

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and
Chapters

University of Nebraska Press

2012

Beyond Bend It Like Beckham

Timothy F. Graine

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/unpresssamples>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Graine, Timothy F, "Beyond Bend It Like Beckham" (2012). *University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and Chapters*. 117.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/unpresssamples/117>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Nebraska Press at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and Chapters by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Beyond *Bend It Like Beckham*

[Buy the Book](#)

BEYOND
Bend It Like
BECKHAM

THE

GLOBAL PHENOMENON
OF WOMEN'S SOCCER

Timothy F. Grainey • *Foreword by Brittany Timko*

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS • LINCOLN AND LONDON

[Buy the Book](#)

© 2012 by Timothy F. Graine
All rights reserved. Manufactured
in the United States of America.



Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Graine, Timothy F.
Beyond “Bend it like Beckham”: the
global phenomenon of women’s soccer
/ Timothy F. Graine; foreword by
Brittany Timko.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-0-8032-3470-3 (pbk.: alk.
paper)

1. Soccer for women—Cross-cultural
studies. 2. Soccer—Social aspects—
Cross-cultural studies. I. Title.

GV944.5.G73 2012

796.334082—dc23 2011047387

Set in Sabon by Kim Essman.
Designed by Annie Shahan.

*To my wife, April,
and daughter, Arianna:
two precious gems
who make my life better
in infinite ways*

Contents

List of Illustrations	ix
Foreword	xi
Acknowledgments	xv
Introduction	xvii

PART ONE Rapid Growth in the United States

- 1 Title IX, Soccer Moms, and Pioneering Players 3
- 2 U.S. National Team, 1996–1999: “Welcome to Our Party” 17
- 3 Professional Women’s Soccer and the WUSA: “The Best Three Years of My Life” 35
- 4 Women’s Professional Soccer (WPS) 65

PART TWO Challenges in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America

- 5 The State of the Game in the Middle East 105
- 6 Challenges and Successes in Africa 123

- 7 Latin America: Fighting Machismo Attitudes 139
- 8 Women Athletes: Objects versus Wholesome Role Models 163

PART THREE Building Leagues and National Team Programs

- 9 Ancestral Roots: Leveraging the Diaspora to Build the Game Abroad 181
 - 10 National Leagues around the World 201
 - 11 Overcoming a Fifty-Year Ban in England 215
 - 12 Canada's Youthful Road to Success 231
- Conclusion: "The Future of Football Is Feminine" 241

Afterword: 2011 Women's World Cup 247

Appendix of Tables 255

Selected Bibliography 267

Illustrations

- 1 Brittany Timko xii
- 2 Macke Mutz's flip throw 9
- 3 Cindy Parlow coaching at a clinic in Bahrain 122
- 4 Goalkeeper Anna Picarelli versus
Abby Wambach in an international match 183
- 5 Queensland (now Brisbane) Roar
celebrate their 2008–9 title win 212
- 6 Queensland (now Brisbane) Roar coach and
captain address the media 213
- 7 Canadian Women's National Team
coaching staff 233

Foreword

When I was five years old I dreamed of playing in a World Cup, at the Olympics, and professionally. I told my parents, who have always been supportive. They told me to work hard at my dreams, and the opportunities would be endless. At the time, what I didn't know was that some of my dreams weren't very realistic. In 1990 there was no official women's World Cup, women's soccer wasn't a part of the Olympics, and playing professionally would almost be laughable, as most countries barely recognized women as being able to play soccer. For me, my role models were male. I watched a documentary on Pele, and he immediately became my favorite player. I believed that if I had faith, when it was time for me to play, the opportunities would be there. So every day I went down to the park and juggled, dribbled, and kicked the ball against a wall. I would miss birthday parties for games because the games were just that much more fun for me. At school I waited for the bell to ring so I could play at recess and lunch. That was the highlight of my school day.

