

Olympians Uncensored:

Examining Female Athletes' Media Attitudes and Experiences

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To all of the female athletes, young and old – Be fierce. Stay true to yourself.

Take a moment and think to yourself. Have you heard of Anna Kournikova? How about Serena Williams or Lindsey Vonn? Heard of them? Chances are you have a visual and could tell me a little about each woman, perhaps whom they are dating or what products they endorse. But what about Sue Bird, a basketball player who won a gold medal for Team USA in the 2012 London Olympics? I am willing to bet you have never heard her name before. This is the way it goes for women's sports. A handful of select athletes receive a ton of media exposure and appear in all sorts of publications from *Teen People* to *Maxim*, while the rest remain unidentified and unknown to the general public. More recently, sexualizing images of sportswomen, such as those that appear in *Playboy* and *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition*, have become more prevalent within the media sphere. But before we can examine the current state of female athletics in the media, we must first look at where women's sports began.

On June 23, 1972, Congress passed the Higher Education Act, including a provision known as Title IX, which prohibited sex discrimination in educational and federally funded programs. For young girls and women, this ensured they would become more equitable in an arena that had previously belonged to men: athletics (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983). Title IX celebrated its fortieth anniversary this past June and many would argue that women in sport have made significant strides over these past forty years.

Every four years, women of all ages cherish, celebrate, and anticipate the moment they will watch their favorite female athlete or team compete at the Olympic games. Whether it is soccer, basketball, gymnastics, or tennis, many women look to professional female athletes as role models and inspiration to achieve their own goals. The most recent Games marked some very important milestones for women in sport. The 2012 Summer Olympics was the first time every participating country was represented by at least one female athlete and the first time Team

USA was comprised of more female than male athletes (Hecht, 2012). But despite the apparent strides sportswomen have made over the past few decades, it is evident that being a female athlete is a complex and difficult role to fulfill.

After the 2008 Olympics, Caster Semenya, a track and field gold medalist from South Africa, was forced to undergo a gender test in order to verify her biological sex as a woman. Doubts regarding her gender were attributed to her perceived masculine characteristics including her deep voice, strong stature, facial features, and sensational athletic abilities. During this controversy, feminists all over the world expressed outrage that a young woman was ambushed and her sex questioned because she did not meet traditional standards for femininity. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Olympic athletes such as Alex Morgan (soccer) and Natalie Coughlin (swimming) posed for the *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition, while Rhonda Rousey (MMA fighting) and Natasha Hastings (track & field) posed nude for *ESPN Magazine's* Body Issue. It would seem, female athletes are either not feminine enough, or forced to extreme lengths to accentuate and display their femininity for the world to see.

The complex nature of being a female athlete in the public eye is an area of great interest to feminist and media scholars alike. Specifically, scholars concern themselves with how the media depicts female athletes. Numerous studies explore the differences in the representations of female and male athletes through textual and discourse analysis. In general, these studies have found that sportswomen are underrepresented, over sexualized, and depicted through traditional ideas of femininity and stereotypical gender roles. Research shows that these portrayals of female athletes undermine feminine athleticism, thereby constructing female athletes as less capable and inferior to male athletes (Bernstein, 2002; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994).

More recently, scholars in this field suggest that these negative representations still exist in our media sphere today. Now forty years since the turning point of female participation in athletics, one would hope that sportswomen enjoy the same respect and appreciation as male athletes. However, this is not the case and these problematic representations deserve an explanation. But in order to understand why these media images persist, it is necessary to examine the dynamics behind the construction of these representations, a relatively unexplored dimension of research relating to gender and sports media. Speaking directly to the athletes provides an opportunity for further insight into the production of the media images of female athletes. This research examines the relationship and communication between female athletes and the media industry, in order to help explain why narrow media representations of sportswomen still exist and what contributes to the creation of these images.

In her study, Bernstein (2002) justifies the importance of studying female athletes in the media: “The main reason is that the mass media – which are an essential feature of modern social life – preserve, transmit, and create important cultural information” (Bernstein, 2002, p. 416). If the media contributes to how society thinks and feels about female athletics so significantly, it is necessary to evaluate how the media portrays and constructs the representations of these athletes.

In order to understand why sexualizing images and problematic representations exist, this study will utilize interviews with Olympic athletes to uncover the processes that take place when a professional female athlete participates in the media. Rarely do audiences or researchers ask questions such as, what motivates these women to participate in certain media opportunities or what are they trying to achieve through their participation? Existing research analyzes the current media representations of female athletes and hypothesizes their effects on audiences.

However, by speaking to the athletes, this study pushes beyond the existence of these representations and aims to unravel how and why these images are constructed in the first place.

Literature Review

Testimony from the athletes

Much of the existing literature on women in sport relies on textual analysis to identify how the media represents female athletes. Since the passage of Title IX four decades ago, female participation in athletics has been a topic of great interest to feminist and media scholars, and at this point, the problematic nature of media representations of female athletes has been well documented. Very few studies utilize methods that allow the researcher to speak to the very athletes whom appear in the media, leaving a considerable amount of potential research unexplored. For the purposes of this study, it is imperative to have a thorough understanding of the previous testimony from professional, collegiate, and amateur female athletes regarding their participation in sports, their lifestyle as athletes, and how, if applicable, the media influences this lifestyle. Various studies utilizing interviews or focus groups with female athletes identify three major themes emerging from discussions on being a female athlete in contemporary society: battling femininity and masculinity, recognizing a difference between athletes and “normal” girls/women, and the importance of performing a strong athletic identity.

For centuries, American women have been faced with societal expectations for their behavior and appearance (Bordo, 1993 in Krane et al., 2004). Femininity is the concept used to describe these standards. In the present day, slender, dainty bodies, along with a demure and agreeable demeanor characterize femininity. Women who deviate from traditional ideas of femininity are constructed as social outcasts who violate cultural norms (Blinde & Taub, 1992 in

Krane et al., 2004). Many female athletes attest to the difficulties of upholding these expectations (Krane et al., 2004).

When asked about their athleticism and femininity, most college athletes discussed their femininity in opposition of their athleticism and agreed that athleticism was more closely in line with traditionally masculine characteristics (Krane et al., 2004). Muscularity was the driving factor of these opposing forces. Due to their intense training, many female athletes build large muscles and acquire significant strength, which is the antithesis of the celebrated feminine physique (Krane et al., 2004). The athletes agreed that their muscularity made them feel unfeminine and more like men than women (Krane et al., 2004). Despite the way these athletes feel about their femininity, or lack thereof, Royce, Gebelt, and Duff (2003) interviewed male and female college athletes and non-athletes and found that only 5% of participants agree that female athletes are not feminine (Royce et al., 2003). However, when asked whether strong women can be feminine or not, more men stated that strong women could not be feminine (Royce et al., 2003). From their findings, the researchers concluded that female athletes could sustain a feminine identity, but it would have to be kept separate from their athletic self (Royce et al., 2003). When researchers asked professional athletes about femininity, most agreed it was “okay” to be both athletic and feminine as a female athlete (Mean & Kassing, 2008).

Closely related to the difficulties of being both athletic and feminine, female athletes reveal the ways they feel different from other, nonathletic women. College athletes claimed to have felt distinctly different from “normal” women while shopping for clothes, engaging in romantic behaviors with men, and during social interactions with friends (Krane et al., 2004). Due to their muscular shape, female athletes discussed the difficulties in finding clothes that fit properly, which served as a reminder that they were different from other girls and women whom

the clothes seemed to be made for (Krane et al., 2004). Additionally, the women spoke of being teased by peers for their muscularity and aggressive behaviors and noted the surprised reactions they received when they did dress or act in traditionally feminine ways (Krane et al., 2004). During their interviews with WUSA professional soccer players, Mean and Kassing (2008) found that the athletes “achieved their own athletic identity by framing self as different from and outside of the *normal* female category” (p. 137). In this way, the women embraced their differences from traditional femininity and found it to be an essential component of their lifestyle as professional athletes.

Finally, during their testimony, female athletes placed great emphasis on the importance of promoting a positive athletic identity. Professional female soccer players discussed their natural athletic abilities, as well as their passion and dedication for their sport (Mean & Kassing, 2008). By stressing these qualities, the athletes try to justify their inclusion and membership within the sports community (Mean & Kassing, 2008). The importance of emphasizing a positive athletic identity was also apparent in a study by Krane et al. (2011), where young female athletes analyzed photos of collegiate female athletes and discussed their favorite and least favorite images. Overall, the girls liked the photos expressing the athletes' authenticity, mental strength, and passion for their respective sport (Krane et al., 2011). The photos incorporating all of these elements were those depicting the athletes in uniform, in an athletic setting, and posed in a natural or athletic stance (Krane et al., 2011).

Representations of Women in Sport

From birth, little boys and girls learn how to act and interact appropriately based on their biological sex. Western culture draws gender lines between almost anything and everything, including colors, toys, and careers, among countless others. These gendered categories give way

to our cultural understanding of suitable gender roles. Psychologists define gender roles as socially constructed characteristics that mandate acceptable characteristics, behaviors, and interests for men and women (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; Eisend, 2010; Griffin, 1998; Hardin & Greer, 2007; Messner, 2002;). From childhood on, boys learn that participating in sports is an essential aspect of developing a proper masculine identity (Cahn, 1995; Cohen, 2001; Griffin, 1998). Because sports is embedded within the male domain, female participation in sports is considered a trespass and presents a considerable threat to normative expectations for women (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; Cohen, 2001; Griffin, 1998; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). The media counteracts this role-conflict in their depictions of female athletes by emphasizing traditionally feminine qualities and downplaying their athletic prowess (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994; Lenskyj, 1987).

Since women began to enter the sporting world with the passage of Title IX, media representations of female athletes provide a substantial body of research for consideration. Much of the existing research identifies several problematic ways in which sportswomen are constructed in the media when compared to male athletes. Overall, the media expresses these complex representations in two major ways including, (a) attention to the sexual differences between men and women, and (b) emphasis on femininity and sexuality.

Sexual Difference

As apparent reflections of cultural ideologies and expressions, photographs and textual material included within media publications wield significant power over the ways audiences interpret their subjects (Duncan, 1990). In this way, sports articles and photographs may reinforce patriarchal ideologies through their representations of male and female athletes (Duncan, 1990; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Kane, 1996). Previous research identifies several

differences in how the media portrays male and female athletes in both visual and textual mediums, including amount and content of media coverage, and visual constructions of the athlete.

It has been well documented that male athletes receive significantly more coverage than female athletes. An analysis of all the articles written about athletes in two major newspapers from 1948 to 2004 found that 59% of the articles were dedicated to male athletes, while only 28% were written about female athletes, and the remaining articles were categorized as “gender neutral” (King, 2007). In a study of newspaper articles written about male and female tennis players from June 1979 to September 1983, it was found that men were featured in significantly more articles, headlines, and photographs than women (Hillard, 1984). Additionally, an analysis of the newspaper coverage of the Winter Olympics from 1924 to 1960 produced similar results, finding that men were the subject of 56.5% of newspaper articles and 65.5% of photographs, while women received merely 13.8% of textual coverage and appeared in only 24.8% of photographs (Urquhart & Crossman, 1999). The remainder of the sampled articles and photographs featured both male and female athletes or none at all (Urquhart & Crossman, 1999). While the bulk of the previous research on this topic suggests that female athletes are underrepresented, more recently it has been suggested that this gap may be closing. For example, the cover of the NCAA media guide featured men and women almost equally in both 1990 and 1997 (Buysee & Embser-Herbert, 2004). Although it may appear that male and female athletes receive equal amounts media coverage, many researchers argue that men continue to receive more coverage than women (King, 2007; Urquhart & Crossman, 1999).

More recent research suggests it is the *content* rather than the *quantity* of the coverage that produces the most problematic representations of sportswomen. While male athletes receive

substantially more media coverage than women, the differences in the way print and televised media talk about male and female athletes presents another topic for consideration. Overall, the media portrays female athletes in terms of their femininity and physical appearance, while down playing their athletic skills and accomplishments (Harris & Clayton, 2002; Hillard, 1984; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). On the other hand, when the press discusses male athletes, they receive exclusive attention and praise for their athleticism with little attention paid to other traits (Hillard, 1984). When it comes to televised sports, sports reporters often show more respect for male athletes by referring to them by their last name or full name, while referring to female athletes by their first names or addressing them as “girls” or “young ladies” (Cohen, 2001; Messner et al., 1993). Finally, research shows that traditionally masculine traits, such as power, aggression, strength, and control, often coincide with the contemporary definition and understanding of sports (Hardin & Greer, 2007; Harris & Clayton, 2002; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994). Since these traits do not fall within hegemonic femininity, the media overlooks these traits when discussing female athletes (Harris & Clayton, 2002). Therefore, sports that avoid these characteristics, like swimming and tennis, receive more media attention than aggressive sports, such as boxing (Harris & Clayton, 2002). Clear differences exist within in the textual representations of male and female athletics.

Aside from textual media, photographs also offer an interesting medium for discussion. The bulk of quantitative research on this topic focuses on how the media portrays male and female athletes through visual images. There are several aspects of sports photos that reveal the differences in the representations between male and female athletes, including setting, wardrobe, pose, and camera angle. With regards to setting, men are depicted on the court or in a sporting arena more often than women (Buysee & Embser-Herbert, 2004). In terms of their wardrobe,

media photos feature men in uniform more often than women, who appear in street clothes more often than men (Buysee & Embser-Herbert, 2004; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Roedl, 2006). When it comes to posing, men pose in action more often than women, who pose in passive positions, often unrelated to their sport (Buysee & Embser-Herbert, 2004; Duncan, 2006; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; King, 2007; Roedl, 2006). Finally, camera angle plays a significant role in photographic representations. According to Duncan (1990), a low angle (looking up at the subject from below) portrays superiority, dominance, and control, whereas a high angle (looking down at the subject from above) places the subject in a subordinate position signifying inferiority and smallness. Typically, the media utilizes photographs featuring women from a high angle and men from a low angle (Duncan, 1990; Roedl, 2006). Overall, the differences in these photographs trivialize female athleticism by portraying male athletes in a more dominant, sports-related position than women.

Overall, the media constructs clear differences between male and female athletes through representations of sports and athletes. The amount and content of media coverage, along with visual differences in sports photographs contribute to the troubling representations of female athletes. The various discrepancies between portrayals of male and female athletes illustrate a sexual difference.

Attention to Femininity and Sexuality

In addition to constructions of sexual difference, vast amounts of research explore the way discourses of femininity and sexuality revolve around the media representations of female athletes. Existing research claims that the media accentuates these characteristics to convey heterosexuality, compensate for masculine qualities, or rectify threats of lesbianism.

Additionally, the media places extreme emphasis on beauty and attractiveness, and lends a considerable amount of attention to sexuality and sex appeal.

Generally speaking, if a female athlete possesses too many masculine characteristics, she will be excluded from the media or represented in a very negative way, and in some cases, a more feminine and attractive athlete from the same sport will be placed in the media spotlight (Bernstein, 2002; Harris & Clayton, 2002). For female athletes who present masculine or potentially lesbian qualities, the media reaffirms their femininity and heterosexuality by representing them in overly feminine ways (Bernstein, 2002; Duncan, 2006; E-Sex-P-N, 2011). An analysis of the 2010 *ESPN Magazine* Body Issue found that the text accompanying nude photographs of female athletes always included an equal amount of “appearance” and “physical” descriptors when discussing the photographed athlete (E-Sex-P-N, 2011). For example, when an athlete was discussed in terms of her athletic abilities, the article also included a comment regarding her beauty or sexuality, in order highlight her feminine qualities and negate any lesbian connotations (E-Sex-P-N, 2011).

In addition to the emphasis on femininity, media representations of female athletes reveal an obsession with feminine beauty and attractiveness. In sports photographs, the media features sportswomen who reflect conventional standards of attractiveness more often than women who are not as conventionally beautiful (Duncan, 1990; Harris & Clayton, 2002). The media appreciates athletes who style their hair, apply glamorous makeup, and present a stylish wardrobe more than women who do not (Duncan, 1990). Sports journalists or commentators often discuss an athlete's appearance or outfit choice rather than her athletic skill (Duncan, 2006). This is the case for professional tennis player Anna Kournikova, whom the media

celebrates for her beauty more often than her athletic abilities, and her model-like looks have led to a profitable career off the court (Bernstein, 2002).

Lastly, the media portrays female athletes in terms of their sexuality and sex appeal, which is arguably the most prominent, yet problematic representation sportswomen face. Duncan (1990) argues that in photographs, the athlete's body position and pose generates their sex appeal. Based on the direction given by the photographer and the publication, female athletes often pose in sexually seductive ways, similar to that of soft-core pornography magazines like *Maxim* and *Playboy* (Duncan, 1990). Additionally, in newspaper, magazine, and product endorsement photos, female athletes often appear in provocative clothing. A study of advertisements promoting products endorsed by athletes found that of the entire sample, 81% featured women in sexually suggestive attire (Grau et al., 2007). And finally, the athletes' feminine body parts, including the breasts and buttocks, receive prime attention in the media coverage of women's sports. An analysis of the television coverage of women's beach volleyball from the 2004 Olympics found that throughout the match, the camera captured close-up shots of the athlete's breasts and buttocks, while excluding the rest of the athlete's body from the frame (Bissell & Duke, 2007). Overall, the attention to femininity and sexuality allows the media to sexualize female athletes and trivialize their athletic abilities and accomplishments (Bernstein, 2002; Bissell & Duke, 2007; Duncan, 1990; Duncan, 2006; E-Sex-P-N, 2011; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994).

These types of representations tarnish the image of women in sport and undermine their progress in the athletic arena over the past forty years. However, it is important to note that these athletes are not always victims of sexually objectifying media. Some athletes, like Anna Kournikova, endorse products or participate in certain types of media to extend their careers

beyond athletics and develop a public image outside of sports. In this way, these athletes contribute to some of the repressive representations of women in sport.

Considering it has been forty years since the passage of Title IX, it is concerning to realize that these negative representations of sportswomen still exist. The majority of research on female athletics examines how the media portrays female athletes and how these representations are different from that of male athletes. With an ever-increasing number of women participating in sports, it is certainly important to understand how the media represents these athletes, but at this point, it is time to take a step back and ask who and what contributes to the creation of these representations and why they still exist. The present research seeks to do just that by exploring the following research questions.

RQ1: What leads to the construction of the existing media images and representations of professional female athletes?

RQ2: Why do professional female athletes participate in sexualizing media?

RQ3: How do professional female athletes react to their own depictions or to the depictions of other female athletes in the media?

Media process

Based on the interviews with twelve female Olympic athletes, this section discusses some of the underlying dynamics that play out when various media outlets approach female athletes with specific media opportunities. First, the athlete receives a request for an interview or photo shoot in one of two ways. If the athlete has an agent, the request will go to the agent first, and then in some cases the agent will go directly to the athlete with any and all media requests, or in other cases the agent will act as a filter and only direct certain requests to the athlete. If the athlete does not have an agent, the request will go through the media representative of the

governing body, such as USA Gymnastics. The media representative then sends the request to the athlete or provides the publication with the athlete's personal contact information.

Overall, each athlete made it clear that she was always the one to make a final decision regarding an interview or photo shoot, whether she had an agent or not. The main reasons for declining media opportunities were conflicts with training or competition schedules. The athletes said there was usually minimal contact with the publication before the interview or photo shoot. If the athlete was in contact with the publication directly, she might work with them to schedule a time to meet. However, if it were a high exposure media opportunity, her agent or media representative would be in contact with the media source ahead of time to discuss the nature and direction of the interview or photo shoot.

It was interesting to discover that the National Olympic Committee requires all athletes to participate in a significant amount of media training. During this media training process, the athlete learns how to best answer interview questions, how to treat sponsors, how to handle social media, and how to handle herself in an awkward media situation. Most of the participants felt like they could redirect the focus of an interview with how they chose to respond to the interviewer's questions if the interview was headed in a direction they were not comfortable with. When it came to photo shoots, the athletes discussed having less control because they did not have the final say over which photographs were selected for publication. However, the key element to these findings is the fact all twelve women agreed that they have complete control over what types of media they choose to participate in and what they choose to deny.

Methods

Twelve female Olympic athletes agreed to participate in this research and were interviewed over the phone or via Skype. All of these athletes were over the age of 18 with a

mean age of 29, participated in various Olympic games, and competed in a variety of sports. In order to maintain confidentiality, none of their names will appear in this report. Instead, I will use pseudonyms to refer to the athletes (See Appendix C for a biography of each athlete)

Participants were recruited through multiple approaches. The University of Michigan community proved to be a promising starting point. I consulted a website that included a list of Olympic athletes who had ties to the state of Michigan, many of whom were connected to the University of Michigan in some way. I also sorted through a list of Olympians provided by Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan. From both of these sources, I generated a primary list of female athletes to contact. If the athlete was an alumna of the University of Michigan, I searched her name in the MCommunity directory to find an e-mail address. I also attempted to contact these athletes through their respective governing body, i.e., USA Rowing. In most cases, the media representative for the organization provided a list of contact information for the various athletes, which usually included the name and e-mail address of her manager/agent, whom I contacted. In some cases, the media representative sent my contact information to a list of athletes who had competed for that sport in the Olympic games. Lastly, I contacted a couple of the Michigan athletes through their Facebook fan pages, using the private “message” feature.

Outside of the Michigan community, I generated a “wish list” of famous athletes who could provide insights meaningful for the purposes of this project. In order to obtain contact information for these athletes, I consulted Joanne Gerstner, a national sports reporter on fellowship at the University of Michigan. She provided contact information for several of the athletes' managers/agents.

If I succeeded in contacting a manager/agent and the respective athlete was interested in participating, I was then permitted to speak to the athlete directly. If the athlete did not have an agent, I was in personal contact with her from the start. After each interview, I asked the athlete if she could put me in contact with any of her former Olympic teammates. In some cases, this proved to be a successful method of recruitment.

Each athlete or manager/agent was initially contacted through e-mail (Appendix A) and all correspondence leading up to the interviews were conducted over e-mail. Once the athlete agreed to participate, she received the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B). We then scheduled a time to conduct the interview. Before each interview, I researched the specific athlete to analyze her previous photo shoots, interviews, endorsements, and appearances to familiarize myself with the types of media she had already done. In some cases, I generated specific interview questions in response to certain photographs, including the participants who posed nude for the *ESPN Magazine* Body Issue.

At the beginning of each interview, I asked the athlete if she had an opportunity to read the Participant Information Sheet. Regardless of whether or not she had read the document, I went through the key points of the information sheet with her:

1. Your name will be omitted from the final report;
2. Your testimony is completely confidential and will only be shared with my advisors;
3. You may stop the interview at any time, and
4. You do not have to answer any question you feel uncomfortable with.

After reviewing these disclaimers, I asked the athlete for her permission to record the interview. All participants agreed to this. I proceeded to ask a series of interview questions (Appendix D). During some interviews, the athletes were probed with a few follow-up questions that were not

included in the original interview protocol in order to clarify a response, urge further elaboration, or gain insight into an unexpected response.

After completing all twelve interviews, I transcribed them using the playback feature on my recorder. Transcribing the interviews myself, rather than hiring a service, allowed me to save money and to familiarize myself with the material. Once all the data were compiled, I began my analysis, in which I followed a model similar to that described by Hammersley & Atkinson (1995). First, I read through the interviews in order to generate a list of emerging themes and identify the key elements from each athlete's testimony. From there, I condensed these initial thoughts and findings into three overarching themes. In addition to these themes, I identified two contradictions that emerged from the testimony. With these categories in mind, I went back through the interviews to find specific anecdotes that corresponded with each theme or contradiction. Finally, any findings that were related to the media process were included in a separate section in the literature review.

Analysis and Discussion

Three overarching themes emerged from the interviews with twelve female Olympic athletes. The first theme, "you can't *just* be a female athlete," delves into an analysis of the existing media depictions of female athletes, which emphasize beauty and sex appeal before athletic talent and accomplishments. The second theme, "attention and exposure," discusses how the desire for publicity motivates athletes to participate in the media. The third and final theme, "the empowered female athlete," explores the reasons why female athletes find sexualizing media empowering. Taken together, these themes illustrate a troubling cycle that exists between sportswomen and the media. Until either party deviates from the current media attention female

athletes receive, the problematic representations of these athletes will continue to be created, circulated, and celebrated.

You can't just be a female athlete

Despite the vast amount of empirical research exploring the media depictions of female athletes, few have asked the athletes themselves how they react to the media coverage of women's sports. This study examines the way sportswomen interpret the media depictions of themselves, of other female athletes, and of female athletics as a whole. The athletes' responses to the interview questions pertaining to this topic gave way to a theme concerning what it means to be a female athlete in a sporting world dominated by men. Overall, the interviewees had very critical interpretations of the way the media represents female athletes. The emergent theme, "you can't *just* be a female athlete" wove itself through almost every interview. By this, the participants meant that within the media sphere, a female athlete is never featured simply because of her athletic ability. Rather, her beauty, sex appeal, sexual orientation, or other features are always attached to the depiction of her as an athlete and always come before her athletic achievements.

