

## PROTECTING YOUR POSSIBILITIES PODCAST WITH LUKE FEDLAM

### Episode 34: Achievements of Women in Sports | March 31, 2021

*The following is a transcription of the audio podcast recording. It is largely accurate but in some cases it is incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages or transcription errors.*

Luke: I'm sports attorney Luke Fedlam, and welcome to the Protecting Your Possibilities podcast. Each conversation we focus on sharing information and having conversations around how athletes can best educate and protect themselves or their life outside of their sports.

Thank you so much for tuning in to the protecting your possibilities podcast. I'm your host, Luke Fedlam. And I am pumped for another episode. I'm really excited about this episode. Since today is the last day of March, I thought it would be important to end the month on the topic of achievement by women in sports. And I wanted to kind of look at some different things, some different statistics and some different experiences from the professional and college levels, really just to be able to share more with our listeners around some of the great achievement of women in sports.

And to be honest with you, one of the things that really has been interesting to me lately has been the idea-as you all know, if you listen to me, you know, I get into conversations a lot around name, image and likeness-and one of the questions that I will commonly get, whenever I'm speaking on a panel or being interviewed or discussing the topic, it will be about what about opportunities for women. And so many people see name, image and likeness as this opportunity for the football quarterback, or the star men's basketball player to have opportunities to market themselves and sign endorsement deals. But I'll be honest with you, I think that there are a lot of data points that lead us to believe that women will really be engaging in this name, image and likeness space, from a social media influencing perspective and even more.

So today, there was a discussion on social media, Opendorse estimated earnings of men's or women's basketball players who are currently playing in the Elite Eight, and among the elite eight teams, eight of the 10 most followed players on Instagram and Twitter are women. So numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 are all women. You know across from UConn Louisville, Baylor, South Carolina, Stanford. And so when you look at that, there are estimated earnings associated. And you can see, I mean, significant dollars being estimated that these women could potentially make if name, image and likeness were allowed.

Now, we know that we're getting to that point, it's just a matter of time. In fact, the Supreme Court is actually hearing oral arguments this morning, Wednesday, March 31. There will be oral arguments in the Supreme Court in the case of NCAA versus Alston, which will have a significant impact on the authority that the NCAA has when it comes to allowing student athletes to be compensated. And we know that Congress is considering the rules and legislation that they might implement, regarding a name, image and likeness environment. And so we know these changes are coming. And it is interesting to see eight out of the top 10 athletes who are in Elite Eight teams, men's and women's, that eight of the top 10 are women.

And so thinking about that, I think it just continues to highlight a couple different things. First and foremost, yes, let's just address it head on. Yes, the you know, star football players will be able to sign endorsement deals that you know, will most likely in some respects probably be shocking and stunning, looking at the amount that they're going to make. And I think that's a true statement.

But I think that we are going to see a lot of other sports and women's sports engaging heavily in this name, image and likeness space. And I think a lot of that is because from a social media influencing perspective, brands aren't just looking for athletes, celebrities or social media influencers who have just by itself, large numbers of followers. They're looking for social media influencers, celebrities, athletes, others who have an engaged following base, right? That have engaged followers. As followers who want to engage with that celebrity and that celebrity, that athlete knows how to engage back with them. That's what they're looking for.

And so we've got, you know, plenty of examples of social media impressions. In fact, when you look at last year, one of the teams with some of the most social media impressions across the country was UCLA women's gymnastics team. And trust me, if you, if you've never seen any of their floor routines, and just in general, you're missing out. And I encourage you, you can check out my feed. I know, I've retweeted some in the past, but definitely go check them out on social media, but they do a great job and have a very high engagement rate with their fans and with people who are following them on social media. It's that kind of engagement that is going to lead to more and more opportunities.

You know, the other thing that I'll highlight is Chloe Mitchell, not sure if you've heard of Chloe Mitchell. She's one of the first college athletes who's made money from her likeness. So just last year, during the end of the pandemic, she was still in high school. And she's now a freshman volleyball player at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. And so it's NAIA. So they've had their name, image and likeness rules in place for student athletes. And so back in 2020, she was in her final year of high school, she said that she just kind of got bored, and she needed to do some things to take her mind off of just COVID and everything that was going on. And so she found a space for a small shed in her backyard. And she decided to turn it into what she called a she shed, and millions of people tuned in to watch this process of her kind of cleaning it, renovating it, in preparing it for, you know, kind of being her space, right? Her space kind of away from family and that kind of thing. And so on TikTok, she has over 2.7 million followers, right, and these are engaged followers.

