

# The Women In Sports

## Special Interest Group

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### COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

#### ***Why Women In Sports***

In wanting to promote continued discussion, research, and collaboration regarding issues of gender equality, female body satisfaction, as well as the professional woman's experience in both research and practice within the field of exercise and sport psychology, I noticed there was no specific AASP special interest group to address these issues - thus Women In Sports (WIS) was born.

I would like WIS to serve as a platform to introduce, discuss, and debate issues currently impacting women's participation in sports and workings within professional practice and research, as well as the promotion of healthy behaviors and body satisfaction amongst female athletes. Also, through the active collaboration of our members, the spirit of mentorship, education, and collaboration will be promoted. Lastly, my hopes are that the activity of this SIG sparks conversation, debate, and insight. Thank you all for your membership and support!

Leeja Carter, Women In Sports SIG Coordinator

# The Women In Sports

Special Interest Group

## SIG ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hello Hawaii!

WIS Symposium AASP

The Women In Sports special interest group is in its infancy, and as many new interest groups WIS has seen drastic changes since it's start in January of this year. First, I would like to announce our first SIG-sponsored symposium presentation at AASP in Hawaii titled: "Women Leaders in Sport" presented by Moe Machida, Angela Coppola, Erika Carlson, Michele Kerulis, and Leeja Carter (chair). Below is an excerpt of the submitted abstract:

*A key purpose of the "Women in Sports" special interest group (SIG) is to promote research and practice within the areas of gender equality in sport, particularly, the representation of women in leadership positions. This symposium provides both theoretical and applied methodological reports discussing leadership qualities, skills, and strategies that can cultivate positive leadership behaviors in women and increased representation of women in leadership positions.*

Nominations for Women In  
The Spotlight Q & A

I would like to invite members of the SIG to nominate a professional women to be featured in our Women In The Spotlight section; the Women in the Spotlight column features women who are leaders in the field of sport psychology. This column will include women in applied practice, academics, coaching, and research and provides the opportunity for women to demonstrate how they use their skills to move our profession forward.

Nominations for Students  
Corner Q & A

To highlight the daily research and practice conducted within the AASP community by AASP student members, the Students' Corner is designed to spotlight female undergraduate and graduate AASP student members displaying exceptional work within the field of exercise and sport psychology. WIS invites it's members to submit proposals of female students that are

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currently working to promote the interests of women (through research or practice) and/or exemplify leadership qualities.

#### Mentorship Network

In order to promote the collaboration between professional and student women of AASP within the field of exercise and sport psychology, WIS has developed a mentorship network; this network will serve WIS members who seek a mentor as well as those who are interested in mentoring WIS members. Those interested in getting involved or to inquire about more information are asked to contact Leeja Carter at: [lmcarter@temple.edu](mailto:lmcarter@temple.edu).

#### Article Submissions for the Fall/Winter Newsletter

The *Women in Sports* SIG is looking for contributions to our newsletter! The *Women in Sports* SIG newsletter is published twice a year (Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter). Unsolicited contributions from members are welcomed and must be relevant to the

issues concerning the purpose of the *women in sports* SIG. Additionally, contributions should not have been published elsewhere. All submissions should be sent to the Editor, Leeja Carter at ([womensportsig@gmail.com](mailto:womensportsig@gmail.com)), and be received by April 15th for the Spring/Summer issue (published June 1st) and October 15th for the Fall/Winter issue (distributed December 1st). Authors should ensure that their manuscripts comply with all APA publication and ethical guidelines.

#### Have Comments to the Articles?

Would you like to submit a response or comment to any of the newsletter's articles? Send your comments to: [womensportsig@gmail.com](mailto:womensportsig@gmail.com)

# The Women In Sports

## Special Interest Group



*The Women in Sports SIG will maintain a position that works to promote research and practice within the areas of gender equality in sport, perception of female sport participation, promotion of female sport participation, and promotion of healthy behaviors and body satisfaction (e.g., self-esteem, positive body image, etc.) within adult and youth, female sport participants.*

## About The Coordinator



Leeja Carter an instructor of psychology at Rutgers University, Camden campus, and a Psychology of Human Movement Ph.D. student at Temple University. She has a Bachelor's and Masters degree in Psychology from Fairleigh Dickinson University with thesis concentration in sport psychology. Leeja is an advocate for disability sports promotion, woman's sports and equality, as well as multiculturalism in sports and research. Her research interests focus on understanding the multifaceted components that affect an athlete's ability to become fully emerged in their competitive performance; such emersion is known as "Flow". Previous research explored mechanisms of optimal performance in athletes with additional applied interests involving the examination of anxiety, aggression, and arousal within athletes and performers.