Close to twenty years later, soccer has helped me to live my dreams and continue to make new ones. I've played in two world youth championships; in 2002 at the finals, we played in front of fifty thousand Canadians and had over a million watching on TV. I've been able to represent my country in two World Cups and recently the 2008 Olympics. It paid for my education, allowing me to



1. Brittany Timko with the Canadian National Team. (CanadaSoccer.Com/
Tony Quinn.)

attend the University of Nebraska–Lincoln on an athletic scholarship. Soccer has allowed me to travel the world, competing against other countries, and has also allowed me to live and experience different cultures. And although it seemed unrealistic at the time, soccer has allowed me to play professionally. After graduating, I participated in the first year of the Australian W-League and saw

firsthand the potential that the league has to grow over the coming years. From Australia I went to Sweden, where the league is already one of the best in the world and will undoubtedly continue to flourish. Then my travels took me to Germany's top competitive league, as the country builds toward the 2011 World Cup as host.

Looking forward, I think that Sepp Blatter was correct when he stated that "the future of football is feminine." The passion and excitement that girls have to play soccer is continuing to grow. It is now realistic to dream of playing professionally. And finally, we are given the opportunities to show the world that we can play the beautiful game too.

Beyond Bend It Like Beckham brings to life examples of women who have gone through highs and lows to achieve their dreams. It also shows us how far women's soccer has come through the years and more importantly, that the sky is the limit in terms of how far it can go.

Acknowledgments

This book celebrates the amazing journey of girls' and women's soccer, focusing on why the sport has become the number 1 sport for females globally and a vehicle for societal change.

I'd like to thank Robert Taylor and his publishing team at the University of Nebraska Press, especially editorial assistant Courtney Ochsner, for their excellent guidance, effort, and belief in the project; my wife, April, for her poignant suggestions on the manuscripts; my daughter, Arianna, for her photographic ideas; and Dan Lauletta, a freelance writer and womensprosoccer.com columnist, for his review of the WUSA and WPS chapters.

I am indebted to Chris Vaughn Griffiths of *World Football Pages of Canada*, who brought me into the soccer journalism realm; John Turnbull of TheGlobalGame.com, and David Fleenor of Soccer365.com, for their continued support of my articles on women's soccer.

Special mention for their assistance in numerous ways over the years must go to Rob Penner, the director of communications of Women's Professional Soccer; Richard Scott, media officer of Canada Soccer; David Applegate in communications at U.S. Soccer; Dan Courtemanche at Major League Soccer (ex-WUSA); the Equalizer soccer website founder, Jeff Kassouf; and the superb soccer correspondent Scott French.

This book is a testament to the passion and commitment of women soccer players, coaches, and administrators around the

world. There's not enough space to thank all those who so freely gave of their time. Their stories were always enjoyable and edifying, but I would like to single out some who were instrumental in shaping this book (in alphabetic order): Tonya Antonucci, Melissa Barbieri, Eleni Benson, Shek Borkowski, Ian Bridge, Josee Busilacchi, Ann Chiejine, Marilyn Childress, Dr. Bob Contigulia, Leo Cuellar, Tonny Dijkhuizen, Dr. Sahar El-Hawary, Mary Harvey, Emma Hayes, Jeff Hopkins, Monica Jorge, Tanya Kalivas, Dalton Kaufmann, Noel King, Daniel Lato, Melissa Lesage, Jill Loyden, Aivi Luik, Anton Maksimov, Laura Pappano, Even Pellerud, Anna Picarelli, Ben Popoola, Katie Ratican, Jennifer Rottenberg, Monika Staab, Brittany Timko, Tim Ward, Tiffany Weimer, Kacey White, and Joao Maria Xavier.

College head coaches Kevin Boyd at Arizona State and Brad Evans at the University of Toledo always shared ideas and contacts with players all over the world. FC Indiana head coach Shek Borkowski and general manager Anton Maksimov, now with the LTA Agency, allowed me to closely follow FC Indiana for years and tap into the team's unbelievable source of international players. Arizona Rush (Tucson) WPSL team coaches and directors Dalton Kaufman and Chris Sydney have openly and perceptively shared their approach to building a top-level women's franchise. Kinsley Nyce has been a constant soccer traveler with me for years. Thanks to Brittany Timko for agreeing to share her story of "living the dream."

