

HBO Sports premieres "Billie Jean King, Portrait of a Pioneer"

By ChicagoPride.com

Show About Landmark Athlete and Activist Premieres April 26th

Chicago, IL - On Wednesday, April 26, HBO Sports premieres "Billie Jean King, Portrait of a Pioneer." This exclusive "Sports of the 20th Century" presentation explores the personal and professional life of the landmark athlete and activist, whose remarkable career on the tennis court was equaled only by her impact on the struggle for women's equality during the 1970s.

The documentary will tell the story of an athlete who revolutionized sports for women, in the process encouraging women to pursue endeavors outside the traditional realm of the home.

As one of the 20th century's most respected women, Billie Jean King has long been a champion for social change and equality. King created new inroads for women in and out of sports during her legendary career and she continues to make her mark today.

King, one of the most illustrious and celebrated tennis players in history, is recognized for spearheading the women's movement in tennis and for her life-long struggle for equality in women's tennis. King empowered women and educated men when she defeated Bobby Riggs in one of the greatest moments in sports history – the Battle of the Sexes in 1973.

In 1990, Life magazine named her one of the "100 Most Important Americans of the 20th Century". In 1994, she ranked No. 5 on Sports Illustrated's "Top 40 Athletes" list for significantly altering or elevating sports the last four decades.

King, who resides in New York and Chicago, has been heralded as an ardent defender of equal rights for all humankind. She founded the Women's Sports Foundation in 1974 to advance the lives of girls and women through sports and physical activity and, in 1987, she established WTT Charities, Inc. to promote health, fitness, education, and social change. In 1998, King became the first athlete to receive the prestigious Elizabeth Blackwell Award, which is given by Hobart and William Smith College to a woman whose life exemplifies outstanding service to humanity. In February 1999 King won the Arthur Ashe Award for Courage for her fight to bring equality to women's sports.

Off the court, King remains active in a number of important causes. She serves as a director on several boards including the Elton John AIDS Foundation and the Women's Sports Foundation.

Although her place in tennis has certainly been secured as one of the all-time greats, King remains active in the sport she loves. King, who has coached Olympic and Fed Cup teams, led the U.S. squad to four Olympic medals and the 1976, 1996, 1999 and 2000 Fed Cup titles. In 2003 she received two of the tennis world's highest honors. King was awarded the prestigious Philippe Chatrier Award, the International Tennis Federation's highest honor, recognizing individuals for their contribution to tennis and was one of six inaugural inductees into the Court of Champions at the USTA National Tennis Center.

On the court, King left a lasting and indelible mark. She won a record 20 Wimbledon titles with six of them in singles (1966-67-68-72-73-75), won the U.S. Open four times (1967-71-72-74), the French Open in 1972 and the Australian Open in 1968. She was ranked No. 1 in the world five times between 1966 and 1972 and was in the Top 10 a total of 17 years (beginning in 1960.)

King is the only woman to win U.S. Open singles titles on all 4 surfaces on which it has been played (grass, clay, carpet, and hard.) She's also one of only eight women to hold a singles title in each of the Grand Slam events.



King has had a long and impressive career of firsts. In 1970, King was one of nine players who broke away from the tennis establishment and accepted \$1 contracts from tennis promoter Gladys Heldman in Houston. The revolt led to the formation of the Virginia Slims Tour and Women's Tennis Association. In 1971, she was the first woman athlete to win more than \$100,000 in any sport. In 1974 she became the first woman to coach a professional team with men when she served as player/coach for the Philadelphia Freedoms of World TeamTennis.

She is a member of the International Tennis Hall of Fame and the National Women's Hall of Fame. She is the founder of the Women's Tennis Association and the Women's Sports Foundation.

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