# Contributors



Michele Kerulis

Michele is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) and a Certified Consultant through the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (CC-AASP). Michele is a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education and Supervision at Northern Illinois University. Michele currently directs a sport and health psychology master's program in Chicago. Her research interests include health, fitness, and wellness.

Angela recently graduated with a M.S. in Sport Studies from Miami University of Ohio and will be pursuing a Ph.D. in Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta in the fall of 2011. Her current research interests include perceptions of body image in sport and the communication of sporting body ideals. Angela's career goal is to be a college professor.



Angela Coppola



Kisha Grady

Kisha possesses a Masters of Science in Psychology of Human Movement from Temple University and is a Performance Enhancement Specialist/Wellness Coach. Ms. Grady is a certified pilates instructor whereby she uses exercise techniques as a platform to help her clients create a healthy body, mind, and lifestyle. Currently, she is working towards becoming a Certified Consultant with the Association for Applied Sport Psychology.



## Increasing the Percentage of Female Coaches - What does the NCAA Have to Offer Women?

By: Angela Coppola

The percentage of female college coaches in the United States (U.S.) is at an all time low (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010). According to Acosta and Carpenter (2010), from 1978 to 2010, the percentage of females in collegiate coaching has dropped from 58.25% to 42.6%, whereas in 1972, the percentage of women coaches was over 90.0%. Seminars and mentorship programs for women have been previously suggested in order to increase female coach participation (Marshall, 2001; Demers, 2007).

In fact, coaching programs may increase perceptions of social support and coach confidence. In 2002, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) sponsored the Women Coaches Academy to support and retain female college coaches. Now an official NCAA program, the Women Coaches Academy has over 700 graduates. Additional NCAA initiatives are developing to increase coach support and the number of females in athletics. This article will discuss the potential of coaching seminars and mentorship programs as well as the development of NCAA coaching initiatives addressing the issue of the decline in female participation.

Coaching satisfaction is a main component of attracting and retaining female coaches. Some important factors influencing coach participation include support of women's athletic programs from administration, location, and salary and

perks (NCAA Gender Equity: Perceived Barriers Report, 2009). A study examining coach participation explored female Canadian university athletes' and coaches' perceptions of the female coach profession and ideas that could increase the support of women coaches (Demers, 2007). The women suggested that adequate training and supervision be provided to female coaches and enhancing skill and ability would contribute to increased involvement in coaching. These findings may be extended to female coaches in the U.S.; as skill development in general is more of a self-focused and controllable factor that may contribute to perceptions of coaching efficacy.

Coaching efficacy can be described as the belief that coaches have the ability to positively affect the learning and performance of their athletes (Feltz, Chase, Moritz, & Sullivan, 1999). Enhancing coach efficacy is an integral part in increasing coach satisfaction and participation. Further, perceived social support from parents and the community, for instance, may contribute to coaching efficacy, particularly in females (Myers, Vargas-Tonsing, & Feltz, 2005). Although these findings may not be entirely generalized to all female college coaches, the NCAA Women Coaches Academy in the United States has successfully targeted similar factors, such as knowledge or preparation and coaching development, to enhance coaching knowledge, skill, and support.

The NCAA Women Coaches Academy (WCA) aims to develop, retain, and mentor female coaches (C. Slater, personal communication, April 11, 2010). Since the first academy in 2003, over 700 female coaches from different sports and division levels have participated. The program is available to both head and assistant coaches. In five days, instructors from various backgrounds, such as coaching, administration, and business, teach courses on management skills, communication strategies, and philosophies of coaching.

Essentially, the WCA provides a support system for female coaches who have limited knowledge of Title IX requirements or are not very comfortable applying for positions, recruiting, or fundraising. In fact, the retention rate of WCA graduates in coaching and college athletics is approximately 90%. Realizing that a support system in female coaching is important, graduates from the WCA created a mentorship-centered organization of female coaches called the Alliance of Women Coaches. The Alliance of Women Coaches maintains a goal to increase the number women in coaching at all levels and diversity of female college coaches. The benefits of the Alliance of Women Coaches include opportunities for collaboration with other coaches and associations.