When directly asked to interpret how the media represents female athletes, the majority of the participants pointed out the sexualizing nature of this media and the way their beauty and bodies come before athletics. Additionally, the participants noted that the female athletes who receive the most media attention are those considered conventionally attractive by our cultural standards, regardless of their athletic abilities and accomplishments.

Gymnast 1: Their [female athletes] actual accomplishments aren't getting enough praise, it's more based upon their looks and their image and everything they're portraying. It's not always about athletics.

Track Runner 2: A woman could be a great athlete and could be doing really good things on the track, or wherever her discipline is, but if she's not really the most attractive, or has the best

body, she may not get as much attention as someone else who might look better or have a better body.

Athletes recognize the problematic media representations women face in athletics. They are aware and tuned in to how the media sexualizes female athletes, favors beautiful athletes, and promotes other redeeming or controversial characteristics before their athleticism. From these interviews, it is clear that sportswomen recognize what it takes in order to become a famous athlete, which is to obtain high-level exposure in large-scale media outlets. But often times, female athletes are only featured in big-time publications when they are doing some type of provocative or revealing media. Although there is a certain level of awareness by these athletes, it is unlikely to change the way female athletes choose to represent themselves in the media.

During their interviews, participants also compared the media depictions of male and female athletes. Overall, the participants recognized the gender discrepancy in the media coverage of athletics. The athletes pointed out how male athletes are generally more prominent in the media, receive more attention for their athletic abilities and accomplishments than anything else, and are not nearly as sexualized as female athletes.

Water Polo Player 1: For male athletes, I think it's much more about the athletic feats...you can turn on *Sports Center* and watch the "Top 10 Plays of the Day" and it's all male athletes, and it's all about making the catch or making the save or whatever that may be, and for women, it's not about the sport so much as it is about the image.

Clearly, the female athletes were aware of the fact that society respects and celebrates men's sports much more than women's sports. While the participants noticed the exposure male athletes receive is primarily concerned with athleticism, the athletes did not recognize that the extra steps required for female athletes (sexualizing media) are not *required* of men. Male athletes do not need to pose half naked to generate some media attention. Although the interviewees noticed the discrepancy between the media depictions of male and female athletes,

they were unwilling to admit that they participated in this type of media in order to gain the same exposure as male athletes.

Another topic of concern relating to this particular theme is how these women interpret their femininity in conjunction with their athleticism. Much of the existing research on female athletics has shed light on the separation the athletes feel between their femininity and their lives as athletes. This study revisits this issue to see if the creation of sexualizing images can be attributed to the athlete's need to express her femininity outside of the athletic arena.

During their interviews, I asked the participants if they felt it was possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye, and all twelve women responded with a resounding "absolutely." But immediately after, when I asked them to define the term "femininity," many surprisingly struggled with this question. In order to elicit some sort of response, the athletes were then asked to describe certain characteristics they associate with their femininity, or with the femininities of women they admire. Some participants responded with more hegemonic aspects of femininity, such as hair, makeup, and high heels, while others thought poise, confidence, and self-respect were more indicative of their femininity. Arguably, all women, athlete or not, struggle with the concept of femininity and what it means to be a woman in Western society. But despite the fact that every athlete thought she was able to achieve a balance between her athleticism and femininity, almost all struggled with the concept of femininity and how it played a role in her everyday life as a woman and as an athlete, which gave rise to a very interesting contradiction.

When prompted with these questions, several of the athletes discussed the ways they emphasize their femininity both inside and outside the sporting arena. Some athletes, like Track Runner 2 and Basketball Player 1, utilize cosmetic features to accentuate their femininity while

doing their sport. Track Runner 2 spoke of the preparations for the 2012 London Olympics. For her and her teammates, manicures, jewelry shopping, and trips to the hair salon were essential in order to look groomed and presentable while competing on national television. Similarly, Basketball Player 1 spoke of applying makeup and doing her hair “in a way that’s both practical and aesthetically pleasing” before playing a game. Although both these women agreed that they were able to be athletic and feminine, it seems that some female athletes take certain measures to ensure their femininity is noticed. By utilizing cosmetics to embellish their femininity, these women draw attention away from their athleticism and encourage the media to view them as women first and athletes second.

Other athletes, such as Water Polo Player 2, discussed a complete separation between their personal and athletic lives and that femininity can only exist in one. Water Polo Player 2 described the necessity of embodying certain “masculine” characteristics in order to compete at an elite level. She said that she felt like a completely different person while she was playing than in her normal every day life. She went on to say that while she was competing, she could not express her femininity in the ways she would like, such as by doing her hair and nails and carrying handbags, because it made her look weak in front of her opponents. After she retired, she felt she “could just be a woman.” It is obvious that there is a complete divide between her life as an athlete and her life outside of water polo, despite the fact that she believes it is possible to appear athletic and feminine in the media. This holds true for several other athletes in the sample.

Whether the twelve athletes responded to the question honestly or in a way they felt was the most “correct,” it became clear that these women struggle to maintain and present an equal balance between femininity and athleticism. However, the athletes are not completely to blame

for their contradictory testimony. The media celebrates feminine athletes and rejects unfeminine athletes, and therefore, it is necessary for these women to embrace femininity in order to gain exposure in the media. On the other hand, sports that require immense strength, power, and aggression, such as weightlifting and water polo, reject femininity, which is at odds with societal expectations for female athletes. These sports do not encourage femininity, unlike sports, such as gymnastics and tennis, where gracefulness and poise, along with makeup and coordinated outfits are essential. These opposing forces may confuse the athlete and compel her to pick a side: be feminine, flaunt your assets, and potentially become famous, or ignore femininity, receive negative press attention, or never get noticed. Whether the athlete overcompensates for her femininity or detaches it from her athletic persona all together, femininity is simultaneously celebrated and rejected in sports. Ultimately, if the athlete wants to be in the media spotlight, she must embrace and display her femininity in order to achieve that goal.

In general, the participants understood that conventionally attractive female athletes are more prominent in the media and that female athletes are very seldom represented by their athletic feats alone. Additionally, they realized that male athletes receive substantially more media attention than female athletes, which is both less sexualizing and more related to their athletic achievements. In essence, these women realized that it is not enough to *just* be a female athlete. It is not enough to be a great soccer player, or a great basketball player, or a great track runner *and* be a well-known athlete. There has to be something to make them special enough to appear in the media, which often times seems to be sex appeal.

Attention and exposure

While much empirical research examines how the media exposes and sexualizes female athletes, little research explores the reasons why these athletes agree to be depicted in these ways. As

mentioned previously, each athlete agreed that she would always be the one to make the final decision regarding a certain media opportunity. Therefore, no one is forcing these women to undress for the camera, and so, the question remains, what motivates these female athletes to participate in sexualizing media? Why do these women find it necessary or acceptable to show off their body in a way completely unrelated to sports? Based on the interviews from the twelve athletes, the greatest motivating factor for participating in sexualizing media is the opportunity to gain exposure for their sport and for them as individual athletes.

I asked each participant how she felt about female athletes posing for the *ESPN Magazine* Body Issue, where the athletes are featured nude, and the *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition, where various models and athletes are photographed in bikinis. I also asked them to discuss why female athletes are motivated to pose for these types of magazines. Through the lens of this research, these two special edition publications qualify as sexualizing media and were used as a constant for discussing sexualizing media with the athletes. It interesting to analyze this theme from two perspectives: the perspective of the participants who had not done nude photography and the perspective of the four athletes who had been featured nude in various publications. While the participants felt differently about each magazine and the athletes who posed for them, they had similar sentiments regarding the various motivational factors behind participating in this type of media.

The women who had not posed nude felt exposure, publicity, money, and potential fame were all motivating factors for doing nude or provocative photography. As explained earlier, the athletes discussed how women's sports lack media attention compared to men's sports. Therefore, they felt these types of photo shoots were great opportunities to generate some attention for the sport and for the individual athlete, especially in well-known publications.

Water Polo Player 2: I think that a lot of female athletes find it necessary to do those kinds of things, more for the publicity and to become a name that's recognizable. I think it's just to get some media attention and some press attention.

Many discussed the positive impact this type of media could have on an athlete's career. In fact, Track Runner 1 spoke fondly of a female Olympic high jumper who had posed nude for *Playboy*, resulting in a significant amount of sponsors and endorsements. The general sentiment seemed to be that since women's sports are not as popular or appreciated in the media as men's sports, any press is good press, and so these women will do just about anything to boost their career as athletes and gain exposure for their sports.

During their interviews, I asked the women who had posed nude or participated in the *ESPN Magazine* Body Issue (none posed in the swimsuit edition) to discuss their personal experience doing this type of media. Gymnast 1 and Water Polo Player 1 posed for the Body Issue, while Soccer Player 1 posed nude for *Maxim*, and Rower 1 posed nude for a campaign called "Empowered by You" for the Seven Bar Foundation (see Appendix C). These athletes discussed various reasons for posing nude including, a good career move, exposure for her sport, and taking advantage of an opportunity to "show off" the body she worked so hard to achieve (to be discussed more in the following section). Money and fame were not expressed as motivation for doing this type of photo shoot. It was apparent that these women had previously discussed their decision to pose nude and were very careful in their responses; however, this came as no surprise since they have all been through a significant amount of media training. Since three of these women were the most famous of the athletes interviewed, it can be reasonably inferred that exposure was a motivating factor since they received a significant amount of media attention because of their nude photos.

Like other industries, athletics requires women to work harder to achieve the same recognition as men. In order to receive the same media exposure as male athletes, female athletes need to be featured in high profile publications like *Sports Illustrated* and *ESPN Magazine*. These women only receive prime coverage in these types of media when they decide to take their clothes off. When discussing her decision to do the Body Issue, Water Polo Player 1 quoted a teammate who had opted out of the nude photo shoot.

Water Polo Player 1: One of my teammates who chose not to do it said it best, 'until they're willing to put us on the cover of *ESPN Magazine* with our suits on, why should we go on the cover without them?'

While there are some who feel as strongly compelled as Water Polo Player 1's teammate, it is interesting that many of these athletes will do whatever it takes to become well-known athletes and generate media attention for their sport. They are not motivated to pose nude simply for the experience. Rather, the incentive lies in the perceived benefit for their sport and their athletic career. In the eyes of these athletes, any exposure is good exposure, and therefore, they will continue to take advantage of sexualizing media opportunities.

The empowered female athlete

While the participants discussed their reactions to the way female athletes are generally portrayed in the media, this research was also concerned with their reactions to the athletes who participate in sexualizing media like the Body Issue and the Swimsuit Edition. Although exposure and potential fame were considered motivating factors for doing this type of media, how do female athletes respond to sexualizing media and how do the athletes who have done nude or provocative photo shoots feel about their experience? According to the athletes, posing for publications like the Body Issue and the Swimsuit Edition provides an outlet for a female

athlete to show off her strong, athletic body, which the interviewees interpreted as an empowering opportunity.

When comparing the *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition and the *ESPN Magazine* Body Issue, the participants felt much more comfortable with female athletes posing for *ESPN*. For many of the athletes, the Swimsuit Edition was problematic because it is geared towards a predominantly male audience and exclusively features women (mostly models) in revealing bikinis. Some pointed out that while only a few athletes appear in the Swimsuit Edition, these athletes are almost never depicted in a way that represents their sport. Rather, it is strictly about sex appeal. On the other hand, the athletes were much more accepting of the Body Issue. The athletes felt that this issue tastefully celebrates the athletic physique by featuring all types of bodies and highlighting their strength and muscularity. The interviewees also praised the Body Issue for equally representing men and women and posing the athletes in action based on their sport. The athletes gave the most feedback regarding their reactions to the Body Issue. However, each photograph featured in the magazine is different and may not elicit the same response from everyone. Therefore, when I asked the participants to comment on the Body Issue, they might refer to a few standout images, while I considered a completely different set of photographs. In this way, asking the interviewees about the Body Issue may have been too general of a question and too broad of a medium for consideration.

In general, the women who had not posed nude were accepting and complimentary of the athletes who had been featured in the Body Issue or some sort of similar photography. As athletes themselves, they discussed the immense amount of time and energy female athletes dedicate to their bodies to stay in shape and excel at their sport. Therefore, showing off the body

is a mere reflection of this hard work. Overall, these eight interviewees felt it was up to the athlete to make decisions regarding her body.

The athletes who posed for the Body Issue or posed nude for a different publication were asked about their experience doing that type of media. Each woman made sure to point out that it was *her* decision to do the photo shoot. When analyzing those statements from a traditional feminist perspective, it can be interpreted that these women felt empowered by deciding to reveal their bodies to the world when, where, and how they chose. Additionally, the women described the photo shoot as a way to show off the body they worked so hard to achieve and an opportunity to become even more comfortable and confident with themselves and with their bodies.

Soccer Player 1: That day I got to just let it go and just say this is me and I felt very free... I felt it was a really empowering moment for me.

It would be easy to approach these comments from a traditional feminist perspective and claim that female athletes sexualize themselves by posing nude. However, it would not be fair to the athletes unless I considered the alternatives. For most of these women, being an athlete is a career and a lifestyle. They train day in and day out to become the best athlete possible and their bodies are a reflection of their hard work. Women in other professions display the results of their commitment and dedication to their careers, so why should an athlete be shamed for doing the same? Perhaps the athletes do not think about nude or revealing media as sexualizing or degrading, but rather, view it as an opportunity to receive recognition for their athleticism and their accomplishments in the sporting arena.

In addition to the positive feedback regarding nude photography, the idea that these types of images are beneficial for young girls, women, and the rest of society emerged as a common theme throughout most of the interviews. Most of the athletes felt like their athletic physique, being very strong and muscular, fell outside the accepted norm for the female body. Therefore,

they felt as though showing off and expressing confidence in athletic bodies would show people that a strong body is also “cool” and “sexy,” and that a woman does not need to be super thin to be beautiful. From this perspective, the athletes feel like they have a positive impact on societal expectations for women by potentially eliminating the stereotypes for a thin female physique.

Generally, the participants found it admirable for female athletes to embrace their strength and muscularity and display a certain level of pride in their bodies by showing it off to the world. Some participants embodied this confidence, while others envied it, but either way, the idea of empowerment was present through every interview. Based on their testimony regarding the general media coverage of female athletics, the discussion about the sexualizing media gave rise to a very interesting contraction.

As mentioned in the first section of this analysis, the athletes were very aware and critical of how the media portrays female athletes. Many of them expressed disappointment in the lack of media attention and the sexualizing nature of this coverage. What is more, most of the athletes were aware that a woman's beauty, body, and sex appeal were always discussed in conjunction with her athleticism. Her athletic triumphs alone were not newsworthy enough. The series of interview questions prompting these responses came before the athletes were given an opportunity to comment on more specific examples of sexualizing media, like the *ESPN Magazine* Body Issue and the *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition.

When I asked the participants about their reactions towards female athletes posing for these types of magazines, their attitudes were much different. The athletes had mostly positive things to say about their fellow athletes who posed nude and praised the female athletes who embraced their strong, athletic bodies. The interviewees who had posed nude or participated in a similar type of media described their experience as empowering. There was also a level of

awareness that in order to get exposure for their sport or for their individual athleticism, female athletes have to take advantage of any and all media opportunities, and many of the participants accepted this fact. So in terms of their attitudes towards the media and the requirements for receiving media attention, female athletes are faced with a double bind. Although the athletes are critical of the type of media attention they receive and do not necessarily feel comfortable undressing for the camera, they continue to indulge the media by agreeing to participate in this type of exposure and by supporting female athletes who do this type of media.

Although these athletes expressed a certain level of support for the women who chose to show off their bodies in the media, I was also interested in understanding each athlete's individual preferences for media exposure. I asked them to select their most and least preferred photo shoot settings from five options. Nine out of the twelve athletes most preferred to be featured in their uniform in their sporting arena, i.e., in the pool, on the track, on the basketball court, etc. By representing the athlete in her uniform and within her discipline, her athleticism is the focus of the photo shoot. When magazines and newspapers start to feature these athletes outside of their sport, it takes away from their athletic accomplishments, and she is no longer seen primarily as an athlete. Therefore, their responses indicate that the majority of the interviewees want to be featured in a way that best reflects their athleticism. Additionally, seven out of the eight women who had not done nude photography, chose nudity as their least preferred option for a photo shoot. Most said they would disagree to it altogether. And even one out of four athletes who had posed nude said she would not do it again. While the majority of the participants seemed to shy away from our current understanding of sexualizing media, all but one of the athletes expressed their support for female athletes who had posed for publications like *ESPN Magazine* Body Issue and *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition.

However, the contradiction of refraining from critiquing other athletes, while refusing to partake in sexualizing media deserves further explanation. It is possible that the athletes do not feel comfortable imposing their own values and beliefs onto other athletes, and so, the interviewee will not express her displeasure with this media choice in order to refrain from doing just that. Furthermore, the athletes may feel somewhat bonded to these women as fellow female athletes and do not want to break their loyalty to this community by speaking out against them. Therefore, the interviewee has no other choice but to express support for their teammates, friends, and fellow female athletes.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore three research questions in order to examine why sexualizing images of female athletes still exist. The first research question was concerned with what leads to the creation of the current media depictions of female athletes. Despite my initial speculation that the athletes' managers control their involvement in various media opportunities, all of the interviewees expressed a strong sense of agency over their media participation. With control over their own media decisions, the athletes revealed a need for media exposure in order to generate attention for women's sports and individual athletes. Therefore, the desire for attention and exposure is one contributing factor to the current media representations of sportswomen. The second research question explored why female athletes participate in sexualizing media. Closely related to the findings from RQ1, it became clear that the athletes agree to nude or revealing media opportunities in order to promote their sport and their individual athletic identity.

The final research question examined the athletes' reactions to the media depictions of sportswomen. Overall, the interviewees discussed how the media sexualizes female athletes,

gives preferential attention to conventionally attractive athletes, and downplays their athletic achievements in favor of trivial qualities or characteristics. However, despite this insight, the athletes praised those who participated in provocative or revealing media and most of the interviewees described this type of media as empowering. These emergent findings reveal a continuous media cycle that perpetuates the problematic media representations of female athletes.

The cycle begins with the athletes and their desire to gain media exposure. The athletes pursue various media opportunities to help them achieve this goal, but the available opportunities are often sexualizing. Then, the images circulate through the media sphere, they are seen by other athletes and by the public, and the athlete may experience the fame or attention she wanted. Other female athletes view this type of media as empowering and support the athlete's decision to show off her body. This support or unwillingness to say anything negative about the sexualizing media presents another link in the cycle. In essence, the athletes have their hands tied behind their backs. What else can they do but express support for their fellow female athletes? By understanding and accepting the fact that this type of media exposure is what it takes to become a famous female athlete, and then indulging the media by taking advantage of their sexist opportunities, the athletes help contribute their own problematic representations. Consequently, the most famous athletes who participated in this study were among the women who had posed nude. Until the media broadens their scope of interest and the athletes reject the media opportunities only interested in their bodies, and instead, demand attention accentuating their athletic feats, the cycle will continue and sexualizing depictions of female athletes will continue to clutter the media landscape.

There is still much to explore in regards to how and why the media produces these sexualizing images of female athletes and why the athletes continue to engage in these opportunities. Future research might assess female athletes' attitudes towards sexualizing media by utilizing more specific examples of sexualizing images. In this study, I asked the participants to comment on their feelings towards the *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition and the *ESPN Magazine* Body Issue. However, these publications produce hundreds of images and therefore, one athlete's perception of these magazines might be completely different from another's. By showing the athletes a particular set of images, the researcher might provoke more specific and accurate responses. When it comes to the media process, specifically, how the athletes and the media interact after a photo shoot, several athletes discussed the lack of control or input they have regarding which images appear in the publication. Rather, the publication conducting the photo shoot exercises complete control over the selection process. An industry study might explore this aspect of the media process in order to further reveal the production of sexualizing images of female athletes.

Through this research, I had the opportunity to speak with twelve incredibly smart, talented, and humble women, who remain some of the best and most accomplished athletes in the world. While women in sport have made progress throughout the past few decades, female athletes still do not receive the recognition they deserve. To this day, the media underrepresents and over sexualizes female athletes, who rarely appear in the media unless they are exceptionally beautiful or controversial. Although the athletes comprehend the distorted nature of this media coverage, they realize media participation is required in order to become a recognizable name in sports and in the media. This research merely scratches the surface on the media processes and communication that take place to create the sexualizing representations of female athletes. The

continuous cycle occurring between the media and athletes provides one explanation for why these problematic portrayals persist in Western culture. One can hope that someday the rest of society will see these athletes for more than just their beauty and sex appeal and appreciate them for their strength, skill, and distinguished athleticism.

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Appendix A

Initial Participation E-mail

Hi [name of agent/media representative],

I hope this note finds you well. My name is Rachel Berkal and I am a senior in the Communication Studies program at the University of Michigan. During my final year at U-M, I have been working on an honors thesis, focusing on media representations of female athletes. For this research project, I am looking to recruit female Olympians to participate in a brief phone interview, lasting approximately 20 minutes. [Name of athlete] has been carefully selected as a potential participant due to her remarkable athletic career and her achievements at the [year] Olympics. In addition to the other Olympic athletes I have interviewed, [athlete's] participation would have a significant impact on my research. I'm sure you receive requests such as this all the time, but it would really mean a lot to me if I could speak with this extraordinary woman for just 20 minutes.

If [athlete] is interested in participating, please contact me via e-mail at rlberk@umich.edu or by phone at [\(248\) 505-6267](tel:(248)505-6267).

Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Rachel Berkal

*Context of the e-mail would change slightly if the athlete was being contacted directly

Appendix B

Participant Information Sheet

Participation in a Research Study **MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE OLYMPIANS**

You have been invited participate in a research study about media representations of female athletes, due to your athletic achievements in the Olympic Games.

By agreeing to be part of this research study, you have been asked to participate in an interview with Principal Investigator (PI), Rachel Berkal. The interview will take place over the phone, unless the participant lives within 20 miles of Ann Arbor, MI, in which case, a personal interview may be requested. The interview will last approximately 20 minutes.

Your testimony will be kept confidential between the PI and the Faculty Advisors. In the final report, your name will be omitted and replaced with a pseudonym. At the onset of the interview, you will be asked for permission to record your testimony. Recording the interview will allow the PI to accurately analyze the testimony and select exact quotes to appear in the final report. If you do not feel comfortable recording the interview, please inform the researcher at this time.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. During the interview, you may choose not to answer any question.

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact Rachel Berkal, Principal Investigator at rlberk@umich.edu, or Scott Campbell, Faculty Advisor at swcamp@umich.edu.

The University of Michigan Institutional Review Board (IRB) Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences has determined that this study is exempt from IRB oversight.

Thank you for your time and your participation in this research.

Appendix C

Participant Biographies

Softball Player

Competed in the 2000 Sydney Olympics on the USA women's softball team. She has participated in very little individual media coverage. Currently, she coaches the women's softball team at the University of Michigan.

Soccer Player 1

Played on the USA women's national soccer team from 1988-2004. She has done a lot of high exposure media during her professional career and recently appeared on a new reality game show on ABC. She posed nude for Maxim before the 2000 Summer Olympics.

Track Runner 1

Ran for the University of Michigan before she went on to become an Olympic athlete. She competed for the United States in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Although she is well known in the track and field world, she has had little public exposure as an athlete.

Track Runner 2

Although she is an American, Track Runner 2 ran for Great Britain in the 2012 London Olympics. She currently coaches at the University of Michigan. While she is well known in her sport, she has received relatively little high exposure media attention.

Track Runner 3

While she was born and raised a US citizen, Track Runner 2 competed for Nigeria. She coaches at the University of Michigan and has not received a significant amount of media attention.

Basketball Player 1

Graduated from the University of Michigan in 2010 after playing on the women's varsity basketball team for all three years of her undergraduate education. Upon graduating, she played on the Canadian women's national team and competed at the 2012 London Olympics.

Water Polo Player 1

Born and raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Water Polo Player 1 played on the U of M women's water polo team before competing on team USA in the 2008 and 2012 Summer Olympics. In 2010, she posed nude for the *ESPN* Body Issue with some of her teammates from the women's national team.

Water Polo Player 2

Competed on the USA women's water polo team at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. While she has had little no media exposure outside of water polo, she did compete on a reality game show on ABC.

Water Polo Player 3

Played for the USA women's water polo team at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. She has not participated in a lot of high exposure media.

Gymnast 1

Competed on the 2008 USA Olympic gymnastics team. She has participated in several high exposure media opportunities, including a nude spread for the *ESPN* Body Issue and signing as a spokesmodel for CoverGirl cosmetics.

Gymnast 2

Competed on the 2008 USA Olympic gymnastics team. Has not received a lot of high exposure media outside of the gymnastics.

Rower 1

Rowed for the USA Olympic team at the 2012 London Olympics. She has received press attention because her grandfather was the coach of a NFL team. She also posed nude for the "Empowered by You" campaign for the Seven Bar Foundation.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

1. What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview or photo shoot?
For example: Who is in contact with the publication conducting the interview; Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot; How do you decide if you're going to participate or not? Can you give an example of when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot?
2. When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in?
3. Are there any topics you dislike discussing or refuse to discuss with a reporter?
4. Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? You, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?
5. What is your impression of how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?
6. Hypothetical example: You are approached by a magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two-page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph?
7. If you had a choice of being photographed:
 - a. In uniform on the court
 - b. In uniform off the court
 - c. In casual dress in a neutral setting

- d. In figure flattering dress in a neutral setting
- e. Nude

What would you prefer and why? Are you opposed to any of the options and why?

