



International
Olympic
Committee

IOC WOMEN AND SPORT AWARDS 2021

WORLD WINNER:	Hashimoto Seiko (Japan)
WINNER FOR AFRICA:	Natsiraishe Maritsa (Zimbabwe)
WINNER FOR THE AMERICAS:	Figure Skating Harlem (USA)
WINNER FOR ASIA:	Zhang Xia (China)
WINNER FOR EUROPE:	Kari Fasting (Norway)
WINNER FOR OCEANIA:	Tracey Holmes (Australia)

PROFILES OF THE WINNERS

WORLD WINNER – HASHIMOTO SEIKO, JAPAN

President of the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee and seven-time Olympian-turned-politician, Seiko Hashimoto has been advancing gender equality and inclusion in Japan for decades.

As a cyclist and speed skater, Hashimoto competed in both Summer and Winter editions of the Games, and inspired the nation when, at Albertville 1992, she became the first Japanese woman to win an Olympic medal in speed skating.

Hashimoto was elected to the House of Councillors in 1995. Since then, she has held several different positions, including Vice-Minister of Hokkaido Development (2000), Chair of the Committee on Education, Culture and Science (2001), and Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs (2008). What's more, after the birth of her daughter in 2000, she was instrumental in passing a measure that for the first time granted mothers-to-be in Japanese parliament an official leave of absence.

In 2019, Hashimoto was appointed as the Minister for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, Minister in charge of Women's Empowerment and Minister of State for Gender Equality. Whilst holding these positions, she stressed that increasing female representation in government was vital to improving the situation of women in Japan. She was also a key player in the development of the Fifth Basic Plan for Gender Equality, which includes targets to increase female directors in sports organisations to 40 per cent and drive forward measures to prevent harassment against athletes.

Alongside her political career, Hashimoto has held several sports governance positions, including President of the Japan Skating Federation and Board Member of the Japanese Olympic Committee. In February 2021, she was appointed President of the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee (OCOG), and



immediately took steps to strengthen gender balance, diversity and inclusion. She pledged that women's empowerment would be promoted at the Games, increased collaboration with Pride House Tokyo and doubled female representation on the OCOG Executive Board from 21 to 42 per cent, to name but a few initiatives.

Embodying the core values of Olympism, Hashimoto has shattered many glass ceilings throughout her career, and continues to promote gender equality and diversity in Japanese society.

WINNER FOR AFRICA - NATSIRAI SHE MARITSA, ZIMBABWE

Despite her tender age, teenage taekwondo fighter Natsiraishe Maritsa has been at the forefront of the fight against child marriage and the abuse of women in Zimbabwe.

Two years ago, Maritsa felt compelled to act when a close friend was forced to marry her abusive boyfriend, and recognised the role sport could play in raising awareness of the situation in Zimbabwe. From her parents' home, she started to teach taekwondo to girls and boys within her community, and to provide education on gender-based violence and harassment.

Maritsa also went on to set up an association, Vulnerable Underaged People's Auditorium, where her students could share their stories and subsequently develop their self-confidence. Understanding that poverty and hunger contribute to the high number of child marriages in Zimbabwe and across Africa, as families are forced to sell their daughters as compensation, she similarly created a food programme for her students and the local community.

On 10 March 2021, World Taekwondo invited Maritsa to the 2nd World Taekwondo Gender Equity and Women Leadership Forum as a young taekwondo ambassador, where she shared her journey with those participating in the virtual event. Moved by her passion, World Taekwondo has since partnered with the Zimbabwe Taekwondo Association and the Korean Taekwondo Promotion Foundation to send equipment and supplies to support her cause.

Committed to empowering girls and women not only within her community but also globally, Maritsa's bravery and determination continue to offer hope to those confronted with abuse.

WINNER FOR THE AMERICAS - FIGURE SKATING IN HARLEM, USA

A not-for-profit organisation located in New York City, Figure Skating in Harlem (FSH) combines the power of education with access to the artistic discipline of figure skating to help girls of colour thrive and reach their fullest potential. Its mission is to help girls gain the academic, social and leadership skills needed to transform their lives.

Many FSH students reside in the poor New York City neighbourhoods of Central and East Harlem and the South Bronx, and come from low-income families. Around 70 per cent of their students identify as



black, 15 per cent as Latina, and 15 per cent as multiracial, with their ages ranging from six to 18. These students face multiple challenges growing up within a culture of generational poverty, including a lack of access to positive educational experiences and risks to their health through poor nutrition.

With three programmes designed to offer holistic support – I Can Excel (ICE) Afterschool Program, Summer Dream Program, and Leaders Café – FSH provides low-income girls of colour with critical access to educational, fitness and leadership development programming. The holistic approach to the intellectual, emotional and physical growth of its students has equipped hundreds of girls with the tools they need to make positive choices for their futures and improve the overall quality of their lives.

At the heart of its success in transforming its young students' lives has been figure skating – the confidence, resilience and determination that come with setting and reaching goals on the ice are the cornerstone of the FSH model.

In 2017, FSH began a new chapter of its incredible journey by expanding its reach to Detroit. An increasing number of girls of colour continue to see their lives transformed by the selfless contributions of FSH.