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[womensportsig@gmail.com](mailto:womensportsig@gmail.com)

Networking is valuable for both coaches and graduate students considering collegiate coaching as a career as women athletes aspiring to be coaches should be afforded the opportunity to gain knowledge and experience sooner than later. The NCAA Winning Careers Program encourages women undergraduates to enter the field of athletics. The objective of the program is for female-student athletes to develop an interest in the profession of coaching as well as other potential career paths available to women in athletics, such as athletic administration. Participants are introduced to some of the pioneers of women's athletics and offered insight into several different careers. Moreover, the program sessions provide women with networking and mentoring opportunities.

The decline in the percentage of female coaches in college sports over the past few decades is a concern. Coaching academies and

alliances, such as the NCAA Women Coaches Academy, Winning Careers Program, and Alliance of Women Coaches, are striving to support, mentor, and retain females in coaching and athletics.

"Further, perceived social support from parents and the community, for instance, may contribute to coaching efficacy, particularly in females"

There is a growing interest in coaching programs; however, increasing the number of academies and participation in coaching alliances are necessary to continue building a support network and, essentially, confidence in female coaches. Further, while it is helpful for student-athletes to attend seminars and network with coaches, coaching experience may also enhance coaching confidence (Gould, Giannini, Krane, & Hodge, 1990). Therefore, it may be beneficial to encourage female student-athletes to intern as a coach assistant. In general, the act of encouraging coaches and athletes to participate in established coaching initiatives as well as spreading awareness of the initiatives are among the essential means to increasing female participation in college athletics.

For more information about the NCAA Women Coaches Academy or the Alliance of Women Coaches, please go to <http://www.coachesacademy.org/ncaa.php>, <http://www.ncaapublications.com>, or contact Celia Slater, [celia@coachesacademy.org](mailto:celia@coachesacademy.org)

#### **Acknowledgements:**

A special thanks goes to Celia Slater, NCAA WCA Executive Director, WinStar Foundation,

for providing me with information about the NCAA initiatives discussed in the article.

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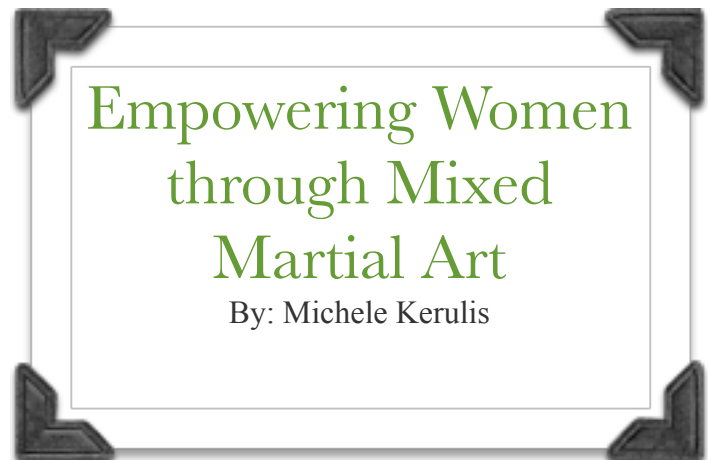
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Women and girls have been fighting for a place in sports for a long time. The introduction of title IX, the Education Amendments Act of 1972, called for the end of gender inequality in school sports and required the same support (opportunities, equipment, scholarships, etc.) for girls' sports as was provided for boys' sports. This resulted in the expansion of athletic programs and college athletic scholarships for women.

Women have come a long way, but there are some battles that seem to remain uphill. There are courageous women who will be sure to make their presence known in the attempts to continue promoting the equality in sports.

One sport where women literally, and figuratively, have been fighting for gender equality is in mixed martial arts (MMA). MMA is a blend of traditional martial arts, resulting in the athletes' abilities to utilize strategy from several different disciplines. MMA requires



enormous physical strength and mental toughness. Many people identify Bruce Lee as the first true mixed martial artist, as he created Jeet Kune Do, “The Way of the Intercepting Fist”, as an art that blends powerful martial arts concepts from many disciplines into one style for mind and body efficiency. Lee encouraged cultural awareness, which includes gender equality.

Participating in martial arts results in increased self-esteem, physical fitness, patience, and the knowledge of how to defend one’s self. Traditionally a male-only sport, women have earned their way into professional leagues. However, the largest MMA league that supported professional women’s bouts, Strike Force, was recently purchased by Forza, LLC, a subsidiary of Zuffa, LLC., the parent company of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC). UFC does not hire women contenders but reported that all Strike Force contracts would be honored (for both men and women).