Introduction

This book examines why soccer has become the most popular team sport for women and girls, not just in North America but globally as well. This process has taken only a few decades, which is shocking since some countries like Brazil and Germany even banned the sport in the 1960s and 1970s. Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the sport's governing body, determined through its Big Count global survey of participants that 26 million women played the sport in 2006; this is 10 percent of the estimated 265 million total players. Four million women and girls registered with a FIFA member for an organized team, an increase of 54 percent since the previous survey in 2000. Millions around the world watch the Women's World Cup every four years. Nowhere do so many girls and women play the game as in the United States, whose 1.6 million registered players are more than the sum total of the fourteen nations who rank behind it. Women's soccer has brought new energy, ideas, opportunities, and fans to the sport. In the United States it is the biggest women's college sport. In Canada, fully a third of all players are female, the highest percentage of any country or territory in the world, contributing to soccer eclipsing hockey as the most popular game among Canadian youth. How did women's soccer grow so quickly? What obstacles did it overcome, what problems does it still face, and what does the future hold?

Part 1 examines the history of the sport in the United States. The

United States was a late adopter of soccer, a solid decade behind the major Western European markets. However, the combination of federal legislation aimed at equal spending in colleges by gender (Title IX), along with the discovery by parents that soccer was an inexpensive, safe, healthy, and socially beneficial activity for children of both sexes, led to an explosion in the sport's numbers. Women's soccer electrified the country in the United States during the 1999 Women's World Cup, bringing unheard of publicity and attention. The result was unfathomable even months before; a national poll conducted in 2007 found that 48 percent of Americans knew who three-time FIFA World Player of the year Mia Hamm was, but only 9 percent could identify Landon Donovan — the top American-born male player—and Hamm had been retired *for three years*.

The two attempts to professionalize the sport in the United States, via the Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA) from 2001 to 2003 and Women's Professional Soccer (WPS) starting in 2009, have ramifications for players' career choices, marketing, other women's professional sports enterprises, and the growth of national team programs. This book explores why players postpone their careers, additional education, marriage, and children to “live the dream,” even when salaries are far below what they would make in other professions.

Part 2 looks at the sport internationally, particularly how it struggles to gain a foothold in some countries since it defies perceptions of traditional roles for women. We will focus on the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Then we look specifically at perceptions of women athletes, including sexual portrayals, which frequently are excused under the guise of “marketing the game.” We look at lingering definitions of how women should play the game, which are discriminatory and different from those for men.

Part 3 covers different ways in which the national teams and leagues have expanded around the world. We will look at why North American athletes are going abroad to play for clubs and the national teams of their parents and grandparents. Some countries

have done a better job than others in leveraging their diaspora for long-term growth at home. We then turn attention to the pressing need of a number of countries to establish national leagues for their top athletes (whether completely amateur, semiprofessional, or professional setups.) We will look at how a number of countries have approached the issue, including Australia, England, the Netherlands, Russia, and Sweden. We then explore how Canada leveraged a rich vein of youth players to turn around a national team program that was floundering from a lack of support and direction.

The conclusion discusses the biggest problems facing the expansion of the sport globally and presents some future hopes for the sport.

The book's title refers to Gurinder Chadha's independent film *Bend It Like Beckham*, which featured two soccer-mad teenage girls in England (one with traditional Sikh parents) who defy family and social pressures to play the game at a high level. The movie was a surprise success in the United States when released in spring 2003, grossing \$43 million by the end of the year. *Bend It Like Beckham* treated soccer, and particularly women's soccer, with respect, arguably a first for the sport in North America, where previous movies showed the sport in an unrealistic or condescending fashion.

Beyond *Bend It Like Beckham*

[Buy the Book](#)

ONE

Rapid Growth in the United States

Title IX, Soccer Moms, and Pioneering Players

Today, all over the United States, soccer is seen as a “normal” sport for girls to play. You see them playing in television advertisements, in movies, and on television shows; there’s no shame or shock in the activity. You see them in their uniforms in restaurants and shopping malls. For a high school girl, it is one of the most popular sports to play and has the additional carrot of there being a significant number of college scholarships available. In short, it is a very common activity for American girls.