8. Do you think it is possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye? How would you define "femininity"?
9. How do you feel about female athletes posing for the *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit edition, where the athletes are featured in bathing suits, or the *ESPN Magazine* Body Issue, where athletes pose in the nude? Do you feel differently about one magazine over the other? Have you or would you ever pose for either magazine? Why do you think female athletes are motivated to pose for these types of magazines?
10. Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in the media? Explain.

Appendix E

Transcribed Interviews

- Interviewer in italics/Interviewee in plain text
- Inaudible speech is marked by ---- (unless noted otherwise)

Softball Player

What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview or photo shoot? Who is in contact with the publication conducting the interview? Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot? How do you decide if you're going to participate or not?

We had a sports information director who was in charge of our team, who set up all interviews and photo shoots. So he would approach us and let us know and I suppose we always had the option to decline them but I don't know that any of us ever did.

Ok, would you know ahead of time like what kind of things they were interested in or who was doing the interview, or would you hear any of their questions ahead of time or anything like that?

No.

Can you give an example of when you may have denied participation? Or you said that usually didn't happen?

A time we would have denied...I suppose if it was something we were uncomfortable with. That was never an issue for me, I don't know if it was ever an issue for any of my teammates.

When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in the most?

Really they're pretty interested in what was going on out on the field. Most of our interviews were related to the games that had occurred and there were occasional interviews that wanted to know background on our softball careers and that sort of thing.

Would it depend, if you were to be interviewed right after a game, a sports publication would be interested in what just happened, but what about an interview that might have taken place with a magazine, like Teen People or something, did you guys ever have any interviews that were outside the sporting arena?

I never did.

Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? You, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?

I would say it would be equal parts me and equal parts interviewer. I tend to let them direct the interview however they see fit, unless it were to ever veer into a topic I wasn't comfortable with and then I would pretty much take over and just say no and whatever, I'm not interested in answering that question, or just kind of ignore the question and give the answer that I want to give. A governing body had put us through some media training... this was a long time ago, so I don't completely remember everything. We went through media training and they kind of taught us how to get our message out there of what we wanted to say, regardless of the question that being asked. And that we could feel comfortable to say...you know when I'm not comfortable answering that question or I'm not comfortable with this photo shoot, and you know making it known that we had every opportunity to say no I'm not going to do that.

And what sort of topics would push that limit for you? What sort of topics do you dislike discussing with a reporter?

Just anything that's real personal. For me it was more of, if you're interviewing me it's pretty much going to be about softball and that's how it's going to be.

What is your impression of the how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

Well I definitely think certain female athletes are definitely depicted based on their sex appeal. But not all female athletes, you know. I think that, obviously, the female athletes who are considered hot or sexy or beautiful, unfortunately, they are held to a different standard than female athletes who aren't considered that. And so they are often judged on their looks and often I don't believe that their talent is appreciated as much as say a female athlete who isn't judged for her looks. I don't remember the rest of your question.

How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

Oh I think it's pretty universal that male athletes are judged primarily on their athletic prowess. They're not devalued if they're pretty boys or whatever you want to say, whereas women are often discredited because they are good looking and haven't won the big championship or something like that. I think there's definitely a double standard.

Would you say that more attractive, by conventional standards, female athletes that are perceived to be more beautiful, do you think they receive more attention for their looks or their athletic abilities?

I think it's a little bit of both. I think they receive more attention period than less conventionally attractive women. I think that often the...I don't really know what comes first, are they receiving the attention because they're beautiful or are they receiving the attention because they're great athletes. Because if they're just another pretty face they wouldn't necessarily be in these situations where you know they're recognized for their athletic talents. So I don't know which comes first, but I think that they both work together to create greater media attention for attractive female athletes, than less conventionally...less attractive female athletes, let's put it that way.

Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph?

Well I'd definitely want to be depicted for my strength, which would be my strength, you know I'm not the slender you know slim model type figure, so I'd want to look strong and athletic. I'm not interested in showing a lot of skin or anything like that.

What kind of clothes?

I'd probably want to be in my uniform, because that's what I'm most comfortable in.

What kind of setting would you prefer?

I never really thought about it. It probably wouldn't matter to me whether I was on the field or in the studio.

And would you prefer to have your hair and makeup done?

Um...that wouldn't bother me too much, I would probably be in favor of that.

And you said you would want to highlight your strength and your athletic ability...

Yes.

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. *In uniform on the court*
- b. *In uniform off the court*
- c. *In casual dress in a neutral setting*
- d. *In figure flattering dress in a neutral setting*
- e. *Nude*

What would you prefer and why? You can pick more than one.

A and B would probably be most preferred, C would be fine, casual clothes. What was D?

Figure flattering clothes in a neutral setting.

I mean if it's flattering than sure I don't have a problem with that, and E would not happen.

Ok, so my next question would be, do you oppose any? So E, you would definitely be opposed?

Yes. I'm opposed to it for me, I'm not necessarily opposed to it for other people.

Yeah that's what I mean. So perfect. My next question is, do you think it is possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

Yes.

And how would you define femininity?

I think that it's...I don't necessarily think there's one definition for it. I haven't really spent a whole lot of time thinking about specifically what it is. But I think that for me, it can be a number of things, it's just reflecting your inner strength.

Do you feel like you have a balance between your femininity in your athletic life versus your personal off the field life?

Yeah I'd say...yes...I'd say there's a balance.

And how do you maintain that balance? Or is it just kind of your natural...

It's just who I am. I don't feel like I'm a different person off the field than on the field. I mean on the field than yeah I'm competitive and I'm playing to win, but I don't really feel like femininity or even masculinity come into play there, it's who you are. You're either a competitor or your not it has nothing to do with male or female.

How do you feel about female athletes posing for the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition, where the athletes are featured in bathing suits, or the ESPN Magazine Body Issue, where athletes pose in the nude?

I think that they're fairly different from each other. As far as the swimsuit, the Sports Illustrated magazine, there are very few actual athletes in there. It's seems to be mostly models and occasionally they'll put an athlete in there. And if an athlete wants to pose for that, then more power to her. As far as the Body Issue goes, I actually think the Body Issue is a little bit better representation of athletes' bodies in general. They pick athletes from a wide range of sports...they do male and female, from what I've seen. And they pick all different types of bodies. You'll see thick ones, you'll see thin ones, you'll see...I feel like they portray a more, more realistic image of athletes' bodies. It's not completely realistic, but it's more so to me, than the swimsuit models, swimsuit magazine, which seems to be a little thin, waif like models.

I was going to ask, do you feel differently about one magazine over the other? So from what I've heard, you feel more comfortable with the way the athletes are depicted in the Body Issue than the Swimsuit Edition?

Yeah.

Would you ever pose for either magazine?

Not likely.

Why do you think female athletes are motivated to pose for these types of magazines?

Probably money and publicity.

Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in an article or professional photograph?

Oh I'm sure that I have, but if I were trying to remember any specific examples right now, I'd probably have to think about that.

I don't need specific examples, but if there's an athlete that sticks out in your mind where you're thinking wow, I love the way she represents herself, or wow I really don't like the way she's representing herself.

Yeah I definitely have strong opinions about that. But if I'm trying to think of examples, I don't really have any at this time.

You as a coach, how do you coach your athletes on how to represent themselves when they're approached by a local newspaper, or when they're representing themselves on behalf on the university, or any time that they would be in the media spotlight, how do you coach them to represent themselves.

Well we talk to them a lot about representing the block M and everything Michigan stands for, class, integrity... those kinds of values. And some of the other things we'll talk to them about, especially in terms of social media or interviews, is would you want your mom and dad to read this? Would you want your mom and dad to see this? Those kinds of things, and to always have that in the back of their minds, because that's usually a good indicator of yes this is appropriate, or no this is not appropriate. But we always tell them to just try to represent us with class, represent the team, because they're representing the team and they're representing Michigan, they're not just representing themselves.

And how would you feel if one your athletes were to appear in the Swimsuit Edition or the body issue?

Well I'm not convinced that Michigan sports information would allow that, so I'm pretty sure that wouldn't happen.

So at the college level it's sort of like you don't really get a choice in that sort of thing?

I don't think so.

Soccer Player

What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview or photo shoot? Who is in contact with the publication conducting the interview? Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot? How do you decide if you're going to participate or not?

Well I think it happens multiple ways, I don't think there's one specific way it happens. For me, it either...the request comes directly to me, or like you, you correspond either with my husband or an agent and we agree upon a time. It's actually pretty simple.

Can you give an example of when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot?

I think the majority of that has been OK, there have been times when let's say there was just a conflict either traveling for playing or just a conflict in the schedule, and then those kind of things can be worked out and probably rescheduled.

When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in?

I think that the range is pretty severe. It can be anywhere from talking about what's it like to participate in the Olympic games, or what is it like to be considered a female icon in sports, what it is like to play sports in a male dominated society, is it OK that women are objectified in sports versus their male counterpart, I mean gosh, the list goes on and on. What was it like to be in the moment, are you happy that you celebrated by removing your jersey in the World Cup. It runs a gamut.

Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? You, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?

Yeah, I think that's a really good question because I did have a situation before the '99 World Cup where our PR representative, Aaron Heifez from US soccer, and I had a feeling that a photo shoot would go one way and it went completely the opposite way. So in that circumstance, it felt like the photographer and the magazine had control of the situation. Until we talked about it and decided that we can either leave or we can stay, and then I think in that way, we kind of then took over so to speak the decision on being there or not being there. But I think in some instances the person who is doing the interview has control only because they're the ones asking the questions, but as soon as they ask the questions, I believe the athlete or the individual takes over because they can answer those questions in any way they like, or they don't have to answer them at all.

Are there any topics you dislike discussing or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

I'm a fairly open book, to be honest with you Rachel. I think there was a topic that passed over during the Olympic games where something via social media kind of blew up at me, and I had to decide: is it important for me to respond, or is it important for me to let it go? I think it's really interesting if you compare and contrast the US women's national team in '99 in the world cup versus 2011 in the world cup and then let's say the Olympic games in 2012 and social media is

such a huge part of our daily lives now and how people use that media to relay or to...relay information, to share information, to make things up...it's really...it's a very powerful tool and a very dangerous tool at the same. But at the end of the day, each individual is responsible for answering the questions or not answering the questions, or putting information out in the universe, because once its out there there's no getting it back.

What is your impression of the how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

I kind of equate that question to a question about...why is women's soccer better than men's soccer. And what I mean by that is, men's soccer in our country is behind the 8-ball because the rest of the world started playing at the international level much before our team did. Whereas, our women's team started virtually around the same time other great countries had been participating women's world cups and Olympic games, and so we've had fortune and we've won some, but we didn't start behind anybody. So that's difficult...I relate that to men's sports and women's sports. Men's sports has been around for a while, it has this grass roots hold on young families and young kids and likewise, it dominates and it determines our social...our athletic social and social calendars and the way we look at sports is through a microscope of men's sports. And so that's beginning to shift and I think what's happening is that like in business, when a woman is seen as powerful, sometimes there's misperception about who she is or what she should be because it has been, in the past, out of the norm. So I think that's changing. You know, 1996, I think if you look at the Olympic games previous and then you look at '96 and then '96 going forward, the female athlete was the dominating athlete in the '96 Olympic game in Atlanta, especially for the US. If you're looking at our egocentric perspective. Women's basketball, soccer, softball, gymnastics, track and field, the list goes...water polo I believe, the list goes on and on about gold medals and doing well and that's really where the female athlete exists most because the professional leagues are so few and far between here, and I still think there's an uphill battle because there's always the word sexuality, or sexism, and that's how I think a lot of people come to view women's sports first, versus come to view the sport and then maybe they might say something else, where they don't do that in men's sports.

And in your opinion, do you think women's sports is progressing towards being on an equal playing field with men's sports?

Is that question a dollar and cents question, is it an on the field question, is that just an overall general question?

Maybe not dollar and cents, but just overall, in terms of the way that sports fans perceive...

Here's what I believe and here's what I heard and so I take this as, it wasn't a survey I put out, but just the amount of information I've been given over my career is that people really value watching women play sports for the essence of the game, for the teamwork, for the camaraderie, for all the things I think they truly love about sports. The hardwork and the dedication and the loyalty, all of those good things that I think are really coveted, the things you want to teach your kids. But I think what happens is, people are also drawn to sensationalism, and money, and glitz, and power, and media, and that's more important. So I think they live in almost two universes.

But women's sports is gaining more popularity. I mean geez let's look at...it would be interesting for you because I don't know the numbers...but what were the numbers that viewed Nascar Indianapolis 500 when Dana Kilpatrick was sitting on the pole, probably pretty high. And I think well here's a woman who's...she's not the first female to have driven in nascar, but the first women to hold pole and if there's a men's sport out there, that's gotta be one of them. So things are changing, are they changing for everybody, no. But I think change is very difficult for people, it's hard to swallow, it's uncomfortable. I love change, I think change is awesome, it keeps me on my toes, but I think it's really hard for some people, because they're so set in their ways that they grew up or they were told about something and I think women's sports kind of suffers from that. And ultimately, half the population is female and I just can't see it going backwards and I only see it going forwards.

Yeah and that's definitely a positive outlook and I hope it goes that way as well.

Our women's soccer league has started again for the third time now since 2001 and I hope that it's the league I dreamed it would be the first time because there's enough young girls playing soccer, there's enough families going every weekend, there's enough quality for people to go and watch.

Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph?

This is so funny. I think it's funny Rachel because I have a group of women that I've encouraged to come out in the mornings and work out after we drop our kids off because it's really my way of creating a social network at my son's school because he's new. And I find it interesting...I just immediately flash on these 10-12 women and the different answers I would get from them. And some would be glamorous and others would be casual comfortable. I think for me, you say hair and makeup...but I'm really good at a ponytail and I don't do makeup very well...so it probably wouldn't be anything with too much makeup, but it would be nice to have someone do my hair...that would be a bonus. But it would probably be surrounded...it would be outside surrounded by my friends and my family, probably an activity driven shoot, where we were playing or enjoying one another's company. I think maybe I got that from my parents who encouraged me to participate in sports and it wasn't just about me, it was about the whole group... and teammates and families and...I'm trying to give that to my son about how special those times are, and I think that for me that's what it would probably be...teammates, friends, family.

Ok, so kind of incorporate all aspects of your life.

Yeah.

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. *In uniform on the court*
- b. *In uniform off the court*
- c. *In casual dress in a neutral setting*
- d. *In figure flattering dress in a neutral setting*
- e. *Nude*

What would you prefer and why? Are you opposed to any of the options and why?

I am not opposed to any as long as it's a personal choice. Having done a photo shoot...like I said... that was unexpected and very revealing...I realize quickly that what I do is not a reflection on my team, it's just a reflection on me and either my self confidence and my decision. If I had to choose only one of those, if they could find the perfect clothes that fit comfortably and I would never had to feel like I had to pull something or tweak something, maybe I'd go casual because I've had enough in uniform stuff I guess.

Do you think it is possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

Oh I think so. I think it's very difficult for people to merge those two things, or it has been because I think people view sports as being powerful and strong and explosive and dynamic. And I think the conventional definition of feminine doesn't have those words in it. But I think that's changed, I think now women who are powerful and strong and elegant and beautiful are also athletic, I've always thought that, but I think about track and field athlete as they glide around the track, I mean gosh what's more beautiful than that.

And how would you define femininity?

Oh gosh...I don't know...what does the dictionary say?

Maybe any qualities or characteristics you associate with your femininity or the femininity of women you admire?

Yeah I think, intelligence, confidence, self awareness, a comfort level with who you are, these are aspects ...and it's not like your 5'10" or blonde hair, or...they're not physical traits. I think that's what makes this so difficult for individuals and for the mass public, which is what does that mean. It's like looking at art, some people will look at a picture and fall in love with it and others will be like no that's the worst thing I've ever seen. Well anyway, I think femininity is a comfort level of self awareness, confidence, freedom to love yourself and I think beauty is truly inside out.

Are you familiar with the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition or the Body Issue by ESPN Magazine?

Oh yes.

I didn't have a lot of time to do research on you, but have you participated in either?

No, I haven't participated in either, but I've done similar types of photo shoots.

How do you feel about female athletes posing for the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition, where the athletes are featured in bathing suits, or the ESPN Magazine Body Issue, where athletes pose in the nude?

Again, having been in that circumstance myself, that's a personal choice and I think when I see somebody who does that I see a person who has come to terms with who they are and feels comfortable enough to show it off to the world. I'm not against it on any level whatsoever.

Do you feel differently about one magazine over the other?

The thing about the SI Swimsuit Edition that sometimes bothers me is there's not a good balance of male/female and also that it becomes less about the swimsuits than it is about the body. I think the body issue, for me, is about the body. Here's a professional who has dedicated themselves to their craft and becoming an elite, and perhaps the best in the world. And I think the SI one is kind of like... the pretense is that it's about bikinis and it's really not.

Would you ever pose for either magazine?

At this point in my life, probably not. Maybe I could do the middle-aged body issue.

Why do you think female athletes are motivated to pose for these types of magazines?

I can only speak for myself, and so, I think for me having been faced with that question, the answer became...there were several questions, what am I afraid of, and what message can I send, and when I answered both of those, to me they were both positive responses, and I thought well, if it encourages someone to feel good about themselves or to realize that... you only get one time to go around, so it's like why don't you either make the most of it, or embrace what you have and not worry about what you don't.

And when you had your photo shoot, how did you feel about while that was happening and taking place and then when the pictures came out in public...

I felt very uncomfortable at first, and then I realized I just needed to embrace it and to enjoy and to be OK with...I'm not a supermodel, I'm not a poster girl, I'm just me and I'm the same person I was before I did the shoot and I'm the same person after. I chose to embrace it and of course my teammates gave me a rash of crap about it and they parodied it and made a funny video and we all laughed, and it was good, it was positive and I think it secretly told the majority of them that I hope that they would have the courage to try it, to do that because it was really kind of a life altering situation because as somebody who didn't grow up being comfortable in a bathing suit, or being in public, and then that day I got to just let it go and just say this is me, and I felt very free.

And what publication was it for?

Maxim. It was in promotion of the '99 World Cup.

Was that the same photo shoot you were speaking of earlier, where it you had an uncomfortable situation with....

Yes, yes.

And eventually it was smoothed over?

Yeah, I mean after we found out what it was. It was like, well we have a choice, we can either take control of this, or we can leave, or we can feel uncomfortable the whole time and (can't understand the rest of this).

[Ends for her flight]

We talked briefly about the Maxim shoot before, but it was kind of loud so I couldn't really hear you. So I wanted to ask you a couple more questions about that. How did you decide whether or not you were going to do the Maxim shoot?

Well, we had arrived at the studio in New York City and after it was explained to us what they had envisioned for the shoot, Aaron Heifetz and I...I pulled him aside and I was like hey this is not what you told me it was going to be, and he's like this is not what they told me either, and so of course, the photographer's is telling you it's going to be done in this and it will come across this way to the viewer, so of course trying to talk me into doing it and reassuring me and showing me other photographs that he had done. Part of what was intimidating was that there were other people in the room and to be somebody who has a little bit of...I wouldn't say I'm shy, but I wouldn't say I'm flamboyant either, so there was a lot of hesitation about it. I think ultimately, I sat by myself for a few minutes and I just said OK what statement can I make and what can I learn from this situation, and after thinking about that I decided that I wasn't taking it for the team, I wasn't doing it because I felt that if I didn't do it would be back for women's world cup or women's us soccer, but I did it because I felt like I could make a positive statement about this is what you get, this is who you are, you have to be OK with that and you have to take ownership of that, and I felt it was a really empowering moment for me and the shoot was uncomfortable at times, I was probably laughing more than anything and when they say things like give this look or do this and you're like I have never done that before, so it was kind of funny in a way too. So ultimately, it was just about coming to grips with just be comfortable with yourself and put yourself out there and you're going to be fine.

And was it the photos where you're nude, but holding the soccer balls?

Yes, correct.

So how were your expectations different from what you and Aaron had to what they explained to you when you got there?

I had done an ad with Nike about the material they were using, a new material they were going to be using for their jerseys and for their sports division in the women's line about it's like your

second skin, it almost feels like you're wearing nothing. And so it was like back pose where you don't see anything from the front, but it's just my bare back. And that's kind of how they sold it to us and it would be in similar vain so I was like sure, I've already done that, that's not a problem, I have no issues with that. And then it turned into us not really entirely...the whole thing, so that's where the lack of communication or miscommunication happened.

Ultimately, do you feel like you made the decision to participate? Aaron kind of let you do that?

I think Aaron was...his position as PR is to get PR and ...for the national team. At the same time to protect and make judgement calls on whether something is good, bad, indifferent, whatever. And so the both of us were like whoa what do we do? He's like do you want to do this? And I'm like I don't know if I want to do this. And so we kind of talked through it a little bit and I think at the end of the day, the only one who wasn't in the room was Aaron because we had a friendship and we had a working relationship and I asked him if he wouldn't mind stepping out of the room.

You said earlier, you ended up embracing it and you ended up doing. Are you happy that you ended up doing it and having the photos out in public?

Ultimately, I'm fine with it. I had to reconcile with feelings right then and there before I did it, I had to think about that and determine that no matter what happened from that point forward, how would I handle any questions. And ultimately, I think there's a positive side to it, the term it was tastefully done... I've heard that before, ultimately, there's nothing shown that would have be shown with clothes on, so really, you don't see anything. So in that way, I'm comforted it by that. And well if anybody ever has any questions, I give them the same answer that I gave you and while I'm sure at some point I'll have this conversation with my young son and... we're talking about decisions and making decisions and being thoughtful about them.

Your Maxim shoot aside, you've received a considerable amount of media attention for the way you celebrated your win in the '99 World Cup. But all that aside, how did you feel about the monumental press coverage you received from that moment and that iconic photo?

Gosh, there are so many feelings about that moment. I think the coverage is interesting. I think it's really interesting to take moments whether it's in sports or history, you look at moments that are kind of selected from the bigger picture. I think why that moment became so popular, because beyond just the celebration...I didn't plan on that happening and I always explain it as if you take the perfect scenario whatever it is you're passionate about it and you've dreamt about it as a kid and you've thought about it over and over in your head and all of a sudden it comes true, exponentially by a million or more emotions are just through the roof and it's not just you celebrating, it's 90,000 plus people and your teammates and you never know what you're capable of doing under those circumstances. And so, I think for people to know that the genuine place that celebration came from is really important, it wasn't contrived it was planned out, very spontaneous. And then the attention about it is interesting. Because after that I've had the luxury of doing a lot of great things. I have influenced a lot of peoples lives in a positive way and that tells me a big picture perspective about how can that celebrity moment be translated into action. I started a non-profit with a friend and a colleague eight years ago we service (can't

understand) on the playground and we tell them to be strong and be their own potential and take care of their health and wellness and things like that have sprung from this celebration and I think the media attention is interesting because all of sudden people want to know your opinion and they want to know what your doing and all of a sudden things that you do matter more than they did the day before, and I always found that very fascinating. I'm a regular girl, I'm neighborhood, I grew up just like anybody else and I just happened to have this great fortune that of being on a group of incredibly talented people, players...and my job was to kick it and because of practice and hard work and passion...I was successful. And now all of a sudden it's just like BANG...what do you eat for breakfast, what to you do in the afternoons, what do you eat late at night, what's your favorite music, what's your political affiliation, what do you think about this, is there global warming? So all of these things. It's really interesting how the media can hang on to something like that and create buzz whereas maybe the day before there wasn't any.

Yeah and it's great to hear that not only have you embraced your stardom, but have also channeled that into positive things like your non-profit and have become such a role model for young girls and young athletes.

If you don't mind me interjecting my own little bit here...I think that's one thing that maybe...it doesn't set males and female athletes apart because there's a ton of male athletes who do great, charitable things in their community. I think the female athlete in my eyes, that's something we do because it grows our sport more it brings attention to what it is we're doing, in a way, that doesn't exist on the men's side. It's like the money is not overflowing, the attention is not overflowing, it just seems to go hand in hand. I mean I can't tell you how many soccer clinics our national team did just to use a soccer field in training...or...just these genuine, organic kind of opportunities that have come out of these big game situations. It's really...for me, it's part of a reason I play sports, to share the game, and share the moments... (phone cuts out). I'm sure you got the gist.

Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in an article or professional photograph?

I think have strong feelings about the fact that I think women are forced to...deliberately or cultural, without being in your face...they have to show that they deserve to play sports. It can't just be about them being good, there's gotta be something else always attached to it. How does she look? What color did she choose to wear? Constantly there's talk about what's Serena, and Venus, and Anna all these athletes...what are they wearing, and what does their tennis dress look like, and golfers...what's their attire and what's your perspective on them...and their hair. There's always other components that I don't feel exist in the male athlete world...unless they choose for it to exist. For example, Dwayne Wade likes fashion and Westbrook...the other basketball player...he loves fashion. So people are talking about it...oh that's unusual...---- ...what's up with that, you don't wear glasses. But it's only because they've done that, they've put themselves out there in that way, whereas it's not quite the same on the female side. So for me, I feel really strongly about...can their actions speak louder than anything else...and it should be either judged, or criticized, or analyzed from that perspective.

