

# ESPN, WNBA helped spread advice at sports symposium

■ A day of activities Friday involved many prominent women in the sports industry

By Mindi Rice  
for the Emerald

In terms of women's opportunities in sports, Clare Hamill may have said it best at Friday's Women in Sports Business Symposium.

"There's never been a better time to get into the sports industry," said Hamill, the vice president of Global Women's Business for Nike.

Hamill was one of eight top female executives from the sports industry who were panelists for the symposium, held in the EMU ballroom. The symposium, in its sixth year, is hosted by the James H. Warsaw Sports Marketing Center and produced by students of the center.

Honored during the evening were four Community Sports Awards winners. A Sports Girl, High School Sports Woman, Sports Woman and Leader in Youth Sports were chosen

from nominations in the community and awards were presented before the keynote address.

Lee Ann Daly, ESPN's Senior Vice President for Marketing, was the evening's keynote speaker and also one of the panelists. She talked about the changes in sports marketing and in ESPN over the years.

"The first and most important thing is to serve the fans," Daly said in her keynote address.

Daly said that ESPN, which was created by Connecticut fans in 1979, is unlike other large media corporations.

"We think of ourselves first as the world's biggest sports fans," Daly said.

During her address, Daly spoke about the steps ESPN is taking towards adding entertainment approaches to sports. She also showed a few advertising campaigns, some of which have not been released yet, including a few spots of the new "Basketball is Beautiful" WNBA campaign.

She mentioned many of the ways that ESPN programming continues to evolve, adding that the station is working on a new game show where fans can banter about sports topics.

Daly and the other panelists stressed many things about working in the sports marketing field. Knowledge of technology and the ability to think creatively were two recurring themes.

Sandi Bittler, vice president of business operations for the WNBA's Portland Fire, said one of the things she does is create dreams for other people to work towards, later adding that if you work hard and prove yourself, you will earn respect.

Kris Rone, the Los Angeles Dodgers' Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, stressed that sports is a difficult area to be in marketing because the fans are often times very emotionally connected.

Citing an example from the Dodgers' last season, Rone advised that while it's good to try new techniques and bring in new audiences, one needs to be careful not to alienate dedicated fans. She also mentioned that sports and sports marketing are becoming much more grassroots than in the past.

Daly said that one has to make people care about the sport one wants them to watch. She made the point that ESPN strives to be a part of sports fans' lives, showing not only games but giving fans the ability to be interactive with the network.

She ended her keynote address by giving the sports marketing students some advice she has learned through the years.

"Never underestimate how hip and knowledgeable your fans are going to be," Daly said.

# Bryant keys L.A. sweep over Kings

By Greg Beacham  
The Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Kobe Bryant emerged triumphant from a hectic weekend that was more than most 22-year-olds could handle.

In a 48-hour span, Bryant played a phenomenal game, rushed home to Los Angeles to check on his wife's health, then hurried back to Sacramento for another amazing performance that put the Lakers in the conference finals.

Bryant set career playoff bests with 48 points and 16 rebounds Sunday as the Lakers advanced to their second straight Western Conference finals with a 119-113 victory over the Sacramento Kings, sweeping the best-of-seven series.

When he finally was able to relax, Bryant could only praise the Kings

and deflect the praise heaped on him for his poise under pressure from many fronts.

"We needed to be challenged like this," Bryant said. "We needed to go into (the conference finals) feeling like we're playing our best basketball. ... I just wanted to run and push myself to the point of exhaustion."

Bryant, who married Vanessa Laine last month after an engagement that began during last season's playoffs, found out hours before tipoff of Friday's Game 3 that she had been taken to an emergency room with a severe pain in her left side.

After being assured by doctors that his wife's life wasn't in danger, Bryant scored 36 points in the Lakers' victory and rushed home, only to find his wife sleeping off her undisclosed malady. After a relaxing day, Bryant

returned to Sacramento and finished his two-game virtuoso performance.

Bryant scored 15 points in the fourth quarter as the Lakers weathered a strong effort from the Kings and advanced to face the winner of the San Antonio-Dallas series.

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