

THE ROOM

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**FOOTBALL FOOTBALL
FOOTBALL FOOTBALL
(OR I LOVE LAVE DASH)**

written & directed by
KRISTOFFER DIAZ



BACKSTAGE GUIDE

A publication of **COMMUNITY SERVICE** at
AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

BACKSTAGE CALLBOARD

FOOTBALL FOOTBALL FOOTBALL FOOTBALL (OR I LOVE LAVE DASH)

written & directed by
Kristoffer Diaz

STARRING



Lara Lee Gayer



Suli Holum



Marin Ireland



Tawny Newsome



Maria-Christina Oliveras



Maureen Sebastian

One professional football team must choose between two potential top draft picks: charismatic multiethnic finesse machine Lave Dash and salt-of-the-earth muscle monster Mervin Gufflinson the First. But when these two young legends join forces, it not only changes the game, but also all sports, and also the whole world, and maybe the entire universe. An insane comedy about masculinity, featuring an all-female cast.

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DIGITAL LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To create art in a new digital format, we use equipment and high-speed internet not available in many Indigenous communities. This technology, which has now become central to our daily lives, leaves a significant footprint and contributes to changing climates that disproportionately affect Indigenous people. As we make use of this digital format, it is imperative that we recognize the Indigenous Land, regardless of our geographical location. It is land once occupied and inhabited by hundreds of Native tribes and stolen from these Indigenous people by European settlers. The genocide and forced removal of Indigenous people from these lands is a history that must be acknowledged, and the current struggles of Indigenous people must be brought to the forefront, so that their plight is never forgotten.

This digital land acknowledgement is inspired by the work of producer & artist Adrienne Wong. Learn more [here](#).

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



KRISTOFFER DIAZ he/him (*playwright/director*) is a playwright, screenwriter, musical librettist, and educator. His teaching interests include dramatic writing and contemporary US theater, with a special focus on new American plays and musicals. His play *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, and has gone on to more than thirty productions nationwide. Other full-length titles include *Hercules* (adapted from the Disney film for the Joseph Papp Public Theater's Public Works program), *Welcome to Arroyo's*, *#therevolution*, *The Upstairs Concierge*, and *The Unfortunates*. His work has been produced, commissioned, and developed at The Public Theater, Dallas Theater Center, Geffen Playhouse, Center Theatre Group, The Goodman, Second Stage, Victory Gardens, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville, American Theater Company, The Atlantic, InterAct, Mixed Blood, The Orchard Project, Hip-Hop Theater Festival, The Lark, Summer Play Festival, Donmar Warehouse, and South Coast Repertory, among many others. Awards include the Guggenheim, Jerome, Van Lier, NYFA, and Gail Merrifield Papp Fellowships; New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award; Lucille Lortel, Equity Jeff, and OBIE Awards; and the Future Aesthetics Artist Regrant, among others. As a screenwriter, Kristoffer adapted the musical *Rent* for the Fox network, wrote on the Netflix series *GLOW*, and has developed original television pilots for HBO and FX. Kristoffer holds a BA from New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, an MFA from NYU's Department of Dramatic Writing, and an MFA from Brooklyn College's Performing Arts Management program. He teaches in both Gallatin and the Department of Dramatic Writing at the Tisch School of the Arts, and has been the artist-in-residence for Gallatin's Summer Theater Lab since 2012. Kristoffer sits on the board of New Dramatists (where he is an alumni playwright) and the council of the Dramatists Guild.



LORA LEE GAYER she/her (*Mervin Guffin*son *the First*) BROADWAY: *Holiday Inn* (Roundabout Theatre Company); *Doctor Zhivago* (Broadway Theatre); *Follies* (Marquis Theatre). OFF BROADWAY: *Pipe Dream* (New York City Center Encores!); *These Seven Sicknesses* (Exit, Pursued by a Bear). REGIONAL: The Kennedy Center, The Ahmanson, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Goodspeed Musicals, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Alliance Theatre, The Old Globe, La Jolla Playhouse, McCarter Theatre Center, Alley Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival. FILM: *The Post*. TELEVISION: *The Tick* (Amazon Studios); *House of Cards* (Netflix); *Law and Order: SVU* (NBC); *Little America* (Apple TV+). EDUCATION: Carnegie Mellon University; Interlochen Arts Academy. AWARDS: Helen Hayes Award, Chita Rivera Award, NFAA finalist, National Arts and Letters Award, Lotte Lenya Young Artist Award. Lora Lee has performed both nationally and internationally with symphonies and orchestras. She is the founder of The Hysterical Womxn's Society, a non-profit aimed to give platforms to those fighting for human rights. @LoraLee_Gayer



SULI HOLUM she/her (*Coach & others*) is a Philadelphia based theatre performer and creator. Currently a member of the Wilma Theatre's HotHouse Company, she was a founding member of Pig Iron Theatre Company, and Co-Artistic Director of Stein | Holum Projects, whose works include Drama Desk-nominated *Chimera*, and *The Wholehearted*. She recently launched Suli Holum/The Work, a Philadelphia-based incubator for live performance. A recipient of a Drama Desk Award, a TCG/Fox Resident Actor Fellowship, a Barrymore Award, an Independence Fellowship, and a NEFA Touring Grant, she is also an accomplished playwright, choreographer and director whose work has been supported by the Orchard Project, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Playwrights Horizons, New Dramatists, the Playwright's Center, The Ground Floor at Berkeley Rep, and HERE, and presented by FringeArts, The Public Theatre/UTR, La Jolla Playhouse, Center Theatre Group, Z Space and The Gate (London). She is currently pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing at Goddard College where she was the recipient of the 2020 Engaged Artist Award. Upcoming: HBO's *Mare of Easttown*.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