This raises the question of whether or not women will have to continue struggling for equality within this sport. Scott Koker, the current CEO for Strikeforce, signed a long-term employment agreement with the UFC. Hopefully this means that the women of Strikeforce will remain on the fighting cards – only time will tell.

Two women who are involved in MMA, Christine Sarricola and Elizabeth Nuesser, share their ideas about women’s involvement in MMA. Christine began her involvement in MMA by watching the sport with her dad. Christine said she instantly fell in love with the sport and realized that as she was watching the fights she would be dodging combinations from her couch. Christine recommends MMA to other women as a way to gain physical independence and mental strength. It is also a great way to get in shape, stay fit, and lead a healthy lifestyle. Christine, a fighter with Hackney’s Combat Academy located in Illinois, encourages other women to get involved in the sport: “Speaking as a woman who

[does MMA], it is an amazing sport to be involved with. There should be no such thing as just a man’s sport; it’s 2011 and women are just as capable as men in this sport.”

We love seeing women support each other in sport, and also like to see the support from the women’s families. Elizabeth Nuesser, founder and CEO of Fight Chix apparel (<http://www.fightchix.com>), had a vision of empowering women worldwide. She became involved in MMA through her husband Jake Nuesser, who is certified in Jeet Kun Do. She was drawn to the biographies of the fighters from the TV show *They Ultimate Fighter* because “they fought for their families and sacrificed so much for their dreams – it is very inspiring . . .” Jake mentioned that he is drawn to MMA because of its “combination of effective fighting with athletic performance for the perfect blend of functional fitness and effective martial arts.”



Elizabeth, after being a single mom and being raised with six brothers, developed an eye for talented women, especially those who reside in a “man’s world.” She recognized that the female fighters were just as good, if not technically better, than the males but had to work a lot harder than men to gain recognition in the sport. Elizabeth paid attention to the unheard voices of women in MMA: “I also realized the woman’s

voice was not being heard or if it was we weren't being represented like we should be." Elizabeth wanted to create something that would support women in sports. Together, Elizabeth and Jake have worked hard to develop Fight Chix, which "has transcended mixed martial arts and has become a lifestyle brand for all the women in the world that have overcome struggles to reach their potential. Fight Chix is for the women who will be the future leaders of the world.

Fight Chix is for women who are not afraid of a challenge and meet it head on." Elizabeth believes women should be involved in MMA to increase confidence, relieve stress, and learn a functional skill set that can save one's life. Elizabeth and Jake agree that women in sports, especially in MMA, portray strength, confidence, and the courage for other women to break through barriers to achieve their goals. According to Jake, "Women should not be afraid to try it . . . and when they do they will LOVE it. MMA is so empowering for women because I see them break barriers that they might not have thought possible. Think about it - if you can roll on the ground with a 200lb guy and choke him out - that day job is gonna be pretty damn easy!"

With continued support from organizations like Hackney's Combat Academy and Fight Chix, women will time and again prove that they are deserving to have a place on MMA fight cards. We are all encouraged to continue breaking the barriers and give a voice to athletes and fans of women's mixed martial arts.

Would you like to submit a response or comment to any of the newsletter's articles? Send your comments to:  
[womensportsig@gmail.com](mailto:womensportsig@gmail.com)

## Improving Body Satisfaction in Young Female Athletes

By: JoAnne Barbieri

As young female athletes become more experienced in sports changes can be noticed within their bodies. These can be due to adjustments to the demand of sports, genetic dispositions and natural developmental changes, which can be shown through increases in muscle mass, weight fluctuations and alterations in mood and behavior.

At a young age, athletes strongly value what their peers think of them. Many desire to fit in with certain groups by acting like them, looking like them and wearing similar fashionable clothing. This struggle can greatly affect many dimensions of an athlete's development.

Due to changes and adjustments within their own bodies, young female athletes stand out from what their peers consider to be normal or ideal. This ideal image could be due to media exposure and the portrayal of what is considered to be a normal and accepted body type. Media sources display the ideal body image to be one in which a woman is unnaturally thin (Ferguson, Winegard, & Winegard, 2011). The struggle to fit a certain mold with their peers and with the norm of society can cause young athletes to experience severe body image issues and dissatisfaction with themselves.

Young athletes struggling to fit society's mold for the ideal body put themselves at great risk. This is especially true since it is very

unlikely that an athlete would be able to compete successfully while forcing themselves to achieve body weight or body fat percentage that is severely unnatural.

