

CALLING THE SHOTS



The success of these Owls heralds a bright future for Temple's current female athletes.

Before Title IX, a federal civil rights law, was passed in 1972, women's collegiate sports were in a lamentable state. Many universities only offered club or intramural sports for young women, and if there were competitive teams, the practice facilities, uniforms and coaches were often inferior to those of the men's teams.

Imagine the messages that must have been internalized by all of the young women who'd worked throughout their adolescence to rise to the top of their sports, only to have that progress stunted in college. Aside from the very few who went on to the Olympic level, the message was this: You can go far, but not too far. You can be a serious athlete, but not too serious.

After Title IX, which guaranteed equal treatment, regardless of sex, in any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance, things began to drastically change in the world of college athletics.

"I cannot convey enough just what a significant impact that Title IX has had on college athletics," says Temple University Director of Athletics Patrick Kraft. "It has helped create new opportunities, ensured equal footing and facilities and, more importantly, has sent a critical message that female athletes are on par with their male counterparts. Temple Athletics is better because of our women's teams and leadership and that is a direct result of Title IX."

Research since the enactment of Title IX has shown that participating in sports is associated with better grades and higher self-esteem in girls and contributes to life-long improvements to educational, career and health prospects. Meet five Owls who prove that point and herald a bright future for the 241 Division 1 female athletes currently competing for Temple.



1 - Lacrosse standout Lise D'Andrea is CEO and founder of Customer Service Experts Inc.

Lise D'Andrea's entry into lacrosse at Temple was the result of one rather cinematic coincidence: After playing for a highly competitive high school lacrosse team in Unionville, Pennsylvania, D'Andrea, *KLN '87*, decided that in college, she needed to focus entirely on academics. But just a few weeks into her freshman year at Temple in 1983, she saw another student, Susie Chillano, walking through Johnson Hall holding a lacrosse stick. They chatted for a bit, then went outside the dorm for a catch.

After seeing D'Andrea's skills, Chillano insisted that she meet with the women's lacrosse coach, Tina Sloan Green.

"The next thing you know, I'm a freshman practicing with the varsity team, and then I'm on the varsity team," D'Andrea remembers.

The women's lacrosse team went to the Final Four all four years that D'Andrea played and won national championships in '82 and '84, a feat that no other athletic team at Temple had accomplished at that time. But more profound than any trophy, what stays with D'Andrea are the lessons she earned from her coaches.

"The leadership skills they taught me during those four years, and how committed they were ... I carry that with me today," she notes.

Today, D'Andrea is the CEO and founder of Customer Service Experts Inc., an innovative leader in customer experience consulting for the airport industry, based in Annapolis, Maryland. The company has grown to 25 full-time and 22 part-time employees since she started it 25 years ago.

While going through some old papers before a recent alumni event, D'Andrea found a series of documents from Coach Sloan Green that laid out her expectations for the team in the early 1980s. Among the items are directives like, "Come away with a sense of achievement from each situation, practice and game"; "Excellence is maintaining your full potential under the pressure"; and "Be honest, sensitive, courteous, disciplined."

"I still think about the motivational approach that our coaches took and the incredible team culture they led," D'Andrea says. "And I expect the same things of our team members at CSE today."

Though college student-athletes are immersed in their respective sports, many aren't fully aware of the voices they have to advocate for themselves in the larger structure of the school administration and even in their division. Alyssa Drachslin, *CLA '15, KLN '16*, was not one of those athletes.

While playing on Temple's varsity women's volleyball team from 2012 to 2016, she sat on the NCAA National Division I Student Athlete Advisory Committee, a group of representatives, one from each conference within Division I, sent to national conferences at the NCAA.

At these gatherings, policies and procedures were shared with the students, who got to see the inner workings of how the entity operates and weigh in on topics that affected their lives as student-athletes.

"It was a pretty life-changing experience," Drachslin says. "At all the conferences I went to, and through serving on a couple of NCAA committees, I saw the background of the NCAA, [and got to be] privy to that knowledge.