Track Runner 1

What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview or photo shoot?

Typically it goes through my agent, so it's not usually a one on one approach with a media outlet of some kind. So usually it's filtered through my agent and then he asks whether or not I want to do it.

Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot?

Sometimes, yeah, sometimes they'll give me an idea of what they want to do, or I'll tell them if I don't want to do something.

How do you decide if you're going to participate or not?

Basically with photo shoots and things like that, I just want to work it around my training so I just don't want it to be interfering with my training at all. Interviews are pretty easy because you can do them over the phone, so it's more like if I don't have anything good to say then I'll typically be like, yeah I don't really want to talk.

But photo shoots, they take a little more time that would have to be scheduled around your training?

Yeah and especially since I used to do the steeplechase, they would always want me to go over hurdles and incorporate that somehow into the photo shoot, and that can be pretty tiring. Like I'll contact them and say, no I don't want to do hurdles or something, because they'll have you doing that for hours before...

Can you give an example of when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot? Besides scheduling reasons...

For personal reasons, in 2011, I was sick a lot of the year and so I just didn't really want to describe all of my sickness and put that public information out there. So I pretty much just said no to all news during that time.

When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in?

It depends on the media outlet because it's very...you have the super educated fans who are really into running, and so they'll ask really specific questions about my training, and then you get the totally clueless fan...or not even fans...but like if I was to be interviewed by ESPN or the New York Times or something like that, they really have no idea about track and field, so they'll ask me about my hair...they'll...you know, shit like that. Very superficial, or really in depth.

It's interesting that even ESPN would be asking those kind of questions.

Like those outlets, don't seem to do their homework as much. It's weird. You'd think the big media outlets would do more homework, but they don't really care about track and field, so typically in those scenarios they'll ask me really stupid questions.

So mostly like your appearance, personal life, things like that...

Yeah.

Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? You, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?

Probably me. Sometimes my coach will be there...especially like with photo shoots and stuff...and he'll help guide things. Like if I say I only want to this for 15 minutes, he'll cut it off at 15 minutes. But since my agent is in Boston and I don't live there, he's typically not at my interviews. So I'd say I have to be mostly in control of how things are going...steering information.

But when he is there...he kind of helps you...

My coach?

Your coach or your manager, would you say he takes a more active role when he's there.

Yeah, definitely.

Are there any topics you dislike discussing or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

I don't like talking about drugs because there's so much...like track and field is always about drugs...performance enhancing drugs...so I get a little frustrated when I get questions about that because I don't know I feel like it's already so pervasive in the media that I don't want to add more crap to it. And it seems like when people talk about drugs a lot, they typically are on them, like if they get really defensive. So I just avoid the topic in general.

What is your impression of the how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

I mean I think female athletes, in general, are more sexualized. And you can see a lot of that...just like my uniform...I run in a little crop top and small...basically underwear. And the men get to wear full singlets and longer shorts. So it's just like a lot more sexualized. I think in track and field, men get more attention than women. But it's way worse in other sports, so I almost really feel like I can complain about that. Because if you look at female basketball or something like that you, you get nothing, WNBA gets nothing. So I'd say for track, we actually get more than other sports, but it's still not as popular, obviously as men.

I was talking to another track and field runner who competed for Great Britain and she was telling me that you guys get to pick what your uniform in from a series of outfits. Can you comment a little on the fact that you guys get so many choices, whereas the men only have a few options, and you guys can pick from this crop top with bikini style bottom, or this crop top with these tiny shorts? How do you decide on what you wore and how do you feel about that as a track runner?

I think women have more fashion choices for sure and there's a bigger spectrum. Obviously I do crazy shit with my hair but there are other people who wear a lot of makeup and stuff, but men don't have that many options, or they don't explore them. There aren't too many outwardly gay men in track and field that I can think of, so I think that metro sexual look is not explored as much in track and field. So yeah we definitely get to choose more options in terms of what we race in and if we want to coordinate it with our hair and jewelry and all that stuff and women really work that aspect a lot more. And that's why track and field is more popular with women, we are sex objects, even though we're running slower.

Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph?

I think a lot of times you don't know what a photo is going to look like until you actually see it. So like during a shoot, a lot of times the ones I think are going to be good, end up not being that great. So I would just want to have control over the final say, which in previous ones that I've done, that hasn't been the case, like the magazine will come out and be like oh they chose that picture, not very excited. I'd say I'd want it to highlight fitness. Show people this what an elite athlete looks like, because I work my ass off all the time. So to highlight...you'd want to look good, like look really strong, powerful, yet still have a little bit of gracefulness to you. I'd want my hair looking good. I like it to match whatever I'm wearing or doing, so definitely want a coordinated outfit.

And you said you didn't always have an option over what final photo went in the magazine, so have you ever been given that opportunity to pick from what they shoot that day?

Not really. I think if I was a little more big time, I would be able to make those demands. But like since I don't have as many media opportunities, I'm not saying, no I can't do this if I don't get final say sort of thing, whereas if I was like Huesain Bolt, I'd be like hell no I'm not doing this.

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. *In uniform on the track*
- b. *In uniform off the track*
- c. *In casual dress in a neutral setting*
- d. *In figure flattering dress in a neutral setting*

e. Nude

What would you prefer and why? Are you opposed to any of the options and why?

I don't think I'd be opposed to doing a nude shoot at all. Yeah I think I would probably do it. I would probably go with either casual or figure flattering, off like in a neutral setting. Just because most of the media attention I get, I'm in my uniform. So people have already seen all that, so it's not that exciting, so I'd probably go for something that haven't seen, and see a different side of me.

Do you think it is possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

Yeah, absolutely. Do you know who Sonya Richards Ross is?

Yeah.

Like you see somebody like her, I mean she's beautiful and she really pulls off crazy big hair and looking really good, but then also is kind of a badass on the track. I think it's really possible to do both. And it becomes a little bit of a fine line when you see people who are like really overdoing the physical, like trying to be attractive but not really pulling it off when it comes to athletic ability, so I really think you have to focus on your athletics first and then look cute after.

How would you define "femininity"? What characteristics do you associate with your femininity or with women that you really admire?

See when I think about femininity, when I think about myself as a female, it's very different than how I think of people when I think of their femininity. So I'd say for me it's like having power and showing that you're strong, almost despite being a woman...which is probably not exactly the most positive read on that. For me, it's more like, growing up a woman...and wanting to be...like when I was young, I was almost jealous that I wasn't a guy, cause like in terms of athletic ability. But now I feel like I've owned being a woman a lot more. So I don't know yeah just having strength in different ways than men.

How do you feel about female athletes posing for the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition, where the athletes are featured in bathing suits, or the ESPN Magazine Body Issue, where athletes pose in the nude? Do you feel differently about one magazine over the other?

I feel like the Swimsuit Edition is more sexualized because it's typically more models. It's kind of just like any other magazine, in my opinion, it's not really all that different. Whereas, it's just kind of strange that it's in a sports magazine because it doesn't really mesh with what their doing. Although I used to look at it, like oh that's a cute bathing suit. Whereas with the body issue, I feel like they're taking athletes and trying to make them look more artistic. It kind of is a little bit like Greek statues, which I think is cool...making the athletes body more like a work of art. And I think it's pretty bold for a lot of people, some of the positions that they do...it's like, you're really putting yourself out there.

Why do you think female athletes are motivated to pose for these types of magazines?

I think because female athletes just don't really get that much play in media outlets. So if you do something like that you, you're going to be pretty well known for that. Like the high jumper...what is her name...the blonde one...she made the Olympics this year, but she was in *Playboy* like ten years ago. I'm totally blanking on her name, but everyone knows her from that now...

From Playboy.

Yeah from doing *Playboy*. Which is funny because she's not scandalous or promiscuous whatsoever. But she's just like really comfortable with her body and she just went for it. I think she was having trouble getting a sponsor, and then after that she was sponsored.

So it's more about exposure?

I think so...it probably gets more into the attention side of things too.

Have you or would you ever pose for either magazine?

I think I would...I'm not doing that shit for free...so I'm going through a divorce right now. But I was married. And my husband was like, you're never doing something like that so I think it kind of depends on who's in your life at the time. So I think he saw it more as like a representation of him and his family, and to me, it's more just about me. So I'm comfortable with myself and how I'm shown so I think I'm OK with it.

Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in the media?

That's a hard one. I can't think of anybody. I remember Marion Jones, when I was younger, did the Body Issue and I was maybe like 14 or something and so that kind of made an impression like I thought wow she's like super strong and powerful. But at the time, I was like she still doesn't quite look like a woman...so it's kind of at odds with that, not sure how to feel about a woman like letting go of complete femininity.

Track Runner 2

What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview or photo shoot?

They go through my agent, and he kind of is like the filter and kind of decides what's a good idea for me to do, and what's not a good idea for me to do. Because as we know, not all media is created equal. So once he kind of does that, then he talks to me and then I make the decision if I want to do a certain interview or not and then we just go from there.

Would you say it's pretty collaborative between the two of you?

Absolutely.

Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot?

Not me particularly, it's more of the agent's job. You can't really say, don't ask her this, don't ask her that. But he does kind of say, you know, what's the direction of the interview, what are you trying to accomplish, and just kind of get a good feel if they're a reputable source, and, stuff like that. So he has more so the contact before the interview than I do.

And if there was anything he was unsure about, would he come to you?

Absolutely. And there's been times when he's like, Tiff, you know, this might come up but I think it's a good opportunity. And I'll say no I'm not comfortable and I just won't do it.

Can you give an example of when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot?

Yeah, well in the past, you know, I compete for Great Britain, and there are tabloid magazines that kind of felt like, you know, I was not worthy of being on the British team, or whatever the case may be, they just have their own negative opinion. And more so, just to kind of sensationalize the story, they tend to make it juicier than what it was, stuff like that. So this one particular tabloid magazine in the UK, that had some really negative things to say about me, so I kind of obviously shut down all of their requests. But then there's a spinoff to them, that writes only on Sundays, and it's not the exact same editor of that publication, but they are a spinoff of it. And my agent was like you know, I think this would be a good opportunity, it's not the exact same, and I said absolutely not. Even if they're slightly affiliated with the other publication, I'm not doing it. So that's kind of an example of when I turned one down.

Would you say it's like a gossip magazine, this tabloid?

Yeah, it's a tabloid magazine. Like tabloids are a little different in the UK than they are here. People read them more in the UK than they do here in the states. Especially for like sports stuff.

Would you say in the UK, they take them as a more reliable source than we do here?

Yes. Absolutely, absolutely.

When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in?

They like hearing stories. They obviously like to hear about my performances and my opinions and my reflections on how I performed. But they also like to hear the back story, like how is your training going, what got you to this place, how's your diet, how's your new coach...just everything surrounding the performance.

Would you say that the types of thing they're interested in vary from the different types of publications they come from, if say a tabloid was interviewing you versus a more sports oriented magazine?

Absolutely. Whereas, you know, a more sports oriented magazine might focus more on numbers and figures and trends and just like raw material, like a tabloid will ask you 25 questions and you'll give 25 answers and one little thing that might sound controversial, despite everything else, they'll take that one small tidbit and make a story out of it, and just kind of take your words out of context and so yeah it's completely different and you have to be really careful with them.

Are there any topics you dislike discussing or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

Yeah. Absolutely.

And would that be more personal things? Or what types of things would you shy away from?

Well, I mentioned the whole issue with me switching allegiance and running for the UK. There was a British runner who had some really negative things to say about me, and she went to one of the tabloid magazines and wrote a really, really nasty article. And I know a lot of people wanted me to respond, or see how I would react to it, but I just completely ignored it and didn't even address the issue. So stuff like that, if they asked, how did you feel about her comments, I don't think I would entertain.

Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? You, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?

For me personally, I think a big mistake a lot of athletes make is that they let the interviewer control the flow and direction of the interview, but I think the more seasoned you become and the more experience you have, you realize that you are ultimately in control of what is said and what gets put out there. So for me, I have been learning what I feel comfortable answering and what I don't, and I'm pretty strict to that, so I think I control what gets put out there and what is published because if I don't say it, it's not going to get written. So I would say I have the most control over what is written about me.

Would you say you've gained that from experience, just like being an athlete for so long and having a lot of practice with these sorts things, is that how you developed this...

Yeah that and media training, where they kind of explain to you what to do and what not to do and ways to go about answering questions. So I would say with experience and training and just kind of more exposure.

What is your impression of the how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

I strongly feel that sex sells, obviously. And I feel that, you know, that it's a really big part of how women are portrayed in the media, and looks and charisma and personality, and stuff like

that, I would say a lot of times, kind of, are tied more to women, in my opinion, than male athletes in the media. Just cause like a woman could be a great athlete and could be doing really, really good things on the track or on the field or wherever her discipline is, but if she's not really the most attractive, or has the best body, or whatever the case, she may not get as much attention as someone else who might look better or have a better body or a better personality, or whatever the case may be. So I definitely think that plays a role in what we do and how we're portrayed.

And you said that does differ from men? In what ways?

Just cause I feel as though, their looks don't really matter as much in the media and in society in general. And that definitely does carry over into how they're portrayed. It's important, you know, people want to use attractive people in media coverage and for marketing purposes, but I think that definitely it is not as big of an issue for men as it is with women. Like men, I think they're performances speak louder than their appearances, than women.

Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph? Would your ideal photographs differ for a beauty/fashion magazine? If so, how?

I would definitely want to show off my body in a tasteful way, modest, yet tasteful, but yet I'm very proud of my body and all the work that we as athletes put into our bodies, and we use them everyday, so I think it's important for people to see that hard work pays off and being fit and being healthy is really cool and really important to your overall well-being. That being said, also I would like to, even though it would be like a sports thing for a sports publication, I would like to incorporate my pharmacy background somehow, maybe with like a white coat in one of the scenes or something, just because that's really important to me to. The fact that education has always been a staple in my life, and like, I love track with all of my heart, but I also love what I do on the professional side with pharmacy. And then I would also like to somehow highlight my performances on the track, maybe with a hurdle next to me or a medal, something around that nature, along those lines. And then I would like my hair and makeup to be fabulous as well.

So you would want to highlight both your athletic and then your education qualities, things that represent you as an athlete, as a student and as a person?

Yes.

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. *In uniform on the track*
- b. *In uniform off the track*
- c. *In casual dress in a neutral setting*
- d. *In figure flattering clothes in a neutral setting*
- e. *Nude*

What would you prefer and why? And are you opposed to any and why?

I would probably say in uniform probably on the track, that'd be pretty cool. Why? Because, again like our uniforms are pretty, I don't want to say revealing, but they are...that goes back to the whole point of I'm very proud of that, and it's acceptable to be dressed like that when you're competing, so I'd definitely like to show off my uniform, and my sponsor, Adidas, or the UK depending on what uniform we are wearing. And on the track just because that's where I spend a bunch of my time and that's where my magic happens, so I would really like to do that. And am I opposed to any of the others? I definitely would not pose nude, um, yeah. I personally wouldn't do that.

I was going to ask you, for your uniforms, women track runners have their stomach exposed...

You have the option, yeah. You can do your stomach exposed or you can wear the long shirt where your stomach is covered. Or you can even wear the unitard, where is one big piece. And then for the bottoms, you can wear the longer shorts, or the shorter shorts, or even like the brief cut like panties, kind of. So you have quite a bit of flexibility in there.

And do men have the same breadth of choices?

Not really. They don't show their stomachs. They can either do the one piece, or the shirt with the shorts, the tight shorts or the loose distance shorts. So they don't have as many options.

Do you think it is possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

I think times are definitely changing. In the past, I thought it was kind of one or the other. People kind of say either you're a woman or you're an athlete. But I think people are appreciating being fit and having muscles and being strong, but yet still being a woman and still being feminine at the same time, so I do think it is possible now, and I think society is embracing it more now than they have in the past.

And how do you balance your athleticism with your femininity?

For me, if I'm not at the track or on my way to the track or at a track meet, I don't like wearing athletic clothes. I like to dress up a lot. I like fashion and I like to show off my fashion sense in a way different than like spandex and sweatpants, so yeah, that's how I like to do it. I like to do my hair a lot and I like makeup as well.

How would you define "femininity"?

For me, or for women, or for?

It can be either really. Maybe some characteristics you associate with your femininity or femininity in general?

How would I define femininity? I think each woman has her own definition and I think femininity is just the feeling a woman gets when she wakes up. Like if she wants to be really natural and you know, not wear any hair extensions or any makeup and she feels beautiful, then to her that's feminine and that's fabulous, and she needs to embrace that. But you know, some women like to wear heels all the time and wear the big hair extensions and a lot of makeup and if that's what makes them feel beautiful, then that's feminine as well and needs to be embraced as well. For me, I like to change it up. Depending on how I feel that day, I might wear my hair extensions, I might not, I might go with makeup, without makeup, I might wear heels, it just depends on how I'm feeling. For me, femininity just encompasses how a woman's feels every day, it's something you don't have to chase, it's just in your being, it's just who you are.

How do you feel about female athletes posing for the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition, where the athletes are featured in bathing suits, or the ESPN Magazine Body Issue, where athletes pose in the nude?

The Swimsuit Edition is really cool. I think it looks really cute and it shows women athletes a lot of times in a different light and it kind of highlights the fact that being strong and being fit is cool, and being a woman at the exact same time and still be sexy and still regarded as beautiful in society's eyes. And the body issue, I think it's actually really tastefully done. I talked to my husband, and I was like, how would you feel if I posed for the body magazine, and he never really answered me, so I don't really know what his opinion is on it. I think it's really tasteful. I think again it highlights a woman's body in a tasteful manner, it's not like overly sexual, where it's like immoral or anything like that. So I think it really shows that athletic women's bodies are beautiful and really cool.

Do you feel differently about one magazine over the other?

Not really. Cause I think they're both really tastefully done. And I think as long as the women who are posing in those magazines feel comfortable doing what they're doing, then by all means, take it and run with it.

Would you ever pose for either magazine? You said you asked your husband about the Body Issue, but....

You know, it's funny, um, uh, kind of hard, because like the body magazine, yes they're nude, but they're not showing any body parts, it's more like silhouettes, you know, profiles. So I don't really, in my eyes, see that as the same as like a Playboy magazine or something like that, where it's for a completely different purpose. Would I personally do it... I don't know. I can't really say. I don't think it's bad and I don't think it's tasteful. But at the same time, I'm married, and I don't know, I don't know, I really don't know.

Why do you think female athletes are motivated to pose for these types of magazines?

I think it just goes back to that issue I mentioned before, that you know, athletic bodies are beautiful, and they feel comfortable in their own skin, and they're very proud of their bodies cause definitely put a lot of work into what we do, and they're just showcasing all of that hard

work, and yeah, I think that's a huge motivating factor. I'm not sure how much they get paid for that kind of stuff, I'm not sure of the money, I actually heard that it's not really that much, that it's more so for the satisfaction of saying hey this is my body, this is who I am, I'm proud of it, look how beautiful a woman's body can be and still be athletic and strong. So I think that's probably a motivating factor for a lot of women.

Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in the media?

Well, like Lola Jones, she's a really talented girl, really pretty girl. I think it wasn't as fair for her to be under such scrutiny this past Olympics, for you know being over hyped, just because she was embracing her personality and doing what she does. At the same token, I thought it was really even more unfair how they portrayed Dawn Harper as being this jealous, evil, conniving competitor who just wanted to run Lola down and kind of take away her shine, so I felt like both of those women embodied different things and they both are very talented in their own right. And I think it's just really important that women, we just aren't portrayed as catty, cause that's just the general stereotype, that women can't get along when they're catty, women hate each other, when in all actuality, both those women are really strong, really talented and I felt like they were both negatively portrayed, and I don't think that really helped out her cause, or our sport in any way. So that was a little bummer to watch because I love both those women personally and I know they both work really hard and that they're both really great athletes and it was just unfortunate how the media spins the story the way that they did.

Track Runner 3

Have you ever participated in an interview or a photo shoot with a newspaper or magazine?

Have I ever participated in an interview or photo shoot? Yeah.

Ok so, what happens when you are approached to an interview or a photo shoot? For example, who would be in contact with the publication conducting the interview? Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time? Things like that.

This past summer [the 2012 Olympics], if somebody wanted to do an interview they would just approach you and ask you a few questions. When I was in college and I would do interviews, they would let me know ahead of time and then I would get back to them if I had a problem with it, but I never really did.

Did you say they would contact you personally?

Sometimes you would do a meet and greet, or someone would approach me and want to do a quick interview, you would talk to them and then that's it. Or like when I was in college, they would contact my coach and then my coach would put them in touch with me and then we would conduct the interview that way.

Did it differ when you were competing in the Olympics?

Yeah, the interviews I did there, it was pretty much, people would approach you and ask if you wanted to do an interview and if you did, you did, and if you didn't, you didn't have to. I got approached to do some interviews, and sometimes I would say no I don't want to talk right now. But yeah, there it was pretty much people approaching you and asking you if you wanted to do an interview.

Do you have an example, or could you give an example of a time when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot?

Yeah, it was after I competed, I didn't go well, and you know, I just didn't want to talk to the interviewers.

Yeah that's understandable; you probably didn't want a microphone shoved in your face at that point. So when you're being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers most interested in?

You're talking about specifically during the Olympics, or like, just in general?

Say around the time you were competing in the Olympics.

How your training is going, how you're preparing, what you're excited about, what you know, how you feel about the competition, what you expect from yourself, just general types of questions like that, nothing too personal.

So you would say mostly athletic related things?

Yeah, mostly athletic related things, things pertaining to how you're doing in training, stuff like that.

Who do you feel is the most in control of the interview or photo shoot, would you say it's you, the interviewer, the photographer, the coach, somebody else?

For me, I would say the interviewer. I never really felt like there were too many things I wasn't really comfortable answering. So I would say they would probably be in control. Just in terms of the flow of the interview, maybe I would say something and they might ask another question off of that, then we would go that way. But for the most part, they pretty much control, they ask you and you answer. If you don't want to you, you don't have to, but for the most part they pretty much have control.

You said there aren't too many things you feel uncomfortable with, but are there any topics you dislike or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

It depends. I'll be frank because I compete for Nigeria. So for us, things go differently for us in terms of how your generation handles things. So for us, sometimes, depending on the interviewer, they want to know the dirt, like how the athletes are being treated and all that stuff.

Sometimes you'll want to take the opportunity to say what you want. Or other times you don't want to talk about it. Depending on the interviewer they might want to know about that end of the things. But that's pretty much the only thing that gets kind of uncomfortable talking about.

What is your impression of how female athletes are represented in the media? And how does that compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

I think female athletes are pretty well depicted in the media. For example, there was a British athlete, Jessica Ennis, she was pretty much like the face of the Olympic Games. So her pictures were everywhere. When I think of a female athletes and how they're represented, I think about her, and how well I thought she was portrayed.

What was her name again?

Jessica Ennis. She was the best hope for a gold medal for GB. While we were there, it was like a Jessica Ennis theme park. They really wanted to promote her. I thought that was good. I really like the way they represented her. They didn't just have her in her uniform, because they're basically bikinis. She wasn't everywhere exposed. They had her in a bunch of different... they had her dressed up, in her regular work out clothes, looking like she was ready to compete. So I like the way she was represented. And as far as how that compares to the men, I didn't have a problem with that either. They depicted the male athletes in whatever, uniforms, whatever they're supposed to be wearing.

So, you're comfortable with the way both are represented?

Yeah, pretty much comfortable with the way everyone was portrayed.

Ok, I understand that. Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph?

For me, I would want them to show me in all aspects...you know I want action shots, where I'm actually competing, and when I think about a question like that...I think about the athlete Sonya Richards...and for her spread they had her competing, and then they had her dressed up, they had her really glamorous, so they had that aspect of her as well, and then they had another shot of her in practice....so I would want a spread to show all aspects of me outside of just me being an athlete.

OK, and then the wardrobe and hair and makeup and setting would correspond to each of those aspects.

Yeah exactly. Some I would want to have my makeup on, and then if I'm competing I want to be in my uniform, and if I'm at practice I don't want to be super exposed. I just want a full picture of me.

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. *In uniform on the track*
- b. *In uniform off the track*
- c. *In casual dress in a neutral setting*
- d. *In figure flattering clothes in a neutral setting*
- e. *Nude*

What would you prefer and why? And are you opposed to any and why?

I would prefer A, me in my uniform on the track. I would prefer that because that's like the most clear representation of what I do as an athlete in track and this is what I do. As far as least, I would say E. I've seen athletes who...like...there's Sports Illustrated and the Body Issue and all that stuff and I don't know, maybe at some point that would be cool, but it's really not...that would be the least comfortable for me, I figure that's too much exposure.

And it's interesting you bring that up because that's one of my next questions for you. SI has a Swimsuit Edition and ESPN has a body issue, but athletes are depicted in both. So, how do you feel about female athletes posing for each of these special issues of these magazines?

