December 20, 1923, p. 8. The quotation about the inaugural season comes from *The Album*; those about the game from the Temple newspaper, which also misspells Bodenstein's and Strassman's names, among others.

[27] "Girls' Basketball," *The Album*, 1925, p. 255; "Hunter Varsity Triumphs over N.Y.U.," *Hunter College Bulletin*, January 10, 1924, p. 3; "N.Y.U. Girls' Team Beats Penn, 25-19," *The New York Times*, March 30, 1924, Section X, p. 3; and "Hunter College 24; N.Y.U. Girls 11," January 1924, p. 195, and "N.Y.U. Girls 25; University of Pennsylvania Girls 19," April 1924, p. 358, and "Women's Athletic Association Awards Letters to Girl's Basketball Team," *New York University Alumnus*, May 1924, p. 432. The quotations about the Hunter game are from the *Bulletin*; about the Penn game from *The Times;* and the one about first recognition from the May *Alumnus.* Records are incomplete as to dates and descriptions of all the games played that first season and, where there are accounts, scores often differ; I have used the scores found in contemporary sources.

[28] "Girls' Basketball Popular at N.Y.U.," *The New York Times*, December 19, 1926, Sports section, p. 4; and "Girls' Athletics," November 1924, p. 30, and untitled, March 10, 1926, p. 11, *New York University Alumnus*. The *Alumnus* quote is from March 1926.

[29] "Swimming," *The Album*, 1926, p. 313, and 1929, p. 354; "Girls' Swimming," April 1924, p. 358, and "Co-ed Swimming Meet," January 1925, p. 27, *New York University Alumnus*; "Women's League Plans To Form Basketball 5," November 15, 1922, p. 2, and "League of Women After New Members," February 16, 1923, p. 4, *New York University Daily News*; and "Sport Talk," *The New York University News*, February 22, 1921, p. 2. McCormick is identified as an instructor in physical education in the NYU Catalogues of 1923-1930 and in the 1926 *Album*, p. 47.

[30] Frances Froatz, NYU Archives Biographical File, MC317, Box 62; and *New York University Alumnus*, November 1924, p. 7. In the NYU Catalogues from 1923-1930, Froatz is listed variously as an Assistant in Physical Education, Instructor in Swimming, and Instructor in Physical Training under the University, School of Commerce, and Washington Square College sections.

[31] "Hunter Swims to Victory Against N.Y.U.," *Hunter College Bulletin*, April 23, 1925, p. 9. The *Bulletin* says the meet was on Tuesday the 13th, but the 13th was a Monday. I have kept the date and changed the day of the week not least because April 13th is my birthday. It also refers to the 100-yard freestyle as "the crawl," another term used for that style, and does not give the distances for the long distance freestyle or the medley relay. The NYU records in the University Archives, "Women's Swimming, 1924-25," Records of Athletic Programs, RG41.0, Box 2, Folder 4, erroneously lists the Hunter meet as a win.

[32] "Pennsylvania Swims Against New York," April 24, 1925, p. 1, "Varsity Team Swims in New York," May 8, 1925, p. 3, and "Varsity Has Two Dual Meets," May 22, 1925, p. 1, *The Bennett News of the University of Pennsylvania*; "N.Y.U. Girls Beat Penn Swim Team," *The New York Times*, May 16, 1925, p. 15; and "New York Mermaids Defeat Penn In First Intercollegiate Meet," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 22, 1925, p. 20. The quotation about McGary is from *The Inquirer*; about different rules from the April 24th *Bennett News*. The April 24th *Bennet News* claims a 21-20 Penn victory, while *The Inquirer* has the 22-19 NYU win. The scores in the NYU Archives records are not consistent with those in the newspapers.

[33] *The Album*, 1929, p. 354; and "17 Women Named For Olympic Swim," July 3, 1928, p. 15, "Miss M'Gary Wins A.A.U. Title Swim," September 9, 1929, p. 21, and "Ethel McGary, 67, Swimmer In Olympics of '24 and 28," May 5, 1975, *The New York Times*. Numerous *Times* articles cover McGary's non-collegiate competition during the 1920s. She later coached Hunter College for over forty years.

[34] *The Album*, 1929, p. 354; and "Editorial," *New York University Alumnus,* April 6, 1927, p. 3. The quotation about the number of titles held by NYU's women swimmers is from the *Alumnus*. The January 16, 1934 *Education Sun* claimed the team won 40 dual meets in a row ("Sports Review," p. 3), but I have relied on the record in "Women's Athletics All-Time Records 1871-1985," NYU Archives Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.0, Box 2, Folder 4.

