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## In the Game

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# In the Game : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Thursday March 14, 2019

## In the Game

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By Eric F. Spina

The television camera caught me spontaneously lifting my hands up in disbelief and complaining about a referee's call during a close Dayton Flyers women's basketball game against the Saint Joseph Hawks earlier this season.

In my defense, I bleed red and blue, and I give my all in supporting our women and men student-athletes. (...and it was a bad call!)

As an unabashed fan of our women's athletic program, I try to catch games, matches, and meets whenever I can. These student-athletes represent the University of Dayton with character and a competitive spirit, and I'm so proud (and eager) to support them.

They're winners, in every respect of the word. Our women student-athletes perform with talent and heart, often at an elite level on the national stage, where they win championships and make the post-season field in NCAA tournaments — including an Elite Eight appearance

for the women's basketball squad in 2015.

Just last month, Karen and I were thrilled to celebrate our women volleyball champions with a lunch at the president's residence. In the fall, the team won the A-10 tournament championship while extending their amazing streak of consecutive winning seasons to 23. In the past 15 years, Dayton volleyball has missed only two trips to the NCAA tournament. Like most of our student-athletes, they don't miss commencement ceremonies, either. The team has posted a perfect Graduation Success Rate nine times, including each of the last three years.

During Women's History Month, I would like us all to pay tribute to all 166 UD women athletes who compete in 10 intercollegiate programs, and I'd like to give a special salute to a woman who built the program, literally from scratch.

When R. Elaine Dreidame came to UD as the head volleyball \*and\* women's basketball coach in 1970 (Shauna and Tim, how do you feel about coaching two sports each?!), the women's athletics budget totaled just \$3,000. The teams shared coaches, trainers, equipment, and even uniforms from season to season. They rode yellow school buses to away games.

For blazing a trail for equity for women athletes, Elaine is one of 16 "Trailblazers" honored this month by the Women's Center. All are extraordinarily wise leaders — capable, collaborative, creative — with Elaine standing out for breaking the glass ceiling in intercollegiate athletics at UD, being a voice on campus and nationally for Title IX gender equity enforcement, and building a successful, inclusive athletics program.

Now retired, she was the first female athletics administrator at UD and served as Division I NCAA vice president, among numerous other leadership positions.

Her words in the winter 2000 issue of the *University of Dayton Magazine* are prophetic: "The current success of UD's women's teams has its roots in Title IX (which provided the mandate) in getting money (which provided the means) and in following through (which provided the success)," she wrote.

"Now it's a new world for women, not just for UD, but for the country. Women, once directed down narrow career paths, now are learning what teamwork is, what competition is all about. They're learning," she said, "to play the game."

And do our women student-athletes ever play the game! With grit, dedication, hard work, talent, and smarts, they perform at a high level. Every game they play and every degree they earn stand as a testament to the visionary leadership of pioneers like Elaine Dreidame.

Our Flyer caps are off to the women who wear the red and blue so well, who represent UD with skill and grace.