Things were very different four decades ago. The year 1972 is seen as a watershed for all women’s sports, because Title IX was passed into law that year. Title IX of the Education Amendments Act was a federal ruling mandating gender equity in athletic opportunities for colleges that received federal funds. Sporting equality was hardly the focal point of the legislation, but its effects proved far reaching. Since both private and public universities and colleges received government funding, they had to adjust their athletic budgets in proportion to the ratio of male and female athletes and, as one writer penned, “The edict developed into perhaps the most contentious issue in the history of college sports.” Further guidelines in 1993 required that the male–female ratio of participants reflect the university’s total enrollment, and not just a school’s athletes. Though this was not the intent, detractors have long blamed Title IX for any reductions in funding for male teams.

Starting the Sport

In the early seventies when Title IX came into effect, women simply didn't play the sport of soccer in any significant numbers. Some girls played it on rare occasion, perhaps as a PE activity at school, but that ended before high school. Formalized training or coaching was nonexistent. Team sports for women were limited to field hockey, softball, volleyball, and some basketball. You didn't see boys playing soccer very often either outside of heavily ethnic centers. Many people didn't know what soccer was and those that did heaped scorn on it. A neighbor of mine summed up the general mindset when he declared it was "a sport played by f#*&ing foreigners." A major event like a World Cup was available for viewing in the 1970s only via Closed Circuit in theaters or arenas, and then just in large cities. PBS had some German soccer on TV, but you had a better chance of seeing a UFO than a full soccer game on television forty years ago.

Women's college soccer was played at only a handful of colleges during the seventies, beginning as club soccer at a few schools in the northeastern states. Matches were generally a glorified version of kickball. In 1977 Phil Pincince started the first varsity women's college team at Brown University. He had a few experienced players, some good athletes from other sports such as tennis, and some who were new to sports. In addition to building a team, he had to build a schedule with other colleges that were starting programs in his area, including Ontario's Lake Champlain College, which had had a team for a few years and gave Brown their only loss that first year. By the following season, the Ivy League had enough teams to hold a championship at Brown that included Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. In 1979 Brown hosted the first Eastern Regional Championships.

The Northeast had always been where the majority of schools with women's programs were centered. That changed in 1980 when Anson Dorrance, already coaching the men's college team at the University of North Carolina, started a women's program at the bequest of his athletic director. After his first season, Dorrance

wanted a national championship for the sport. With fewer than fifty college teams in the United States, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) wasn't yet an option, as it required at least eighty participating teams for a championship, so the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women sanctioned the first intercollegiate championship in 1981, which North Carolina won. The NCAA got on board in 1982 with a championship tournament, and Dorrance's team won the first three NCAA championships and seven of the first eight to close the first full decade of women's intercollegiate soccer.

Title IX dovetailed with Baby Boomer parents discovering that soccer was a fun, relatively safe sport that their children could start as young as age four. It was a game that *anyone* could play—football required greater bulk, basketball skewed towards taller players, and track and tennis needed exceptional speed—soccer was accessible to any average athlete; and *anyone* meant girls as well as boys. The result: now you can even find soccer leagues for people in wheelchairs and little people (under four-foot-ten). Soccer became the favorite sport of young families, plus it had low entry costs—all you needed to start was a ball, shin guards, and some soccer shoes—it was the ultimate egalitarian sport. Women who carted their kids to games for years in minivans even became a targeted demographic by political parties and marketers during the nineties—*Soccer Moms*. The combination of the federal legislation and the discovery of a new recreational activity for children resulted in an explosion of youth clubs, high school programs, and fully funded college teams that actively sought women players. Pele's arrival in 1975 to play for the New York Cosmos of the North American Soccer League (NASL) helped to popularize the sport, along with the United States hosting the Men's World Cup in 1994 and the launch of another pro league in 1996 (Major League Soccer, which replaced the NASL, which had folded in 1984 after eighteen seasons). These events all helped to diffuse the sport of its "ethnic" baggage, but it was largely the tremendous growth of youth soccer that helped to end that stigma. It became *the* sport

of suburbia; *Washington Post* columnist Steve Twomey labeled it “the game that ate suburbia.”

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, youth leagues blossomed. Young girls would begin by playing with boys, but by age seven or eight parents would start looking for leagues for girls only, sometimes having to start them with a few other parents. Experienced coaches from overseas started to run clinics for girls, include them in camps, and launch elite girls’ teams. Parents even hired experienced pros by the hour to work with their children a couple of times a week—all tax free with no records kept, of course. Studies have shown that girls who participate in sports have higher self esteem, are more likely to graduate from high school, and are less likely to become pregnant, which is an answer to parents’ prayers. Sports encourage girls to work as a team and develop skills, and reinforces their enthusiasm for healthy activities.

