

# Bates Bobcast Episode 214

## Transcript: Phyllis Graber Jensen and the fight for gender equality in sports

Aaron: This is the Bates Bobcast! Our weekly podcast where we take a look at the week that was, in Bates athletics. My name is Aaron Morse and this week we have a very special guest, Bates Director of Photography and Video, Phyllis Graber Jensen! On the heels of National Girls and Women in Sports Day, we take a look back at Phyllis' fight for equality in New York City high school sports, which helped pave the way for future generations. That's coming up, on the Bates Bobcast!

Aaron: Phyllis Graber Jensen grew up competing in a wide variety of sports with the boys in her New York City neighborhood of Kew Gardens in Queens. At age 12, she took up tennis and even got to hit with Billie Jean King. But when she entered high school, she discovered no opportunities for girls to compete in varsity sports. So then 16-year old Phyllis appealed to play on the high school boys tennis team. And 50 years ago, despite a fair amount of backlash, she won her case.

Phyllis: Well, I loved to play sports. I played every sport that was available to me, including tackle football, touch football, baseball, softball, punch ball, stickball, handball, paddle ball, I played them all, and I loved them.

Phyllis: But when I was about to turn 12 years old, my parents said to me, "We think you need to stop playing tackle football. And we think that tennis would be a great substitute. It's a sport you'll be able to play your entire life. And why don't you get serious about that?" So that's pretty much how I got interested in tennis.

Aaron: So, tackle football. Was this with your friends, just in the park, or were there organized teams that you were on? Or how did that go?

Phyllis: When I was growing up in New York City, there weren't that many organized leagues. Parents would send their kids into the street when they came home from school. I happened to grow up in an apartment complex that was right in the middle of a beautiful park, Forest Park. And it had playing fields, it had a baseball field, it had a handball court, basketball courts.

Phyllis: Every day I would just go into the park, and I would play with my friends, who were male. There were no other females playing these sports. I played with girls and we played with dolls. We hung out, we cooked, we learned how to bake, but none of these girls were on the playing fields with me. And so, I would just join with a group of boys, my age, who were friends from school and we would play tackle football.

Phyllis: I still remember being in the huddle and sharing what the play was going to be, and going out for the pass. And I, at that point in my life was probably bigger than most of the boys on the field. So at that age, my size and aggression was effective with boys who were smaller than I was. So it was a lot of fun for me.

Aaron: Nice. But when your parents told you, "12 years old, let's focus on some other sport, not football," what was your initial reaction to that? Were you disappointed, were you frustrated with that? Or were you ready to embrace a different sport, also, perhaps?

Phyllis: I think I raised my eyebrows and thought it was ridiculous, but on the other hand, I think I had already started playing some tennis, and I really liked the sport. And I thought, "Okay, if my parents are willing to support me in that, then I'll take up tennis more seriously."

Phyllis: I was still playing all the other sports, with the exception, I would say, of boxing. I really was interested in boxing, and I went to a day camp where that was offered as a sport, but they wouldn't let me do it.

Phyllis: That was one sport that I really didn't get my arms around when I was a girl, primarily because I was a girl. I mean, if I had been a boy, there would have been no question, "Go ahead and box," but "Not for you," I was told.

Aaron: So tennis, how do you go about learning the sport? Did you have an instructor, did you learn with your friends, or how did that go?

Phyllis: Basically, for the first years of my tennis life, I played tennis in Danbury, Connecticut, where my family and I went to a bungalow colony. And my father had played tennis in his youth, and he was continuing to play as a middle-aged guy. So he started to play with me, and then he found me an instructor, a guy named Henry Bouqin in Danbury, Connecticut.

Phyllis: I would go over to his house where he had a tennis court once a week, and I'd play with him, and then I'd spend extra hours there on my own, just hitting tennis balls, drinking orange sodas, as I recall. That was where I really got going with tennis.

Aaron: Excellent. All these sports you're interested in, who are maybe some of your role models within sports growing up? Who did you look up to, maybe in professional ranks, or Olympians, perhaps?