MARIN IRELAND she/her (*Marketing Guy & others*) Theatre credits include *Blue Ridge*, *Reasons to be Pretty* (Theatre World Award, Tony nomination), *The Big Knife*, and *After Miss Julie*, both also on Broadway, *Ironbound*, *Kill Floor*, *Blasted*, *Marie Antoinette*, *Summer and Smoke*, *Three Sisters*, and *Cyclone* (Obie Award), among others. Television and film work includes *Light From Light*, *The Irishman*, *Sneaky Pete*, *Girls*, *Homeland*, *Masters of Sex*, *The Divide*, *The Slap*, *Sparrows Dance*, *The Family Fang*, *28 Hotel Rooms*, *In the Radiant City*, *Hell or High Water*, *Glass Chin* (Independent Spirit Award nomination), and *Flint*, in which she portrays activist Melissa Mays.



TAWNY NEWSOME she/her (*Intern & others*) is an actor, musician and podcaster most known for her role as Captain Angela Ali in *Space Force* (Netflix), Gabby Taylor in *Brockmire* (IFC), and voicing Ensign Mariner on *Star Trek: Lower Decks* (CBS All Access). She's the co-host of *The Pod Directive*, the Official Star Trek Podcast, and the co-host of comedy-meets-culture pod *Yo is This Racist?* As a musician she's released albums with longtime collaborator Jon Langford, and recently a completely diy record with Chicago musician and actor Bethany Thomas. An alum of the Second City main stage, Tawny currently lives in LA, after getting killed off all the ambulance shows in Chicago. @trondynewman on all the things.



MARIA-CHRISTINA OLIVERAS she/her (*GM & others*) is an actor, singer, educator and producer. Dedicated to new works, the majority of her work has been in world premieres. Broadway: *Amelie* (cast album), *Machinal*, and *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*. Off-Broadway credits include: *Here Lies Love* (Public; cast album); *Pretty Filthy* (Civilians; cast album); Taylor Mac's *24 Decade...* (St. Ann's Warehouse); *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* (Public); *Romeo and Juliet* (Public); *Zorba!* (Encores!). Regional: *Kiss My Aztec!* (Berkeley/La Jolla), *Soft Power* (CTG), *El Huracan* (Yale Rep), Williamstown, Long Wharf, Huntington, Baltimore Centerstage, Sundance, O'Neill, Powerhouse, among numerous others. Selected Film/TV: *Matthew*, *Manhattan Night*, *St. Vincent*, *The Blacklist*, *Madame Secretary*,

NCIS:NOLA. Maria-Christina received her B.A. from Yale University and her M.F.A. in Acting from the National Theatre Conservatory. She has taught and served as a guest speaker at NYU, Princeton, Fordham, Harvard, Primary Stages, Stella Adler, Broadway Workshop, and Kenyon, among others and currently serves on faculty at Wesleyan University and Yale University. www.mariachristinaoliveras.com



MAUREEN SEBASTIAN she/her (*Lave Dash*) studied acting at the University of Michigan's School of Music and received a fellowship in playwriting at Columbia University. She has worked with Ensemble Studio Theatre, Vampire Cowboys, Ma-Yi Theatre Company, Second Stage, and Ars Nova in New York City. Regionally, Maureen has worked at the O'Neill Theatre Center, Berkeley Repertory, Arena Stage, and the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, to name a few. Her television credits include *Revolution* (NBC), *Chicago PD* (NBC), *American Gothic* (CBS), *Oasis* (Amazon), *Law & Order SVU* (NBC), *Prodigal Son* (Fox), and *Love Life* (HBO Max). She is a member of Ma-Yi Theatre Company Writer's Lab. Maureen also produces and creates podcasts: *Gulp: Life in the Time of Coronavirus* and *A Guide to Freedom: A North*

Star Fund Podcast. www.maureensebastian.com



CARA PARRISH she/her (*stage manager*) is a proud Ensemble member of American Blues Theater where she is also the Human Resources Coordinator. Chicago credits: *Gem of the Ocean*, *Electra*, *Hard Problem*, *Photograph 51*, *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, & *Lady From the Sea* (Court Theatre); *WITCH*, *Port Authority*, *Yellow Moon*, *The Letters*, *The Caretaker*, *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf*, & *The Blond*, *The Brunette*, and *the Vengeful Redhead* (Writers Theatre); *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* & *The Vibrator Play* (TimeLine Theatre Company); *James and the Giant Peach* (Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook); *Jabari Dreams of Freedom* (Chicago Children's Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet*, & *Emma* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre); *Beauty's Daughter* & *Buddy: The Buddy*

Holly Story (American Blues Theater). Cara is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT KRISTOFFER DIAZ

WHAT WAS YOUR INSPIRATION FOR WRITING *FOOTBALL FOOTBALL FOOTBALL FOOTBALL (OR I LOVE LAVE DASH)*?

