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Joan Magruder

Pioneering Water Polo Player to Speak at Annual Lecture

Maureen O'Toole, widely regarded as the greatest female water polo player of all time, will be the featured speaker at this year's annual Distinguished Woman in Sports lecture at UC Santa Barbara, February 4 at 7 p.m. in the Corwin Pavilion.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

O'Toole, who will discuss "My Journey to the Olympics," has almost single-handedly carried women's water polo from its infancy in the United States to becoming a medal sport in the 2000 Olympic Games.

She began playing water polo in high school on a boys' team as there was no girls' team.

At 17, O'Toole joined the U.S. Women's National Team, retiring in 1994 after earning every honor available to a woman in her sport, including being named U.S. Water Polo Female Athlete of the Year (five times) and to the All American team for U.S.

Water Polo (28 times -- a record).

O'Toole came out of retirement at the age of 39 to qualify for the women's Olympic Team, which won the silver medal at the 2000 Games.

Now retired from competitive water polo, O'Toole is the founder of The Pursuit of Excellence Sports Academy, a non-profit foundation aimed at instilling self-esteem and leadership skills in a sports environment for girls eight to 18 years of age.

An "Up Close and Personal" reception with O'Toole will be held at the Women's Center from 5:45 to 6:45 p.m. preceding the public lecture.

Reservations are \$25 per person and must be made by January 16.

The event will support future annual lectures and other activities celebrating and honoring the accomplishments of local girls and women in sports.

The Annual Distinguished Woman in Sports lecture series, now in its sixth year, is sponsored by UCSB's Affirmative Action Office, UCSB Physical Activities and Recreation, The Santa Barbara Athletic Roundtable, UCSB's Title IX Office, and the UCSB Women's Center.

For further information, or to make reservations for the reception, contact the UCSB Women's Center at (805) 893-3778.

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