Phyllis: Well, before I started playing tennis, and I was just a kid playing sports, I remember in fourth grade, there was a bookshelf filled with biographies for children, of every person you could conceive of in American history. Several of them, I remember, were women athletes.

Phyllis: One of them was Babe Didrikson Zaharias, and another one was Althea Gibson. Althea Gibson was a tennis and golf player. I believe, and Babe Didrikson Zaharias was just an all-around athlete, Olympian, track, field golf. So those were early role models, because I devoured those books.

Phyllis: But my real hero or heroine, however you want to phrase that, was Billie Jean King. She was playing tennis. When I was still a kid, she was a young tennis player. Eventually, my parents sent me to a two-week camp in South Orange, New Jersey, that was run by her former coach. And she came and played with us, and I got to hit with her.

Phyllis: It was the highlight of my tennis life. That's something I won't ever forget. And she continues to be a role model, as well.

Aaron: You got to meet her and hit with her. What was she like, in terms of that encounter, I suppose?

Phyllis: She was very warm and supportive and encouraging, but I do remember that one of the other tennis players there, and this is the place where I met tennis players and female athletes who were much more accomplished than I was. And I remember one of them asking her, "Well, what do you think my chances are?"

Phyllis: This was a 14-year-old who was asking her, and Billie Jean King was just really direct. She said, "You just don't have it. You haven't trained enough at this point in your life, to be able to make it." She said it in a very kind way, but she didn't pull any punches. "Nope. You're not going to make it."

Aaron: Interesting. So you get to high school, and your high school does not have girls' tennis. Do they have any girls sports at that time? And you were obviously wanting to play tennis. When did you start to think, "I want to try out for the boys' team," and how that process sort of start?

Phyllis: Well, I would say that when I was in ninth grade, so I was in middle school, or junior high school, as they called it.

Aaron: Yeah.

Phyllis: I wanted to play on my school's handball team. And I went to the coach, who was my ninth grade earth science teacher. He knew me well, and I had him for the whole year. When I told him I wanted to try out for the team, he just laughed in my face. So I didn't get to try out for the team, and I would have made it for certain.

Phyllis: The thought stuck in my head, from that point, "When I go to high school, what sport would I want to play?" There was a tennis team, but there were no teams for girls in any sports. In fact, I just looked at my high school yearbook this morning, to refresh my memory.

Phyllis: And I see that they had a Basketball Club and a Bowling Club and a Tennis Club for girls. But if you look at the athletics section of the yearbook, there's not one photograph of a girl, or any girls' team, or any other girls playing on teams for the school.

Phyllis: When I was a first-year student at high school, which was a sophomore, I went to the coach, and told him I wanted to try out, this guy, Ron Eddis, and he was very supportive. He said, "Please do try out. But I just want to tell you now, that there's a rule that prohibits girls from competing with boys."

Phyllis: The girls' club at my high school was basically a way for some girls to teach other girls how to play tennis, which was very nice, and a good thing to do, but there was no competition. It was a club activity. And that's when I went to the team, and found out that I could try out, but I couldn't play if I made it.

Phyllis: I tried out, anyway, and I made it, and the coach said, "Well, now you're going to have to do something about it, because I can't let you on the team, because of your sex", is how it was phrased. So, he suggested I approached the New York Civil Liberties Union. This was in 1970.

Phyllis: So, I spoke with my parents, and we decided that would be a good thing to do. And that was our next step.

Aaron: How did that approach go? I mean, what was the first step? Was it a lot of just, filing paperwork, or was there any hearings or anything like that? How did that kind of go?

Phyllis: I don't remember if I, or one of my parents called the New York Civil Liberties Union, but I was matched up with somebody who, it turns out, wasn't an attorney. He was the assistant executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union. His name was Ira Glasser, and he eventually became the executive director. Then he became the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, for the next 20 years.