[35] "New York Takes Second Place in Powerful; Intercollegiate Meet,": *The Album*, 1927, p. 334; https://grokpedia.com/page/joan_mcsheehy; Esther V. Foley, NYU Archives Biographical Files, MC317, Box 60; Esther V. Foley Papers, NYU Archives, Records of the Athletic Department, RG41.0, Box 2; "Miss M'Gary Wins in Distance Swim," September 13, 1925, Section IX, p;. 8, "Swim Crown Goes to Miss M'Gary," August 10, 1926, p. 15, "Swimmers Lower Three World Marks," May 6, 1928, Section XI, p. 7, and "Esther V. Foley; Athletic Director, 85," May 21, 1990, Section D, p. 23, *The New York Times*; untitled, April 7, 1926, p. 11, March 9, 1927, p. 11, and

"Editorial," *New York University Alumnus*, April 6, 1927, p. 3; https://en.wikip[edia.org/wiki/Lisa_Lindstrom and Joan_McSheehy. The quotation is from the April 6, 1927 *Alumnus*.

[36] Lisa Bier, *Fighting the Current: The Rise of American Women's Swimming, 1870-1926* (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011), pp. 1, 31, 35, 61, 75, and 112; Himes, pp. 225-226; Harold A. Lerch and Paula D. Welch, *The Women's Swimming Association of New York: The Golden Years, 1920-1940*, 1978 (ED174591) ERIC; and Welch, pp. 226-227. The quotations are from Lerch and Welch, pp. 3 and 5.

[37] Frost and Cudderley, pp. 5-6; "Field Hockey Is Football For Girls," *The New York Times*, October 16, 1927, Section IX, p. 10; Park and Hult, p. 38; Spears and Swanson, p. 225; usafieldhockey.com/about; and Welch, p. 233.

[38] *The Album*, 1924, p. 142; "Girls' Field Hockey," *The Album*, 1926, p. 313; untitled, p. 7, and "Girls' Athletics," p. 30, *New York University Alumnus*, November 1924; and "Sport Talk," *The New York University News*, February 22, 1921, p. 2. The quotation is from *The Album*. Page 7 of the *Alumnus* refers to the team as Washington Square College and page 30 as the University team.

[39] "Hockey A Minor Sport 1925-26," *The Album*, 1927, p. 331; *New York University Alumnus,* February 17, 1926, p. 11; "Owlettes Overcome Manhattan Maidens," *Temple University Weekly*, November 1925, p. 1; and "Women's Field Hockey 1925-26," NYU Archives, Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.0, Box 2, Folder 4. The quotation is from *The Album*. The sources are inconsistent as to game scores.

[40] "Field Hockey," *The Album*, 1928, pp. 350-351; "Field Hockey," *The Album*, 1929, pp. 352-353; "Cedar Crest Tilt Ends Hockey Season," *Campus Crier* (Beaver College), November 17, 1927, p. 1; *New York University Alumnus*, December 1, 1926, p. 11; and "Women's Field Hockey 1927-28," NYU Archives Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.0, Box 2, Folder 4. As usual, there are discrepancies in scores between sources. The quotation is from the 1929 *Album*, p. 352.

[41] Sylvia Stern Krugman memorandum, 1977, NYU Archives Collection of Faculty and Alumni Memory Projects, MC226, Box 5, Folder 19; and "Women's Field Hockey 1929-30," NYU Archives, Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.0, Box 2 Folder 4.

[42] "Julia Jones-Pugliese, Fencer, Dead at 84," *The New York Times*, March 9, 1993, Section B, p. 6; "Julia Jones-Pugliese," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Jones-Pugliese; and remarks by Julia Jones Pugliese at her induction into the New York Sports Hall of Fame, February 10, 1993, youtube.com. An alternate version on the website of the National Intercollegiate Women's Fencing Association says she was told the basketball team she wanted to try out for was for men only, but Pugliese mentions being too short in her Hall of Fame remarks.

[43] Grace Chenxin Liu, "Breaking the Barrier in Women's Fencing: Historical Roots, Title IX and Empowerment of Women," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 3, July 2022, pp. 1-15.

