

“What you try to do in those moments is you just try to breathe and not think.”
Brandi Chastain, World Cup champion, on her famous 1999 World Cup celebration.



Brandi Chastain

is one of the most famous female soccer players in the world. She currently coaches at Bellarmine, leading them to their first CCS title in 2018, and is a club soccer coach.

Championship teams

Chastain competed in the first World Championship. In 1996 she led the United States to a Gold Medal at the Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta, a feat she repeated in 2004 in Athens, Greece. Chastain was named to the USWNT All-Time Best XI in 2013.

Hall of fame
 In March 2017, she was inducted into the National Soccer Hall of Fame. In 2018 she was inducted into the Bay Area Sports Hall of Fame.

STILL CELEBRATING

Brandi Chastain shares one of her defining moments, and her role advocating for girls

JAZZY NGUYEN
 Staff writer

It was called the bra seen around the world.

In 1999, moments after scoring the decisive fifth penalty kick against China in the Women's World Cup, **Brandi Chastain** removed her jersey, twirled it around, and fell to her knees in celebration. It was perhaps the most memorable moment in women's soccer history.

Chastain had put the U.S. Women's National Team in the spotlight, where it has remained dominant like no other team, through controversy and success.

The Bear Witness sat down with Chastain to talk about the rise of women in sports, the most recent World Cup and the double standards that she feels still exist in sports today. And, of course, her career-defining goal.

Note: The 40-minute interview has been edited for length and content. A transcript of the interview is available on the Bear Witness website.

ON SCORING HER WINNING PENALTY KICK

Bear Witness: What was your goal in 1999 like?

Brandi Chastain: I just think about the moment as a great opportunity to contribute to the outcome. I get a lot of questions about “Were you nervous?” obviously, you know, in a big moment like that you would be nervous, but we had done a lot of practicing already. I had actually missed a penalty earlier in the year against China against the same goalkeeper, so I think that that moment actually set me up for greater success in the World Cup because I knew what it was like to miss it. I knew I had done a lot of practicing between that time and the final. The only difference was that in that moment, the coach had asked me to take it with my left foot, which I had never done before. I had never done it in a game, but I had practiced it a lot during practice, so I felt very comfortable. And then I think, what you try to do in those moments is you just try to breathe and not think. The kick is no different than any other practice kick. The distances are the same. You know, the obstacle is getting it past the goalkeeper, but in terms of the technique, and whether or not you can do it, you know you can. So, it's just believing in yourself in the moment.

ON HER FAMOUS CELEBRATION

BW: In previous interviews, you mentioned that your celebration was reactionary, how true is that?

BC: It was completely organic. Think about the whole day, for us, when we got to the Rose Bowl. We're thinking “We're going to the World Cup final!” You get to the locker room, you put your stuff down, everybody kind of

has their rituals that they go through. Some are superstitious, some are just doing the things that we do, some are in the middle of random acts of dancing, or just getting ready. It's your biggest game you've ever played in your life, it's 90,000 plus people, and you don't even get to go out onto the field.

We're running in the tunnel, we're running in circles in the locker room, we've got the music on, we're laughing and high-fiving, and it's not typical to the situation. You don't get to be in the World Cup that often. So I don't think you can really prepare for thinking that you're going to score the winning goal. And what would you do if you did that, especially in my case, since I was my primary position is defender. So it was organic, 100%.

I watched soccer my whole life. So, you know, maybe that moment was at the back of my head, as I've seen it before, but had never done it before. It just felt like the right moment, I guess.

POSITIVE REACTIONS

BW: What was the backlash you received like?

BC: There was probably 95%, this is an approximation, positive responses. There's always going to be somebody who's going to disagree with what you do, or you say, or just don't see things the same way as you do. But I learned fairly quickly that those are really great opportunities for conversations. You know, I had a chance to really bring more fans to soccer with those conversations, “Why did you do that? You've sexualized women's sports, you've ruined it for our daughters. It's embarrassing.”

BW: Was there anything about the backlash that surprised you?

BC: Mostly what surprised me is the amount of attention it got in general. The amount of positive feedback it got was wonderful. Whether it was from women who never felt empowered to participate in sports, from men who were trying to be encouraged to go to the gym, two couples who had met while watching the game together, and then got married, or daughters that went to the games with their dad for the first time.

ON FINDING HER PASSION

BW: How and when did you realize that this was what you wanted to do?

BC: I was about 11 when the 1980 hockey team was playing in the Olympics, and they beat Russia in the semi final, to go to the gold medal match. When the USA men's hockey team won the gold medal, the captain,



Elizabeth Posey/Bear Witness

Michael O'Neill, stepped up onto the platform to receive the medal. He was holding the American flag, and as the captain, he was the only one that was supposed to go up there because the podium wasn't very big. Then he called his teammates up. I remember as a kid, I was watching it live thinking, I want to do that. I didn't want to play hockey, but I wanted to feel that feeling that I was getting just through the TV. Like, I wanted to feel that sensation of being victorious in that moment. And especially with representing the red, white and blue. The women's national team didn't exist. When I said, I want to do that, I had no idea how that would ever be real. But it just hit me really hard and very strongly. And I thought: that's passion. That was the first time I think I really understood what passion was.

