

COMMEMORATIVE COLLECTION

College of Engineering Sophomore Kate Meader poses with a 50th Anniversary Title IX button from the October 14th field hockey game versus Indiana University. Photographed by Jenna Hickey



Written by Annabel Curran | Designed by Dyanna Bateman | Photographed by Jenna Hickey and Anya Svintsitski

On June 23rd, 1972, the U.S. Congress signed into action Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, a hugely impactful law better known today simply as Title IX. The amendment was only 37 words: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal funding assistance.” These 37 words would become a landmark piece of legislation that would change the treatment of women by educational institutions for the better. 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of Title IX, reminding us of its enormous importance and impact for female educators, students and athletes.

Nowhere in the short amendment of Title IX are the words “athletes,” “sports” or “athletics” ever mentioned. For one athlete, however, the role of Title IX in women’s athletics would become extraordinarily important. Carol Hutchins, known as a Title IX pioneer and the winningest coach in all of NCAA softball history, has fought for the rights of female athletes since her

college basketball and softball career at Michigan State University in the 70s. Hutchins, the women’s basketball captain at the time, and her team brought a lawsuit in 1978 against the MSU Board of Trustees after enduring years of inequities and snubs in favor of the men’s team. The internal investigation brought slow but steady improvements to women’s sports at MSU as a whole, with the case finally settling long after

“WE’RE NOT ASKING FOR MORE THAN MEN. WE’RE ASKING TO BE EQUAL.”

Hutchins had moved her fight for equality to Ann Arbor. Hutchins, better known as “Hutch” to her players, has worked to cultivate a culture of success and perseverance for the women of University of Michigan softball, changing the University’s attitude towards women’s sports for the better.

With her retirement aligning with the 50th anniversary of Title IX, Hutchins’ departure from coaching leaves behind a long legacy of victory, iconic strength

and female empowerment – a powerful legacy that Hutchins has passed onto her players at UM as well. For Keke Tholl, a Ross Junior and catcher for UM Softball, Hutchins’ legacy is one she holds dear to her heart.

“[Hutchins] represents determination and grit. Someone who’s not going to let others walk all over her,” Tholl said while explaining Hutchins’ and Title IX’s impact on her life and her experience as a female athlete – a story that occurred long before Tholl even played for UM Softball.

“I was recruited by Michigan my junior year, so I had the opportunity to speak with her then and learn about what she’s done about Title IX,” Tholl said. “At my high school, the women’s sports lockers were much smaller than the men’s. Because Hutch had taught me what Title IX is, I had the high school switch the lockers [and] within a year the school had them switched so that everyone was equal. Because [Hutch] taught me that was wrong.”

The impact of Title IX and its 50th anniversary has been celebrated all across UM campus. UM Athletics took steps to celebrate Title IX, dedicating a



50 Years of Title IX: 37 Words That Transformed Womens' Sports

volleyball match to the 50th anniversary of the legislation. The UM volleyball team commemorated the event at their game against Mississippi State University, where they emerged triumphant with a 3-1 win. Volleyball player and LSA Sophomore Mira Chopra emphasized the importance of the event.

"It's really important that men and women are always treated equally," Chopra said. "Having a celebration that reminded us [of that] was really cool to see."

It's clear that the 50 years since the signing of Title IX into law have brought many positive changes. However, when asked if there is still room for improvement in terms of equality in women's sports, both Tholl and Chopra answered with a resounding "Yes."

"I do think we've taken big steps in how we're treated and what we get," Chopra said, "[But] there is always room to improve."

Tholl echoes this sentiment without question.

"I think Hutch always says it best," Tholl said. "We're not asking for more than the men. We're asking to be equal. We've definitely made some big strides, but we're not done yet."



BEST OF THE BEST

Carol Hutchins coached the UM softball team from 1985-2022, ending her tenure with 1,684 wins. Photographed by Anya Svintsiiski