Phyllis: But he and I worked together, and started to do, as you refer to it, as the paperwork, in order to challenge the New York City Board of Education. Because it turns out that the state of New York had a pilot program in 1969, where they tested in five non-contact sports, how girls would do in competition with boys.

Phyllis: The results of that study, that pilot program, were positive. And they decided, for New York state, that they would allow girls to play in non-contact sports with boys, but it would be on a district-by-district basis.

Phyllis: So, it was up to individual districts to make changes based off it. And none of the districts saw fit to make any changes, including New York City. So they were basically ignoring whatever overtures that Ira Glasser, and the New York Civil Liberties Union were making.

Phyllis: I guess Ira Glasser decided that there was a hearing, or a series of hearings, being held in New York in 1971, by Eleanor Holmes Norton. And it was a Commission of Human Rights. And she was holding hearings about the absence of civil liberties, or the oppression of women.

Phyllis: There are all kinds of people from all walks of life, including ordinary working people, people like Bella Abzug or Shirley Chisholm, or the writer Pauli Murray, or people like me, a high school student.

Phyllis: We testified, we all testified on varying topics. And the testimony that I made there received a response from both Eleanor Holmes Norton, and the New York Times covered it. So, suddenly, the story had a lot more visibility.

Aaron: Were you nervous? I mean, this is speaking in front of a live audience. A lot of people don't like public speaking, especially when it's an issue, at that point, that was so fraught. Take me through that experience a bit.

Phyllis: I remember, I got on the subway to go from Queens to Manhattan, because it was in the city, and a lifelong friend of mine came along for support. So it was my mother, and my friend and I went down to lower Manhattan to testify, and there were lots of women there. And I remember, some of them testified before me.

Phyllis: As I said, there were people of all abilities and from all walks of life. Some of them struck me as being a little bit out of step with reality. And others struck me as being very on point about feminism, and about the way women were treated.

Phyllis: Yeah, I don't remember that I was nervous so much. I remember more about the response that I got, which was robust applause, and a commendation from Eleanor Holmes Norton saying that she was impressed that so young a person would stand up, and that she wished more women had come forward to testify of different backgrounds and ages.

Phyllis: So I think, yeah, I was nervous, but I got a very positive response. And that's what I remember, as opposed to being anxious about the public speaking. But after six months, nothing was going on.

Phyllis: At that point I wrote a letter to the president of the Board of Education, threatening to take the case to federal court, if the city didn't make a decision. Right around that time, the school superintendent changed, and this new guy, Harvey Scribner came in, and he held a special vote on the question that, that I had raised through the New York Civil Liberties Union. And they decided to vote three and one in favor of my proposal.

Phyllis: The only person on the committee, who was a woman, was the person who cast the no vote. It's not a surprise, because most of the phys ed teachers in New York City who were coaching women's sports and supporting women's sports, actually, I can call them girls' sports. We were in high school. They had no budgets. They were doing their darndest to coach girls in athletics, to create a love of athletics.

Phyllis: When you have a girl saying that she wants to play with the boys, instead of the girls, that was considered to be a betrayal. I'm thinking that might have been why, although, I don't know for certain why the woman on the subcommittee for the Board of Ed was the only person to vote against the proposal.

Phyllis: I'll throw one more thing in. One of my dreams in high school was to be a yearbook photographer, when I was a senior, and do all the photography for my yearbook. One afternoon, I went up to the art teacher who was the advisor. And he was married to a phys ed teacher in our school.

Phyllis: I said, "Mr. So-and-so, I'd like to join the yearbook next year. I'm a photographer." And he basically, in front of 10 other students, told me to drop dead. He said, based on what I have done with applying to be on the boys' team, and making trouble, and basically screwing other girls, that there was no way he would let me participate in the yearbook, "so get lost."

Phyllis: It was a humiliating experience for me, because he was doing it in front of my peers, but I also think it exemplified how difficult it was or how upsetting it was for the women coaches in my

high school, they weren't coaches, but they were phys ed teachers. Not to have any resources, and then basically be told that, "Okay, we're going to take your best resources away from you, which are female athletes, and let them play with boys," who continued to get the funding, when they don't. So I see the problem inherent in that.

