

SOCIETY & CULTURE

books



Award-winning journalist and author Melissa Isaacson has scored a lot of firsts. She was the first woman beat writer to cover the Bears and the Bulls for the *Chicago Tribune*. In 1975, she played on the Niles West High School basketball team the first year they had a full varsity/JV program for girls. Passage of groundbreaking

Title IX legislation made that possible, opening doors for girls across the country to start participating in sports. The story of how that team went on to win the state championship Isaacson's senior year is the subject of her new book, *State: A Team, a Triumph, a Transformation* (\$27, Agate Midway). "It was such a pivotal moment in history," says Isaacson. "Because of Title

IX, a whole world opened up for us that wasn't there for our older sisters and cousins." She credits team sports with life lessons that served her and her teammates well. "For generations, boys had been getting those lessons about setting goals, working together and being tough, but girls just weren't getting that."

Isaacson, who teaches at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, describes the years she's spent writing the book and reconnecting with old high school teammates as therapeutic. She learned that a profound impact winning that state championship had on all their lives. And while

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it's a book about victory, Isaacson's quick to point out there are still battles to fight in women's sports today.

Still, she's thrilled about the way participation in competitive sports is benefiting girls and women. "Our high school basketball coach, Arlene Mulder, who became the five-term mayor of Arlington Heights, worried our parents would be upset with her for pushing us too hard. But today, it's cool for girls to be athletes in high school. Take a look at female executives at Fortune 500 companies. Some 80% of them played competitive sports." melissaisaacson.com



ISAACSON SHOT ON LOCATION AT THE RENAISSANCE CHICAGO NORTH SHORE BOOK COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF AGATE PUBLISHING