ALEX MORGAN'S TEACUP CELEBRATION IN THE 2019 WORLD CUP

BW: What did you think about Alex Morgan's celebration in the game against England in the last World Cup?

BC: I didn't see it happen live, so I don't have a real initial reaction to it. Then I saw the picture. I was thinking, what's that all about? Because I know they played England and I was thinking, “Hmm, that's a little interesting.” My first response was when I did see it

was “Probably not a good idea.” Then when I heard her comment, I thought about it again. I thought, you know, I don't feel like we can censor genuine, celebratory moments. Preconceived, setup props, you can judge that all you want, because that's premeditated, right? You've already decided that you're going to do this thing no matter what.

CULTURE OF BOYS AND GIRLS SOCCER

BW: As someone who's still really involved in the soccer world, have you noticed any difference in treatment between boys and girls at a young, elementary level in sports?

BC: Well, I still have to, you know, I still advocate for my girls every day. You know [at the soccer club I coach at], the boys got to play on the soccer field, and the girls were playing on the football field. And week after week, I noticed it. I had to go to the director and say, “Hey, what's happening? This is not right.” If we're playing at the same time, we should switch fields. And that should be normal.

Then when somebody says, “We don't really see that happening. There's no discrimination.”

I say, “You don't understand discrimination when it's not happening to you. You don't really see it.”

Fighting gender role bias in sports

Male gymnast, female hockey player face negative stereotypes

ZIV GALPAZ
 Staff Writer

When he was four and living in Iowa, sophomore **Jacob Boomershine** took up gymnastics, inspired by his older sister. This put him among 1 out of 5 U.S. gymnasts who are male.

As he got older and his peers caught on to his participation, he said he would occasionally be taunted by peers who felt that gymnastics was a feminine sport. “I was a little different,” he said. “When I moved out here, I would do stuff on the playground, and some guys would be like, ‘You're such a girl’ and I'd be like, ‘Bro, I can do so much more cool stuff than you.’”

This type of bullying is not uncommon with both boys and girls who do not participate in traditionally gender-specific sports, such as girls playing hockey and boys taking up dancing. According to an ESPN study, the percentage of young boys who participate in gymnastics is under 4% compared to a considerably manly sport like football which is at over 40%.

The taunting subsided as Boomershine's body developed and his friends began respecting the work in gymnastics. He recently left gymnastics, due to the numerous injuries that he sustained, including a torn labrum on his shoulder.

Senior **Julianne Alvares**, the co-editor-in-chief of

the Bear Witness, is one of two females who play ice hockey on campus. She has been playing ice hockey since she was a child, and said that people

“Whenever I say I play hockey, people are like, ‘field hockey, right?’” Alvares said. “No, ice. The sport has grown since the women's team won gold,” referring to the fifth consecutive world championship the team earned in April.

Within the sport itself, Alvares said that men on the team would view the girls as weak compared to them, and limit their play.

“It's like physical action that guys they don't think you belong there sometimes and they don't expect you to be there.”

The sport is gaining traction among girls, the rate of growth in USA Hockey's women's registrations was nearly 9 times greater than men, though at 485,100, registered male participation dwarfs those of women, at 82,808.

P.E. teacher **Ron Smare**, who has been teaching for more than two decades, has seen big leaps in female inclusion in once male-dominated sports, such as soccer. What matters to Smare, who also coaches girls soccer at Branham, is that people are physically active and mentally fit.

“Anything that's fun for people to do they want and to be involved with, that would be super good,” he said.



Courtesy Jacob Boomershine



Julianne Alvares/Bear Witness
 Jacob Boomershine and
 Julianne Alvares.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Scores updates as of Sept. 21

Football

The varsity team won their last game against Andrew Hill with a score of 55 to zero on Sept. 13. Running Back Duo of Pati Wolfgramm and Cameron Rynhard combine for four rushing TDs. The JV team got their first win of the season at the same game.

Next games: Home vs. Sobrato, Friday; JV 4 p.m., Varsity 7 p.m.

Field Hockey

The girls' varsity team lost 0-1 to Willow Glen High School, making the second game in a losing streak. JV defeated Willow Glen, a force to be reconed with during an undefeated season.

Next games: Tuesday @ Sobrato; JV 4 p.m., Varsity 5:15 p.m.

Girls' Tennis

Varsity beat Independence 7-0, on Sept. 19, after starting the year 0-2. Since then, there has been riding a four-game winning streak.

Next games: Tuesday @ Andrew Hill, 3:30 p.m.

Girls' Volleyball

Varsity won to Evergreen Valley 3-1, on Sept. 19, snapping their four-game losing streak against Evergreen. JV won at 2-1, their first win of the year, also snapping a four game losing streak. The freshman team lost to presentation on Sept. 17. Freshman, hot to start the year, are now on a two game losing streak.

Next games: Home vs. Willow Glen on Thursday; JV 5 p.m., Varsity 6 p.m.

Cross Country

At their first meet Sept 6, the boys team swept Oak Grove and Leigh High School. The girls varsity team fell to Leigh but outran Oak Grove. Franco ran the 2.74 mile course in 15:34.

— Zachary Macapanpan