In the summer of 2016, I woke up from a dream with the phrase "I love Lave Dash" in my head. I have no idea what it was supposed to mean, but it stayed with me. I never write about things from my dreams, even though a lot of times they feel like the most brilliant ideas, because they usually are not. But for some reason, this one became a play.

Right around that time, I read an article about (I hate to even mention this) this guy who was running for President (you know the one) and one of his advisors: Steve Bannon. Bannon's game plan was crystal clear and almost overtly stated, in my eyes at least: get into power, destroy everything, and maybe create the society he really wanted in the ashes of the old world. It was reminiscent of the kind of "move fast and break things" model favored throughout the tech sector, and I could sense how it could be (a) super attractive to certain folks, and (b) wildly destructive in practice. And look where we are now.

In November of that year, the football player Luke Kuechly suffered a concussion on the field, which, you know, not unusual. What was really unusual though was the aftermath, when he sat on the field and cried. It shook me. Something about the humanness of that casual violence — the same violence that's kind of undeniably awesome to watch, in my opinion — landed hard in that moment.

So there were these three weird seemingly unrelated moments/ideas floating in my head, and they kind of conflicted but they also kind of made perfect sense in terms of explaining some portion of the world to me. When I'm lucky enough to stumble into a place like that, it ends up being pretty easy to write a play.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE AUDIENCES TAKE AWAY FROM THIS PLAY?

Man, this play is dumb. I love writing really dumb plays. I hope people Zoom into this big dumb play about all the serious stuff I mentioned above and laugh a bunch. The world has been so dumb for such a long time (yes, the last four years, but so much dumbness going back so long and probably continuing for a long time going forward), and yes, we need smart stuff to counter it, but we also need truly dumb stuff to capture it. I hope this big dumb play can maybe offer some of both. Mostly dumb stuff.



CAN YOU SPEAK ABOUT YOUR BOLD CHOICE TO CAST ALL WOMEN IN THIS READING?

There's this great show by Janet Allard about NASCAR called *Vrooommm!*, and I think I'm pretty much just copying Janet's brilliant decision to have every role played by women. It's a great way to point at how ridiculously over-the-top macho masculinity can get in a sport like football. I've always known that at least two roles — the two football players — were going to be played by women. This is the first time we're doing the play with an all-female cast though, and I couldn't be more excited. The best thing about this dumb pandemic (as a playwright, at least) is that you can suddenly get all these incredible performers from across the country into a virtual room together at the same time. I mean, this cast is SHOCKINGLY good. I can't believe I get to work with them.

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NEXT?

Musicals! One about basketball and advanced analytics, and another that I'm not at liberty to discuss, but is going to be amazing. And hopefully by the time we do this reading, celebrating a Buffalo Bills Super Bowl win (I'm a lapsed fan who gave things up after their fourth consecutive Super Bowl loss back in the nineties). I still love the game, no matter what this play may seem to say.

WHAT IS TOXIC MASCULINITY?

Toxic masculinity takes center stage in Diaz' play. The below article by Maya Salam was originally published on the *New York Times* website on January 22, 2019. It has been edited here for length. You can read the full article [here](#).

For decades, we used terms like “macho,” “red-blooded” or “machismo” to describe the kind of hulking masculinity that men were, on some level, expected to aspire to.

Now we have “toxic masculinity” — an expression once relegated to women’s studies classrooms that suddenly seems to be everywhere.

Last week, the razor company Gillette released an advertisement titled “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be,” a spin on its longtime slogan “The Best a Man Can Get.” The ad challenges viewers to confront #MeToo and issues of “toxic masculinity” that manifest in acts like bullying and catcalling. It suggests that men abandon the “boys will be boys” mentality and instead hold other men accountable for misogynistic attitudes and behavior.

While the spot got plenty of love — it has been viewed about 25 million times on YouTube and 40 million times on Twitter — it also unleashed a torrent of backlash, including calls to boycott Gillette.

It came days after the American Psychological Association released its [first-ever guidelines](#) for psychologists working with boys and men who are socialized to conform to “traditional masculinity ideology” — which it says can hinder them from exploring what it means to be male — as well [as an article in The Times](#) about a new breed of straight male rockers who are protesting old notions of manhood.

“All these norms that we see aren’t normal at all,” said Joe Talbot, the lead singer of the British band Idles. “It’s a giant lie.”

So what does “toxic masculinity,” or “traditional masculinity ideology,” mean? Researchers have defined it, in part, as a set of behaviors and beliefs that include the following:

- Suppressing emotions or masking distress
- Maintaining an appearance of hardness
- Violence as an indicator of power (think: “tough-guy” behavior)

In other words: Toxic masculinity is what can come of teaching boys that they can’t express emotion openly; that they have to be “tough all the time”; that anything other than that makes them “feminine” or weak. (No, it doesn’t mean that all men are inherently toxic.)

It’s these cultural lessons, according to the A.P.A., that have been linked to “aggression and violence,” leaving boys and men at “disproportionate risk for school discipline, academic challenges and health disparities,” including cardiovascular problems and substance abuse.