Research has shown that females who experience body dissatisfaction issues are at a greater risk for developing eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa (Ferguson, et al., 2011). Young athletes who experience these conditions early in their careers are more likely to struggle with other aspects of their lives, including relationships with friends and family, achievements in school, the struggle to maintain a certain body composition and the strive to be perfect (Krane, Waldron, Stiles-ShIPLEY, & Michalenok, 2001).

Providing young female athletes with education and guidance to assist them in improving body satisfaction and promoting healthy body image is important. Starting prevention techniques early in an athlete's career can assist in reducing the likelihood of negative body image, body dissatisfaction and the possibility of developing eating disorders. One way this can be achieved is to increase awareness of positive body image in the beginning of an athlete's involvement in sports (Ferguson, et al., 2011). Learning how to accept and love their body can be a struggle for many, especially if this is addressed later in life.

Those who struggle with body dissatisfaction can suffer with low self-esteem levels and low self-confidence levels. By starting early, young athletes will be able to develop a positive self-image and increase their personal self-worth (Ferguson, et al., 2011).

Another technique involves surrounding the athlete with positive peer influences (Ferguson, et al., 2011). At a young age females are likely to develop emotions and feelings based on what their peers think of them and desire to fit in with the group. Hearing a friend describe themselves as fat, overweight, or not thin enough, could cause an athlete to start to believe the same

things about their own body. Unhealthy relationships in this nature influence a female athlete's body dissatisfaction through unnecessary body comparisons with others (Ferguson, et al., 2011).

Through providing education to young female athletes, such as nutritional information and healthy habit promotion, they will receive valuable information to assist in their overall healthy development (DiBartolo & Shaffer, 2002). Media and social pressures will be present throughout an athlete's lifetime, but by attaining these proactive measures the athlete will be able to cope with the changes and stay positive in regards to healthy body satisfaction. They also will be able to share what they learned with their teammates and peers, helping to enhance healthy body images.

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# Women In The Spotlight

Featuring Women Leaders In The Field of Sport and Exercise Psychology

## Q & A with Dr. Barbara Walker

By: Michele Kerulis

**WIS SIG:** What is your educational background?

**Dr. Walker:** I have a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology with an emphasis in Exercise and Sport Psychology. I am a licensed psychologist and a certified consultant with the Association of Applied Sport Psychology. As a post-doc, I worked in Australia at the Academy of Sport to gain experience with athletes.

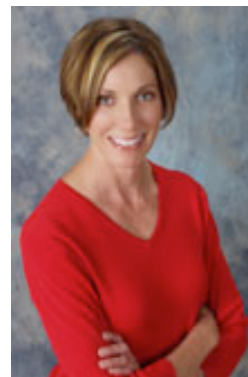
**WIS SIG:** Please describe your current career.

**Dr. Walker:** I work in applied sport psychology every day. I developed the Center for Human Performance 12 years ago and work with people who are between the ages of 8-80. My clients are mostly athletes, but I also work with business executives, individuals, and teams in the Cincinnati area. In addition to my applied work, I am currently working on two books. Because I do applied work all day long, it is hard to set aside time for writing and research. I also teach two undergraduate classes at the University of

Cincinnati (sport psychology and general psychology classes).

**WIS SIG:** What professional activities have you recently engaged in?

**Dr. Walker:** I was on the AASP Ethics and Performance Enhancement Committee for a few years. The association asked me to be a board member as the Professional Division's Head. I oversaw the diversity committee, the ethics committee, and the continuing education committee.



**WIS SIG:** What is the most enjoyable aspect of your career:

**Dr. Walker:** I have the opportunity to meet the most amazing people. They let me into their lives for the moment I work with them. They are incredible; they come to me for help and I love to see people excel, whether it is through a Superbowl ring or making the high school team. I

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help clients make internal changes and apply those changes to their everyday lives.

**WIS SIG:** What are career challenges that you have overcome?

**Dr Walker:** I feel like a pioneer in the field because I had to have a lot of determination. Many people told me this wouldn't work. I stuck to my vision of what I wanted to do. We need to apply what we teach athletes to our own lives. The biggest challenge is that I never took a business class. Learning to run a business is complicated. I learned through trial and error and by talking with people who have successfully run a business.