There were an estimated 18 million soccer players in the United States in 2007, half of whom were females, with an average age of fifteen. Participation in girls’ youth soccer has doubled over the past decade, while youth participation in all other sports has dropped. It’s the same story at the high school level, where participation in women’s sports like basketball and volleyball has leveled off, while the percentage of girls who play soccer has increased significantly. In 1972, twenty-eight high schools in the entire country had girls’ teams, but as of this writing, it’s eight thousand. The number of elite female players rose from 700 in 1972 to 290,000 today. There are now three times more female soccer players in the United States than there are Girl Scouts. The numbers of girls pouring into youth programs tipped the scales in terms of money and influence for the sport. The growth of boys’ soccer was significant, but when you added the girls, it overwhelmed everything: the availability of coaches, leagues, and existing fields. The first two could be overcome with volunteer parents, at least during a child’s early years, while later on Boomer parents became a force, lobbying civic authorities for more dedicated soccer parks. Soccer-only fields were unheard of before 1990 except for a few privately held fields that

ethnic clubs owned. These social networks of parents were good at organizing, learned quickly that their numbers provided political clout, and were doing it for the best reason of all—their children. There are currently over 100 dedicated soccer complexes in the country with 150 more planned in the next few years, which has further helped to establish soccer as an “American sport.”

In the meantime, colleges, trying to keep out of the Title IX legislative dragnet, crunched numbers and found that soccer’s low equipment costs combined with squads of twenty would appreciably help their gender balance numbers. The number of NCAA schools that added women’s programs was staggering, rising from 80 in 1981–82 to 951 in 2007–8. The most rapid growth came during the 1990s; in ten years the number of women’s Division I programs tripled while men’s growth was relatively flat. Just in 1995–96 alone, over 115 new women’s teams were fielded over the previous academic year. In 1997 women’s programs outnumbered men’s programs in Division I for the first time. In 2007 there were 307 Division I women’s soccer programs and a total of 951 in all divisions. Today, there are more women playing soccer in college than any other sport (see table 1 in the appendix).

The few top-shelf women’s programs of the late 1980s and early 1990s, notably Anson Dorrance’s University of North Carolina teams but also the University of Portland, the University of Virginia, Santa Clara University, and Colorado College, began to face competition in the later nineties. What was most astounding was the number of schools that were adding women’s programs that didn’t even field a men’s side, including the University of Nebraska, Purdue University, Louisiana State University, Arizona State University, and Florida State University. The explosion of youth soccer meant that there were so many quality players emerging that new programs could compete almost immediately. This was unrealistic in other sports, where it took years to build a dominant program. Of course, to qualify for the playoffs within the first few years, an administration had to provide sufficient support and uncover a clever coach who could leverage the university’s other benefits in recruiting,

while constructing a strong unit. The best example was the University of Florida, which, led by future U.S. National Team stars Danielle Fotopoulos, Heather Mitts, and Abby Wambach, captured the 1998 NCAA Division I title in only the team's fourth year of existence. Even more enlightening, their coach was a woman. Their success spurred other schools to invest in women's soccer, through providing the maximum number of scholarships (currently fourteen) but also by supplying dedicated stadiums and training fields. This contrasts sharply with the men's teams, who work with a maximum limit of nine-and-nine-tenths full rides, and some schools only provide a few partial scholarships or have even disbanded their men's programs (such as Illinois State and Central Michigan Universities) while still supporting the distaff side. Certainly some of this was due to Title IX compliance, but some men's coaches have blamed women for all of their woes. The coach of BYU's men's club team complained, "It's fair to say gender equity has hurt the development of men's soccer in the U.S."

