

# SportsUnited

## Women in Sports



Moroccan visitors cool down after playing soccer with members of DC Stoddard's U-15 team.

The U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) is home to the SportsUnited Office. This office develops sports initiatives designed to help non-elite youth discover how success in athletics can help give them the skills they need to achieve in the classroom and beyond. Through our Sports Envoy and Sports Visitor programs we hope to reach out to young athletes and coaches around the world with a message of America's commitment to international understanding, cultural tolerance and mutual respect.

### [Iraqi Basketball Visitor Program - June 2009](#)

A delegation of female youth basketball players and their coaches from Iraq were brought to the U.S. by ECA to increase their basketball skills and interact with athletes of all ages. Their program included learning about the balance between sports and academics at River Hill High School, the importance of proper nutrition and fitness at George Mason University, and opportunities for women to play basketball through meeting WNBA stars at a Mystics game. Cheering on *Race for the Cure* runners, and helping at a TOPSoccer clinic for disabled children, allowed the athletes to become a close-knit team. Rounding the trip off was a week-long camp at the University of Tennessee, with all time winningest NCAA basketball coach Pat Summitt.



Iraqi girls playing games with TOPSoccer participants

### [Pakistani Soccer Program - April 2009](#)

Ten representatives of Pakistan's Young Rising Stars, the 2008 All-Pakistan Inter-Club Women's Football Tournament Champions, were brought by ECA to the U.S. for a soccer program that included learning about strength and conditioning, and Title IX. After a soccer clinic with the Washington Freedom, a club in the U.S. Women's Professional Soccer League, the Pakistani girls were able to attend a game between the Washington Freedom and the Chicago Red Stars. The delegates were able to interact with girls their own age while touring two high schools, and also got a taste of the academia by attending classes. Additionally they received coaches' training and helped lead a clinic for youth with disabilities. One of the group commented, "Before coming to the United States, I thought that people here would not like us because we are Pakistanis. Now, I see that Americans are just like us."

### [Moroccan Soccer Program - April and October 2008](#)

In partnership with U.S. Soccer, ECA sent Sports Envoys Lorrie Fair, the first American to join the Chelsea Ladies Football Club, and Jay Miller, Director of Coaching for the Atlanta Fire and Head Coach of the Region III Boys Olympic Development Program, to Morocco to conduct soccer clinics for youth. Nawal El Moutawakel, the Moroccan Minister of Youth and Sports and the first woman from the African continent to earn an Olympic

gold medal, welcomed the envoys and attended the program's opening ceremony. The follow-up Sports Visitor program in October reunited Jay Miller with ten of the Moroccan girls and two female coaches. The delegation came to the U.S. to improve their soccer proficiency, develop leadership skills, and meet with their American contemporaries.

### [Ukraine Visited by Envoy Michelle Kwan - February-March 2009](#)

World champion figure skater Michelle Kwan made her fourth trip as a US Department of State American Public Diplomacy Envoy to Ukraine, where she spoke with high school and university students, hosted skating clinics, and visited an orphanage and a school for abused children. Her dedication spread to Para-Olympians, as well as a master class of 10-14 year old skaters. Such endeavors were widely applauded, and Ms. Kwan was asked to make several media appearances such as talking on a popular Ukrainian television show.

### [Basketball Envoys to Saudi Arabia - July 2008](#)

In partnership with the National Basketball Players' Association (NBPA), ECA sent former WNBA players Lynette Woodard and Ruthie Bolton to Jeddah to conduct clinics and competitions for female basketball players and coaches. Twenty coaches and 47 players traveled from Jeddah, Mecca and Medina to participate. The basketball clinics focused on fitness as well as sportsmanship and teamwork. As women's sports are not officially recognized in Saudi Arabia, the clinics were a unique opportunity for the participants to meet role models, learn new skills and benefit from Woodard and Bolton's motivational stories.



Pakistani team members practice ball handling skills at a clinic hosted by the Washington Freedom



Michelle Kwan, center, working with young skaters in Odessa

## **Other Women in Sports Programs**

- [Afghan Girls Basketball](#)

- [Iranian Table Tennis](#)

- [Jordanian Track and Field](#)