

Hoops Happening: Before society can 'bet on women,' it first must listen to them

Maori Davenport's path to reinstatement is the latest example of society failing to listen to women only to later rally for change after men have added their voices to the cause. Plus, Mystics' stars in London, and more from the world of women's hoops!

[Tamryn Spruill](#) Jan 17, 2019, 11:30am EST

Basketball legends Diana Taurasi (left) and Sue Bird (right) after winning gold medals at the Rio Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Aug. 20, 2016.

Photo by Tom Pennington/Getty Images

After missing most of her senior-year season because the Alabama High School Athletic Association ruled her ineligible to play for mistakes made by USA Basketball, Maori Davenport [returned to the court last week](#) and turned in a glorious 25-point performance.

Although Rutgers-bound senior has just a handful of games left in her high school season, it is great that she was able to pick up where she left off and will be able to finish the season with her teammates.

But getting to play the last games of her senior year was a hard-won fight. The public outcry was one thing, but to get their daughter back on the court, Davenports' parents had to [file a lawsuit](#) against the

AHSAA and its executive director, Steve Savarese, with [support](#) from the Women's Sports Foundation.

It took no less than local community, national sports media, Alabama state representatives and the broader basketball community coming together to draw attention to this injustice — and keep the pressure on — until Davenport was able to return to the court. It took nothing less than a judge's order against the AHSAA and Savarese.

Hopefully, the state representative who wrote a bill to check the powers of the AHSAA will be voted into law so that no other young athlete in the state of Alabama has to face a similar ordeal.

Listen to women

The WNBPA calls on the world to “bet on women.” While this is a great slogan, we see daily that the distance between this ideal and present reality is pretty wide. Society does not bet on women yet, but it also doesn't listen to them, which we see repeatedly in daily life.

It was a long and winding road for Maori Davenport to be able to play the final games of her high school career and it happened because the story gained steam. Prominent ESPN journalist Mechelle Voepel began tweeting about the [debacle on Jan. 4](#), while Dallas Wings head coach Brian Agler tweeted to the AHSAA with a day count of how long Davenport had been away from the court, stating that the AHSAA [“hijacked”](#) Davenport's senior season due to “incompetence and ego.”

Others from the basketball world also commented, including three-time WNBA champion [Sue Bird](#), who tweeted about it on Jan. 4, and Hall of Fame basketball player turned analyst Rebecca Lobo who, on

Jan. 6, provided ["all day" coverage](#) on ESPN2. But things didn't begin to shift until about a week later, when [Kobe Bryant](#) chimed in via tweet (Jan. 10) and ESPN's Jay Bilas subsequently spoke about the situation on TV (and [wrote about it](#)).

Yes, it is ultimately great that Davenport is back on the court. But that doesn't erase the pervasive issue of society not listening to women. To those who feel it's small potatoes — that all that matters is Davenport being able to play — think again.

How many Larry Nassar victims could have been spared if anyone had taken seriously [the first young woman](#) who reported being molested by him? Or the second ... *third*?

Outside of the sports world, a docuseries on *Lifetime* brought renewed — but now national — attention to [decades-long](#) sexual abuse allegations against singer R. Kelly. What would the lives of current victims be like if anyone had taken seriously the words of the first?

See also: Bill Cosby, Harvey Weinstein and many more.

How much more of the Rutgers-bound senior's season could have been spared if Steve Savarese had listened to the player and her family after her first appeal. *Second*?

Some may point out that Agler also is a man, and that no one listened to him either. Of course, this is true. But Agler is a man who coaches in the WNBA — an overlooked league with a history of not being taken seriously by a society brainwashed with sexism. As it is, the WNBA is often only legitimized in the eyes of mainstream media when NBA players comment in the media about the players they admire.

Additionally, it is quite telling that, despite guiding two WNBA teams to championships — the [Seattle Storm](#) (2010) and the [Los Angeles Sparks](#) (2016) — Agler’s Twitter account still isn’t verified.

The question everyone should ask themselves is: Why are the words of Sue Bird (a Hall of Fame-bound basketball legend with three WNBA Championships) not given the same attention as those of Kobe Bryant (a Hall of Fame-bound basketball legend with five NBA Championships)?

More in the world of women’s hoops

It’s “London Calling” for Washington Mystics’ stars!

The Washington Wizards play the New York Knicks tonight in London at O2 Arena, and the Wizards brought along a few of stars from their sister team, Mystics, to participate in associated events.

[Elena Delle Donne](#) and [Natasha Cloud](#) arrived in the city of Big Ben just in time for yesterday’s [Brexit nightmare](#) in the British parliament. But the Mystics’ players had other things on their minds — basketball and, presumably, promoting the NBA and WNBA — with Cloud performing some broadcasting duties and executing a full [social media takeover](#).

Cloud captured a sweet video from the [Jr. NBA Clinic](#) she and Delle Donne conducted at Kensington Palace. (If you’re gonna hoop, why not do it in a palace?)

After finishing their work of the day, the pair [got dolled up and spent time with](#) teammate [Kristi Toliver](#), who is an assistant coach with the

Wizards, at a Kensington Palace reception.

Londoners will witness the matchup between the [10-33 Knicks and the 18-26 Wizards](#) at 3:00 p.m. ET. The game is also scheduled for national broadcasting on NBA TV.

Delle Donne and Cloud are reportedly headed to Abbey Road, so follow the WNBA on Instagram and Twitter to follow along on their, um, *mystical* adventure.

Also:

- New head coach of the [Los Angeles Sparks](#) will serve as grand marshal in the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade in Inglewood on Saturday, Jan. 19. Several members of the Sparks' front office will be in attendance. According to the Sparks' press release, "[t]he mile-long parade starts at The Tabernacle at Faithful Central Bible Church, 321 N. Eucalyptus Ave., at 11:15 a.m. PT and ends along Market St. with a family festival which includes vendors from the community."
- Kevin Garnett tracked down [Sue Bird](#) for [a forthcoming episode](#) of *Area 21* and we couldn't be more excited.
- ICYMI: WNBA free agency season has arrived, and [this list shows](#) which players are cored, restricted and free to go anywhere they like.
- Hall of Famer Lisa Leslie will [coach](#) a new BIG3 team.

Every [hu]man is guilty of the good [they] didn't do. -Voltaire