The easy counterargument is this: how can something be hurt that for the most part has been in a stupor for nigh on thirty years? Freeing a heavy-duty truck from quicksand is easier than turning men's college soccer around. Men's programs struggle to figure out what their mission is to players, the school, and fans; that hasn't changed for decades. Men's college soccer has been damaged significantly by the NCAA steadfastly operating outside FIFA, tampering with rules such as multiple substitutions, and focusing more on recreational than elite player development. Top quality players now skip college for the pros, but for women, you get to national teams and the pros through college soccer. College soccer became a target for the top women athletes to continue their sport after high school; the image of coaches dangling the golden ticket of a college scholarship at youth tournaments played well with parents, who were all too happy to munch. Many didn't stop to crunch the numbers; out of six hundred thousand high school players, there are only about ten thousand full-tuition scholarships in soccer for both genders, with



2. Macke Mutz of the University of Arizona performing the acrobatic flip-throw in. (Luke Adams, University of Arizona Athletics.)

women accounting for 60 percent of those. Parents responded to the stories like “Cathy’s friend’s daughter across town got a full ride to Stanford,” which encouraged them to spend more on elite clubs, coaches, tournament travel, and equipment. The colleges capitalized on the growing number of youth players, which in turn helped to attract more new players to soccer. Women injected new energy into the sport at all levels. Many colleges correctly read their tea leaves; women’s soccer was hot. The 1999 Women’s World Cup (WWC) success in America simply validated their strategy and made them look like clairvoyant geniuses.

A side benefit of the growth of women’s soccer is that it has provided women another avenue to stay associated with the game through coaching. As colleges added teams, they turned to experienced women players to coach, some of whom were the first beneficiaries of the government’s mandate. Some were ex-national team

players, while others combined coaching with a professional career. Some still in their mid-twenties were appointed to head coaching slots, even at major universities. UNC graduate Lori Walker was appointed as head coach of the new University of Kansas program in 1995 at age twenty-four, and her schoolmate Angela Kelly started at the University of Tennessee at twenty-five. U.S. National Team forward Lindsay Tarpley, a former UNC player and now in Women's Professional Soccer (WPS), when asked in college what she wanted to do after her soccer career, said, "I'm majoring in communications and mentoring in exercise science. But I'd really like to coach and be able to train [for the National Team]. I'd love to coach at the college level."

As colleges added programs and scholarships, they started to attract top international athletes. Women from Germany, France, Italy, and Scandinavia came to America to further their education both in the classroom and on the soccer field. Another important difference is that women didn't have to fight against an established dominant sport for players like the men did with football. All women's sports expanded thanks to Title IX.

Launch of the United States Women's National Team

In 1985 U.S. women were invited to play their first match as a women's national team in Italy as part of an international tournament. They lost three games and tied one after only three days of practices and were forced to wear hand-me-down men's uniforms. Italy, Sweden, and Norway had formed women's national teams a decade or more before the Americans. U.S. Soccer realized they had to arrest the gap in ability if they were serious about competing. The first women's coach, part-timer Mike Ryan, made way for Anson Dorrance; but even the dominant women's college soccer coach was still forced to lobby the U.S. Soccer Federation for the job in 1986. Many viewed Dorrance as arrogant, but no one could deny his record (by this time, he had won four national team titles at UNC; his team was virtually unstoppable). Longtime U.S. Soccer Women's National Team Media Chief Aaron Heifetz called

Dorrance “the Christopher Columbus of his sport,” and continued, “Anson had vision and he was always ahead of the game. He figured out this women’s soccer thing way before anyone else. He got a head start on everybody.” Dorrance made the switch to the women’s game years before his colleagues because he was able to look at the big picture. The men’s game on the national level was “an old boy’s network,” and at that point seemed light years away from qualifying for a Men’s World Cup spot. There was little room to grow. The women’s game was less established but with unlimited potential, and once he accepted the women’s national team coaching job, there was never any question which way Dorrance had plotted his future. Three years later, in 1989, he resigned from the North Carolina men’s team and took over the women’s team full time. Dorrance said, “I saw women’s soccer in America as a sleeping giant, and my goal was to wake it up. I don’t think UNC alone started the boom, but I do think we were a beacon for it, because we didn’t want to just win, we wanted to win attractively.”