SI has the swimsuit and ESPN has the body issue...and how I feel about women having to do both rather than one? Or...

Just how do you feel when you would see another female athlete posing for either one?

Oh like how do I feel about this versus that?

Yeah. And do you feel different differently about one over the other?

Yeah I do. I don't know why, but I do. I mean I feel like...so the Body issue, they do men and women...so like everyone is pictured naked. I don't really understand the purpose of the body issue, but I like that they have men and they have women, and it's like one magazine so it's kind of a compilation of both. SI, it's... in a bikini, whatever, shots more or less for a guy to enjoy. I mean, I guess women look at each other, but you know your audience...so...it's more one sided. The body issue—both sexes could pick it up and enjoy it.

Why do you think female athletes are motivated to pose for either magazine?

Exposure, money. Yeah, it's good exposure. Attention. Who knows where the fact that you were in that magazine could lead you. Exposure, attention, money.

Would you pose for either magazine? You said earlier you weren't comfortable posing nude, but maybe later on at some point in your life.

Um, I don't know. I guess you can never say. I can't 100% say no, and I can't 100% say yes, right now. But if anything, I think I would more comfortable with the ESPN spread than SI. Athletes are approached to do things they are uncomfortable with at first and then someone comes along and says hey this is actually a really good idea, you should do it, and there it goes.

I'm sorry, you said someone else would tell you it's a good idea?

Well yeah, I was reading about one of the athletes who did it and I guess he was not really comfortable at first, but then he was convinced that it was actually pretty tasteful, it was a good idea, and I'm sure he got a decent amount of money.

I only have two more questions for you. Do you think it's possible to be both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

Yes.

And how would you define "femininity"?

How would I define femininity? That's a hard question.

Or maybe, just give some characteristics of what you would put in your little basket of femininity?

You're talking about image wise, or character wise?

Yeah, character wise, I mean, both. When you think of a feminine woman or when you think of being feminine yourself, what kind of qualities go along with that?

I would say just poise, and you know, just being well kept, well-groomed, just well-manicured, just being pretty. I mean not in terms of like "define pretty" or whatever, just very well kept, well poised, very graceful, but still having that edge.

You said you do think it's possible to appear both athletic and feminine, so when you go to compete, when you were at the Olympics, do you feel like you have to bring out your femininity when your on the track, or are you not concerned about it all when you're in your element.

That's a good question. A lot of athletes, like before the Olympics, everyone was getting their nails, they were getting new earrings, they were picking out what kind of jewelry they wanted to have on, and how they wanted to have their hair done, so I guess that's the femininity aspect of it. Guys, before, they might get a hair cut or something cause they're going to be on TV and stuff, but a woman goes through a lot, a woman, definitely, more carefully plans what their image is going to be like when they're competing. I would say most female athletes want to be looked at as really glamorous, but still very raw and edgy. And that's the combination that a lot female athletes strive for, they want to be something very glamorous, nails, makeup, they'll get new hair, and all types of stuff like that, just to really bring out that feminine side, but you still want to go out there and stay fierce.

And you said that was your other team members that were getting their nails done and stuff?

That's in general. I think women on every single team were getting ready...it was like prom or something.

Well you got to look good when the whole world is watching.

Yeah, you got to look good. Exactly, you want to look really good. It's so funny you ask that question because, yeah, I guess that's the femininity aspect of it, everyone wants to be glamorous.

But they still want to be an aggressive athlete at the same time.

Yeah, but you still want to be fierce and aggressive, cause you want to display that you have that balance. You still want to display that yeah I can be a tough athlete, but I can look good doing it, so, that's the goal.

That's really interesting because obviously you as an Olympic athlete would see the behind the scenes that none of us ever see. You mentioned Jessica Ennis earlier, but my final question is if you have any strong positive or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete has been represented in the media. And you said you really enjoyed seeing her, you thought that she was represented very well during the Olympics, but do you have any other athletes in mind that you either feel positively about or negatively about the way they've been portrayed?

I would say, positive, Sonya Richards, she's a US athlete. I like the way she presents herself and I think she's really positively displayed. As far as negative, man... I don't know, there was the South African athlete, Caster Semenya, they had an issue with her, yeah I think they...I didn't like they way they display her, I think it's unfair what they do to her in terms of like....

The gender issue?

Yeah, the whole gender...because then I think it goes into what makes you feminine. And stuff. But that's the only really negative depiction I can think of off the top of my head. There are other women, but like I don't know their names.

Basketball Player

What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview or photo shoot? Whether it's team or individual?

What happens in terms of how does it go?

For example, who is in contact with the publication conducting the interview? Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot?

It depends, with team Canada, all of that stuff, once we made the Olympics, we were represented by a media person, and typically anyone who wants to get in contact with us will call Canada basketball cause it's tough to be able to get in contact with athletes on short notice, so they [reporters] usually go through the program and that person will set up, will email and ask about what we want to do, and who with, and what kind of affiliations, and then they set it up.

How do you decide if you're going to participate or not?

Yeah, so typically we're asked permission first. They'll say so and so has contacted me and they're interested in doing a story, is it something you want to do?

And they would just ask you guys?

Yeah.

Can you give an example of when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot?

Um I think the only time that...well especially around the Olympics, the only time I would have denied if would have been an inconvenience, but at that time any kind of press is generally good press, especially in trying to create awareness around not only Canadian sports but Canadian women's sports, so it would be rare to decline an interview.

And you would describe "inconvenience" as being close to a game or something?

Yeah, I mean I typically won't answer like emails on the day of a game, that won't happen for sure. And then, a lot of stuff came last minute and that was kind of tough to handle because people were wanting your attention right away and there was no kind of previous warning, so all of it kind of came at once. And I definitely don't answer interviews or emails on the day of a game, so some people missed out that way.

When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in?

For us, it was our qualification process, we were one of the last teams to qualify for the Olympics. A lot of them asked about our journey thus far and how we thought we were going to do and it was those types of questions, kind of the end game questions. They wanted to know the general story and then throughout the Olympics, how we thought we were going to do and how we were rated against other teams and stuff like that.

Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? You, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?

No, I definitely think it would be us. A lot of us are taught in college how to answer interview questions, so typically, as basketball players being a team sport, we learn how to deflect onto the team because, I mean, a lot of us don't like to individualize. They'll ask you questions like, how do you think you did, and we're taught to deflect to the team in those kind of stats, because it's a

team sport and that's the reason we play it. So we definitely have control in answering questions how we want to answer, and once they ask a question, they typically don't push if they don't get the answer they want.

Are there any topics you dislike discussing or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

No, generally most topics are going to be about basketball, so those are all free game. There's a couple of stuff that came up in my city when I did interviews...personal questions, but most of it was... growing up, who was your childhood idol and stuff like that, but those are the kind of questions that people ask all the time. It all stays pretty general.

So it stays within basketball, so it usually doesn't get that uncomfortable?

Yeah, it's a team sport after all. So they want to know the general logistics of the team, not necessarily individuals. Whereas, individual sport athletes are a bit different.

What is your impression of the how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

I think it's tough because female athletes have to really meet standards in order to get media coverage. You can look in the newspaper and see an NBA game on the front cover and a WNBA game on page 6. It's hard for women to get proper recognition in media and it leads to less awareness about it because it's not something you see everyday. I think it's definitely tough. It has to be an outstanding achievement in order for it to be in the paper, like I know for us, no one in my city was interested until we qualified. There was no one who was interested in the qualification process and how we did, it wasn't until after qualified that all of a sudden it became popular. Granted, it's the Olympics, but there was no coverage up until the day we qualified.

So you said the NBA game might be on the front page, so do you feel male athletes are more prominent in the media, or how would you compare that....

I think it has a lot to do with fans too, there are so many more fans who support the NBA than the WNBA. I think newspapers print what they think people want to see and so that comes down to fans and what people read and what's popular and it just happens to be that women's sports take a backburner to men's sports, especially professionally.

Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph?

I think it would be probably about my Olympic journey, the cover would be me in a jersey for sure, and I think it would be just kind of the road we took to get there, and all the things we had to

overcome, and all the things we did overcome for not only women's basketball in Canada, but Olympic sports in Canada.

And so you said you would be in a jersey, but would you be on a basketball court, or where would you want to be pictured?

I think on the basketball court, a low back lit, probably holding a ball...something I would feel comfortable. The stories about me playing basketball so it would be natural for me to be in basketball clothes.

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. *In uniform on the court*
- b. *In uniform off the court*
- c. *In casual dress in a neutral setting*
- d. *In figure flattering dress in a neutral setting*
- e. *Nude*

What would you prefer and why? Are you opposed to any of the options and why?

It would depend on the article and what it was about. Generally, it would be a basketball feature, so I would be most recognizable in basketball gear on the court, I think that would be my first choice. I wouldn't oppose any, but personally, I definitely wouldn't choose nude because it has absolutely nothing to do with my sport and that's also kind of personal aspect that wouldn't be shown. And I mean I would definitely do a photo shoot in casual clothes, but I think it wouldn't necessarily be as relatable to an article they would write.

Do you think it is possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

Absolutely. I mean I think...there's a lot of talk...especially team sports, there's a lot of groups of people, mostly men, who say that the uniform isn't exactly flattering to a woman's figure and there's a lot of controversy in Europe because they're attempting to change the uniforms to make them more figure flattering for women, except we would rather be comfortable than look good. I know a lot of girls who put on makeup to play, and I'm one of them, but when it comes down to performing, I think you have to be in what's comfortable and I think what's comfortable is the current baggy shorts, baggy jersey look. And there's a story about (name), who's a women's basketball player, who paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines so she could wear clothes that were comfortable for her, in her league. So it goes to show, there are a lot of image problems, where people think we're supposed to look good while we play, but I would disagree for sure.

You wear makeup on the court, do you utilize the makeup to highlight your femininity while your playing. Or for you, what is the reason behind wearing makeup?

I have a thing that goes something like look good, feel good, play good. I kind of become a different person when I play, so I put on my game face and I go to work. More or less. It would be the same as any other job where a woman would put makeup on in the morning and get dressed, my work attire is just a little bit different.

How would you define "femininity"?

I think it's individualized. Femininity, you can see in lots of different cultures, lots of different ways. There are lots of people...women of all types who are equally feminine to women with long blonde hair, so I think it just depends on the culture and the person. So it's hard to pick one sort of term because femininity could be anything. You could be feminine in a pair of sweatpants or in a dress.

For you personally, what aspects of yourself do you associate with your femininity?

It's probably...the way that I get ready to play. I mean I put on makeup and I make sure that my hair is done in a way that's both practical and aesthetically pleasing. So I guess that would be my definition of how I'm feminine in sports, it's not the clothes I wear or the way I play, it's the way I look.

How do you feel about female athletes posing for the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition, where the athletes are featured in bathing suits, or the ESPN Magazine Body Issue, where athletes pose in the nude?

I mean we work hard to have the bodies that we do, and if people feel they are comfortable showing them off, then I think that's great. I don't find an issue with it, I also don't find an issue with the Swimsuit Edition either, that's what they get paid to do, so who are we to say what they should and shouldn't do.

Do you feel differently about one magazine over the other?

Not particularly. I guess if you have it, flaunt it. Which would be my view on the whole thing. I don't find a reason with it, if they're comfortable with it and what they're doing, there's no reason not to.

Would you ever pose for either magazine?

Probably not. Just because I don't know that I would want everyone to have access to that. It wouldn't be my personal choice, but I don't have a problem with anyone who does.

Why do you think female athletes are motivated to pose for these types of magazines?

I think for a lot it's another way to show their femininity. Especially for people whose uniforms don't reflect their body type I guess. So it would be another way to show they're not just athletes, they're women too.

Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in the media?

I think there have been a lot of misrepresentations of a lot of athletes, but it's hard to say that I have negative feelings towards any. There was a lot of buzz about the article that was put out in ESPN about Hope Solo and the ongoing processes of the Olympics. That's one person's opinion, but it depends on the athlete. I can't say that all of what she said was true, some of it is, but that's just how the Olympics go I think. And I think it reflected a bit negatively when it didn't need to.

[Asks for clarification]

Oh so she was talking about the Olympics four years ago. There was a massive article put out on ESPN, Hope Solo is a soccer player, where she spoke out about the behind the scenes aspects of the Olympics and how it was a lot of partying and drinking and how she did a bunch of celebrating with celebrities and ...it was...I guess you'd have to read it for yourself. We all kind of sat around the computer and were like really? I mean some of it's true, like they do hand out hundreds of thousands of condoms, but inside the village was not a crazy party scene. And I would imagine she's known for being a bit wild, but it was quite an interesting article that reflected interestingly on the Olympics. I guess it depends on your point of view and that sort of thing. But it was definitely controversial for sure.

Water Polo Player 1

What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview or photo shoot?

For us, as water polo, it's pretty much totally optional from day 1, whether we want to participate in interviews, whether we want to do any type of photo shoots, whether it's for like a magazine or for our sponsor, anything like that. I don't think I've really come to a point ever in my career where you know I've felt pressure to do so, you know, against my natural desire to, I guess, so to speak. So, it's pretty much brought to our attention, for USA water polo we have somebody who's in charge of, we have a media director, and she or he is the one who always lets us know about various opportunities and such, and it's kind of up to us to go from there.

Do you have a individual manager for yourself?

I don't. For water polo, I think very few of us...actually on the women's side I don't believe anybody had an agent or a manager just for herself. On the men's side, maybe one or two of them did, because opportunities are little bit greater, unfortunately, for the guys. And you know, it was never, I know the manager pretty well who manages one of the guys on the men's team, kind of late 2012, like May, he was like if you want to consider representation or anything like that, he was pretty open to getting into a working relationship with me, but that point it was kind of too late.

But you had the opportunity if you wanted it?

Yeah.

Do you or any of your teammates have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot?

Occasionally. For an interview, there would be some emailing back and fourth to determine a good time to speak, and so, you know, usually depending on where the interview is coming from, if it's a particular type of magazine or whatever, like I did some interview with Livestrong, their online website, and they were really, knew ahead of time they wanted to ask me about my diet and nutrition and what I eat as an athlete and my favorite meal. So depending on the interview and the period of time during which it's taking place, you know if it's before/after a major competition, or an Olympic year, usually you'll have an idea of what exactly they're going to ask you. It's more the on the spot, after a game, at the Olympics, or major tournament, those questions are on the fly.

But anything that's preplanned you would say you have an idea of what you're going into ahead of time?

For the most part, yeah.

How would you decide personally if you're going to participate in an interview or photo shoot, or not?

My decisions on that were... my major concern was whether it's to the benefit of our program and our team. Water polo is kind of grass roots sports, so if it's kind of major media magazine or news channel or something like that, if it's going to kind of get some publicity and expose water polo, it seem that would be a factor in making my decision. But a lot of it will also depend on how much time it will take away from time training and time with my team and how much of a time commitment it would be. So for various photo shoots and stuff, you know like we did the ESPN magazine, the Body Issue thing, and we had to spend a significant amount of time in between practices and on the weekends doing that stuff, because our coach, depending on what type of interview or photo shoot it is, he'll either let you miss practice or not, essentially. So if it's going to be a great deal of time commitment during my recovery or something like that or if I'm missing important practices, then that's also a pretty big factor.

Can you give an example of a time when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot?

Yeah, absolutely. Once we got to London and were at the Olympic Games, we moved into the village about 10 days before our first competition or about a week or so, and you know, within that first couple days, if there was an opportunity I was asked for I participated, but then the closer we got to having our first game, I pretty much told my coach, I asked my coach, like the coach isn't really involved in setting up the interviews, our media director is constantly like hey do you want to do the Today Show, hey do you want to do this, do you want to do that, and so finally I was just like, look you know, now that I'm here, we're getting ready to compete, like I really just want to kind of decline any media opportunities that might take me away from what's going on here with the team and practice and my recovery time. Definitely within, leading up to or within major competitions, that's the time that I'll significantly back off from anything I need

to go to in person. A phone interview I can handle during that time, but if it's kind of a bigger ordeal to go to do something then I'll usually decline.

Ok, so to keep your focus on the sport and on yourself, you would decline?

Exactly.

When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in?

You I know, I think with water polo people just have all sorts of questions about the physicality of the sport, about who are major competitors are, just general, educational questions, because people for the most part, don't know, for the most part, a whole lot about the sport. And I think it sort of has this reputation for being this insanely violent match. So people quite often ask about the suit grabbing and the exposure and the, you know, the history of our program. Until London, our program had medaled at arguably ever single major tournament without getting a gold medal at an Olympic game, so people really like to ask about well what's the missing link why haven't you guys been able to get it done, that sort of thing. So, pretty general. For me specifically, I grew up in Michigan and went to school here and I was one of the three athletes not from California on our team, and the only one to attend a non-California university, so people would ask me about that quite a bit as well.

And would you say that those kind of general questions are consistent across the board, whether you were doing the today show, or something for a sports magazine versus something more mainstream, like pop culture?

For the most part, I think, yes. Around an Olympic games you might get kind of different questions, that are a little bit more specific to a tournament or specific to the general Olympic experience, but if it's a non-Olympic year, I would say it's the general water polo questions.

Are there any topics you dislike discussing or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

No, I don't think I've ever...we go through a significant amount of media training with the USFC, so they always sort of warn you about the question, like about the US being liked in the world, politics, and all of that kind of stuff, they sort of warn you, and they make it very clear that if you don't feel comfortable answering a question you can always decline. But I don't think I've ever really been asked a terribly uncomfortable question where I've felt like I needed to decline.

Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? You, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?

I would say for the most part, the athletes feel, do feel...not the point of like, oh you have to take a picture from my left side because that's my flattering side... but like, in terms of our participation, we have a very good idea of what we're going into before we do it, and I don't think anyone would object to making it known if we were uncomfortable doing a certain photo shoot or certain interview, then you know, we wouldn't do it. So were not in control of like, hey

US weekly come here and give me this photo shoot kind of thing, but if we didn't want to do it, we would feel comfortable.

And during the interview, if you didn't feel comfortable, do you feel like you could say...

Next question, kind of thing?

Yeah....

For the most part yeah. Maybe not at first. I think you kind of get used to... when I first started doing interviews if I was a tricky question or something, maybe I would get a little shaky and would still try to answer, but now, for sure...now that I've had enough experience, I'm like "nah".

What is your impression of the how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

I think there's a pretty large variance in how females are represented and a lot of that, also is, whether or not it's an Olympic year or not. I think during the Olympics, this really wholesome celebration of sports, and so you get these sort of feel good stories and it isn't all about the glam and the sexiness that I think, maybe generally, woman athletes are portrayed as. You know, and I think that there is, a certain pressure to find...for the general...for...not just every four years...so like all of the time, every year, there's that pressure to sort of have it be this sexy, cool, feminine, edgy woman athlete kind of image, but for the Olympic year, the media in general is interested the stories behind the athletes, and it isn't all about that superficial glam-ness. If that make sense? And compared to the male athletes, I think it's frustrating because...for male athletes, I think it's much more about the athletic feats, and you know, you can turn on sports center and watch the top 10 plays of the day and it's all just male athletes, and it's all about making the catch or making the save or whatever that may be, and for women, you just don't see, it's not about the sport so much as it is about the image...is a little bit more weighted in terms of the general media depiction.

Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph? If so, how?

I think that's something I would have to put a lot of thought into, it might be difficult for me answer it. I would definitely...you know, I would obviously want my athletic qualities to be highlighted, but then also, this might be a little bit different and just my own person philosophy on being an athlete and my whole experience with it, but I'd also sort of want a genuine-ness to the depiction of me. And just sort of a certain element of real-ness to it. But I also, without a doubt would want it to look good and you know, I don't want it to be this explicit sexy kind of portrayal, but you know, I would also like to...I think there is...at a particular age, there's such

a...women don't want to be portrayed as athletes because athletes are manly, and muscle-y, and hard, and gritty, and I think that's there's a definite line between that type of portrayal and what you see like Kim Kardashian or whatever, like the celebrities you see normally in those types of magazines. I think finding a way to portray an athlete in this sort of... obviously genuine and real person type image, but also enhance the ways that she is also glamorous or she is also pretty and maybe, she's not this sort of 6 ft 125 lb model type, but you know there are certain elements about her that are phenomenally beautiful as well.

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. *In uniform on the court*
- b. *In uniform off the court*
- c. *In casual dress in a neutral setting*
- d. *In figure flattering dress in a neutral setting*
- e. *Nude*

What would you prefer and why? Are you opposed to any of the options and why?

I don't think I would be opposed to any of the options. I think probably in our uniform in a flattering way near a pool setting would be great, maybe in a suit, but minus our wacky water polo caps we have to wear. I think our uniforms, in general, for water polo aren't...its not like beach volleyball where you're wearing a skimpy two-piece, and really, they do that for the media, essentially. I mean our costumes are functional and they're not the most flattering at times, and so I think a way, to sort of, you know if we're in our uniform, but having it look pretty or glamorous, sort of enhancing the ability to do that, but with a pool behind you, so see sort of how it all ties it all together.

Do you think it's possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

Yes.

And how would do you define femininity? Or what qualities do you associate with femininity?

Strength, compassion, composure, fortitude, I don't know, I think...I'm really into just strong, female figures, but there's...a sort of empowerment, but at the same time, a very feminine component to it. We're just as strong and just ...it's not about are we equal in strength to men, or are we this or that, it's just different. It's absolutely strong and it's absolutely empowered, but there's also this very feminine quality to it, that I think needs to be embraced, as opposed to played down.

And how do you balance your athleticism with your femininity?

I think...for me, it's all about my relationships. And you know, something I think that women are so great at is sort of developing these personal relationships, maybe a little bit more than male athletes. And sort of that compassion you have and that ability to reach out and connect to people perhaps a little bit more easily on a personal level than men, or a little bit sooner. I think sort of having the idea of ...women coming together to work together rather than women competing against each other and trying to step on each other to get ahead. And so for me, that's

just a huge...now that I'm coaching...the relationships I develop with my athletes and you know, the ways I can teach them to move forward with that better for all mentality, is how I try to balance it, I guess.

You mentioned the Body Issue earlier, but I want to ask a couple questions about it. So it was in 2010 or 2011?

2010.

So you were featured with your team in the issue, but what happened when you guys were approached to do the photo shoot?

We were approached by our media director and it was put out as you know it's totally up to you, a cool opportunity if you want to take advantage of it, but 100% up to you, and he was basically, you know, for those of you who aren't familiar with the body issue, here's what it is. So he named a couple athletes, gave us a catalog of athletes who had done it in the past, and pretty much, laid it on the table for us... what it is...it's obviously getting pictures taken of you without your clothes on, but it's not full frontal nudity or anything like just, just the philosophy behind it and what the people who he had talked with at ESPN said and why they want to feature water polo athletes and this and that. So I felt incredibly informed and it was something that I thought about for a long...I didn't know whether or not it was something I was going to do...and I think a lot of the girls who chose to do it, we all sort of talked to each other and once you realize who wants to do it and who doesn't and why, once you get a general feel from your team, definitely helped me make my decision.

And so talking to you team helped you make your decision, but what else for you personally made you decide to participate?

Again, I think it's great exposure of water polo. The society in which we live is going to see that and want to pay attention to water polo, in some ways maybe that's a little disappointing, but it is what it is. At this point, water polo is such a grass roots sport and to be able to get exposure more than every Olympic year is to the benefit. And so, I think, also, just seeing the Body Issue the past and seeing how the pictures have been taken and the purpose behind it...it's not oh we want to take a bunch of naked pictures of athletes, instead we want to showcase the athletic body and the athletic physique and the range of athletes the had done in the past and even in this issue, from pool players to wrestlers to gymnasts or whatever that may be, there's such a wide range and I think that was a really big draw for me. It's not just this sort of beach volleyball type...bikini pictures.

Did you have any apprehensions going into it?

Yeah I think my first reaction was I don't know if this is something I really want to do, and one of my teammates who chose not to do it said it best, until their willing to put us on the cover of ESPN magazine with our suits on, why should we go on the cover without them. I think that it sort of a frustration and I support that principle. We've done amazing things for our sport, especially now after London, what USA women's water polo has accomplished is huge, and it's

frustrating that we'll only get a certain level of exposure if we want to do something like the body issue. I totally understand. And I think for me personally, the person that I am and my initial reaction isn't like oh yeah I'm dying to do this photo shoot without my clothes on, I think it just took a little bit of getting used the idea, and if I were an individual athlete, my decision might have been different. But having my teammates next me made the process easier and more comfortable.

How did you feel during the shoot, and maybe, how did your other teammates feel?

I think we were totally fine and totally comfortable. Being a water sport, you definitely will occasionally have your suit ripped off and have to deal with exposure on a number of levels. Just having to change in the locker rooms four times a day, we're all pretty comfortable around each other to begin with. So I think having that camaraderie with my teammates next to me and the people working for...the photographer himself, was just great, and phenomenal, and flattering and all of the things you would want in that type of situation. So, it was totally a positive situation.

And what do you think those photos say about you as a female athlete?

I think it says a lot about how I wanted myself to be portrayed in terms of my femininity. I think it was great because we were in the water, we had these individual shots with a water polo ball, so whatever that may be, and so I think they did an amazing job of highlighting our athletic physique and our body and our empowerment, but also, kind of had that sort of had that softer side to it, which I really appreciated.