WINNER FOR ASIA – ZHANG XIA, CHINA

Zhang Xia has been instrumental in advancing gender equality within the sport of wrestling. At the 1991 World Wrestling Championships, Zhang became the first-ever Chinese female world champion in the 53kg category and, since 2000, has officiated at the highest level, including at four editions of the Olympic Games, five Asian Games and numerous UWW-sanctioned world championships. In 2008, she was the recipient of the Olympic Referee Golden Whistle Award. She has also worked as a National Coach, training many women's national champions, world champions and Olympic champions.

As President of the Chinese Wrestling Federation, improving the opportunities for female wrestling referees was a particular passion and, between 2017 and 2019, Zhang led the organisation of 11 refereeing clinics across different provinces in her home country of China. Over 50 women attended these clinics, each subsequently obtaining their national licence, with two gaining promotion to the international (UWW) refereeing level.

Together with the UWW Development and Refereeing Commission, Zhang also initiated the launch of two major international programmes designed to support female referees from grassroots level through to elite level. The UWW Referee Scholarships programme creates a pathway for talented female referees to be identified and supported financially in gaining the high-level experience required to build a career. The Female Refereeing Education Course, meanwhile, aims to introduce girls and women to refereeing. These programmes have seen the number of licensed international elite-level female referees rise from 64 in 2018 to 82 in 2019.



In addition, Zhang has actively fought for gender parity at events, hosted women's wrestling training camps and, in collaboration with UWW, established new wrestling training centres in China, among many other great achievements that have helped to improve the opportunities for girls and women in the sport for generations to come.

More recently, Zhang was appointed President of the Capital University of Physical Education and Sport, which hosts the Beijing Institute for International Olympic Studies (BIOS), part of the global network of Olympic Studies and Research Centres (OSRC). Zhang plans to leverage this position, as well as her current role as a United World Wrestling Bureau member, to support and mentor women in administrative and leadership structures, and to empower female officials.

WINNER FOR EUROPE - KARI FASTING, NORWAY

Kari Fasting has been a key figure and leading voice in the development of both women in sport and safe sport for over 40 years.

Professor Emerita at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, her research findings have been shared globally, changing and challenging the sporting landscape around the world. Topics covered include the impact of society on women's participation in sport; the influence of women in sports organisations; gender roles in the mass media; and the prevalence and prevention of harassment and abuse in sport. Her findings have helped to change and challenge the sporting landscape around the world.

For the past 20 years, Fasting has placed a particular focus on researching and advocating for safe sport. She recognised a need for structures and systems to be developed to prevent harassment and abuse in sport, with examples of her studies including UNICEF's "Protecting Children from Violence in Sport" (2010). She was also part of the expert team assembled to develop the IOC's Consensus Statement: Harassment and Abuse (non-accidental violence) in Sport (2006), and the latest revised edition in 2016. She was later consulted on the IOC's educational resources, including the IOC Safeguarding Toolkit and the safeguarding resources created for the Athlete365 Community.

Fasting is a founding member of Safe Sport International (SSI) (2016), and continues to share her research, conduct presentations and offer advice to other organisations around the world on policy and procedures for safeguarding as a member of the SSI Advisory Committee.

A dedicated researcher and advocate whose lifetime work has contributed tremendously to the development of safe sport and the inclusion of girls and women in sport, she now mentors other young researchers hoping to leave a similar mark on their respective fields.

Fasting's contribution to creating a safer and more equitable sporting world for all will long be celebrated.



WINNER FOR OCEANIA - TRACEY HOLMES, AUSTRALIA

Tracey Holmes has been one of the most formidable sports broadcasters and journalists in Australia for the past 30 years, during which time she has worked tirelessly to promote women in sport through the media.

The first woman to be appointed as a sports broadcast trainee at ABC, Holmes went on to become the first female reporter in ABC's national sports department, and the first host, male or female, of a national sports programme in Australia.

In 1989, she created the Women in Sport Program (WINS) run by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), believed to be the first of its kind in the country. This programme proved to be significantly influential and ultimately helped to normalise the coverage of women's sport in Australia.

More recently, "The Ticket", her weekly sports show and podcast at ABC, was named Sport Australia Best Analysis of Sport Business programme at the Sport Australia Media Awards in February 2020. Similarly, in March 2021, her programme "Black Lives Matter and Athletes' Right to Protect", which aired on The Ticket on 14 June 2020, was awarded First Prize at the AIPS Sport Media Awards 2020 for Best Audio Sports Programme (Radio). As well as for ABC, her work as an anchor for CNN, Seven, Foxtel and CCTV has seen her cover 12 Olympic Games and three FIFA World Cups.

A trailblazer in her reporting of sport for the past three decades, Holmes has naturally moved into mentorship. Since its inception in 2016, she has been a mentor and trainer with the WINS Program for ABC, which supports female journalists in the Asia-Pacific region. She is also an ABC Mentor for Indigenous Women, and has been a broadcast mentor with the IOC Young Reporters Programme since its launch at the Youth Olympic Games Singapore 2010.