“Men are overrepresented in prisons, are more likely than women to commit violent crimes and are at greatest risk of being a victim of violent crime,” the A.P.A. wrote.

Wade Davis, a former NFL player who now speaks to men about gender inequality and masculinity at companies like Google, Netflix and the NFL, said that there are no better messengers to help men confront these issues than other men.

“I don’t think it’s the work of women,” he told me recently. “I think it’s the work of men like myself who need to be talking to our brothers, fathers, our friends.”

It’s individual men, he continued, who are “going to have to, at some point, decide how to define manhood and masculinity for himself.”

THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN FOOTBALL

EARLY HISTORY

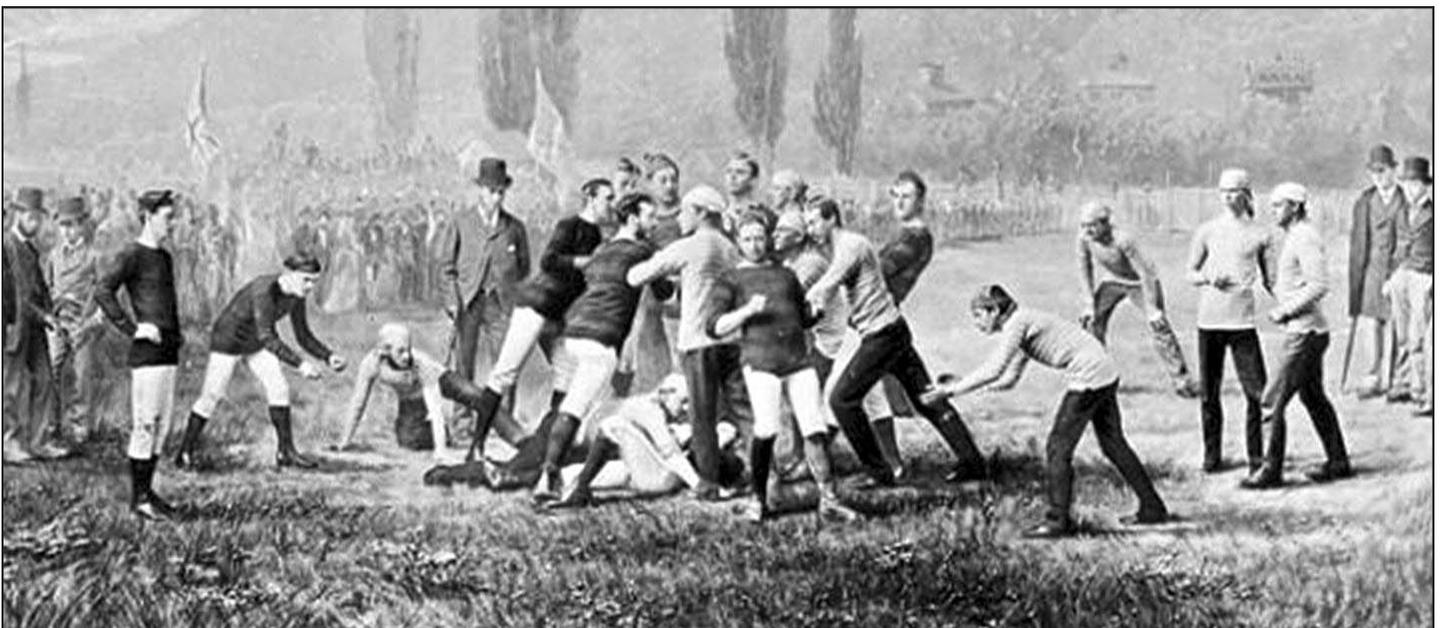
American football evolved from the sports of rugby and soccer. Rugby like American football, is a sport where two competing teams vie for control of a ball, which can be kicked through a set of goalposts or run into the opponent's goal area to score points.

What is considered to be the first American football game was played on November 6, 1869, between Rutgers and Princeton, two college teams. They consisted of 25 players per team and used a round ball that could not be picked up or carried. It could, however, be kicked or batted with the feet, hands, head or sides, with the objective being to advance it into the opponent's goal. Rutgers won the game 6–4. Collegiate play continued for several years with matches played using the rules of the host school. Representatives of Yale, Columbia, Princeton and Rutgers met on October 19, 1873, to create a standard set of rules for use by all schools. Teams were set at 20 players each, and fields of 400 by 250 feet were specified. Harvard abstained from the conference, as they favored a rugby-style game that allowed running with the ball. After playing McGill University using both Canadian and American rules, the Harvard players preferred the Canadian style of having only 11 men on the field, running the ball without having to be chased by an opponent, the forward pass, tackling, and using an oblong instead of a round ball.

An 1875 Harvard–Yale game played under rugby-style rules was observed by two Princeton athletes who were impressed by it and introduced the sport to Princeton. Princeton, Harvard, Yale, and Columbia then agreed to intercollegiate play using a form of rugby union rules with a modified scoring system. These schools formed the Intercollegiate Football Association. Yale player Walter Camp, now regarded as the "Father of American Football," secured rule changes in 1880 that reduced the size of each team from 15 to 11.