Aaron: There was no consideration of, "Hey, we should have girls teams" at that time, like, that wasn't even a thought?

Phyllis: I don't think there were enough athletes at a competitive level, at that point, because girls in my generation were not encouraged to play sports. I can only speak about my neighborhood, and my slightly broader experiences.

Phyllis: But most girls, unless you were in a private school, where you had access, maybe you were playing field hockey, but it's not something that New York City Public Schools had. Even outside of school, I remember I did get to play in a softball league when I was 12 for a year. And that's where I met other girls of comparable interest and skill, because they came from other neighborhoods as well.

Phyllis: We even went to Worcester, Massachusetts to play an All-Star Game, which, I was on the All-Star Team. I remember really looking forward to playing the next year, and the coach and the director of the league told me, that unfortunately, girls my age quickly lose interest in playing organized sports, because they're getting interested in boys, and there weren't enough girls to recruit for the next year's league. So that was the end of that.

Phyllis: That's the kind of environment that girls who were growing up in the '60s, that's when I was growing up and playing sports, there just weren't a lot of opportunities for organized sports. And if there weren't opportunities, then you didn't become competitive, which is what I was looking for, was competition. So that's, I think, why they weren't talking about girls' teams right at that moment.

Aaron: So, you win your battle to play on the boys' team, we just heard there obviously was backlash within the school. But how about the actual teammates? I know the coach was supportive of you. What about your actual teammates? What was that experience like, actually, finally being on the team

Phyllis: Each and every one of them was very supportive. They had no problem with me playing on the team. They felt if I was good enough to play, then I should have a place on the team. In fact, in my senior year, the second year I was on the team, we got a new coach and he was even more supportive than the first coach. Not that the first coach wasn't, but you know, there was no pushback from any of the athletes.

Phyllis: I mean, the pushback that I felt was from A, the women in the school, who taught phys ed. And then, because the publicity I got in the press, where my home address was printed, I would get all kinds of letters and phone calls, hate letters and threatening phone calls, anti-Semitic comments. Again, most people were supportive, but there were enough people who were unhappy with what I was doing, who took the time to write and call about it.

Aaron: Well, it seems odd that they would print your address in the press. Was that a common thing?

Phyllis: Well, it might have been. I thought it was odd, as well, but I think it might have been more common to do that. I mean, nowadays, it's easy to find someone's contact information. Then it was more difficult. I mean, you could look up my parents' name and address in the phone book, and get the phone number pretty easily, or call information.

Phyllis: But for some reason, they printed it. So I did get quite a bit of mail, and some of it was negative, and some of it was threatening.

Aaron: Did it scare you at all, or were you just frustrated, or did you ignore it? How did that kind of go?

Phyllis: I basically ignored it. I wasn't really frightened. My parents were very supportive of me, and created a positive environment for me around that. So I wasn't particularly worried. But it is shocking when you pick up your home phone, and somebody starts shouting anti-Semitic slurs into it. So that's a little bit unsettling, I would say.

Phyllis: But I would also add that one of the ways that I was inspired to play sports was through my parents. As I said, my father was a lifelong tennis player, in a sense, but my mother grew up in Nazi Germany, and she was a track and field athlete when she was a little kid. She actually marched in the opening ceremonies of the 1936 Olympics with a group of other athletes from her clubs. She was 11 years old, and she was also Jewish.

Phyllis: She claims that the coaches forgot that she was Jewish, and allowed her to march in the opening ceremonies, and eventually, she was kicked out. But I think she had a lifelong appreciation of sports, and a love of sports that she got from her father.

Phyllis: And so, there was always support for me in my home to excel in whatever I wanted to do. And if I loved sports, my parents were thrilled to be able to support me in that.