How would you say female athletes posing for Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition compares to female athletes posing for ESPN body issue?

I think the SI Swimsuit Edition is a little different because it is really like...we're going to put you in a bikini and put you on this beach...I don't know how many issues I've really looked at, but from my understanding, it isn't even all athletes is it?

No, no, it could be models, or...

Yeah. You know the purpose of that is like a hot girl in a bikini on a beach kind of picture. And you know it's a compliment to her body, it's very sexy and very pretty, but it isn't so much an homage to the athletic physique, so to speak. So I think there's a definite different in those two magazines. And it isn't sort of about this celebration of the athletic body...and I don't know how many female wrestlers or female judo players are invited to be part the SI swimsuit issue, as opposed to the sort of Giselle's and whatever up there.

And if you were approached to the Swimsuit Edition, do you think you would?

I think it would depend on the circumstances. Obviously, if it's sort of an athletes Swimsuit Edition, if it its regular Swimsuit Edition... like models on a beach... I don't know, it's something I would have to think about in terms of who's doing it, what the purpose behind it is,

if it's just a normal kind of thing or not, it's something I would consider, but given the circumstances I think it would be really subjective.

Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in the media?

I'm trying to think of any main stories, if I think of something that comes to mind, I can send you an email or something, because I can see myself having reactions to...you know I think maybe the whole Hope Solo thing, when she kind of went off to the media in 2007, the world cup, when they lost to Brazil and she didn't play and had been playing up till then and was sort of hot headed in her interview and was like I should have been in and I should have done this and that. I think the attention she gets is not as much around her soccer, so much as her personal life and that story, and I think that would be an example of something where I'm like, you know what, now it's all of a sudden not about her as an athlete and now all of her media is like who this NFL player that she's dating and where she's partying with after the Olympics and stuff like that, and I think I see that and I get pretty frustrated because she's an example of someone who's pretty and who's obviously, is arguably a sex symbol or something, and having that drastic shift away from her as a soccer player and her as a teammate and her as an athlete to sort of this gossipy, tabloid type of exposure. I see it as kind of frustrating, or in some ways, hindering.

And that takes away from her athleticism.

Yeah...and I think it also represents how easy it is...like if you had somebody...like look at Kerri Walsh or Misty May...if one of them made one interview mistake or sort of had a bad relationship that had some high level exposure, it shows how quickly it can shift from... all of a sudden here's a soccer player to now there's all this other stuff... I think that holds true for men and women, but I think it's frustrating and it can be a little bit more damaging to a woman athlete.

Water Polo Player 2

Have you ever participated in an interview or a photo shoot, whether it was national or local?

Yes. I have done interviews before, but I have never done a photo shoot.

What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview? Who is in contact with the publication conducting the interview? Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot? How do you decide if you're going to participate or not?

A lot of times the interviews went through...so the people who wanted to interview anyone on the team went through our media relations person. So usually we knew ahead of time who it was going to be...like who they worked for, but we didn't always necessarily know exactly what they were interested in. You know, if they were going to focus on the team or you as an individual. Sometimes you get random questions, especially from people who don't know the sport at all.

Usually you wouldn't know what kind of questions you would get, but usually you would know who they were writing for and where they were coming from and what they were looking to do. And then post-game interviews, usually were like right after the game, like right before even changing, so out of the pool walking back to the locker room...

They just want like a quick interview...

Yeah, like a quick like... flash quotes from the game, like how it went and stuff like that.

Can you give an example of when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot?

I don't know if I ever did deny interviews. I know I didn't participate in a couple photo shoots, but they were kind of..it was more of a scheduling thing than it was a personal reason or anything like that.

Would you say you received the most press attention during your time on the Olympic team during the Beijing Olympics?

Yes, definitely. Especially being part of a sport that's not really well known. The amount of press attention definitely increased, especially leading up to the Olympics. Like the 3 months or so before all of sudden people are interested in interview you and talking about the team and everything else.

When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in?

A lot of it...kind of depended on what they were doing. So if it was more of a biography type story, like the Ann Arbor news, for instance, did something on Betsey Armstrong and I, she was a teammate of mine, I don't know if you've read about her, she's coaching at Michigan now.

Yeah I'm trying to get a hold of her too, but...

She's hard to track down. So the two of us having grown up in Ann Arbor and overlapping in high school for two years, she played at Huron and I played at Pioneer, so they did like a background story that was more like what it was like growing up and where our inspiration came from and what it was like to play against each other in high school and then become teammates... the more of the biographical questions and the story of where your life came from and how you ended up becoming an Olympic athlete. There's kind of like that group and then on the other side would be really focused more on the specifics of a game or the team or what we thought went wrong or what we thought went right or more so specifically geared toward reporting on a specific game or tournament or event.

Would you say that they mostly focus on your athletic career and your athletic achievements more so than your personal life?

Yeah, I say they probably focus much more on the athletic career than personal.

Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? You, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?

I would say because being on a team sport I would say the media relations person probably has the mostly control because often times they're the ones that more or less delegate which people to talk to, they obviously try to come up with the person that would be the most helpful to the individual that wants to interview someone. Being on a team sport, they usually wouldn't interview all of us, it would be like two for one article and maybe a different two for a different one. So I would say that he probably had the most control over what happened. As far as the interview itself, interviews task kind of a range of questions that I think we were well prepared with how to answer questions more or less appropriately.

Did your media rep coach you guys on how to answer questions when approached by reporters, maybe on the fly?

I would say that our coaches probably did a better job than that. And I even remember at Stanford, an article came out about...it was a UCLA USC article, but it was, one of the players on one of the teams had said something awful to a reporter about someone else, and they had played together in high school and it was this whole big debacle and it was just...I feel like coaches over the year slowly taught you how to best represent yourself and your team and the organization, because you're not only speaking on behalf of yourself, so just making sure that you were aware of ...not techniques...but it's not the media is trying to catch you...but they generally want to hear something you're not going to tell anyone, so I think that we were well prepared for questions that might throw you and being able to keep it on a track...

Yeah, and I can imagine that they would try to prepare you a little bit.

Right, yeah, and I'm not saying that we were controlled to be robots, that's definitely not what it was.

[Comments on the annoyance of being interviewed directly after a match]

Right and I think it's a lot easier after a win. I think the hardest interview is post a loss. Just trying to walk away with... making sure you've given them something they can include in their article or something that either the team has said after the game you generally have...the coach says something about whatever just happened...so usually that's probably what ends up getting re-formatted back to them.

What is your impression of the how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

I think female athletes often try to...it's hard because I don't know if it's necessarily the athletes themselves or the media...but I feel like female athletes aren't always respected as much or almost not...viewed the same...like a male athletes is often an idolized persona and I don't think all female athletes have that same... I don't know. You know, I think that it's kind of a complex

issue. Female athletes can often be portrayed as very masculine and less of their personality, generally, is seen and more based on looks almost than actual achievements. Whereas with male athletes, I think that no matter how they look...I mean often times male athletes, at least, you know, muscular body type and that kind of thing, generally comes through more positively for men even if they aren't the most attractive. Whereas on the women's side, I think that, it's often, the attractiveness or lack of attraction becomes more important. Does that make sense?

Definitely.

And I think that for male athletes, they're accolades speak more than what they look like and how they're seen. Whereas, women's accolades don't necessarily speak as much as what they look like and how they're seen. I guess that's the best way I can put it.

No, that's very well put.

I don't know. This is kind of sidetrack to that question. So like any pictures that are taken during games are technically not the athletes...like you don't have any rights to them if they're taken at a public event. So, for example, in water polo, it's a physical sport, it's an aggressive sport, we're wearing bathing suits... sometimes bathing suits get pulled or ripped or whatever and things are exposed that aren't necessarily...you know... I wouldn't go into a photo shoot and pose nude for anything, but in a game, if a breast gets exposed, I have no rights to that pictures, and there definitely are those types of pictures and I've seen it across the board...in water polo, those pictures get posted in different places. It's frustrated because you don't have control over that kind of stuff and I feel like that's something that you don't really think about and you don't really realize because it's a part of your game and a part of your sport that that stuff is just open and free for anyone to take and do what they want with it. I don't know I think those things can be more negatively used around women's sports than men's sports.

Yeah even when I was doing research on you and Betsey, some of those types of images popped up on Google search.

Yeah Google image search. It's just awful. Like my high school kids, I know they did it one day because they were laughing about something...I don't know...it's like really, seriously, this is so frustrated. As much as I want to take them down and removed, I can't get them to do it because it's not my property.

Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph? Would your ideal photographs differ for a beauty/fashion magazine? If so, how?

That's hard. What type of magazine?

Say it's a sports magazine.

If it's a sports magazine, I think I would really want to highlight, I think I would do more of an in uniform, more or less. So not necessarily a cap, but a bathing suit and...cause that's what we wear when we play. Kind of for the photo shoot...minimal makeup, if any...because that's how I am normal, every day. I would want it to be me, I wouldn't want it to look like someone I didn't recognize. So I wouldn't be big on, I generally am not big on, getting super... like it wouldn't be a super fancy gown...because that's not how my personality is. So I would want it portray me. If there were multiple pictures, maybe one that would be in the water, kind of action shot more or less, and then anything that was outside of the pool, I guess it would be more of the jeans and t-shirt look of just this is me and this is how I normally am... and the article just to be about me and my personality and how that fit in with my team and my sport, more than what I look like, or...you know what I mean?

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. In uniform on the court*
- b. In uniform off the court*
- c. In casual dress in a neutral setting*
- d. In figure flattering dress in a neutral setting*
- e. Nude*

What would you prefer and why? Are you opposed to any of the options and why?

What would be my number one preference?

Yeah.

In uniform in the pool.

And are there any options you would be opposed to.

I would absolutely not pose nude. And I'd say that it's almost really awkward and strange in uniform away from the setting...is generally the most awkward.

Right, like you could be in your suit and cap on a lawn or something.

Right and it's really weird and it doesn't make sense.

But you do see those kinds of pictures often, believe or not.

Yes, you do.

That's why I'm wondering about these things...who decides?

Yeah I don't know.

Do you think it is possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

Absolutely.

How would you define "femininity"?

Femininity means more the way that you carry yourself than the way that you... basically the way you... carry yourself and portray yourself to others. I think that femininity is more of a trait than it is necessarily... I don't think it's instinctively linked to body type or figure, I think it's more based on personality and how you hold yourself and yeah...

Are you familiar with the Swimsuit Edition of SI magazine and the Body Issue of ESPN magazine?

Yes, more so with the Body Issue of ESPN, I have seen a SI Swimsuit Edition in a long time.

How do you feel about female athletes posing for the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition, where the athletes are featured in bathing suits, or the ESPN Magazine Body Issue, where athletes pose in the nude?

With ESPN, I think that some of the pictures that come out are super tasteful and really kind of... they're more artistic and celebrating the human form and physical form of the human body. The ones that I appreciate the most are the ones that are tastefully done where not much is exposed and they're doing their particular sport. So sometimes they pose nude and it's completely unrelated to what they would do in their sport, but I find it more interesting when it's what they actually... like seeing them in an action shot basically... I think is the most interesting. I wouldn't do it personally because I don't think you necessarily... there's so many that would get taken and you have basically no control once you sign the deal... you don't have control over what they actually print and I don't think I would be comfortable with doing that at all. But then with the Swimsuit Edition, I mean it's definitely, obviously the sex appeal is the reason they even print that. But again, it's not nude so it doesn't bother me nearly as much. But it has a lot less to do with anyone being in their sport than the ESPN magazine does.

Yeah so do you feel differently... do you feel more... I guess do you feel differently about SI because you said you feel it's more sexual over the ESPN body issue, or is the nude factor more troubling or bothersome.

I actually think that the ESPN when done correctly, and even in the same issue, I think that some are done very well and are celebrating the body, and others are done not very tastefully and way too sexually and just not kind of appropriate. So that's kind of a mixed bag. Whereas I would say the Swimsuit Edition is kind of more of, I think it's more of a sexual thing, I don't think it's celebrating sports and the body, I think it's more of a sexual issue that they just put out. Whereas ESPN is more focused on the sport and the human body aspect.

And you said earlier you wouldn't pose nude and you wouldn't do the body issue, would you be interested in the SI Swimsuit Edition and posing for it?

No, not really.

Why do you think female athletes are motivated to pose for these types of magazines? I actually saw the US national water polo team in 2010 posed for the body issue...

They did. Well a lot of them did, a few refused.

But that was after your retirement, right?

Yeah, it was after I retired, yeah. I think that a lot of female athletes find it necessary to do those kinds of things, more for the publicity and to become a name that's recognizable. I think it's just to get some media attention and some press attention. And for some of them, I think that some people have good intentions about it being a celebration of the body and the form and all the time and energy and effort that you put into your sport, results in your physique, and so I know a lot of female athletes are proud of how they look. So I think that's fine for them to celebrate that if that's something they feel comfortable doing. But on the flip side of it, it's hard like when the issue came out, the ESPN one with the water polo team, I was coaching a 14 and under girls team at the time, a club team, and a lot of backlash from the parents and a lot of questions from the players of why they would ever do that. So I don't think it's necessarily the best way to model for female athletes...younger female athletes, it's not a good role model for them to see that that's how female athletes get attention. So I saw it from the outside, but there was definitely a lot of backlash from them posing.

That's interesting, I never really considered that from a coaches perspective, as coaching younger girls around that time.

Yeah and a lot of parents were shocked and surprised and they just thought it was such a terrible way to be role models in the sport, which I kind of agree with them. But the notoriety and the press and the way to get attention, that sex sells kind of mentality that the media has kind of causes that to be something that a lot of athletes consider when they don't necessarily know if they would say oh yeah I'd pose nude...and then when it get posed to them in a way that well maybe I would if it's going to be tastefully done and if it's going to be this and going to be that then you know maybe it will be OK for us to gain some publicity. I think that that's where the line becomes more difficult to draw.

Are there any topics you dislike discussing or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

I don't think there's anything I would necessarily refuse to talk to a reporter about. I guess there are definitely topics where I might be less personal about and more broad about. Like if you're talking about like a specific issue that I didn't necessarily want to be sharing with the world, I would tend to be more broad. But I don't think I've ever really not answered a question or completely just said no comment to.

Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in an article or professional photograph?

I don't know. That's a hard one. I think it sometimes does upset me when female athletes do the nude photography, especially when it's just not done well. If they're showing too much or they're not highlighting why they're body is any more special than anyone else's. And I think that just from the standpoint of having been an athlete...it almost to me seems like they're selling their body for something that's not worth it. And I mean everyone has different reasons for doing what they do so it's hard for me to judge them and what they're doing. But I don't really, I don't find it to be, like you said, the idea of...from the coaches standpoint and just hearing the girls talk about what happened...I just...it makes me cringe a little to thinking about your role models and your female athletes which is something that is hard to be anyways, and your making it into something that it isn't by portraying yourself the way you do in the media, I think that that's where I get a little hesitate about what is right and what is wrong and how people make decisions. But I don't think that's females only, to be honest. Male athletes definitely do things that are ridiculous as well and that I wouldn't agree with from the role model standpoint. A lot of kids look up to athletes and I think it's important to show your girls that being a strong woman in sports is something to be proud of and something to be cherished, it's not something to be giving away to the world.

Water Polo Player 3

Have you ever participated in an interview or photo shoot with a newspaper or magazine?

Yes.

What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview or photo shoot? For example, who is in contact with the publication conducting the interview? Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot? How do you decide if you're going participate or not?

It depends. I mean like in high school or club, someone would talk to your coach first and then they would talk to you, but on the national team, we have a manager or a publication relations person and it would normally go through them.

Would you know what kind of questions they going to ask you ahead of time, or would it be kind of on the fly?

Yeah, it would be on the fly. It would be totally random. I mean at the Olympics when I was walking up the pool deck after the final game, some reporter from San Diego, which is where I'm from, and then I had these people about the Bruins scoring seven goals...and I'm like what the hell, she scored seven goals? You just don't know, and sometimes you don't know how they get access to you, they just kind of show up.

Ok so, do you have any real control over how you decide if you're going to participate or not, or is it just kind of whatever happens...

Yeah, I mean if I ---- I would just say I don't want to talk right now, sorry.

Can you give an example of when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot?

I know in college, I never did interviews before a national championship or a conference championship, just because I felt like people can change what you say and it's motivation for teams you're playing against, so I was really careful to not give interviews before.

When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in?

How did you feel? What was the team's approach? Did anything unexpected happen? How did you feel about your performance? I was an offensive player all of my career, so I scored a lot and that was usually the topic of conversation, or if you were ever up for an award, that's what they would talk about, just really superficial things. No one ever really cared about the dynamic within the team, it was about scoring.

And if you had an interview sitting down with someone outside of the pool, are the things they're interested in then different from what they want to ask you after a match or right when you get out of the pool?

Yeah, it's definitely different. After the game it's scoring and how did you feel, that kind of stuff, you have a difference among...they might show more interest in outside activities and family...I know when I was at USC people were asking about my brother because he was on the water polo team at that time at USC, and kind of getting a family connection. So yeah, it's definitely different outside the pool.

So more personal when you're just sitting down?

Yeah.

Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? Would you say it's you, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?

Yeah, I would say the interviewer and the photographer. When you say you're going to do something with someone, you kind of take their lead. I mean I would never say they forced us to do something we didn't want to do, or say something we didn't want to say...you kind of relinquish your power when you agree to do one of those things.

Are there any topics you dislike discussing or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

I really don't like talking about my personal life at all. In fact, my Wikipedia page had to be changed because I don't want people to know that I'm married, I have a daughter, I just don't like talking about my personal life.

What is your impression of the how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

I think it's disgusting, personally. I think female athletes only get exposure if they're good looking, if they have a nice body. I mean you look at the US Olympic women's team (water polo), I was on the 2008 team and we won a silver medal. We were the most decorated country in the world, and we didn't get any exposure. This year, we won the Olympic gold, still no exposure. You look at our men's national team, for example, who is not one of the best teams in the world, and in 2008 they had a commercial with I think it was Toyota...don't quote me on that...it was some commercial that actually made it on the air in our area. And it just makes you wonder, what are they trying to sell. And the media wants sex symbols. And after I retired, what did the girls do...SI...nude?

SI? Or...

It was ESPN.

Oh, the body issue?

And they were nude, yeah. And if that's the kind of exposure...you know, I have a young daughter and I just think it's absolutely disgusting. You worked your whole life to be viewed as an equal...just to be viewed as an athlete, and the media wants to subject you and objectify you just for situations like that. It hasn't changed. I mean, the women's rights and all that...it hasn't changed for years.

Yeah, and I would have to agree with you...but I can't express my feelings too much on how I feel because I'll get in trouble for trying to lead you.

Oh, I could go on for days about that topic. I mean especially now that I'm a mom, I mean that's why I was off the team, I thought would I do something like that if I was still on the team and I hadn't retired. And my answer was absolutely not. I'm not an ugly person...you know, I was in shape at the time, but one day I knew I was going to have children and my daughter saying, you worked your ass off to do that, that's how you got exposure, that's how you shoed people you were a great athlete? I'm so against it.

[I decide to ask about the Body Issue now since she just brought it up] Do you feel differently about one magazine over the other? [SI versus the body issue]

I do. I think the nudity bothers me, and I know they were covered up, but it's still sending a certain message, like you're important because of your body and I think that's the wrong message for female athletes. I think it's the total wrong message. Swimsuit Issue is...I would have no problem if they were in the water, in their swimsuits, showing what they did. Because I think female athletes' bodies are beautiful and they should be excited that we have women who want to live a healthy lifestyle and all that stuff and send the right message to young girls. So I think once you cross the line of...we're nude and we're appealing to a whole different audience who has no interest sports, they just want to see young, 20-something in provocative position, I just think we're sending the complete wrong message.

And why do you think the water polo team was motivated to pose for ESPN in the first place?

You know, I couldn't tell you. I mean I retired before that, there was approaching change, I think the mentality was different...I don't know if that would have happened if our other coach was still there, my Olympic coach. I don't know. But I almost think ----- good news, whether it's good or bad, and I don't agree with that obviously. There's a lot of people who would do anything to make sure they were well known. And, unfortunately, the sport you're playing...you're never going to be well known, so it's like, why sell your soul, if it's not going to matter anyways. So that was my sort of feeling, it was like, OK here's your chance to get on the map quickly, sex sells, let's see what we can do, let's see if this generates some popularity, and unfortunately, I don't think it did. I think it made a lot of those girls look bad and I'm in the coaching business now, I also teach..I'm an English professor at a college, but I also coach and a lot of little kids have come up to me...parents, I should say, not kids, and just spoke out against it because they have little girls that are going in this direction, and it's like, what are we trying to tell them. Forget about how smart you are, forget about how talented you are, the only time someone is going to care about you is if you take your clothes off. That's basically the gist of it.

I think you've already answered this question, but would you pose for the Swimsuit Edition or the body issue?

I think swimsuit, yes. But I mean, anything nude, anything that's suggesting your nude, no. I'm from a pretty religious background too, so I just think all that stuff is pretty...

So for you it's mostly the nudity factor you disagree with.

Yeah. Yeah. Cause that's our field. Swimsuits, OK, that's one thing. I've done photo shoots where I have been in a swimsuit on a cover, you know, it's not like my whole body, it's half my body because I'm in the water, and that's fine cause I feel like that's my discipline, I'm in the water, I train in the water, I'm a water polo player, but I think the nudity is just a whole other thing.

Would there be a difference for SI...you guys normally compete in one piece bathing suits...if SI came to you and said Moriah, we want you to pose for the Swimsuit Edition, but we want you in a bikini, would that make a difference for you being in a bikini in SI versus being in your normal athletic uniform?

Yeah, I wouldn't like that. Granted, I didn't have the body for that. Luckily, I wasn't having to worry about things like that. But, even if I did, I just think, you just have to think of what they're trying to get out of you, like what are you to them? Are they trying to promote the sport? Are they congratulating you for being a great athlete? Or are they objectifying you? When you're in a swimsuit that shows this is the sport I compete in, this is why I'm wearing the suit, this is why I'm even in a suit at the shoot, so yeah ok, no one is going to say yeah she looks like a slut, but as soon as you go past that and you're wearing a string bikini, what does it have to do with your sport at all, what does it have to do with you being an athlete, what does that have to do with you being a strong, confident, disciplined, successful woman? You're a sex object, period. And I don't

think a lot of female athletes even think about that, even think about the message you're sending, it's like oh I've made it, I'm getting attention.

So it's when your removed from the athletic atmosphere and the athletic environment that it becomes problematic?

Yeah.

Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph?

Since I play a team sport, I would definitely want my team in the picture. I think part of the problem with team sports is when photographers or people conducting interviews only ask one person to do something, it creates a huge divide among the team. So if I had that opportunity, I would definitely do it with my teammates. Like even in interviews, I was always talked about how great my teammates were. So it would definitely be in the pool, I think we would all be huddled around, our hair would be wet, but our makeup would be done because I'm a super girly girl.

Your makeup would be done or would not be done?

Yeah, it would be done. You wouldn't look like ----, but you would have a little bit of makeup on and it would look pretty. Nice with your team, hair wet, and then I think the pictures, individually, maybe would be like some of teammates doing stuff outside the pool with clothes on, hair and makeup done so you see a different look, so were not just in the water all the time, but we are still respectful young women who have lives outside of the pool.

Would the shots in the pool...you said you would be huddled around, but would you have any action shots or mostly poses?

Oh yeah, action shots. Definitely.

So that would be your ideal spread for a sports magazine. Would that change at all for say Glamour, Vouge, Teen People, or I don't know, one of those more fashion, beauty magazines, would your ideal photo shoot change at all for those kinds of publications?

Yeah...maybe I would only...maybe the cover would be on land, in clothes, hair and makeup done to the nines. You know, and then inside the magazine be more action photos. But I think on the cover of like a Sports Illustrated, I think your discipline should be represented on the cover, if you were to do that. Just like they do with men. But yeah, with a Glamour or something like that, I can see how it would have to change because they're gearing towards the

everyday woman, who...not everyday women aren't elite athletes, so I think you'd have to change it.

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. *In uniform in the pool*
- b. *In uniform outside the pool*
- c. *In casual clothes in a neutral setting*
- d. *In figure flattering clothes in a neutral setting*
- e. *Nude*

What would you prefer and why? Are you opposed to any of the options and why?

Let's say A. In my setting, in my uniform, so in swimsuit, in the water, whether it be an action shot, whether it be me in the water with my teammates, whether it be me holding a ball or something. I would still like a little bit of makeup on, I'm not going to lie. But, I feel and I don't want to go too far in the other direction and because I don't want to get you off track, but I feel like as a young female athlete, there weren't a lot of people to look up to. So our...my philosophy was be the best player in the world, and I did everything in my power to get it, I mean I had the -----, I had a trainer at 15. I had everything to excel and be the best...and eventually I was. No where along that journey did I say, I hope I become a model out of this. I feel like there are athletes now, with all of the reality TV shows, I feel like there are female athletes now who get exposure because of how they look, where that's their end goal. I just think we've send the wrong message to young women. Really.