"Drachslin, who was born and raised in Riverside, California, was also captain of her team during her junior and senior years.

Those leadership roles, as well as her intimate understanding of the challenges student-athletes face, perfectly prepared her for her current position as the coordinator of leadership and professional development at Temple Athletics. The job, part of the Academic Support Center for Student Athletes, was added in early 2018.



2 - Volleyball's starting libero, Alyssa Drachslin serves as coordinator of leadership and professional development for Temple Athletics.

Research since the enactment of Title IX has shown that girls' participation in sports contributes to lifelong educational, career and health improvements.

"Temple is one of the only [schools] among its competitors that offers a full-time position [dedicated to student-athletes' professional development]," she notes. "I love helping to create this program that will be carried on through generations, becoming another resource to help students succeed here."

With her time as a student-athlete still fresh in her mind, Drachslin has a firm grasp on the juggling act that's often required as well as the ways internships and professional development opportunities are sometimes limited due to student-athletes' commitment to their sports. One of her primary goals in her role is to help current student-athletes apply the skills they've gained through athletics to life after college.

"You have the capability to work hard, you're goal-oriented, you know how to work on a team, how to work with a manager—your coach—and you know how to manage your time," she says. "My vision for this role is to help develop the students as holistic people, not only [have them] walk away from Temple with athletic experience and a degree, but [also with] self-awareness of how they've grown."

When Claudrena Harold, CLA '97, came to Temple from her home in Jacksonville, Florida, to play guard for the women's basketball team, she fell in love with both the university and the city of Philadelphia.

“When you were living in the dorms, it was in the heart of Philadelphia,” she says. “The music scene was amazing. When I was there in the mid-1990s, that’s the beginning of the neo-soul movement ... you’d go down to South Street and hear the music, the rhythm, and there was this incredible energy.”



3 - A leading scorer for women's basketball, Claudrena Harold is an associate professor of African American and African studies and history at the University of Virginia.

Balancing her passion for the culture unfolding around her, the knowledge she was absorbing in her African American studies classes and her intensive basketball training schedule could be tricky. Though she’d played basketball for nearly all her life, college-level athletics was a completely new experience.

“You’re expected to perform at a certain level, and there’s pressure that’s completely different than high school ... your life is planned out from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.” Harold says. “It made me incredibly disciplined on some fronts, but there were moments when I was in a fruitful conversation, debating a reading or music, and I had to leave because I had to go to practice.”

Three years in, though she was a star player on the team (she’s in both Temple’s Hall of Fame and the Philadelphia Big 5 Hall of Fame), Harold felt physically and emotionally burned out. With enough credits to graduate early, she did just that.

“I had a productive career, leading the team in scoring for three years. So the staff was losing a contributor,” she says. “But the Academic Support team in the Athletics Department were still incredibly supportive.”

After graduation, she went on to graduate school at the urging of her professors and mentors in Temple’s African American Studies Department. Harold earned a PhD at Notre Dame; in 2004, she began teaching at the University of Virginia, where she is now a professor. She’s authored and co-edited a number of books and is currently working with filmmaker Kevin Everson on a series of short films about the history of black student activism and black studies at the University of Virginia.

Through her role as a professor and leader on campus, Harold says she strives to emulate the community of professors and coaches who encouraged her to be a fully engaged student during her time at Temple.

“So often student-athletes are pigeon-holed and stereotyped and not treated as folks who want to engage in questions around culture and politics,” she says. “I do some of the same things for my student-athletes that were done for me, and I think it’s very important that athletes know that the sky’s the limit beyond the court.”

As a teenager, Kia Johnson, *KLN '86*, played on the girls’ basketball team at Susquehanna Township High School in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, which enjoyed a number of state championship teams.

Johnson knew she wanted to play basketball in college and was happy to have the opportunity to be back in Philadelphia, where her family lived until she was in fourth grade. In the fall of 1982, she matriculated as a freshman at Temple and began on the women’s basketball team as a swing guard. The athletic and academic rigor, coupled with the long season were challenging for her. Under Coach Linda MacDonald, the team trained up to four hours per day, seven days a week.