Aaron: Excellent. 1971 was when you won your fight to play on the team. The next year, 1972, Title IX passes, which is a very famous bill. It's a wide-ranging bill, but one of the impacts was, a lot of progress over the last 50 years, in terms of women's sports and funding of women's sports.

Aaron: But it was a slow process. Did you notice ... I mean, when it passed, did you think yourself, "This is a big deal," right away, or did it take a few years for you to realize what impact it would have?

Phyllis: On paper, it seemed like a big deal. It seemed really important, but I would say that in my experience as a varsity athlete at Cornell, where I played on the women's team for four years, it's quite a different experience than I see in NESCAC sports.

Phyllis: I went to Cornell University, so they had good resources there, but the men's team had the best resources. So they had the best courts and the best training experience. They had resources that the women's team didn't have. They had coaching that we didn't have.

Phyllis: Also, I remember that there were some outstanding players on my team. In fact, the number one player when I got to Cornell was a senior, she was a girl who was instrumental in overturning the rules in New York state. She was the first tennis player as a girl in New York state to play on a boys' team. And so, she challenged the system that I sort of described before, in 1969.

Phyllis: There were other people like her on the team, who were much better tennis players, frankly, than I was. But the kind of experience that we had as tennis team members was, you practice several times a week. You go to your schedule matches, and then, "See you later."

Phyllis: There was no conditioning, there was no real heavy training. We didn't eat together. We didn't have the kinds of relationships and support that I see athletes have now. So it seemed like a very different kind of environment.

Phyllis: Although I had friends that I made on the tennis team, but it's just, we played our tennis in this little niche, and then we left and went on with the rest of our lives. I think that reflects in part what varsity sports for girls was like then, at least in the league that I played in, which was, it's nice to do, and it's competitive and it's fun, but it wasn't an all-out experience.

Aaron: The woman who was a senior, when you first arrived at Cornell who you mentioned, she set the precedent in New York state, that you were able to also challenge a few years later, as well, in New York City. I mean, were you familiar with her? Did you know who she was coming in? Or did you kind of learn about that?

Phyllis: No, I learned about her afterwards. And you could look, I mean ... I think there were quite a few girls my age, throughout the country who were challenging the rules and regulations, and they would get, receive press and publicity.

Phyllis: So I heard that Julie Barash, who was four years older than I was, so she had similar kind of publicity to me, but I was at an age where I probably wasn't paying that much attention to every headline in the New York Times, or wherever else she appeared. So I didn't even know about her in particular. I just learned about her, when I met her at Cornell.

Aaron: First time being on a women's tennis team, then, at Cornell, I mean, you touched on the fact that the resources weren't the same. But I mean, in terms of intercollegiate competition, what are some memories you have of those four years, playing with Cornell in the Ivy league, and obviously you were traveling to different schools and whatnot, right, to compete?

Phyllis: Correct, yeah. So we played both in the New York league, so we would play some of the state and private colleges in upstate New York. Then we would travel to Seven Sisters tournaments, and other Ivy league tournaments. And I think I had most of my success at Cornell as a doubles player, which is when I got really interested in doubles.

Phyllis: I remember a particular meet at Vassar, where my partner did really well. I mean, as I said, when I look back at my experiences as a tennis player, I was a good tennis player, and I was a really good athlete, but I was never going to distinguish myself as an amazing tennis player.

Phyllis: What I took away from the tennis team was the camaraderie, the joy of playing tennis, the ability to play with athletes who were better than I was, which clearly was one of the things that I wasn't getting in junior high school and high school. So this was what registered with me from my experience at Cornell.

Phyllis: Yes, I was able to develop my skills into a sport, as my parents pointed out, would be a lifelong sport, and play as much as I could, with some coaching. But just to give you an example of what my mindset was like, I remember we once went to a match on a Sunday morning in upstate New York. And my coach decided we would stop for breakfast at a diner called the Brooklyn Diner.

Phyllis: So we sit down and have breakfast. I ate so much, that I could barely complete the match when I got to the tennis court. This is showing me in hindsight that yes, I was taking it seriously, but I wasn't a conditioned athlete.