Yeah, and so you feel like you would rather be a role model for other female or or in the sports arena, rather than being know for your looks, or your body, or something along those lines.

I mean every woman wants to be viewed as beautiful, that's a fact. But, I would much rather be respected by my peers because that's what I've chosen to do with my life, I've chosen to be a great athlete and if my peers respect from other countries, if coaches respect me, then I've done my job, then everything...looks...you can't really do much without your looks, right. I mean I think that's a great equalizer of sports. It doesn't matter how much money you have, it doesn't matter how much you look like, it doesn't matter...education. If you're a great athlete, if you've done the work, it will show. And I think when you add in all these other elements, it takes away from the hard work and the life that you really put on hold to be so successful.

And by the other elements, you mean the media and the publicity and the exposure?

Right.

I think as an athlete, you have accomplished that and that's really admirable. And hopefully there will be more famous female athletes that are at your caliber that will follow your same motto. But out of those options, you said you probably wouldn't pose nude in the ESPN body issue, are there any of those other options that you wouldn't feel comfortable doing?

No, I think I would feel fine doing any of the other ones, I have no problem being in a suit on one end, although that wouldn't really make sense...you know...I would prefer to be in the

water. Because why are you just going to stand in a swimsuit? I would rather show people what we do or the element we're actually in. So I wouldn't have a problem being in a form fitting outfit, especially if it made me look thinner, you know, how superficial is that. I wouldn't have a problem being in my warm jackets or something like that in a neutral field.

But you still would be opposed to nude?

Yes.

Ok.

Do you think it is possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

Absolutely. I mean I am so ultra girly, you should see my makeup. It's not even a drawer, I have like three bookshelves, it's ridiculous. Every time I go out my hair and makeup is done, my nails are done. I've always been like that. I've always had nice things, I've always like nice purses, it's always been very girly, but I think your attitude and the way you carry yourself... I don't think it [leads to] a strong woman posing nude and showing everyone that you're just... and I don't want to be vulgar... but you're just tits and a vagina. I think you show people you're a strong woman by being a lady, respecting yourself, but also being a great athlete. And I think you can absolutely be both. And that's kind of why I'm coaching as well as teaching because I want these young girls to know that you don't have to do this, this, and this to get exposure. Be yourself, work hard, because it will come. One of favorite lines to my little girls is, in five years I want to see you're a healthy, happy person contributing to society. I don't want to see that you've had five kids, or are in a terrible relationship because they've been objectified and have multiple partners. Some female athletes don't understand the message their sending, they really don't.

Yeah.

Cause like there's just a misconception, either you're either a great female athlete, but you're a lesbian, or you're a pretty athlete and you're terrible. There's nobody who wants to take on both, and unfortunately the women who have done both, you know I'm a great athlete and I'm beautiful, unfortunately those ones that get exposure do things like nude edition, which is so confusing to the young female athlete. Well I'm not a lesbian, well, I am a talented athlete, but I don't want to pose nude. Which of those three do I fit into?

Do you feel like there are more female athletes, like you, who remain athletic and feminine outside of the public eye, in terms of using their bodies to gain attention through magazines like ESPN?

Yeah, absolutely. I think there's a lot of women who are talented athletes who are beautiful women, not just physically, but mentally, emotionally, all those things. But I don't think they're going to get the exposure they want or their sport needs because they're not willing to do something like that. It all goes back to how ---- these women. And we can say we've made all these great strides, but we haven't. As soon as those girls were asked to do that issue, it was like

what have we done? Why have we worked so hard? That's what we did all that training for? To just take our clothes off? We could have done that before we went to the Olympics.

And it kind of takes away from your athletic accomplishments.

Absolutely. I mean my husband, a lot of the people who work with him you know we went to the Olympics, and he had co-workers saying, we saw that issue, your wife wasn't in it was she? It was a negative connotation. It was like, what was all that about, that was weird.

Yeah I had to check Google myself to see if you were in the photo before I started this interview, so I could ask you about it.

Listen I'm going to be very honest, I'm 5'10", but I'm not 180 pounds. I was a center, so it's not like I had to worry about tons of these things ---- a one piece or a two piece? I didn't have to worry about all that stuff. But since these are hypothetical questions, I definitely would not want to be in a string bikini or a two piece. Even at practice, when we would have fun days and we could wear two pieces, I rarely did that. It's like we're not here to work on our tan, I don't let my little kids that I coach...little kids that are 18 years old...I don't let them wear two pieces to practice. What are you doing, we're not here to working on our tans, I don't want to see your body, I don't want guys walking on the pool deck looking at your body, you're here as an athlete, dress appropriately. And it's hard to get that message through.

That's interesting to hear because I imagine it would be pretty hard to play water polo in a bikini.

Well it would just be like swim days and that happens very rarely, but when it did, most of the team would wear two pieces. And of course, people have different opinions, if you have a great body and your not uncomfortable and you want to show it, great. But not only did I think I didn't have the best body...not that I gave a shit because we had a close team...but I really don't think that's the time and place. I'll wear a bikini when I'm on vacation in Hawaii, or when I'm with my girlfriends at the beach, I don't need to do at practice in front of my coaches.

And do you think that takes away from your athletic...I don't know what the word is...ability?

Yeah. When Canada would come down and train with us and they would show up to practice in two pieces, we would take them as a joke. I mean I still...between you and I still have very little respect for the Canadian national team based on things like that. I mean we're training for three hours before they even get in the water and then they show up in two pieces, and it's like, can we get you a margarita to go with that? I mean it was so nonchalant, it was just ridiculous, and that's the idea I have of these girls. Not only did I not respect them...yeah I respected them as peers because we played against them, but I definitely didn't fear them because I didn't think they worked as hard as us, I didn't think they took it as seriously as us, etcetera.

Yeah I think it definitely takes away from your athletic credibility, is what I was getting at earlier.

Right, right.

How would you define "femininity"?

I don't know if I really can define it. I think, because I don't think you need to have a ton of makeup and have your hair done like I do, but I think it's an attitude you have. I think you have to act like a lady. I think when you're not on the pool deck it's showing people that there is a softer side. When you're in that athletic field, I was not nice. I had no problem punching people, I had no problem hurting people, I had no problem telling people bad things or calling them bad names. But when you leave the field, you have to show you have a softer side and I think that means being nice, I think that means being caring, all the things that most people... a lot of characteristics that most people think a woman should have. I think also being a good team. I don't know. I'm sorry my husband just left, I got sidetracked, he left for work.

No, no, that's OK. So from what I'm hearing from you, you think that in the pool you're very aggressive and so when you're outside the pool, in your normal every day life, that's when you have to express your femininity...

Be more feminine.

Ok. And you would think feminine characteristics would be nice, being a good teammate...

I don't want to be superficial, but I mean going shopping with your girlfriends and the way you talk...like I definitely talk differently when I was out of the pool than I was in the pool, I definitely use different language when I was playing, and now I don't. This doesn't have anything to do with femininity, but just being humble when you're a female athlete, you have to take on these masculine characteristics, which I don't...I didn't enjoy, but you almost become this crazy, fuck you and this...you really do have to take on these masculine characteristics to take on these really masculine [women] and so it was such a breath of fresh air when I retired and I could just be a woman. I just have to take on these other characteristics, that weren't necessarily mine, but I had to identify with to be successful, in opinion, especially because of my position. I got the shit kicked out of me every game and I needed to be able to take a hit, I had to be able to look tough in and out of the water, and I had to be intimidating. So leaving the sports field, I was able to...and again it's superficial, I don't think everyone has to do this to be feminine...but doing the hair doing the nails making sure I always had my makeup done, I dress nicely, all those things you couldn't really do in front of your opponents because it would make you look weak. I think I just made that so confusing, I'm sorry.

No, not at all. So you would feel like, if you were to act "feminine" in the pool, you would just get destroyed?

To a certain degree, yeah, absolutely. Like I saw girls walking on the pool deck...like look at the Canadians, when you come to practice in a two piece, it's like, I don't know who you think you're trying to impress, I'm going to rip that suit off and then punch your face and slap your mom, it was like what are you doing?

So in the pool you think you definitely take on more masculine characteristics?

Yeah, absolutely. And within female athletics there's a lot of lesbians. And so being...and I don't know how other people feel about this, but I don't care, I played with tons of lesbians, especially when I lived over seas. I love them, they're great people. But being a straight, feminine woman, playing a sport, I almost had to be extra masculine at times and just be really intimidating to compete in that atmosphere.

Do you feel like for you personally, you try to convey feminine characteristics outside the pool to eliminate any association with lesbianism, or to say to people look I am feminine, I'm not a lesbian, do you feel like in that, you try to portray femininity?

I think that's who I am. I've always been very girly and I think you have to be able to have two personalities. I think when you're competing and training you're a different person. But I've been with my husband for 9 years, and anybody that sees me with him, it's just a completely different personality, I'm a completely different person, I don't have to be that tough person. But when you're playing, I think a lot of women do feel like, OK I have to...and this kind of goes to being objectified... I think have to sleep with men to prove I'm not a lesbian, and I was never like, I was never like that. And I still am, I'm very confident with who I am as a person, and I don't really give a shit what people think about me. I'm going to kick your ass in the water and then I'm gonna come out, put a pound of makeup on, I'm gonna shopping, and my husband is going to treat me like a queen. Seriously, I would be able to have the best of both worlds. And I think people...at least who played with...understood that. I don't know about opponents ever knew that. When I lived in Greece, people were like holy shit we thought you were so mean, just playing against you, and I'm living with them for a year and seeing who I really was as a person and how I acted, they're very surprised that that person, that who I was, was connected to who they used to play against.

And it's interesting that you point out that disconnect...how people you played with and against saw that difference in you.

My best friend at USC, I mean, we would get in fights, like literally fights at practice, and our coach would have to separate us. And then after practice we would go get dinner, we would get dressed, and go party, it's like...I'm mean I'm not like a party animal, I don't want you to get the wrong idea...but freshmen year of college was a lot of fun, I can't remember half of it. So yeah, that was fun. You would just play hard and then party hard, and you'd dress up and you'd look like a girl, and I think a lot of people, I know my husband...loved that about me. I was a hardworking, dedicated, focused athlete, but I was also very feminine. Like I had no problem being very girl around him.

Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in an article or professional photograph? Or if there's one particular athlete where you're like, why does she do this, or I'm glad she does this.

Well, isn't that tennis player who's dating Enrique Iglaseus, who is that girl who's like a terrible tennis player, but gets a lot of credit because she's pretty?

Anna Kournikova.

Yeah. I never understood her because I'm thinking you're a shit athlete. And I know that sounds so terrible and so snobby, but really, if you look at her record, she wasn't that successful. But she's a good looking girl, so she gets tons of credit. I don't understand that. I don't understand things like that. I didn't understand the ESPN magazine, with...some of my former teammates...some of those girls never went to the Olympics. I didn't understand that. And then the other one that's kind of off topic was that woman from South Africa, I'm not sure, she was definitely from Africa. And people were saying she was a man, and then the media made her out to be this horrible, disgusting person, and it turns out she was a hermaphrodite. Do you know who I'm talking about?

Yeah, I'm trying to find her name in my notes. But yeah.

And I just remember feeling so bad for her because you have the other side, where it's like the Anna Kournikova or whoever that girl was, you have our girls who just want to be objectified, and then you have this poor girl who I really need more background, but the exact opposite. It's like oh you're not feminine enough, and there must be something wrong with you, and you're a big lesbian...oh wait, you're a hermaphrodite and this whole thing was put in the media. And I just felt so terrible for this girl.

And that story has received so much attention in this field, especially from my own professors and my own advisors who have looked into it, and have really pointed out how if you're not super feminine as an athlete, who are you. It's so concerning to people when this athlete...if you're not beautiful, or if you're not out there on the track strutting your stuff, than there must be something wrong with you.

And that's so sad, but I mean, that's the media. Because you go to an Olympic games and guess what, there's a lot of not attractive men and women, but they're fucking amazing at what they do. No other Olympic athlete...I'm sorry I'm swearing...no other athlete cares what someone looks like when they're playing against them, they don't care. I didn't care if someone was really pretty, god you have great skin, no, I wanted to kick her ass. And no other athlete feels that way. But when you bring the media in and you just objectify women...and we could say the same thing about male athletes. I mean how many male athletes are gay but never say anything because they would just get crucified in the media, and they will lose sponsorships that they have, and they will lose fans that they have. It's just such a crazy world we live in...where athletics is not enough, you have to prove that you're a good thing...ultra feminine or you're a lesbian and that's weird, and we don't like it, and we're gonna make you look bad in the media. I can't think of one lesbian athlete who gets any credit, I can't.

Or at least appears in the media to the extent of Anna Kournikova or Lindsey Vonn...

I can't think of one. You have tons of basketball in WNBA who are phenomenal athletes who've done great in college and now professionally, and no one is talking about them or making them cover models, or...it's weird.

[Comment on her attitude towards female athletes, which should have a positive impact on her own athletes and hopefully one day more athletes with this kind of attitude can eliminate these problematic representations]

I hope so too. And I don't know if you want this for your article, but there's a big sporting chain out here, or sports athletic wear called Lululemon, have you heard of them?

Yeah.

They're from Canada. We wore them our whole career one, of my girlfriends is a manager out here, and they only go up to a size 12. And I actually wrote to Lululemon because here I am a retired athlete, even when I was in shape, a 10 and a 12 that's pretty much the only thing I can look at...now I'm retired, I've had a child. I sent an e-mail or a letter saying, are you going to maternity sizes, are you going to have plus sizes, and I think having brands like lululemon, even though I love their clothes, also sends the wrong message to female athletes. It's you can only wear these types of clothes if you're already in shape. I just think from the media, to the consumers, everything that we're sending to these young women...it's you're not good enough unless you look like this and you're this size. It's kind of off topic, but I mean I have a young daughter now, and what am I going to say to her if she can't fit into something like that, you're not good enough? You're not a real athlete unless you're this size. There's a lot of amazing female athletes that don't fit into that cookie cutter shape.

Or somehow you're abnormal because you can't fit into these type of clothes.

Yeah.

Gymnast 1

What happens when you're approached to participate in an interview or a photo shoot? For example, like who's in contact with the publication who's doing the interview? How do you decide if you're going to participate or not? Those sorts of things.

In my case, I personally have an agent, so anything that's in the media aspect is kind of fed through her, and sources can come from USA gymnastics, which is obviously my governing body, or they could just call into my agency directly and speak with my agent, and then she'll run it by me, and if I feel comfortable with it, then I'll do it, if not, then if we don't think it will be a positive image for my brand we'll kind of shy away from it.

And do you have any contact with the reporter/photographer ahead of time?

A lot of times...like if I was doing a photo shoot for my sponsor, like say, Underarmor is one of my sponsors, they're going to pick the photographer and they'll send me samples of his work, but I don't really get to communicate with him beforehand, usually.

Ok, and can you give me an example of a time when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot?

I think after Olympic trials this year I didn't do any media because I was obviously not overly pleased with the outcome of the (meet) so I literally just skipped all media. And after competition there's a pressroom where there's seats, we have to sit and kind of talk to the Associated Press, Boston Globe, whatever your hometown newspaper would be. And I totally skipped it, I was just like not feeling it.

Say if someone were to approach you and wanted you to do a certain type of photo that maybe you felt uncomfortable with doing for your brand, because you said if you didn't think it was a positive image for your brand...can you give me an example of a time when it didn't fall in line with what you guys are trying to promote?

I mean, the most uncomfortable thing that I would think of would probably be a playboy shoot. I actually did the Body Issue in 2011, and you know, at that point I was 24, I felt I was at the point where I'm old enough, I'm proud of my body, I don't need to kind of shy away from something like this. I think when I was younger, that is something we would have denied. We would be like, you know, now is not a good time, I'm only 16, 17, 18 years old and I don't feel like it's going to put me in a positive light. But I think, as I got older, obviously struggling through a bunch of body images issues that girls go through these days, I thought, you know what, I'm proud of the way I look, and I might as well do it now because I'm not going to look like this forever, and it would be something nice to have down the road.

When you're being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers most interested in?

They're most interested in...if it's post competition, they're interested in your thoughts and feelings about how the competition went. If it's during training, they want to know what your expectations and thoughts are going to be about your performance in the upcoming competition. And a lot of the time, they just kind of want to know a little bit of what's going on in your life personally, but for the most part, they try to stick towards just the gymnastics, and cover all grounds...and how you train, what gives you a competitive edge, what your nutrition might be, so all things that circulate around how you're training and how you're living.

So you'd say mostly athletic and not personal?

Right.

OK. Are there any topics you dislike or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

I try to shy away from my personal life...just because...my boyfriend and I are very private and we obviously don't need extra people in our business and especially with media scrutiny and people feel like they have an opinion about everything these days, like I don't need to hear what somebody's comment is about my relationship, it's honestly none of their business, so things like that, I try to give as little as possible about my personal life, and just kind of strictly keep it to business.

When you're doing a photo shoot or an interview, who do you feel is most in control? Would you say the interviewer/photographer, your agent, yourself, or maybe somebody else?

I think I'm most in control. If I ever feel uncomfortable or I don't like something, I will tell my agent, because that's what she's getting paid for, and she'll approach them in very politically correct way and be like, you know what, we're not comfortable with this, let's try to move around, let's try to change it, or alter it so everybody's happy with the outcome.

What is your impression of the way female athletes are represented in the media? And do you feel that differs from the way male athletes are depicted?

I definitely think it differs from the way male athletes are viewed, depicted. I think a lot of times, female athletes, their actual accomplishments aren't getting enough praise, it's more based upon their looks and their image and everything they're portraying. It's not always about athletics, which is what I kind of struggle with a little bit. I wish it were more you know giving them the credit where it's due for accomplishing something great.

And you feel that men do receive that sort of recognition over women?

You know, men are first going to receive recognition for their athletic achievements, and then if they happen to be good looking, that's going to boost up a little more as well. But first and foremost, men don't care how other men really look, they care about, oh he did whatever (sporting event accomplishment)...so it's kind of like that.

Gives hypothetical example.

I think that probably the most ideal setting would be, based upon the fact that I've done gymnastics, would be in the gym I've trained at, it wouldn't be in a leotard because that's how you seem gymnasts all the time. I would want to show them in their normal clothes, showing their personal style in a more laid back setting because in gymnastics it's always very intense, very focused, so, you just want to show that that we're real people too, not just little robots that are competing all the time and doing everything that we're told so I'd want to show that I have a mind of my own and I work hard, but I also try to give back to the community and help little kids that are in a similar situation that I am, trying to come up in the gymnastics world.

And you guys wear hair and makeup normally when you compete, so that would be a part of the photo shoot as well I'm assuming?

Yeah, I mean we're always done up a little bit more, hair's up in a tight bun or ponytail, and we usually have a decent amount of makeup on. So probably something a little more natural, hair down and not really caking on the makeup.

And say this wasn't a sports magazine, it was like Seventeen or People or something, would you still want to have that athletic setting in those types of magazines, or would your ideal photo shoot change a little bit?

No I think it would still be the same, because obviously that's what I'm being recognized for.

Ok so, do you think it's possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

Yes, I do think it's possible for that. Gymnastics is obviously a very girly sport, most people would say, so I think for us to be in athletics that requires grace and ultimately, the feminine aspect of everything, ---- is something that I grew up with, so I think that for all women, we can make it as feminine as we want. And some people try to take that out of it because they want to be equal to men.

Right, and how would you say you balance your athleticism with your femininity?

You know for gymnastics training it's a little bit different, we do a lot of body weight stuff, so we're not in the gym lifting per say, so I try to balance my weight lifting with Pilates or yoga to try to balance out the muscle gain with having long and lean and flexibility in my muscles.

How would you define "femininity"? Maybe some characteristics that you associate with your femininity or other women you admire?

I would think...just having that inner sense of beauty and being able to handle adversity with grace...and just being well spoken and just loving yourself for the way you're built and the way that God made you.

What happened when you were approached to do that shoot? (Body Issue)

They said they're looking for a gymnast because they've never had one before and so they kind of worked through USA gymnastics, which went through my agent, which came to me.

And what made you decide to do it? And did you have any apprehensions beforehand?

I just thought it was a good time in my career to do that and I knew I was going to be retiring after the 2012 season, so I thought why not now, I'm in great shape and I'm really proud of how hard I worked, and obviously, it's a little bit nerve racking, but once it was over it was a cool experience.

And were you familiar with the Body Issue before you were asked to do it?

Yeah, I had seen previous issues.

How did you feel during the shoot? What was going through your mind? Were you ever uncomfortable, or did you feel it pretty even-keeled the whole time?

It was pretty even-keeled. Beforehand, you get your nerves, but then once it's kind of underway you kind of calm down and it's not really a big deal.

In your opinion, what do those photos say about you as a female athlete? You mentioned that you were proud of your body and to have that as a way to express it and show it off, but what do you think they say about you as an athlete and as a woman?

I think it obviously shows that I'm proud of everything I've accomplished, and it shows strength and grace and everything that gymnastics entails as a whole. So that's what I think it depicted and I was proud of that.

How would you compare the Body Issue to the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition?

I think Sports Illustrated is more about flaunting your assets, per se, and then I think the Body Issue is trying to highlight the athleticism that's being depicted in whatever sport the athlete does.

You're shots were action shots, correct?

Yes.

Did you have any other photos besides the one on the beam?

There were two beam pictures and one on the floor. It's obviously kind of hard to get anything gymnastics related because trying to flip, you don't know what's going to happen, so they were like, we need to keep it in kind of a stable environment.

Would you ever pose for the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition?

I don't know...I've never really been approached with it and it's never crossed my mind as something I would want to do, so probably not.

Have you ever had strong positive/negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in the media?

You there have just been certain instances when they try to depict female athletes in a more negative light. I mean there's not really one instances where I was like, oh my gosh I am appalled by this, but I mean, there's cases every now and then where I'm like, you know what, they could have handled that better.

"In a negative light" do you mean in terms of their athletic abilities, or....?

It's not even necessarily their athletic abilities usually, it's more about what they're doing outside of you know, their sport.

So, more personal?

Yeah, it's more about personal stuff.

Multiple-choice question.

I would guess B.

And would you be opposed to any of the options?

I think I'm all set with nude photos, once was enough.

Gymnast 2

What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview or photo shoot? Who is in contact with the publication conducting the interview? Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot?

A lot of it set up through my agent. I signed with an agent in 2005. They would come to me with things and stuff like that. Before the Olympics, USA gymnastics would do some things, but for us...just being young and being gymnasts...it was very, very controlled through USA gymnastics. We actually weren't allowed to do a lot of interviews beforehand. And they all were OK'ed through USA gymnastics if we had...and then, it just depended...and if it is before such a major competition like the Olympics, even if your agent comes through with one, usually they have to get it OK'ed by USA gymnastics, it's something that they have to do...

And did you have an agent right when you were selected for the Olympic team or did you have one ahead of time?

Ahead of time. I signed in 2005 and I was on the team in 2008.

And so now you continue to have your agent and that's how you would...

Yeah. That's usually how people get in contact with me. Unless...I mean...there's a few reporters that I've had personal contact with and just kind of kept up with a little bit and they come to me first, but usually it goes through my agent.

How do you decide if you're going participate or not?

Usually it's...you know, more what the content is going to be about. If it's something positive and shed a good light on the sport. Personally, that's generally how we choose. Cause there's been some things for gymnastics where it's not so positive, so it is, it's always something that's going to reflect positively on you as a person as well as the sport you're in.

Can you give an example of when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot?

Let me think. You know sometimes too, I know that my agent wouldn't just sometimes pass them on to me because she knows right away that it's not right for me. So sometimes I might not

even know or she'll send me something and say this is a good idea or I don't know if this is a good idea, so it's nice to have someone like that who advise you...who knows the business a little bit more.

Would you say she kind of acts as a filter beforehand?

Yes. Definitely.

When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in?

I guess it kind of depends on what it is. After competitions it's always about how the competition went, how did you prepare beforehand, stuff like that. A lot of questions I get are about both of the Olympics, Olympic experiences that I've been through being an alternate and stuff. I actually got asked the question so many times since 2004, how they did the selection process and everything being on TV and all of that. It varies. I get asked about my injuries as well because I've had quite a few.

Are there any topics you dislike discussing or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

Not usually. Like I said, most of the people I've done interviews with been very well...and pretty highly educated in gymnastics. There are some that don't know a lot...I guess there's really nothing that I've flat out refused to say...No, I guess not really. I've always been pretty open with everything.

Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? You, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?

Well I think it's a little bit of both as far as me and the reporter who's interviewing me. If there is something that I don't want to delve deep into, or if I want to direct the question a little bit differently, I'll answer it accordingly.

What is your impression of the how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

I think it's gotten better. I still think that men are favored a little bit more. I understand it. I think, except for the Olympics I guess...the Olympics, gymnastics is one of the bigger...is the most watched sport, so that's when we do get a lot of attention, especially us as a women's...but I still think it's a male's world as far as sports. I think we are headed in the right direction to getting females a little bit more attention... because we're working just as hard as they are and putting in just as many hours and it is nice to be able to...I think for some of the females to get noticed as well as the males. But it is, it's still football, basketball, baseball dominated world.

Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe

your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph?

That's tough. I've mainly been photographed in the gym just because...being a gymnast and everything. And I do like that because it is what I'm known for, it's what I've grown up doing, it's gymnastics...it's been my whole life. I'm trying to think because you said it's what you want to get across...

Yeah.

Well for me, I've always want to be remembered as a great athlete, a great team player and always wanting to do the best that I can for my country and myself. That is hard to get across in a photograph, in an article, but ...something along the lines of that.

Do you think you would want to be featured in the gym again or maybe in a venue outside of the gym?

I don't know. I've never been given that option.

Overall, you'd want to highlight your athleticism and your accomplishments?

Yeah.

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. In uniform on the court*
- b. In uniform off the court*
- c. In casual dress in a neutral setting*
- d. In figure flattering dress in a neutral setting*
- e. Nude*

What would you prefer and why? Are you opposed to any of the options and why?

I oppose to the nude. I'm just not comfortable with that at all. I would be fine being photographed in a leo, but now it's kind of harder, because now that I'm retired I'm not in the gym as much, I'm not in my top gymnastics shape. So it would be nice to be out in some nice clothes. And I guess too, it depends on the setting of the article, what it's supposed to highlight.

So if it was for a sports magazine, ESPN or something..

It would be in a leotard in the gym.

But if was for Teen People or Seventeen or something...

Probably just in regular clothes in any kind of setting.

Do you think it is possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

I think it is.

How would you define "femininity"? Or what characteristics do you associate with your own femininity?

Well I do think you can be feminine and be athletic at the same time. I don't think there's one quality that makes you that way, I think you can always feel feminine no matter what. Our sport...it's kind of nice with the leos...and we do get to have fun with makeup...like I love makeup and I do like getting dressed up from time to time. I think you can be in nice shape and be a strong women and be feminine. Yeah.

Gymnastics is a little different than basketball or something cause you guys have nice hair and makeup and the leos are obviously very figure flattering, as opposed to a uniform that might be a little baggier or less flattering. So gymnastics is obviously a very feminine sport and you don't think there's a distinction between your femininity and your athleticism...but what qualities do you associate with your own femininity?

With my own?

Yeah.

As far as...like while I'm in the gym?

Just in your everyday life...as a woman, what qualities do you associate with being a woman or being feminine. I mean obviously your not masculine, so what qualities do you tie to your femininity as a woman...it could be as a gymnast too, but...

For me, part of it is staying in shaping and still being comfortable and confident with myself, I think those are always qualities that go along with being feminine and being confident in yourself. And also taking pride with how you dress and everything. For me, I'm in gym clothes a lot, but I still feel that you can look nice when you're wearing stuff like that. But I think the biggest one is the confidence.

How do you feel about female athletes posing for the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition, where the athletes are featured in bathing suits, or the ESPN Magazine Body Issue, where athletes pose in the nude?

I think to each her own. One of my teammates and good friend posed in it and one of the male gymnasts just posed for it as well...if they're comfortable with that then I do think that's great they're showing off how comfortable they are with their body in their skin and it's not for me, but I respect their decision in doing that.

Do you feel differently about one magazine over the other?

I think they're two completely different things. The swimsuit [*Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition*] is more just great looking women in bikinis and the other [*Body Issue*] is athletes

showing different types of bodies, it's not just a thin woman who looks great in the bikinis. It's all different body types showing how...all the different muscles of these athletes.

You said you wouldn't do the body issue, or that you didn't feel comfortable posing nude, but would you pose for the SI Swimsuit Edition?

I don't know...I don't think so.

Why do you think female athletes are motivated to pose for these types of magazines?

I think for some of them it is being confident in how they look and proud of themselves for what they've accomplished and everything...I think that has a lot to do with it.

Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in the media?

Well...yeah. There's always people out there that aren't gonna...agree or disagree with how these athletes look or what they do and everything. There's been not nice comments about myself with how I look and everything. There's negatives and there's positives, you're just never going to be able to please everybody, but I've learned from my parents, and being in the sport, and being in the public eye from an earlier age that you really just can't focus on all the negatives that are out there.

When you say that you or others have been represented negatively in what way? Is it in terms of your personal life or gymnastics career or?

Not my personal life. Mainly about our bodies and how they look. Some people thought I was too big to be a gymnast. Those are harsh words to hear or read when you're 17.

Yeah I'm sure.

So those are never fun. And like I said, it's hard to hear that and it's hard to read that, but then it's just like well, I'm OK with my body and I can do all my gymnastics, I can do it well, so it's their problem not mine.

Yeah. And since usually gymnasts are pretty young, I can't even image the kind of scrutiny you guys face and go through and all the things you read from people who don't have anything nice to say.

It's pretty harsh. And like I said, I'm thankful to have great parents that kind of teach me then just let it roll off you, but there are very nasty comments out there and it's...like I said before, you're not going to please everybody, but it is, it's hard. But yeah, they must not be too happy with themselves if they can hate on a 17 year old.

Rower 1

What happens when you are approached to participate in an interview or photo shoot? Who is in contact with the publication conducting the interview? Do you have any contact with the reporter ahead of time to discuss the interview or photo shoot?

Personal or team?

You can talk about both, but let's start with personal.

Yeah, sure. It really kind of varies. I would say that most publications or reporters usually get contact info from US rowing. So if they go through the woman there, who's our media relations person, then she'll either email me that there's a request, or she'll give my email out. And so it usually is ahead of time, most times. But when we were at events, say when we were at the Olympics, there's were just a lot of people around and it was pretty last minute, and people would just come up to you or they'd say OK you need to be interviewed for this...get ready. So, yeah. I'd say outside the Olympic venue it was mostly ahead of time.

But you would typically have direct contact with the publication or interviewer?

Ummm...yeah. And if not the first time...because through our media relations person, then definitely, I would just interview them directly...I'm sorry, respond directly.

How do you decide if you're going participate or not?

How would I decide?

Yeah, what's your criteria or how would you decide if you weren't going to.

I think for me, it's...I don't necessarily enjoy it, so I think it is kind of cool to see an article come out, or you'll see some photos, it's fun cause we never really have a lot of opportunity for photo shoots. And I know before the Olympics it was definitely exciting because it's a huge opportunity for the sport to grow, so I definitely had that in mind when I was thinking about whether or not to accept a request. For the most part, when we're training and then at the Olympics it really depended on what our schedule was like, so obviously rowing comes first and racing comes first, so if it was in any way taking away from what we were doing, then obviously the answer would be no. But for the most part it really seemed like...we did have two or three media days right after the Olympic team was named, so we would have practice and then some interviewers and different people would come on our launch, which is what the coach rides to watch practice, so they would take photos and they got some videos, I think the New York Times did that, and then afterwards we would be filmed and interviewed and taken pictures of. So there were designated days to do that, but then our coach was pretty clear about the fact that these are the three days we have to that, but then it's game on and back to being serious, so no more media. So sometimes it is sort of coach decided as well, which to be honest, I'm super fine with because at the end of the day you spend so long training that you gotta focus on the task at hand. But yeah, for the most part, I definitely say yes because I appreciate people reaching out and I

think, like I said, it's good for the sport and most times, unless it's like a really weird request or at an unsuitable time, it's fine.

Can you give an example of when you may have denied participation in an interview or photo shoot? But have you denied at any other time than it interfering with training or practice or anything like that?

I don't remember having denied anything other than those reasons. I know that there was, in London, there was one where, it was a British guy, I don't even remember the name of the publication... I think it was like... they were doing video. And they had approached me because they had read my story and were interested and they were at the course and I couldn't meet that day because we had practice, so they gave me a time the following day to meet and it would have been fine with practice and we would have been there. But they didn't show up at the time, and then 15 minutes, 20 minutes went by and it was time for practice again. So I just sort of ignored it and went on to row and then afterwards they came back and were like why weren't you there, and it was just a big miscommunication, and then they were actually kind of rude about it. And then I finally told my coach, I was like look I don't want to do this anymore, these people aren't being very nice and I also just have to focus on rowing because I would have had to stay outside of practice time and the buses were leaving and so, but the guy was really rude about it and so then my coach had to go up and say we're not interested, thank you, but no.

When you are being interviewed, what types of things are the interviewers interested in?

I mean it is very interesting because you can really tell who's competent and who's not. Sometimes interviewers will... you can tell they haven't really done their research, so they'll ask like where did you row, where did you go to school, where are you from, what boats were you in, so you kind of have to tell them all that... that's it's pretty searchable online. Then other times they kind of want to hear your story in your own words, so for me personally, I guess the biggest things that come up is I was a swimmer before starting to row, I started to row in college which is somewhat late for a lot of us on the team, so that's a big thing. And then also just sort of where I'm from and the community support, and then also, the biggest thing would probably be the story of my mom and my grandfather. My grandfather used to be the coach of the Denver Broncos, so they like to hear about that. And then my mom passed away from breast cancer a couple years ago, so that's just been a big part of my journey and so they always want to hear about that.

Would you say, those types of things about your grandfather and your mom, those are more personal obviously. Do you mind when they ask you about those sorts of things?

Um, no not at all. I think the thing is they know about it because I've already spoken about it publicly, so it means I'm willing to and don't have a problem with it. No it's fine I think that every athlete has their own individual story and things that make them interesting and unique, so I think that might be part of what makes me interesting. Hopefully. So no, it's great. It's good for people to know and for maybe the public to really... more so. I don't mind it at all.

Who do you feel is in control of the interview or photo shoot? You, the interviewer/photographer, your manager, or someone else?

Like during the actual interview?

Yeah.

Most of the time, nobody else is there besides me and the interviewer. So unless we're doing like high profile interviews, so we did do the Today Show after we won, and our media relations person was there, but for the most part it's just me and the interviewer and maybe a cameraman if it's video. So, I would say probably the interviewer probably because they're the ones controlling what questions to ask and what not. But I think as you get better at interviewing, you realize that if a question makes you a little uncomfortable, there's a good way to spin it or you can take as long as you want to answer a question, or sort of add in anything you want to a question that might not be exactly what was asked, but I think that takes practice, so I'm still trying to figure it out.

And did you guys have any media training leading up to the Olympics?

We did. So all Olympians are supposed to go through a day of media training and they have what they call Olympic ambassadors, which are basically retired Olympians who are still interested in being involved in the movement, that will come and put on this media day training for you. And so you go through all these different scenarios, you practice answering different questions, you learn about the specific venue and the cultural things that are important. So the big thing leading up to London was being aware that the gossip magazines are pretty crazy there, so you just want to be really careful like what you're photographed in, where you are, and just be aware that could be a problem. And then there's a lot about social media and the best way to respond with that and how you should treat sponsors, which is fun, I don't think it was particularly informative, some things were interesting. It was kind of pain because we had to do it in between training sessions. But we do go through a day or two of media training leading up to the Olympics. And it was awkward too because it was.... I think like six months before the Olympics or five months, so everyone who was still in selection and didn't know if they were going had to go through it, so people who didn't make the teams had to do it.

Are there any topics you dislike discussing or refuse to discuss with a reporter?

I mean probably just things that are considered inappropriate, but I haven't really come across anything that ... I mean I feel like any reporter has asked me anything that I felt uncomfortable with. I guess things about my personal life, but again, I don't think...there's nothing that's come up about that. And like I said, I talk about my mom and my grandfather. Yeah I think sometimes like...we did a panel discussion after, immediately after a race, and some of the reporters in that meeting I thought were a little inappropriate. And the reason for that was because we were there with all three boats. So there's apparently this big rivalry between us and Canada and they got silver, we got gold, and then the Netherlands got bronze, and these two reporters, they were actually Canadian, but they asked some, I thought, inappropriate questions to the Canadian team right in front of us that were just sort of like...did you ever get sick of...or

how does it feel to lose again and again and again to the Americans, like right after they had gotten silver. And I mean, I thought they answered it very gracefully, but it was just sort of (cuts out) not great. So I mean I guess there are questions like that might not be very considerate especially if you're in a situation where it's directly in front of the competition, so sometimes like I said, if it's a one on one basis you have time to think about exactly what you want to say, but when it's right there in front of the other team it's a little bit more high pressure and it's kind of uncomfortable to be asked questions like that in front of your competition.

What is your impression of the how female athletes are represented in the media? How does this compare to the way male athletes are depicted?

Yeah, that's a good question. I think that it's a complicated issue because men's sports...well I think there's two sort of categories. You have professional sports and then you have the Olympic sports, and I think in professional sports, obviously men are way more prevalent I would say and sort of the big sponsorships, big time money, big time ads, those are mostly feature men and I think huge reason for that is the presence of the NFL, the NBA, and those are huge money makers. And it sort of an interesting question whether...what came first, was it the fact that people think the NBA is so much more exciting than the WNBA so that's how they create more money and then all of the TV rights go the men and all the sponsorships go the men and all people see are these professional male players, or is it because the media has created this that creates this sort of social response, so maybe if there was more equality on the media front between the two, then maybe that would start to change and people would be fans of the WNBA as well. So that's just one idea. In the Olympics, I was actually really pleased with the equality and the balance of men and women athletes featured. I think that it is interesting because I find that the men that are featured, well they're usually attractive and have nice bodies, especially as athletes, they're not necessarily as highly sexualized as the women are or need to be, in order to feel like they're creating readership or big numbers. So I don't know a lot of the research, but it seems like the female athletes that seem to be the most prevalent in the media are kind of like sexualized I would say and I don't necessarily know if that's a bad thing, but I think there is a little bit of an inequality there.

Hypothetical example: You are approached by a sports magazine that wants to do a story about you. You are told you will be featured on the cover and a full two page spread within the magazine. You get to decide how you want to be photographed for the story (the cover photo and the story photo). How would you want to be pictured in the magazine? Please describe your ideal wardrobe, setting, and hair/makeup. What qualities about yourself would you want to highlight through this photograph?

It's funny because I've done like two photo shoots and I am so inexperienced and have no idea what I'm doing and I basically get so excited that they're doing my hair and makeup that they're like wow, she has no idea what she's doing. And I'm like ooh ya know, taking photos because it's fun...but I'm so into posing, it's so funny because I'm so awkward and they have to tell me what to do, "is this right? Is this right? I don't know. I don't know." So that's a great question and I don't necessarily know what I'm doing. Say like, I would like to be in poses where I would look thin, so whatever I think is most flattering. And in terms of hair and makeup, I think usually it seems like people are pretty good at knowing what looks good in photos. I do notice

that I don't like how they put so much makeup on, but I think sometimes that does look better when you are... high resolution photos. I don't really know. I think, obviously, I'm really proud of being a female athlete and feeling strong and fit, so I think highlighting those assets and maybe hiding my less desirable assets, or not assets, but size.

And would these pictures be you around the water in boat with your teammates, would you be alone, would you be in your uniform, what would the setting be for you?... Or would you be home with your family doing something else you love outside of rowing?

Action shots could be really cool, whether its rowing or being active in some activity or something, I hate our uniforms. We have to wear these awful unisuit spandex things...and they make them white on top, which white spandex... why would you do that? So I would definitely stay away from that. I don't know I think I probably would want to be with my teammates because on the one hand it's kind of nice to individualize yourself because that's sort of what helps bring in sponsorship or money if it's possible, which is tough in rowing as it is, but at the end of the day it's the women's 8 and there are nine of us in the boat and that's a huge team sport, and there's no way any of us could have accomplished what we did without the rest of us, so I think highlighting that would be very important, and it is very important to me. And it's fun, I enjoy being around my teammates and having photos with them. So, I'd probably say if it were a photo shoot where I was really promoting the sport of rowing, or promoting what we accomplished, then I'd definitely want to be with my team. If it were a photo shoot that were involved with say some sort of foundation or something having to do with breast cancer, then that's a little different because it is a little more individual to me. But yeah for the most part I'd say with my teammates.

If you had a choice of being photographed:

- a. *In uniform on the water or in a boat*
- b. *In uniform outside the sporting arena*
- c. *In casual dress in a neutral setting*
- d. *In figure flattering dress in a neutral setting*
- e. *Nude*

What would you prefer and why? Are you opposed to any of the options and why?

I would say I would probably do in the uniform while rowing and also in figure flattering clothes in a neutral setting, those would probably be my two. I'm not necessarily opposed to nude, I mean I think obviously it'd have to be covering areas, but I'm not necessarily opposed to that. I really like the...one of my teammates actually did the ESPN body issue, and I thought she looking fricken amazing, so I think that's really cool to highlight that sort of athleticism. But for me, I'd probably be most comfortable with those two.

And you brought up the Body Issue, which is one of my next questions. So you're familiar with the body issue, but are familiar with the Swimsuit Edition that Sports Illustrated magazine puts out every year?

Yeah, I've seen the cover, but I've never really seen the inside. But yeah I usually see the cover.

Well often times, female athletes often pose for the Swimsuit Edition, not as many as those in the Body Issue because that's all athletes. But how do you feel about female athletes posing for the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Edition, where the athletes are featured in bathing suits, or the ESPN Magazine Body Issue, where athletes pose in the nude?

So how do I feel about female athletes posing for the Swimsuit Edition?

Yeah, and the Body Issue, both of them.

Well, I think they're great. These female athletes have unbelievable bodies, and it's a great way for the public to see how...you can tell the hours and energy and commitment that's put into their sport simply by looking at their bodies, and you can't really tell in clothes. So yeah, I totally support and if the athlete feels comfortable, then more power to them. I think it's great.

Do you feel differently about one magazine over the other?

I mean I think as a female athlete and as a bigger stronger woman, I think I always sort of...I don't know if it's jealousy secretly, or if it's like frustration that was considered sexy...the really thin, not flat, but soft look, and that's considered or being made to consider attractive, then it's a little frustrating cause it's not what I am, but at the same time...yeah I don't know. I don't love it, it is what it is. I think that more female athletes would be featured in that, would be awesome.

In SI Swimsuit Edition?

Yeah.

Would you ever pose for either magazine? If you were approached to do so.

I would definitely consider it, yeah.

Why do you think female athletes are motivated to pose for the Body Issue and the Swimsuit Edition?

Why are they motivated? Well...I think nowadays with social media and the internet and...everyone has their own websites now and blogging and I just think that there's a huge opportunity for anyone, but female athletes also, to generate a following and promote themselves without being tied to even an agent, although many do have one. So I think that any chance to be in the media, especially in a big time publication like those two, is helpful for your career. And nowadays female athletes are able to make their sport their career at this point in their lives, and that's exciting and that wasn't always the case, so more power to them. So yeah, I think it's career driven and I think that it's probably a little vain, but its human nature, so people are excited about seeing photos of themselves. It's fun, it's fun to sort of dress up or dress down and be made up and get these really cool, unique different photos taken of yourself.

And you said you had two photo shoots. What were those for...what publications were they for?

The first one was for Athletes Quarterly....

You kind of broke up there.

Oh sorry. I've actually done three or four, but two of them were just kind of like oh we want to write an article and a quick photo, the other two were like actual hair and makeup photo shoot, real photographer. So the first two, one was for the Denver Post and then the other one was for The Daily, it's like a news app. And then the photo shoot ones, the first was for Athletes Quarterly and then last one was actually for a campaign for a foundation that I'm involved in called the Seven Bar Foundation. And their campaign is called Empowered By You. And I was actually nude in that one, which was kind of crazy...but I haven't seen those photos yet, it was actually kind of recent.

It was recent. So in your photo shoot that you had for the Seven Bar Foundation, how did being nude in the photo shoot come up and how did you feel about being approached to do a nude photo shoot?

Yeah well this one's actually pretty cool because I met the owner of the foundation from a friend and she has this incredible story, and basically what they do is they provide microfinance loans for women all over the world. And this Empowered By You campaign, is...they've got these really cute undies involved with it and it's just for women and just saying what they're empowered by. And so I just thought it was a really cool idea and I thought they're really involved in the fashion world, that's where the founder got her start, and she knows a lot of people within that realm and so, she found it interesting that I could sort of help them spread to the female athlete realm. Where these female athletes are exactly what she's looking for, just these strong, powerful women who are...have achieved something really great, and they're definitely empowered by something. And so, she was really interested in having me as part of the photo shoot and I was the only athlete, but it's just kind of getting off the ground, in terms of the female athlete involvement. But the photo shoot is the first one they've done in a while, they do a lot of fashion shows, and it's actually pretty cool. You write in white paint on your body what empowers you. And they all different shapes and sizes doing it, different age groups, different races basically through her own network, and then I was the only athlete involved and so...what did I write...I keep forgetting what the words were that I used. Oh it was... I'm empowered by recognizing self-worth. And so I posed in a way I was comfortable with, I've never...again...done nude. So I had a glass of champagne of course, and I was the last go and I thought well you know why not, I'm here and this is a really cool thing to be apart of it. It's a great, great cause and I really do trust them, so yeah.

But they haven't been published yet.

They haven't been published yet, and it's my understanding that they're going to be...and I don't know if my photo is, but women who are photographed in this shoot will be publicized in areas like Times Square.

And so, during the shoot, did you feel uncomfortable...I mean you said you got to pick how you were posed and what you wrote on yourself, so did you feel mostly in control of how things went down?

Sort of. I mean, again, I don't really know what good poses are or good looks, so I really look for a lot of direction when it comes to that kind of stuff. Honestly, I didn't feel that uncomfortable, I mean, I'm used to being naked all the time in front of my teammates, you know we see each other naked all the time, it's not really a big deal. So that wasn't necessarily the weird part, I think sometimes I am a little bit self conscious of my stomach or something, so I was just a little bit embarrassed, no, I actually felt...besides the fact that I couldn't stop sweating cause it was kind of an uncomfortable pose, so when I got up it wasn't really attractive, but no, actually it was fine. It was mostly women that were there. There was one gay hairdresser and then I think the other guy had left, so it was basically all women so I felt more comfortable that way too.

Do you think it is possible to appear both athletic and feminine in the public eye?

Absolutely, definitely. And I think that strong, lean, muscular women are considered sexy now, and I think that's really starting to change, especially with the emergence of cross fit fads, and yoga, and this active lifestyle and this active woman. And so, I definitely do, absolutely, awesome.

How would you define "femininity"?

Ooh that's tough. I don't know. I guess...

Or what characteristics would you associate with your own femininity or the femininity of women that you admire or look up to?

Yeah...I think that there's a lot of, let's see, so, when I think of femininity I think of a lot of body characteristics, so not only physically, but the fact that you're able to reproduce and give birth, and all the emotional and physical changes that are associated with that. But then, I think also, women are considered more emotional, or more creative, or all those sort of... I don't know, I don't think they're necessarily true for everyone, but that's sort of what I consider as well. I think for me personally, I'm actually less emotional than most women, I would say. And I probably dress not very feminine. Like I like my lulu's, which I think is pretty feminine, but...I also, I don't know. So I guess just, just sort of...that's such a hard question.

That's OK, it's been a hard question for everyone. But it sounds like, from you said, mostly physical features that are usually associate with women and femininity?

Yeah and I would say the more like emotional, nurturing, care giving side, but again, I really...especially with the elite athlete mentally, I think that every women has that side, but it's funny because I feel like a lot of that gets lost in our competitive training nature. So, while we all have our creative, nurturing, motherly, loving sides, we also want to kill some bitches when we're racing.

And then that kind of gets pushed aside the nurturing, loving, motherly...that's funny.

Yeah.

Have you ever had strong positive and/or negative feelings towards the way a specific female athlete was represented in the media?

Yeah. I mean definitely, I think there are definitely negative reactions...like women athletes posing nude, I've heard people judge that. I know...I wanna say, so I was a swimmer for a long time and I definitely noticed swimming. And I think it was in 2000, the women's swim team did a nude photo shoot or something like that. And I remember thinking...or people talking about, like oh my gosh I can't believe they would do something like that, that's so risqué, why are they sexualizing themselves that way. And I think it was, I mean who knows, I'll have to look back, but it seems like it was maybe one of the first, or just sort unusual at the time. I think now it's probably more prevalent. And I think that's too bad...and even I felt like that was sort of crazy that they would do something like that. And now looking back, I think it's really awesome that they had the guts to do something like that and show off their bodies and show what they worked for, you know it doesn't necessarily have to be a sexual thing and it can be like a subtle sexiness. I don't think that's bad. Other times I think women, female athletes...well I would say Marion Jones, although that was a whole different thing, but I guess athletes who do dope in general are sort of demonized. So Lance Armstrong is obviously a different case, but I think it's too bad because that's a whole other issue. But I feel like she was one the media tore apart. Obviously the woman who ripped her shirt off, Brandi Chastain, that caused a lot of hysteria. So maybe it's worth it to get people to remember it to get people to remember what happened, what you achieved and what your team was able to do and sort of remember the moment.

Yeah, so sometimes you need those moments to stand out.

There's sort of an overnuded media, especially around the Olympics, where if you want to stand out, you gotta do something a little crazy.

And you said one of your teammates did the body issue, who..was that from the 2012 olympic team?

Oh no, I'm sorry two people did it. So Susan Francia did it in I think '09 or a couple years ago, and then there was a woman who a paraolympian, Auxian Masters, and I think she's the first adaptive athlete to be featured.

Yeah I think I saw her photo.

Yeah, that's awesome.