The Living Legacy of the Women’s Professional Basketball League
The League that Propelled

The Women’s Professional Basketball League (WBL) represents much more than just its place and time in the history of women’s basketball.

In three years, the WBL was born, thrived, and ended. However, it’s legacy and influence continues to stretch across the landscape of modern women’s basketball.
The Triad—Title IX

In 1972, Congress passed Title IX. Title IX says, “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 education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

While passed as an education bill, it quickly had impact on school sports and created opportunities for women to play at the grade school and collegiate level.
The Triad—AIAW

In 1971, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) formed to govern women’s college competitions and administer national championships. From 1971 to 1982, the championships ran by and awards given out by the AIAW helped propel women’s basketball and recognize the greatness of individual players.
It’s All About the Ball

In the fall of 1978, the first Women’s Professional Basketball League (WBL) was formed in the United States.

The league used smaller and lighter balls than the men’s league because people reasoned women’s hands are smaller on average than men’s and their upper body strength also differs. However, this suggested change was not based on evidence.

Throughout the WBL’s existence, women played with the smaller ball.

When the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) formed in 1996, they also adopted the smaller ball.
Basketball 1890-1910
This is a replica laced leather basketball used in the earliest days of basketball. The basketball was crude and handmade with an irregular shape. It was made to be passed and not dribbled, and the irregular seams made the ball rougher to shoot.

Basketball 1950
This basketball was used by the Northampton Gazette Girls in the 1950s. The ball is the official size 7 used today by men with a 29.5" circumference and weighing 22 ounces. At the time, both men and women used a size 7 basketball.

Basketball 1978
This size 6 basketball for women was proposed by Karen Logan and first introduced in the US by the Women's Professional Basketball League (WBL) in 1978. This ball is slightly smaller and lighter with a circumference of 28.5" and a weight of 20 ounces. This ball is courtesy of Karen Logan and bears her autograph.

Basketball 1984
The Baden/Pynees NCAA Ball
Baden collaborates with Betty艽es (the first president of the WIBA) to create a ball for the NCAA

Basketball 1997
The Spalding Panel Basketball
After the ABL chose Baden in their 1996 launch, the WIBA selected their Spalding ball in the now famous, pane version.

Basketball 2022
The Wilson WNBA Basketball
For their 25th Anniversary, in a full circle moment, the WIBA partnered again with Wilson who has produced the first size 6 ball for the WIBA.
The League That Propelled

The pioneering members of the WBL broke more than records, they pushed through gender, racial, and social barriers.

For example, the majority of the African American players of the WBL were the first African American players or athletes at their universities.
From the WBL to the WNBA and Beyond

Members of the WBL left their marks on the other pro leagues that followed and helped set the stage for today’s WNBA.

A large percentage of the players and coaches from the WBL chose or continued coaching as a profession. At the end of the league, members of the WBL flooded the coaching ranks at every level from middle school to college, other pro leagues, the Olympics, and the WNBA. Some, like Nancy Lieberman, have coached in both the WNBA and the NBA.

Over time, others made their mark in the front office as executives or as broadcasters.
The game of women’s basketball has been shaped by the contributions of many people.

Time has shown that their contributions have had far-reaching impact on the professional game and continues today...

This is the “WBL Effect.”