Phyllis: I mean, nobody in their right mind would go to play competitive sport, and have bagels and lox and eggs, and whatever else I was having, an hour before the match. That's just insane. So that just puts it into a little bit of context for me.

Aaron: We recently had the 35th Annual National Girls and Women in Sports Day. I mean, how have you seen women's sports grow over the years? You've covered them here at Bates with your photography.

Aaron: What's the next step, in your opinion, for women's sports in general? I mean, it's obviously grown a whole lot in the last 50 years, but I'm sure there's more to do.

Phyllis: Yeah. When I watch the athletes here at Bates, both men's and women's, but of course, women strike me, in particular, with their prowess and their accomplishment. They're just conditioned and competitive in ways that, as a little kid, I might not have ever imagined.

Phyllis: They just exemplify what training and access can do, and how much stronger women have become, and how much more competitive they become. I think about maybe two things in connection to your question. One is the issue of transgender athletes.

Phyllis: I see that as an issue now, and whether at an elite level of sports, or even at a collegiate level, whether transgender athletes should be able to compete in sports with those that they identify, their gender. I would guess I would weigh more on the side of inclusivity. If you identify in a particular way, if you identify as a female, then you should be able to play female sports.

Phyllis: There are all kinds of issues that need to be discussed around that. But I see that as a continuation of girls and boys playing together, transgender athletes playing with cisgender athletes, and where those decisions will end up being made. I also think that a lot of the arguments that were made when I was a girl, which were, girls are weaker, girls are mentally weaker, as well, they're more emotional, they can't withstand the pressure physically or emotionally of playing, that way of looking at male versus female has evolved, to a large extent. But I also see it as something that's going to continue to evolve, till we get to the point where we're really not going to have that many distinguishing factors between genders.

Phyllis: The thing, the example that comes to mind, and it has nothing to do with sports, in particular, is this science fiction show called *The Expanse*, which takes place about 200 years from now. It's about people living on Earth and Mars and elsewhere in space. And the differences, both physical and mental, between the characters, male and female, have been basically erased.

Phyllis: And I really see that as aspirational. That's a binary way of looking at things, of course, but I see a lot of these distinctions being erased. Even an argument that was made, when I was a kid, that nobody's really followed up on, particularly, is instead of having male and female sports teams, just have a team.

Phyllis: Maybe that's not realistic right now, but maybe 200 years from now, that's going to be where we are. And I won't live to see that, but those are my thoughts on that subject.

Aaron: Great. I mean, your passion for tennis continues to this day. You still play, I see you over there at Merrill a lot. What makes that sport, in particular, your favorite? Or, I mean, is this the one that's the lifelong sport? Would you rather be still be playing tackle football, perhaps?

Phyllis: Yeah, well, with my back, I wouldn't rather be playing and football. My back wouldn't hold up to that.

Phyllis: Yeah, I've been playing tennis a long time. I think part of the pleasure in playing it is the use of muscle memory, that I can just naturally do certain things, and I enjoy doing the things that I can do well. But I also cringe at my shortcomings, I think, which is another reason why tennis might be one of the sports I dislike most playing because if you continue to make the same mistakes for 50 years, it's a painful experience.

Phyllis: But it also tends to reminds me of my childhood. I played with my father, and my mother encouraged me, she would drive me to tournaments. And I just remember, that when my mother was on her deathbed, actually, and it was, she had minutes to live, and we were talking to her in her bedroom before she died. And one of the last things we were reminiscing about was how my mother would take me to tennis tournaments and practices when I was a kid and a teenager.

Phyllis: To me, that sort of symbolizes how I feel about tennis. It's really a family-based pleasure that was given to me as a gift by my parents. And they were right. It's a sport that I continue to play, and I love the camaraderie with the athletes, the major athletes that I play with at Bates, staff and faculty and friends at Bates, and it's just a wonderful experience that I wouldn't give up for anything.