[44] *The Album*, 1928, p. 292; "Fencers' Club," *The Album*, 1929, p. 309**;** Diaries, NYU Archives Miguel A. de Capriles Papers, MC60, Box 1, Folder 3, see entries for November 25 and December 30, 1925, and Box 5, entries for January 8, February 5 and 26, and March 5 and 26, 1927; Miguel de Capriles, Transcript of May 11, 1976 interview, NYU Archives Collection on Faculty and Alumni Memory Projects, MC226, Box 3, Folder 11; "Fencing," *The Evening News*, March 20, 1928, p. 1, NYU Archives Collection of the *Washington Square College Evening News*, RG39.191, Reel #5101; Hamberger, p. 272; and "N.Y.U. Revives Fencing as a Minor Sport," *New York University Daily News,* October 20, 1922, p. 4. All the quotations are from de Capriles.

[45] "Women's Fencing," *The Album*, 1929, p. 357; "Women Fencers Lose Match to New Yorkers," *The Cornell Daily Sun*, April 29, 1929, p. 1; "Junior Foils Title to Mrs. Van Buskirk," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1929, p. 24; *New York University Alumnus*, March 6, 1929, p. 14, March 27, 1929, pp. 13-14, and May 8, 1929, p. 12; and "Women's Fencing 1928-29," NYU Archives Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.0, Box 2, Folder 4. The 1929 *Album* has Appell as third at the Novice competition, the *Alumnus*, published earlier, second. The quotations are from *The Album*. Besides NYU, Bryn Mawr, the University of Pennsylvania, and several other colleges were invited by Cornell to compete but declined to do so.

[46] "Co-ed Fencing," *The Album*, 1930, p. 355; "Julia Jones Pugliese," www.niwfa.com/founder.html; and "Julia Jones-Pugliese," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Jones-Pugliese.

[47] "Co-ed Fencing," *The Album*, 1930, p. 355; "Fencing," *The Bennet News*, March 6, 1930, p. 1; "Women's Fencing 1929-30," NYU Archives, Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.0, Box 2, Folder 4; "Women's Fencing at N.Y.U.," NYU Archives, Records of Athletics Programs, RG41, Box 103, Folder 16, undated, handwritten document; and "Fencing Title Won By Cornell Women," *The New York Times*, April 27, 1930, Section XI, p. 4. *The Times* article and the NYU Archives records disagree as to whether NYU was fourth or second. Some articles about NYU fencers in non-collegiate competition are: "Fencing Meet Won By Salle De Vince," December 13, 1929, p. 34, "Miss Magnus Wins

Junior Foils Title," February 19, 1930, p. 28, "Miss Lloyd Keeps Met. Fencing Title," March 7, 1930, p. 28, "Miss Lloyd Gains in Title Fencing," March 15, 1930, p. 14, and "Vince Foils Team Takes U.S. Crown," *The New York Times*. The quotation is from *The Album.*

[48] Bell.

[49] *The Album,* 1924, p. 145;"Tennis," *The Album*, 1926, p. 315; "N.Y.U. Hold Champion Tennis Match," *The Album*, 1927, p. 335; *New York University Alumnus*, February 17, 1926, p. 11; and WSC Course Bulletins for 1926, pp. 53-54, and 1927, p. 74, NYU Archives Collection of Course Bulletins, MC286, RG19, Box 23. Student yearbook biographies read were from the 1925 (Berner, p. 96), 1926 (Berner, p. 59, Rosenblatt, p. 123, Jacobus, p. 124), 1927 (Lipshitz, p. 184), and 1928 (Schmerler, p. 145) *Album* and the 1927 *Commerce Violet* (Arum, p. 71). The quotation is from the 1926 *Album*.

[50] "Hunter Tennis Team Ties N.Y.U. Team With 2-2 Score," *Hunter Bulletin*, May 29, 1929, p. 1; and *The Wistarion*, 1930, p. 205.

[51] "Co-ed Varsity Tennis," *The Album*, 1931, p. 360; "Hunter Beats N.Y.U. 7-0 In First Tennis Meet of Spring Season," *Hunter Bulletin*, May 2, 1930, p. 1; "N.Y.U. Girls Lose At Net," *The New York Times*, May 4, 1930, p. 2; and NYU Archives Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.0, Box 2, Folder 4.*The Album* has the Swarthmore score as 3-2 while *The Times* has 4-1. The quotation is from *The Album*.

[52] "Women's Athletic Association," *The Album*, 1926, p. 314; and "Women Approve A. A. Constitution," *New York University Alumnus*, May 1924, p. 418.

[53] "N.Y.U. Women Students' Athletic Committee," *The Album*, 1931, p. 356; "Miss Froatz Named Director at N.Y.U.," May 8, 1929, p. 25, and "N.Y.U. Women Organize," October 3, 1929, p. 36, *The New York Times*; and "Proposed Plan for the Control of Women's Athletics," NYU Archives, Records of the Dean of Women, Washington Square College, RG19.3, Box 2, Folder 5. The quotations are from the "Proposed Plan." An old handwritten note dates the document as "Sept. 1929-30."