In 1882, Camp successfully proposed a rule that limited each team to three downs, or tackles, to advance the ball 5 yards. Failure to advance the ball the required distance within those three downs would result in control of the ball being forfeited to the other team. This change effectively made American football a separate sport from rugby, and the resulting five-yard lines added to the field to measure distances made it resemble a gridiron in appearance. Other major rule changes included a reduction of the field size and the adoption of a scoring system that awarded four points for a touchdown, two for a safety and a goal following a touchdown, and five for a goal from the field. Additionally, tackling below the waist was legalized, and a static line of scrimmage was instituted.

Despite these new rules, football remained a violent sport. Dangerous mass-formations like the flying wedge resulted



THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN FOOTBALL

in serious injuries and deaths. A 1905 peak of 19 fatalities nationwide resulted in a threat by President Theodore Roosevelt to abolish the game unless major changes were made. In response, 62 colleges and universities met in New York City to discuss rule changes on December 28, 1905. These proceedings resulted in the formation of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States, later renamed the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

PROFESSIONAL ERA

On November 12, 1892, Pudge Heffelfinger was paid \$500 to play a game for the Allegheny Athletic Association in a match against the Pittsburgh Athletic Club. This is the first recorded instance of a player being paid to participate in a game of American football, although many athletic clubs in the 1880s offered indirect benefits, such as helping players attain employment, giving out trophies or watches that players could pawn for money, or paying double in expense money. Despite these extra benefits, the game had a strict sense of amateurism at the time, and direct payment to players was frowned upon, if not prohibited outright.

Over time, professional play became increasingly common, and with it came rising salaries and unpredictable player movement, as well as the illegal payment of college players who were still in school. The National Football League (NFL), a group of professional teams that was originally established in 1920 as the American Professional Football Association, aimed to solve these problems. This new league's stated goals included an end to bidding wars over players, prevention of the use of college players, and abolition of the practice of paying players to leave another team. By 1922, the NFL had established itself as America's premier professional football league.

Football, in general, became increasingly popular following the 1958 NFL Championship game, a match between the Baltimore Colts and the New York Giants that is still referred to as the "Greatest Game Ever Played". The game, a 23–17 overtime victory by the Colts, was seen by millions of television viewers and had a major impact on the popularity of the sport. This, along with the innovations introduced by the new American Football League (AFL) in the early 1960s, helped football to become the most popular sport in the United States by the mid-1960s.

The rival AFL arose in 1960 and challenged the NFL's dominance. The AFL began in relative obscurity but eventually thrived, with an initial television contract with the ABC television network. The AFL's existence forced the conservative NFL to expand to Dallas and Minnesota in an attempt to destroy the new league. Meanwhile, the AFL introduced many new features to professional football in the United States: official time was kept on a scoreboard clock rather than on a watch in the referee's pocket, as the NFL did; optional two-point conversions by pass or run after touchdowns; names on the jerseys of players; and several others, including expansion of the role of minority players, actively recruited by the league in contrast to the NFL.

The AFL also signed several star college players who had also been drafted by NFL teams. Competition for players heated up in 1965, when the AFL New York Jets signed rookie Joe Namath to a then-record \$437,000 contract (equivalent to \$2.76 million in 2019). A five-year, \$40 million NBC television contract followed, which helped to sustain the young league. The bidding war for players ended in 1966 when NFL owners approached the AFL regarding a merger, and the two leagues agreed on one that took full effect in 1970. This agreement provided for a common draft that would take place each year, and it instituted an annual World Championship game to be played between the champions of each league. This championship game began play at the end of the 1966 season. Once the merger was completed, it was no longer a championship game between two leagues and reverted to the NFL championship game, which came to be known as the Super Bowl.

ENDURING POPULARITY

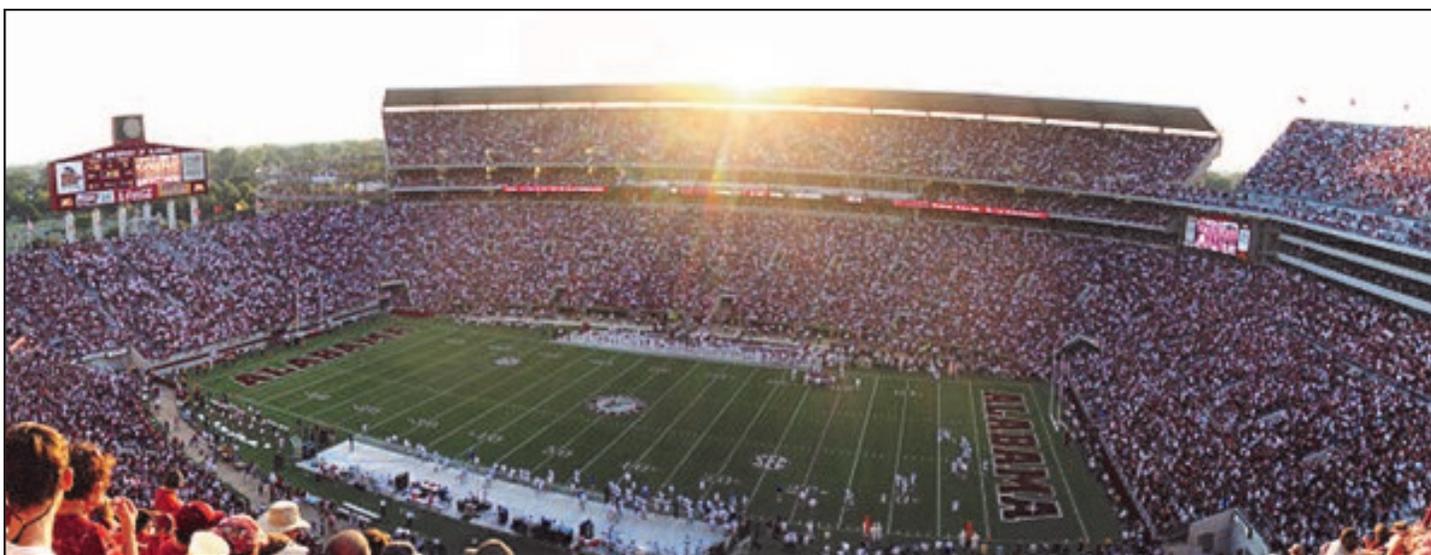
American football is the most popular sport in the United States. As of 2012, nearly 1.1 million high school athletes and 70,000 college athletes play the sport in the United States annually. The NFL has the highest average attendance of any professional sports league in the world, and the Super Bowl ranks among the most-watched club sporting events in the world. The league has an annual revenue of around \$13 billion. Other professional leagues exist worldwide, but the sport does not have the international popularity of other American sports like baseball or basketball.