Aaron: Awesome. Well, it would not be a complete interview without asking about your photography. You were actually originally hired at Bates as a writer. How do you go about showing everyone that being a photographer, maybe was the best fit, perhaps, there?

Phyllis: Well, you know what really did it for me? I was hired as a writer. I had experience as a writer and a photographer, but I was told, "You're hired as a writer, you're not going to be doing photography," but then along came the internet. I started working for Bates in 1995, which is pretty much the time of the birth of the World Wide Web, right?

Phyllis: As the years went on, there was a bigger and bigger need for photography. The need for photography gradually outdid the need for writing. So it sort of, at my job, evolved from just writing, to writing and photography, to some more photography, then video. Then I basically do photography and I still do some writing, but social media has pretty much cemented the need for images, day in and day out. So that's what accounted for that, I think.

Aaron: Where'd you first learn to be a photographer? I mean, you mentioned the high school year book did not want you to contribute. So where did you first learn?

Phyllis: No, again, it was my father who was also, he was an amateur photographer, and he had a single lens reflex camera that he gave to me when I was a kid. He developed my love of photography with me. We took a little course together when I was in sixth grade at the local elementary school at night. And then it took off from there.

Aaron: You do a lot of it at Cornell, when you weren't playing tennis?

Phyllis: Well, then I worked at the yearbook at Cornell.

Aaron: Okay.

Phyllis: They allowed me.

Aaron: Yeah. Excellent. So sports photography, much different than other types of photography, I think. What are some tricks you've learned over the years to master sports photography, in particular, perhaps?

Phyllis: So I think some of the things that are important in sports photography are anticipation, which means that you know the ins and the outs of the sport that you're covering, and also, knowing the ins and outs of the camera equipment that you're using. Well, I don't always know the ins and outs of all the sports. I have to say, that's not one of my strongest points.

Phyllis: Some I know better than others. But if you cover sports long enough, then you get to anticipate what's going to happen, and so, that made me a better sports photographer, but I also have an interest in storytelling, which sports is great for.

Phyllis: In sports, the peak moment of action is not always the best storytelling moment. It could be something leading up to it. It could be something right after, the reaction. It could be something on the field, on the sidelines. I think all sports photographers are always looking for that, as well.

Phyllis: That's something that helps to make me a more complete sports photographer, I would say. Because athletics is so visual, you're always going to find something juicy, whatever game or competition you're covering.

Aaron: Well, anything else you wanted to mention about your fight to play sports in high school, or the general status of women's sports we have not gone and talked about yet, perhaps?

Phyllis: I just appreciate the evolution that I see, from the time that I was a girl, where sometimes you were made to feel shame, or difference, because of an interest in playing sports. And it was something that, in the end, didn't matter to me, because I just enjoyed it so much.

Phyllis: There were things I didn't enjoy, being called a tomboy, which didn't coincide with my identity at all, or being made to feel that I played sports well, but for a girl. I had to hear a lot of that.

Phyllis: When I look at, I have a 31-year-old daughter, so when she was coming up, or the athletes that I meet today, and see what they're doing, it just seems like we've moved so far ahead, in terms of the life of sports that we offer to people regardless of gender. And now, regardless of identity or gender identity, I just think the world continues to change.

Phyllis: Sometimes you have to fight for it, but it's encouraging for me to see that things can change, and to see the fruits of their efforts, because there's nothing like watching some of the athletes we have at Bates in competition. I mean that for both the men and the women, but of course, as I said, I have a special appreciation for some of the powerhouses in women's sports that we have here. So my hat's off to them and their coaches.

Aaron: Awesome. Phyllis Graber Jensen, thank you so much for joining us on the Bobcast. Really appreciate it.

Phyllis: Well, thank you, Aaron, for your interest. I appreciate it, too.

Aaron: Next time on the Bates Bobcast, we'll return to our senior salutes with the football team. The Bobcats won back-to-back games to end the 2019 season but saw their 2020 campaign wiped out due to the coronavirus. That's next time, on the Bates Bobcast!