[54] Minutes of September 30, 1929 meeting and April 22, 1931 letter from Dorothy McSparran Arnold to Rose Jaboolian. NYU Archives, Records of Athletics Programs, RG41, Box 126, Folder 4. Jaboolian was chair of the NYU Women Students' Athletic Committee (and captain of the basketball team). All quotations in this and the preceding two paragraphs are from the committee minutes except for the final quote regarding the recognition of fencing as a varsity, which is from Arnold's letter to Jaboolian.

[55] "Rules and Regulations Established by the University Board of Athletic Control for Women's Athletics," Records of the Dean of Women, Washington Square College, RG19.3, Box 2, Folder 5. An old handwritten note dates the document "1930." The multi-sport athletes referred to were Mary Carter, E'30 (basketball and field hockey) and Louise Marshall, E'31 (basketball, field hockey, and swimming) in 1929-30 and Ruth Eisenberg, W'33 and Sylvia Stern, W'33, in basketball and field hockey in 1930-31, per the team rosters in the 1930 and 1931 *Album*. Information on the number of games played was found in *The Album* 1930 and 1931; Records of the Athletics Programs, RG41.0, Box 2, Folder 4, Box 67, Folder 9, and Box 69, Folder 2; and the September 30, 1932 report of Philip Badger, Chairman of the Board of Athletic Control, Records of the Office of the Chancellor (Elmer Ellsworth Brown), RG3.0.4, Box 5, Folder 1.

[56] "Co-ed Field Hockey," *The Album*, 1930, p. 353; "Co-ed Varsity Fencing," p. 361, and "Inter-Sorority Athletic Conference," p. 368, *The Album*, 1931, p. 361; and "Athletics for Women," *The Waverly*, 1931-32, p. 29. The quotations are from the 1930 *Album*.

[57] Professor G. Rowland Collins, Chairman of the Board of Athletic Control, June 18, 1926 letter to Chancellor Brown, NYU Archives Records of the Office of the Chancellor (Elmer Ellsworth Brown), RG3.0.4, Box 5, Folder 1; Howard J. Savage, American College Athletics (New York: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1929), pp. 254-255 and 257; and "Football at N.Y.U.: Its Rise And Fall," *The New York Times,* December 20, 1931, Section E, p. 7. Savage's report naturally focuses on men's athletics; it has only a six line paragraph on women's college sports (p. 111). Quotation about building up football is from *The Times*; about the need for athletic scholarships from the Collins letter.

[58] Sylvia Stern Krugman memorandum, 1977, NYU Archives Collection of Faculty and Alumni Memory Projects, MC226, Box 5, Folder 19.

[59] Judith Jenkins George, "Mary Washburn Conklin: Pioneer in Women's Olympic Track and Field," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, March 1988, pp. 37-41; "Mary W. Conklin," *Keene Sentinel*, February 4, 1994, p. 21; NYU Archives, Records of Athletics Programs, RG41.0, Box 2 Folder 9, Box 46, Folder 1, and Box 48, Folder 43; and "Mary Washburn," NYU Archives Biographical Files, MC317, Box 180. The quotation is from George. I

heard this story directly (including "I fooled them") from Washburn (then Washburn Conklin) when I met her in the 1980s. The George and *Keene Sentinel* articles, and other information on Washburn were kindly sent to me by January 16, 2025 email from Bethany Flechter of the DePauw Archives.

[60] Thomas Jable, "Jay B. Nash," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, September 1985, pp. 55-59; Jay B. Nash, "Athletics for Girls," *North American Review*, January 1, 1928, pp. 99-104; and "Jay B. Nash, NYU Archives Biographical Files, MC317, Box 125, Folder 10. The quotation is from Nash's *North American Review* article.

[61] The quotation is from "Physical Education," *The Prometheus*, 1929, p. 80. For male Education students on varsity teams, see *The Prometheus*, p. 92; and for Physical Education teams see, for example, *The Prometheus*, p. 91, and successor yearbooks *The Education Violet*, 1931, pp. 210-217, and 1932, pp. 176-178, NYU Archives Collection of Yearbooks, MC304, RG26. The departmental teams appear to have been involved only in intramural competition in the mid-1930s. One reason for the lack of evidence is that there were no Education yearbooks before 1929 and none in 1930.