THE CONTROVERSIAL CULTURE OF COLLEGE SPORTS RECRUITMENT

The NCAA strictly forbids any “extra benefits” being given to prospective or current students or their families, even as schools profit millions from their talents. The list of forbidden benefits include cash payments, loans, gifts, restaurant meals, free services, housing, and more. However, these rules are frequently violated in schools’ pursuit to secure blue chip recruits and to keep current players happy. Here are some of the most notable examples:

- In 1999 the University of Alabama paid high school student Albert Means an estimated \$200,000 to come play football for the them. In 2002 the NCAA punished the university by reducing scholarships, issuing a two-year bowl ban, and placing the school on probation for five years.
- The University of Colorado didn’t use money to recruit players in the early 2000s. Instead, they were promised relaxed supervision under coach Gary Barnett. There were reports of drug and alcohol use while Barnett was in charge and allegedly strippers were hired for recruiting parties. There were also six rape allegations that were swept under the rug while Barnett was in command. Barnett was placed on administrative leave after the allegations surfaced, though he was eventually forced out of his job a year-and-a-half later.
- In 2010 there was an investigation into reports that Cam Newton’s father, Cecil Newton, allegedly sought between \$120,000 and \$180,000 for Cam to sign with Mississippi State. Newton was deemed ineligible to play twice while playing at Auburn, but became eligible for both games and was later cleared of any wrongdoing.
- In 2018, the NCAA stripped the University of Louisville's men's basketball team of its 2013 national championship title over a recruiting scandal, where coaches hired sex workers for recruits and current players. Coach Rick Pitino resigned over the scandal, and the team faced several infractions on the team, including a \$600,000 fine.
- In 2017 the FBI charged several college coaches in conjunction with a corruption scheme saying that those coaches, advisors, and others lied and used their stature to influence recruits to sign with schools. The case alleges that money exchanged hands from a major athletic apparel company to top-level recruits, with financial planners and agents acting as middle men. The money, according to the filing, was given to recruits and their families with the understanding that those recruits would attend specific schools.

Since 2017, only one program has gone through the investigative process and been penalized. That was Oklahoma State, which in June was hit with a 2021 postseason ban related to bribes accepted by former assistant coach Lamont Evans. There are at least 11 other schools still tied up in the federal probe that are at various stages of the collegiate investigative process.



GENDER PAY GAP IN SPORTS

Many popular and widespread sports still retain a significant pay gap between male and female athletes. According to 2017 research conducted by BBC, 83% of sports now reward men and women equally when it comes to prize money. However, this does not mean that the pay gap in sports has truly narrowed or disappeared. In 2018, Forbes released the list of the top 100 highest-paid athletes, and they were all male athletes. In 2017, there was only one female athlete—tennis player Serena Williams—who ranked No.56.

One of the largest factors in the gender pay gap in sports are endorsements, as top male athletes continue to earn significantly more due to better sponsorship and endorsement deals. A 2017 comparison of Roger Federer's income with Serena Williams' income shows that Williams earned \$2 million more than Federer in prize money. However, Federer made \$58 million from endorsements, which is three times more than Serena Williams.

Another factor is the revenue generated by female athletes. In 2018, the WNBA team attracted 7,716 fans per game, which is 10,000 fans less than the audience attracted by NBA teams per game, which indicates female teams generated less revenue. This is tied to a disparity in media coverage and marketing dollars spent on male versus female sports. In the United States, nearly 40% of athletes are female, but they typically receive 2% - 4% of sport media coverage.

There are other factors which also affect the earning of female athletes, including the lack of women holding governing positions in the relevant sports organizations. Motherhood also can reduce the earning of female athletes. Professional beach volleyball player Kerri Walsh once said that she was told to hold off on starting a new family by sponsors. The professional snowboarder Kimmy Fasani also faced the fear of losing her endorsement deals when she found out she was pregnant.