Dorrance’s U.S. team won their first tournament title in 1986 in Blaine, Minnesota, in a triangular event with Canada and Norway. He brought the same unique approach to the national team that he had with the Tar Heels. He escalated the level of competitiveness in practice sessions and in games, which had not previously been a prevalent theme with women’s teams. He would keep track of who won individual drills in practices, sprint races, and the like, and he stressed conditioning. Dorrance created what he liked to call “a competitive cauldron” to build soccer excellence. He demanded the same commitment he had from his men’s team. However, he felt that men’s and women’s teams had to be coached differently, stressing that “different doesn’t mean unequal. It just means different.” Tim Crothers, who wrote a biography of the coach and knew him for many years, quoted Dorrance on the differences of coaching men versus women:

To coach men, you’ve got to dominate them, drive them with the intensity of your personality and walking up and down

the sidelines, burying them always seems to get them going. I always wanted to rail at my women the same way, but while it made me feel good, I learned they weren't going to hear a thing. I could vent my spleen and have a heart attack, but it's not going to make them better players. You don't drive women, you lead them, and you don't lead them effectively with intimidation. You relate to them personally. You lead them by caring about them. Women have to understand that your relationship with them is never in jeopardy.

Dorrance found that he enjoyed coaching women more than men: "Women are easier to coach than men because they listen to criticism, but they're difficult to manage because most are sensitive to slights, and their bond is stronger than on a men's team. Therefore, when you bench a female player, her teammates feel empathy. They experience a debilitating catharsis towards that player and it affects them, whether the benched girl gives a damn or not." Dorrance's successor as national team coach, Tony DiCicco, echoed his predecessor's thinking when he said,

It takes subtlety to coach girls, and humanity. To girls, the coach is a member of the team, or not. They will choose their own hierarchy, their own leaders, and sometimes it's not the players a coach might expect based on his or her objective assessment. That's the first thing you have to figure out. Who have they chosen? You have to coach the team through the team, through their leaders. It's very humbling for a coach and, I think, it's been good for the game. We're now seeing that leadership style take hold everywhere—and not just in soccer. . . . I think that's what women's soccer has brought to the world of sports. Emotional honesty, the sense that we're all in this together, and that the coach doesn't have all the answers. He or she is still the boss, there should never be any doubt about that, but the team bears the first responsibility for its fate, and the coach is part of the team.

Dorrance's approach was the antithesis of a recreational sports culture that held back competition for women because achieving success might come at the expense of being liked, so winning wasn't all that important. To Anson Dorrance, soccer was serious business, and if you weren't on board, then you could find another sport or college.

Dorrance also had an uncanny eye for talent, spotting Julie Foudy, Kristine Lilly, and Mia Hamm when they were fifteen- to sixteen-years-of-age and teamed them with Brandi Chastain, Joy Biefeld-Fawcett, and former UNC players Carla Werden-Overbeck and April Heinrichs (who would later coach the team to the 2004 Olympic Gold Medal). Within five years he had built a team that could compete with the world's elite at the first Women's World Championship in China in late 1991.

For the players, competing at the top level after college was extremely difficult. There were no salaries to speak of; they only received per-diem expenses when they were at a team camp or game. They worked part-time jobs, because regular jobs wouldn't hold a position for them while they were away. They lived at home or shared rooms with friends, sometimes even sharing a bed. Social lives were secondary to pursuing their sport; some even put off marriage and starting families. They had to practice on their own for long periods of time. Lauren Gregg, the team's assistant and a former player said, "It was hard. It reinforced for us that we weren't playing just because people were watching or because we were being paid a lot of money." Finally, in 1991, U.S. Soccer paid for a three-week training camp, common for men but new for women, before the regional qualifying tournament. The regional championships were held in Haiti, where the U.S. women won their way through to the World Championships from a weak group, scoring at least ten goals each against Mexico, Martinique, Trinidad and Tobago, and Haiti before cinching their spot with a 5-0 win over Canada in the final.