[62] Esther V. Foley, NYU Archives Biographical Files, MC317, Box 60; and the yearbooks for Schools of Commerce and Education and Washington Square College have class biographies and team rosters. Schools and graduation years were also checked in the University catalogs (MC286) and commencement programs, NYU Archives, Records of the Office of External Affairs, Commencement and Special Events, RG7.4, Box 63, Folders 1-6.

[63] *The Album*, 1930, pp. 351, 353, and 356; and *The Commerce Violet*, p. 228.

[64] *The Album*, 1930, pp. 351, 353, and 357.

[65] *The Album*, 1931, p. 359; and *The Education Violet*, 1931, pp. 206-207.

[66] "Meeting of December 5, 1930 – Mrs. Arnold and Miss Frazier," "Meeting of Committee with Miss Frazier in Miss Reutiman's Office," "Meeting of Committee on December [blank] 1930," and "Meeting of Committee with Mr. Nash," NYU Archives Records of the Dean of Women, Washington Square College, RG19.3, Box 2, Folder 5. Background information on Frazier was found in the Mount Holyoke yearbook, *Llamarada*, 1919, pp. 162 and 166; "Physical Education Women's Organization," *The Education Violet*, 1931, p. 132; and the 1930-31 Department of Physical Education brochure, NYU Archives Collection of Course Bulletins, MC286, RG26, Box 91. The minutes of the meeting with Nash were unfortunately not particularly helpful, as he comes across as an uncooperative, obfuscating witness testifying before a congressional committee.

[67] "Meeting of December 5, 1930 – Mrs. Arnold and Miss Frazier" and "Meeting of Committee with Miss Frazier in Miss Reutiman's Office." The quotation is from the latter, p. 2.

[68] The quotation is from "Meeting of December 5, 1930 – Mrs. Arnold and Miss Frazier," p. 4.

[69] The quotation is from "Meeting of Committee with Miss Frazier in Miss Reutiman's Office," p. 2.

[70] "Meeting of Committee with Miss Frazier in Miss Reutiman's Office;" "Meeting of Committee on December [blank] 1930;" "Meeting of Committee with Mr. Nash;" and "Rules and Regulations Established by the University Board of Athletic Control for Women's Athletics." The Wall quotation about not enough women is from the Committee meeting, p. 1, and about the existing regulation is from the meeting of the committee with Frazier, pp. 4-5. The quotation about the previously adopted policy is from "Rules and Regulations," p. 2.

[71] Dorothy Arnold March 12, 1935 letter to Frances Froatz and "Faculty Advisory Committee to Women's Athletics," October 27, 1936, NYU Archives, Records of Athletic Programs, RG41, Box 126, Folder 2. Additional documents related to the dispute with the Department of Physical Education during the 1930s are in the same folder, titled "Committee –Board of Athletics for Women's Athletics." Other documents related to the dispute in the 1930s and 1940s may be found in Records of the Dean of Women, Washington Square College, RG19.3, Box 2, Folder 7. The quotation about Yeend is from the October 27th document.

ILLUSTRATION SOURCES

The following pictures are from the NYU Archives Collection of Yearbooks, MC304: Dorothy McSparran Arnold (*The Album*, 1929, p. 336); Frances Froatz (*The Album*, 1931, p. 356); Julia Jones (*The Album*, 1929, p. 357); Mary Washburn (*The Album*, 1929, p. 356); and the first varsity basketball team (*The Album*, 1925, p. 254). The following are from the NYU Archives Records of Athletics Programs, RG41: Esther Foley (Box 2, Folder 1, undated *New York Daily News* article); and Ethel McGary (Box 48, Folder 15, April 30, 1931 *New York University Daily News* article "Marriage for Violet Co-eds."). The field hockey photos and the basketball team cover photo are from, "Girls at Play," *New York University Alumnus*, November 1924, p. 29, NYU Archives. The December 19, 1926 *New York Times* basketball article is from Section IX, p. 4.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barnett W. (Russ) Hamberger was an administrator at New York University for over fifty years, retiring as Associate Provost. During that time, among other duties, he had various responsibilities with respect to NYU's athletic program, including serving as NCAA faculty representative and NYU's voting delegate to its athletic conference, the University Athletic Association, of which he was one of the founders. Upon his retirement, the University established an award named in his honor to be presented annually to a graduating student-athlete who excelled both academically and athletically and demonstrated exceptional commitment to volunteer work and the NYU community. He is the author of *Violet Roots: New York University Athletics in the Nineteenth Century*.