

## Break Point: Two Minnesota Athletes and the Road to Title IX

**Sheri Brenden**

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Sheri Brenden's *Break Point* covers the politics and legal moves involved in the creation of women's athletics programs.

Peggy Brenden and Toni St. Pierre were raised in an era when people believed that girls neither had the interest nor the physiology to play sports: for girls to participate in sports, people believed, would be unfeminine, dangerous, and cause "psychological damage." Coaches sometimes offered sporadic or unofficial places for girl athletes, but not always. Nonetheless, while they were in high school, Brenden and St. Pierre asked to compete on their schools' tennis and cross-country teams. In order for them to be granted equal access to athletics, a federal case was filed in 1971 claiming that the exclusion of women and girls from American athletic education was unconstitutional. In their legal battle, Toni and Peggy faced defamation and immense social pressure to represent all women. The thorny gender politics around men coaches treating girls' injuries and the outdated questioning of Peggy and Toni's abilities are addressed, too, in the actions taken by members of the court and in press clippings.

Written by Peggy's sister, the book includes personal memories alongside its legal documentation and press clippings regarding the Title IX case. Brenden outlines the segregation of the sexes common to the 1970s, when teams worried about eligibility and had "win-at-all-costs" attitudes. She writes about people central to the case, including attorney Thomas Wexler and Judge Miles W. Lord ("the people's judge"), who labored to understand the implications of allowing Toni and Peggy to join sports teams. These men's sensitive treatment of the issue, Brenden notes, challenged people's gender stereotypes for the better.

Drawing on personal memories and the official record, *Break Point* covers the Title IX case, which pushed for gender equality in sports.

ALEENA ORTIZ (January / February 2023)

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