Dorrance was still concerned that the team was not quite at the level of the Scandinavians and Italians, so they traveled exten-

sively before the World Championships in 1991, playing games in Bulgaria, China, Denmark, France, Germany, and Holland, as well as four games at home along the eastern seaboard. As it turned out, the U.S. team was rampant in China, going undefeated in six games. In the first round, they struggled in the opener against Sweden before coming out on top 3–2, then beat Brazil 5–0 and Japan 3–0. They blasted Taiwan 7–0 in the quarterfinals, topped Germany 5–2 in the semifinals, and then became World Champions on a late Michelle Akers goal against Norway, their most dangerous competitor in the tournament. Akers led the tournament with ten goals, followed by Carin Jennings (six) and Heinrichs (four)—the aptly named “triple edged sword.” Akers won top scorer (Golden Shoe award), and Jennings was deemed the tournament’s best player (Golden Ball award). Mia Hamm scored two goals as a seventeen-year-old, the same number she would score in each of the subsequent three World Cups during her illustrious career. The women loved their time in China; they played in front of enthusiastic crowds, including 65,000 for the final in Guangzhou. The tourney had an incredible average of 43,235 spectators per match (most as doubleheaders.)

The American women were world champions in soccer; the year before, the men had qualified for their first World Cup tournament in forty years. However, back home only family and a tiny number of fans were aware of the tournament and the significance of their win in China. Bora Milutinovic, the coach of the U.S. men’s team, led about a dozen people to JFK airport in New York to meet the squad when they returned from Asia. Michelle Akers reflected back on the event: “We’d gone through this incredible experience, played our hearts out, achieved this incredible thing, and we come home and it’s like the ‘Twilight Zone.’ Nobody knew what was going on. I didn’t quite know what to expect. We’d received a lot of attention from the international media, but nobody from the States was interested. It was kind of my introduction to how long a road women’s soccer really had to go.”

In the years between the first two World Cups, the team played

only twice in 1992 but then seventeen times in 1993, thirteen in 1994, and fourteen in 1995. About 40 percent of these games were at home, with most drawing in the three- to six-thousand range. In 1994 Dorrance stepped down as coach to return to the Tar Heels full time, replaced by Tony DiCicco, his assistant since 1991. Dorrance is still the women's head coach at UNC, and in 2009 had won twenty NCAA titles in twenty-seven seasons, finishing second on three occasions. Dorrance remains an iconic figure for the development of the women's game. Aaron Heifetz summed up his impact when he said, "Anson's made soccer hip. A teenage women's soccer player is a cool thing to be. Soccer players are the most popular girls, the prettiest girls, the most social, the most athletic; and all of that started in Chapel Hill. Our sport needed a Chicago Bulls and that was UNC, and we needed a Michael Jordan and that was Mia Hamm. Anson created all that."

Before the 2005 World Cup in Sweden, U.S. Soccer provided a six-month residency training camp in Florida with pay and, though the salaries were at subsistence levels, with it the players had more stability in their personal lives than ever before. The Swedish tournament itself was a very low-key affair with an average attendance of 4,316 a game, far below what China achieved. Everything about this event had a dampening influence: the weather was cold and rainy, the crowds were tiny and largely unenthusiastic, and the U.S. team played below expectations. The United States had lost key players Jennings and Heinrichs through retirement. The positive news was ESPN's decision to broadcast all of the American's games live. Again, Norway and the United States were the class of the tournament, but Norwegian coach Even Pellerud (later the successful women's coach of Canada) and his squad won out, defeating the United States 1-0 in a hard-fought semifinal. After the game, the Norwegians replicated the New Zealand rugby team's celebratory crawl on the field in which each player grabbed the ankles of the woman in front of her and scooted on her knees. Bizarre as it was, it steamed the Americans and provided constant motivation in their battles with the Norwegians for years to come. Norway

won the title in a 2–0 win over Germany while the United States eclipsed China by the same score for third.

Star forward Tiffeny Milbrett said, “It wasn’t our tournament to win. I really believe that. I think Norway was a better team than we were. I see ’95 as part of this team’s evolution, I think it was necessary to lose that tournament in order to solve some problems, work some things out. Everybody needed to go through a soul check, a gut check, a heart check. Had we won, I don’t believe we would have won the Olympics in 1996.” The 1995 World Cup experience thus became an inspiration to step up their individual and team preparation for what would follow; the 1996 Olympics and the 1999 World Cup. During the second half of the decade, the national team members would receive unprecedented attention for female athletes; the speed at which that happened would take *everyone* by surprise and would forever change the landscape for not only women’s soccer but the game of soccer in general, as well as all of women’s sports.