And so when we look at that, I mean, Chloe is just a great example of what I think we will continue to see, as name image and likeness becomes a reality for student athletes in the D one level and beyond, is just this, this idea that athletes who have the ability to understand their brand, and are able to build their brand in the areas that are meaningful, and most importantly, authentic to them, they're going to be able to engage with consumers in different ways and be able to have opportunities to, to provide social media influencing for different brands. And so I think it's going to be really interesting to see what that looks like, over the coming years.

Now, one thing I will highlight is that we continue to see disparities, we continue to see challenges with women's sports, getting the coverage and the attention that it deserves. And I think we continue to see struggles with the opportunities for women in sports from an endorsement perspective, from a branding perspective at significant levels. What is cool is to see recently, there is currently an ad that that Carmax has, where you have Steph Curry is in the ad and having a conversation with the salesperson, and the salesperson was just like, you know, yeah, we just, you know, sold to somebody, you know, with four championships. He's like,

Oh, no, I, you know, I only have three. And he was like, No, I was talking about Sue Bird and Sue Bird is, you know, over getting into her new car. And it was just a cool way to see WNBA and NBA player coming together in a brand realizing that power, right, the brand realizing that like men, women athletes also have a highly engaged following on social media and beyond. Right. And so just to be able to see those kinds of opportunities come together, I think helps, right? It helps when we look at trying to fix and address some of these disparities.

But I'd have to say that when we look at the current situation of things, and we look at even just what has been shared on social media, you know, with the women's NCAA championship basketball tournament, versus the men's NCAA, you know March Madness championship tournament you know some clear disparities were shown. And shown directly on social media and shown from issues with the weight room and workout facilities, to the food that was eaten or shared with the, with the athletes, to the swag bags right have branded materials in the swag bag for men but just NCAA materials and the swag bag for women. I mean you just you can't ignore that, right? Like it you can't ignore the fact that even with the NCAA touting equality and touting opportunity and you just can't you cannot ignore what was just you know seen just this month in March Madness.

So from that perspective I think we all are aware and we all know that there is still work that must be done in so many different ways. And I know this conversation, this podcast, primarily focuses on sports and I know that there's so much more that I could get into when it comes to women's history and the gender equality in our country, but I like to try to keep these conversations to, to sports and the impact. And I think it's important because oftentimes sports does kind of lead the way in a lot of our conversations. So I have to spend some time talking about the WNBA and my good friend Renee Montgomery and all that she was able to accomplish over this past year it's been truly amazing to see and witness what's transpired. So she decided to opt out of the WNBA season last year and she did that in light of all that was happening from a racial injustice perspective. Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, you know, George Floyd, and all that was going on and she decided she wanted to do more. And so she devoted her time to social justice and the causes of social justice, and just truly making an impact to the point that now she was able to be one of the owners who has purchased the Atlanta Dream. And so she's now made history as not only just an owner, but an executive that was a former player. And when you think about the impact that that has when we talk about sometimes you got to see it to believe it, or see it to be it, and for young people-I'm not saying young girls-I'm saying young people generally to see a player play at the highest levels to win an NCAA championship to win WNBA championships, to play a great career, to decide to opt out of their career and from a season so that they could really fight the good fight of social justice. To then become an owner of a professional team that they actually played for and to be an executive with that team. I mean this is; this is incredible! And it's this kind of work, it's this-these types of experiences, it's this history in the making her story in the making that can lead others to want to do that. To want to work that much harder to want to devote their life to causes that are important to them that are authentic to them. Challenges that they see out there.

So I have to say even though we know that there are still disparities, that there are still unequal coverage, that there are still inequities when it comes to pay inequities, I have to believe and I hope that we are on a path towards true equity. That we're on a path towards gender equality in sports. That we're on a path of seeing women athletes as the stars and celebrities and brand endorsers that they are. That they are continuing to lead the way and being recognized for all of their achievement and all of their accomplishments in sports. So time will tell and I do think that with name, image and likeness coming to NCAA sports, college sports, I do think that we're

going to see women athletes engaged and involved in endorsing companies and brands in ways that people aren't even expecting at this point. And I'm here for it. I am looking forward to it.

So thank you for tuning in to this episode of Protecting Your Possibilities podcast. I appreciate you just sharing some time, as we have gone through this journey in this discussion around the achievement and some of the disparities that we see in women's sports. Because I think we have to talk about it. We have to be able to address it head on, if we want to see changes to be made. And so hopefully, we'll continue to see changes.

So please do feel free to share this podcast episode with your friends, colleagues, share it on social media, feel free to leave me any comments, reach out to me on social media at Luke Fedlam on pretty much all platforms. I really do value your comments, I value your feedback. And I just value you for being a listener to this podcast. So definitely feel free to share it with your colleagues. And, again, keep in touch and keep us posted on what it is that you want to hear as we work to protect your possibilities. Again, I'm your host Luke Fedlam. Thank you for tuning in. We'll talk again real soon. Have a great day.

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