The WNBA and NBA is one of the most prominent examples of the pay gap. In 2018, Aja Wilson was drafted as the number one WNBA pick and earned a salary of \$52,564, while DeAndre Ayton was drafted as the number one pick in the NBA and earned a salary of \$5,091,500. The average max salary cap for a player in the WNBA is roughly about \$117,500. For an NBA player, it's about 300 times more than that. For example, Steph Curry sits at \$40.2 million.

The women's US soccer team has been especially vocal on the topic of pay inequality. In 2019, a player on the US men's soccer team would be paid \$1.1 million if they won the world cup. In the same year, a player on the US women's team would be paid \$261,000 for a 1st place victory. After years with no changes made to equalize pay, the entire USWNT filed a gender discrimination lawsuit against the US Soccer Federation. The specific accusations included inequality in pay, medical treatment, transportation, and working conditions. In December 2020, they settled over inequitable working conditions compared with the men's team while leaving their dispute over unequal pay for additional litigation.



WOMEN BREAKING BARRIERS IN THE NFL

On September 27, 2020 For the first time in the NFL's history, three women were on the gridiron in an official capacity during a regular-season game.

A female coach was on each sideline and a female official was on the field when Washington Football Team faced off against the Cleveland Browns at FirstEnergy Stadium in Cleveland. Callie Brownson was the Browns' chief of staff, Jennifer King was Washington's full-year coaching intern, and Sarah Thomas was an NFL official.

Thomas first made history in 2015, when she was hired as the first full-time female official in NFL history, and again in 2019 when she became the first woman to officiate an NFL playoff game. She was also the first woman to referee a major college football game, a bowl game and a game in a Big Ten stadium. She'll make history again in 2021, as she is set to become the first woman to officiate at the Super Bowl.



Here are some of the other women who have broken barriers and made history in the NFL through the years:

ON THE SIDELINES

Jennifer Welter made NFL history when she was hired by the Arizona Cardinals in 2015 as an assistant coaching intern working with inside linebackers during the preseason and training camp. She was the first female ever to hold any coaching position in the NFL.

Her internship led the way for Tampa Bay Buccaneers coaches Lori Locust and Maral Javadifar, whose full-time positions make them the first two female coaches on an NFL team.

In 2016, Kathryn Smith was hired by the Buffalo Bills head coach, Rex Ryan, as a quality control special teams coach, making her the NFL's first full-time female assistant coach.

At the time of her promotion, Smith said the move "shows somebody if you work hard that you can do whatever you set your mind to, and if that's the message that's getting across to girls, boys, whoever it is, then I think that's a good thing."

"I might be the first, but I don't think I'll be the only one for very long," she said, and she was right.

WOMEN BREAKING BARRIERS IN THE NFL

In August 2017, Katie Sowers of the San Francisco 49ers became the second woman to be hired as a full-time assistant coach. She is also the first openly gay NFL coach.

After Ryan was let go after the 2016 season, Smith was not retained by the Bills' new head coach, Sean McDermott.

IN THE PRESS BOX

In September 2017, Beth Mowins became the first woman to call a nationally televised NFL game: a Monday Night Football divisional matchup between the Los Angeles Chargers and Denver Broncos.

By doing this, she also became the second female play-by-play announcer in NFL regular season history. Gayle Sierens, a sports anchor in Florida, announced a game in 1987.

Mowins was hired by ESPN in 1994. Since 2005, she has called play-by-play games for women's college sports and for college football. She has also been the voice for the Oakland Raiders' preseason games in recent years.

IN THE BOARD ROOM

In 1997, Amy Trask became the first female chief executive officer of an NFL team, the Oakland Raiders — a position she held until 2013.

Trask is a self-made woman in the industry. In the 1980s, while in college, she cold-called the Raiders and offered to work as an unpaid intern. A few years later, in 1987, the team's legal department brought her on as a full-time lawyer. She ascended to the top from there.

Other notable women behind the scenes in the NFL include:

- Amy Adams Strunk (controlling owner of the Tennessee Titans)
- Katie Blackburn (Executive Vice President of the Cincinnati Bengals)
- Jeanne Bonk (Executive Vice President and COO of the Los Angeles Chargers)
- Martha Firestone Ford (former owner and chairperson of the Detroit Lions)
- Sheila Ford Hamp (current owner and chairperson of the Detroit Lions)
- Dee Haslam (co-owner of the Cleveland Browns)
- Charlotte Jones Anderson (Executive Vice President and Chief Brand Officer of Dallas Cowboys)
- Kim Pegula (co-owner of the Buffalo Bills)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WOMEN'S SPORTS CHICAGO

Chicago's premiere organization for recreational women's sports. They have something for women of all skill levels and currently offer soccer and basketball programs. Their mission is to help the everyday woman to feel strong and powerful through sports.

CHICAGO FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN

A nonprofit that invests in women and girls with the goal of building strong communities for all. Last year they funded more than 160 projects serving over 70,000 women, girls, transgender, and non-binary people across the Chicago region.

IN HER SHOES FOUNDATION

A Chicago-based nonprofit that is dedicated to making a positive impact on society by empowering women and girls.

