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Ivy League Women Establish Athletic Traditions, 1973-1983

During the early 1970s extraordinary changes emerged in women's intercollegiate sport. Energized by the passage of Title IX in 1972, throughout the nation women faculty and students began to build fledgling intercollegiate athletic programs. The present study focuses on this era in the history of women's athletic programs at Ivy League institutions: Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, and Yale University. All Ivy League institutions offer education that is enhanced by athletic experience. With an emphasis on education first, and secondarily on comprehensive athletic programs, sport is maintained in a proper perspective.

Five of the eight Ivy League institutions can trace sport experiences for women to the early twentieth century, but the modern version of highly organized women's athletic competition commenced when Princeton's tennis team defeated Pennsylvania's women 5-1 in 1973. This was the first Ivy League sponsored event of the "modern" era. The following year the inaugural Eastern Association of Women's Rowing Colleges regatta, the "Eastern Sprints," was held in Middleton, Connecticut. Radcliffe's crew won the varsity eights, the first Ivy League women's championship event. During the 1975-1976 academic year, the Ivy League formed the first women's ice hockey league and in 1978, the University of Pennsylvania's fencing team represented the Ivy League in the first Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (IAIW) Fencing Championships. By the 1982-1983 academic year, women were vying for Ivy League championships in sixteen varsity sports.

Central to this study are the following questions: What factors led to organized athletic competition for women in Ivy League institutions, and then to its growth and development during the decade 1973-1983? What role did the coordinate colleges (Radcliffe, Barnard, and Pembroke, affiliated with but separate from Harvard, Columbia, and Brown, respectively) play in the establishment of Ivy League athletic programs? How did the institutions that were coeducational earlier influence the Ivy League? What contributions did the leaders of the Ivy League women's athletic movement make? What impact did the IAIW, Eastern College Athletic Conference (ECAC), and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) have on the Ivy League and *vice versa*?

Primary sources include material in the archives at the eight Ivy League campuses, newspapers, journals, record book, yearbooks, media guides, minutes of meetings, and pictures. Oral histories based upon focused interviews offer important additional insights. The study reveals the strategies women used to shape their sport traditions in the Ivy League, heretofore forgotten contributors to those traditions, and the ways in which Ivy League women led the way in modern intercollegiate sport programs. The study is funded by the Council of Ivy Group Presidents.