**WIS SIG:** What recommendations would you give to other women and students in the field?

**Dr. Walker:** I recommend having a vision of what you want to do, get a lot of experience, get a wide variety of experience, and with a different populations. Also, do not let the door shut on yourself. Be passionate and aggressive internally and present that in a composed way externally. Know that creating a successful business doesn't happen overnight; it takes hard work to get there.

**WIS SIG:** What are some of your most memorable career moments?

**Dr. Walker:** Every year and every month it gets better and better. There is a constant newness to

my career. I work with professional athletes and kindergartners. It is the combination of my experience with other people that is the most memorable aspect of my career.

**WIS SIG:** What suggestions do you have for students and early professionals who seek to obtain opportunities to gain experience within their field?

**Dr. Walker:** If the person is focusing in a clinical field, get as much experience clinically as possibly so that you know what a range of behaviors looks like. I wouldn't have guessed how important that is in my practice. Get as much experience working with individuals, observing others, having the experience of being able to speak in a group, and get as much practice as possible. Really listen to others to learn about what works and what does not.

Have a comment? Send your responses to:  
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**WIS SIG:** Is there any one point or notion you'd like to stress to emerging female sports professionals regarding how to navigate this field as a woman?



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**Dr. Walker:** Have a great network of other women to bounce things off of. There are not that many people in this field. Talk to people who have been in the field for a while, and have a sound internship program. Have good applied skills. Be sure that you are willing to do the things you ask of your clients. I wouldn't ask clients to do anything I wouldn't do myself. Know where you want to go yet be flexible with where you go. Don't expect to start a private practice right out of school – get the experience and take it step by step to move forward. Be patient with the process.

“There is a constant newness to my career. I work with professional athletes and kindergartners.

It is the combination of my experience with other people that is the most memorable aspect of my career.”

**WIS SIG:** What are the challenges you see facing women within the field of sport and exercise psychology?

**Dr. Walker:** I can speak to the applied area for women and believe it is beyond the glass ceiling effect. We have to prove ourselves, so it is

important to display that you know how to play the sport, even if you've never done it. That means knowing the rules and norms of the game. Exude and really feel confident about who you are and what you are doing so you can express yourself in a clear way. You might have to go outside your comfort zone. Most importantly, be authentic.

**WIS SIG:** Have you participated in sports yourself?

**Dr. Walker:** Yes, as a youth I participated in a variety of sports, and focused mostly on soccer and track. As an adult, I have run many marathons, including Boston, and many triathlons, including Ironman. I have competed at a National level in Duathlon, and represented the US Amateur team twice in World Championships in both long and short course. I am currently focusing on duathlon and cycling time trials, as well as leaving enough energy to cycle with my kids (11 and 8)!

Do you have a woman you would like to nominate for the *Women In The Spotlight Section*? Send your requests to Leeja Carter at: [womensportsig@gmail.com](mailto:womensportsig@gmail.com)

# Student's Corner

Students Researching and Promoting Women in Sports

## Q & A with Moe Machida

By: Kisha Grady

**M**oe Machida is a Ph.D. student in Kinesiology and Teaching Assistant at Michigan State University.

**What are your research and dissertation topics on?** My research interest is women in leadership. My current research project is called Examining the Role of Challenges, Feedback, Support, Leader Self-Efficacy and Resiliency on Motivation to Lead of Women Leaders... I want to know more about their (women's) self-efficacy as leaders, and how they are motivated to lead.

I've received funding for this project from NCAA; and if it is accepted, I will be presenting this project at the 2011 AASP conference. My dissertation is an expansion of my research project and will study assistant coaches, which is called Examining A Predictive Model of Career Advancement of Male and Female Assistant Coaches.

**Could you tell us why you choose this research topic and area of focus for your dissertation?**

Before I came to America, I never considered taking a leadership position. The Japanese culture doesn't put an emphasis on women being

leaders. When I came to America, I was given leadership positions, and wasn't good at it. I knew I needed more training [in this area]. So, my research topic is more personal. Plus, most Divisions I, athletic administrative positions are not held by woman, which is a concern of mines. In the future, I want to have leadership workshops to empower women who want to be leaders in athletics.



**What will you do when you are done with school?** Teach in a university, and do outreach projects for women in athletic administration and coaching.

**Do you have any advice for both graduate and doctorate students?** Find the professor you want to work with, and go from there. You do not want to get into a program that doesn't fit your interest. Exercise Psychology and Sport Psychology are two different things. So, it is important to research the professor and program. Know what you want to do!