Female athletes deserve recognition



PHOTO | JOSHPOPOV

Actress Sydney Sweeney.

By Lily Rand
Photo Editor

Growing up playing softball, I heard the comparisons constantly. Baseball was harder. Throwing "like a girl" was an insult. Even when those comments were meant as jokes, they carried the same message; girls' sports were somehow less valuable.

I grew up always being taught there was nothing a boy could do that a girl could not do.

Still, I spent years being reminded that many people saw girls in sports differently.

Earlier this month, actress Sydney Sweeney appeared in an advertisement for the sports betting app Novig, sparking criticism from female athletes and debate across social media.

The campaign featured Sweeney posing with sports equipment as the only thing covering her body as part of the company's "Just Sports" campaign.

While the ad was designed to sell a product, the conversation surrounding it felt much bigger than one advertisement.

One line from the advertisement stood out to me more than anything else: "Think you know sports, prove it."

While the slogan was intended to encourage people to use the betting app, it reminded me of a frustration many female athletes know well.

Women have been proving themselves for years, yet they are still expected to justify their accomplishments in ways male athletes are not.

The answer to that question should be so obvious by now; they already have.

As a softball player, I think about athletes like Jennie Finch, who helped countless young girls believe they belonged on the field.

I think about my first female softball coach, too, whose favorite saying was, "Attitude is everything." At the time, that seemed like a simple piece of advice.

Looking back, I see how it taught us to overcome criticism, self-doubt and the stereotypes that often follow female athletes.

Athletes like Finch, who became one of softball's most recognizable players, Serena Williams, who transformed women's tennis, Simone Biles, who redefined what was possible in gymnastics, and Caitlin Clark, who helped bring new attention to women's basketball, became role models through talent, discipline and years of hard work.

These women proved themselves long ago.

Women have spent decades proving they belong, yet discussions about female athletes still center on appearance rather than achievement. Some point to revealing photoshoots in publications such as Sports Illustrated, and they are right.

However, athletes earned recognition through their performances first. Their photoshoots did not make them athletes; their achievements did.

That is why the reaction to the Novig advertisement resonated with so many female athletes.

The frustration was never simply about what Sydney Sweeney was wearing or not wearing. It was about seeing attention directed toward a woman's body in a conversation connected to sport achievement.

The Novig advertisement succeeded in getting people talking.

But the reason people are still talking about it goes beyond one actress or one advertisement. It is about the ongoing fight for women to be recognized for what they can do rather than how they look.

The field does not care what you look like. It cares about effort, determination and ability. Female athletes have already proven they belong.

The question is why society keeps asking them to prove it again. If sports have taught me anything, it is that greatness does not have one look.

Every girl deserves to know that she belongs exactly as she is.

Top 5 New Haven spots for students

By Brianna Wallen
Editor-in-Chief

#1 TOUS les JOURS Bakery Café

Need a break from the library? Grab your laptop and head to TOUS les JOURS Bakery Café on Chapel Street. It is a cozy spot to get some work done and grab a sweet treat – as a reward of course.

For me personally, I do my best studying in public and when there is coffee right next to me.

This French –Asian–inspired bakery offers everything from freshly baked pastries and cakes to breads, breakfast sandwiches and specialty drinks.

The bakery is especially known for its milk bread and cloud cakes.

Whether you are cramming for an exam, catching up on work or just looking for somewhere to relax and unwinds, TOUS les JOURS makes studying feel less stressful and more enjoyable.

#2 Mew Haven Cat Cafe

If you love cats, coffee and doing something a little different, take a stroll to Mew Haven Cat Cafe.

Since 2018, Mew Haven has been giving cat lovers the chance to enjoy a drink while hanging out with some adorable and adoptable cats.

Fun fact: Mew Haven Cat Cafe is actually the first cat cafe in the state.

The lounge area for the furry friends was also well kept, and there are plenty of toys and stands to keep everyone entertained.

I loved interacting with the cats and seeing their different personalities.

It is recommended that visitors book their visit in advance to ensure there is a spot available in the cat lounge.

Also, check out their website to see upcoming special events, including cat yoga or embroidery with cats

This is the purr–fect spot to de–stress after finals or find a cuddly study buddy.