RESOURCES FOR **TEACHERS AND PARENTS**

LESSON PLAN FOR TEACHING MASCULINITY

From *The New York Times*, this comprehensive lesson plan includes articles, definitions, discussion questions, videos, and activities on the topics of gender and masculinity.

TEACHING TOLERANCE

Website and magazine run by the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) that provides free resources to educators, including dozens of lesson plans on gender and identity.

ABOUT THE **BLUE INK PLAYWRITING AWARD**

Football Football Football Football (or I Love Love Dash) was a Featured Finalist of the 2020 Blue Ink Playwriting Award.

The nationally-renown Blue Ink Playwriting Award was created in 2010 to support new work. Since inception, we've named 10 Award winners, 79 finalists, and 109 semi-finalists.

Previous winners include Andrea Stolowitz' *Recent Unsettling Events* (2020), Benjamin Benne's *Alma* (2019), Inda Craig-Galván's *Welcome to Matteson!* (2018), Idris Goodwin's *Hype Man* (2017), Nathan Alan Davis's *The Wind and the Breeze* (2016), and Jamie Pachino's *Other Than Honorable* (2015).

Each year American Blues Theater accepts worldwide submissions of original, unpublished full-length plays. The winning play will be selected by Artistic Director Gwendolyn Whiteside and the theater's Ensemble. The playwright receives a monetary prize of \$1,250. Cash prizes are awarded to finalists and semi-finalists too. All proceeds of the administrative fee are distributed for playwrights' cash prizes.



ABOUT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

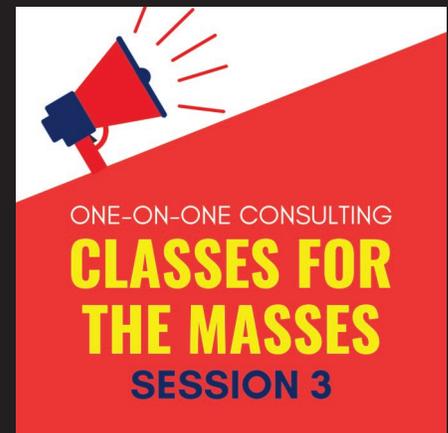
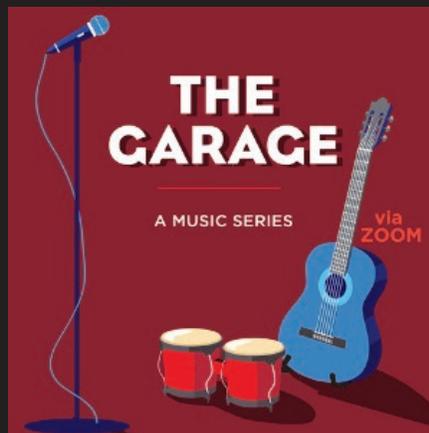
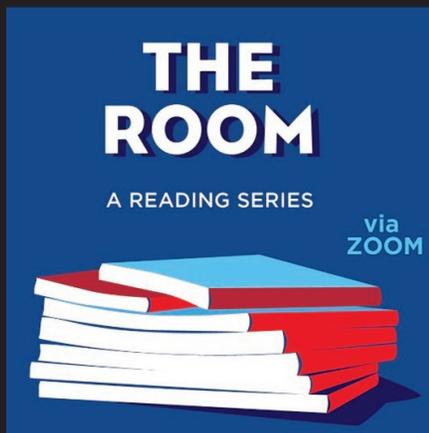
Winner of American Theatre Wing's prestigious National Theatre Company Award, American Blues Theater is a premier arts organization with an intimate environment that patrons, artists, and all Chicagoans call home. American Blues Theater explores the American identity through the plays it produces and communities it serves.

We believe in cooperative collaborations both on and off-stage. We provide community service for many not-for-profits, such as the Chicago Public Schools, The Night Ministry, Chicago House, Suits for Success, Misericordia, and the USO. Since 2009, we've held food, book, & clothing drives, distributed promotional tickets, and raised awareness for children's surgeries and health needs. We donate proceeds from "Pediatric Previews" to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

We are Chicago's second-oldest AEA Ensemble theater. As of 2020, our theater and artists have 221 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations that celebrate excellence in Chicago theater and 40 Black Theater Alliance Awards. Our artists are honored with Pulitzer Prize nominations, Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Awards, and numerous other accolades.

American Blues Theater is committed to developing the classic plays and musicals of tomorrow. More than half of our mainstage productions are world and Chicago premieres. Our new play development consists of a variety of programs – including world and Chicago premieres, the nationally-recognized Blue Ink Playwriting Award, Blueprint play development, and annual *Ripped: the Living Newspaper Festival* of new short-plays.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER



Visit AmericanBluesTheater.com to learn more.

A banner for 'VALENTINES' featuring a grid of artist portraits, musical notes, and large red hearts. The text includes 'VALENTINES', 'SONGS FROM OUR ARTISTS' 1ST LOVE OR HEARTBREAK', 'FEBRUARY 12 @ 7PM LIVE, INTERACTIVE ON ZOOM', '\$50 SUGGESTED DONATION', and 'hosted by Cupid Kross'. A small logo for 'THE GARAGE' is in the bottom right.