4 - Named to women's basketball's all-time team roster, Kia Johnson covers news and politics as a producer at Reuters.

“The whole school year was pretty much dedicated to basketball,” she says. “[We trained] on the track, in the weight room, in the pool ... no one could say that we weren’t in shape!”

In the early 1980’s, Title IX still felt new. Female athletic teams were able to travel in coach buses, fly to faraway games, stay in nice hotels and were allocated a small per diem for meals during holiday breaks when the dormitories were closed. Johnson remembers how much pride these advances instilled in the team.

“We felt important,” she says. “And we felt like it was contributing to women’s rights. We were going to get there, get an education, and use that opportunity to go to what-ever the next level was, just like the men.”

After a successful athletic and academic career at Temple, where she majored in journalism, Johnson worked for a few news organizations. In 1993, she landed at Reuters in Washington, D.C., where she still works, covering news in Washington, including presidential campaign trails, foreign policy initiatives from the State Department and the Pentagon, and other political topics.

She was Reuters’ first African American producer hired in North America and is involved with workplace diversity initiatives, helping emerging journalists find jobs, internships and fellowships at Reuters. Johnson traces a strong connection between her time at Temple and her news career, which is full of challenges, unpredictability and long hours.

“Being a college athlete gave me the courage to overcome lots of obstacles,” she says, “and not be afraid to try, to achieve, to reach goals and not be afraid of the unknown.”

Kamali Thompson, *CST’12*, is a true overachiever: After completing a pre-med undergrad degree at Temple—with a wildly successful fencing career, including being named all-American her senior year—she went on to medical school at Rutgers. Then Thompson got her MBA at Rutgers. Oh, and she’s training for the U.S. Olympic fencing team.

“I’ve been running around like a crazy person going on 10 years now,” Thompson laughs. “But I’m a ‘why not?’ kind of person. Why can’t I get straight A’s? Why can’t I travel the world? I’m trying to be the best person I can be, and if I see an opportunity, why not try for it and see what happens?”

Thompson discovered fencing as a kid growing up in northern New Jersey, where the sport is popular. In 2006, she began training at the Peter Westbrook Foundation, a nonprofit fencing club in New York City that was founded by Peter Westbrook, a six-time Olympian fencer, to help train kids whose families aren’t able to afford private clubs or lessons. Her time there helped take her game to the next level.

“Why can’t I get straight A’s? Why can’t I travel the world? I’m trying to be the best person I can.”—Kamali Thompson, *CST’12*

“Fencing is very strategic, and in high school fencing, you learn the motions and don’t understand why you’re doing them,” she says. “[Through training at the foundation], I really understood how everything worked, like, this is how you make an attack; this is how you make a defense.”

After multiple trips to national fencing competitions, Thompson came to Temple, where she was recruited by the university’s legendary head women’s fencing coach, Nikki Franke, *CPH’74*, herself a former Olympian.

“Coach Franke was the best coach I could ever ask for,” Thompson notes. “She’s really strict, but you need that when you’re in college. It’s so easy to go down the wrong path, and she was always there to pull you back up.”

Thompson thrived in the program and went to the NCAA finals every year. After graduating from Temple in 2012 and starting her medical school program at Rutgers, she continued her intense training schedule so she could keep fencing on the international stage. She tried for the Olympic team in 2016, and though she got close, she didn't make it. Never one to shy away from a challenge, Thompson, now age 26, is ready to try again.



5 - Fencer and Olympic hopeful, Kamali Thompson is a medical student at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School.

Her current plan is to apply for a residency in orthopedic surgery and focus on that after the 2020 Olympics. But even after taking a break for her medical career, she says she'll never really leave fencing behind.

"A lot of women who are fencing have kids and come back and fence on an international level, so I think it would be really interesting to keep going and see how it goes," she says.

"What I've learned is that after retirement, many women still come to practice, and I know I'll be in that space, mentoring the kids who come after me." ■