#3 Modern Apizza

You cannot talk about New Haven without mentioning pizza.

While there are plenty of places to grab a slice, Modern Apizza is one of the spots that makes the city's pizza culture worth testing.

Located on State Street, Modern has been serving its famous apizza since 1934.

Although I have not tried all of the well–known pizza spots in the city, Modern Apizza is an underrated gem.

The thin crust and charred edges give it a flavor that stands out on its own.

Modern also has a variety of toppings and specialty pies, so there is something for almost everyone.

I am more of a basic girlie, so I stick to cheese or pepperoni. But, they have toppings from clams to hot cherry peppers.

I also recommend eating at the table. The atmosphere reminds me of vintage resturants.

#4 Üni-Home Life

For all my Kawaii and Sanrio lovers, or anyone who loves buying cute things, Üni–Home Life is the place for you.

Located on Chapel Street in downtown New Haven, the store is filled with Asian–inspired products, including plushies, stationery, beauty products, home decor, accessories and collectibles.

I always end up buying something I probably did not need, but somehow end up loving.

From the colorful displays to the endless selection of products, there is always something cute or fuzzy that catches my attention – espeically when its Hello Kitty.

Just a warning – even if you walk in just to browse, it is hard to leave without finding something you want.

Üni–Home Life turns a quick shopping trip into a fun experience and is definitely worth stopping by when you are exploring downtown.

#5 Ashley's Ice Cream

Last but not least, it is time for a sweet treat! After spending time exploring New Haven, there is nothing better than ending the day at Ashley's Ice Cream.

The shop has been serving New Haven since 1979 and has become one of my local favorites.

What makes Ashley's fun is the long list of flavors to choose from. Whether it is coffee Oreo or cake batter, I promise there is a flavor for everyone. If you are a cookie butter lover like me, you have to try the limited–edition Biscoff ice cream. My favorite and go–to flavor is grape–nut.

This is the perfect late night sweet treat, as they close at 10 p.m. Another plus is that it is only a few minutes away from campus.

Ashley's is also in a great location for walking around the city after getting a scoop. There's Urban Outfitters, Lulu–lemon and 2nd STREET right around the corner.

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Fashion house returns to London

By Valentina Toro
Managing Editor

Alexander McQueen is back in London, which is where the fashion house belongs.

After 25 years away from the official London Fashion Week schedule, McQueen returned this September to present its Spring 2027 collection. Creative director Seán McGirr brought the British fashion house back to the city where its story began, and the decision feels like the right direction for the brand.

McQueen has spent years showing in Paris, one of the biggest fashion capitals in the world. But there is something different about seeing the brand back in London. So much of what made Alexander McQueen what it is today started there.

Lee Alexander McQueen was born in London and studied fashion at Central Saint Martins. Before creating his own label, he trained on Savile Row, an area known for traditional British tailoring. He eventually became known for doing almost the opposite of what people expected from traditional fashion.

His shows were dark, dramatic and sometimes controversial. He was never afraid to make people uncomfortable or turn a runway into something bigger than models wearing clothes. That rebellious side of McQueen has always felt very London to me.

McGirr seemed to understand that with this collection. Instead of simply bringing the show back to London, he brought parts of the city into the clothes. The collection mixed British tailoring with references to London rave culture while keeping the darker feeling people expect from McQueen.

Some looks were structured and sharp, while others included leather, corsets and dramatic silhouettes. McGirr also worked with Huntsman, the Savile Row tailor that Lee McQueen previously worked with.

Those references to the past were important, but I do not believe McGirr should try to recreate what Lee McQueen already did.

Since becoming creative director in 2023, McGirr has stepped into a difficult position. Alexander McQueen is one of those fashion houses where the founder's influence is still everywhere. Any designer who takes over will automatically have their work compared to his.

But McQueen cannot survive by trying to recreate collections from 20 or 30 years ago.

Fashion changes, and the house has to change with it. McGirr should be able to create his own version of McQueen while still respecting what made the brand different in the first place. This collection felt closer to finding that balance.

Bringing McQueen back is also a big moment for London Fashion Week. Having one of Britain's most famous fashion houses return brings more attention to London and reminds people of the influence the city continues to have on fashion.

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