



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



September 2024 Her Story ENewsletter Olympic Women

Women on Team USA excelled at the 2024 Olympics in Paris. Twenty-six of the forty gold medals and sixty-nine of the 126 total medals won by Team USA were won by women. Ten of the thirteen Team USA Olympians who won multiple medals were women. The individual women's gold medals were in swimming, fencing, gymnastics, cycling, surfing, track and field, wrestling, and weightlifting. Women's teams won gold in soccer and basketball. Like all women, the 2024 women Olympians stand on the shoulders of the women Olympians who came before them – starting in 1900. Let's learn about a couple of earlier Olympians.



Wilma Rudolph had to overcome physical challenges as well as racial barriers on her way to becoming the fastest woman in the world. The twentieth child in a family of twenty-two, Rudolph was a sickly child. When her legs didn't develop properly, she was diagnosed with polio and her family was told that she would not walk. Through the determination and support of her mother and family, by the age of twelve she could walk without braces, a crutch or corrective shoes.

Home schooled for much of her childhood, Rudolph discovered her athleticism when she entered public high school. She played basketball; her talent for running was discovered during her sophomore year by the coach of the Tennessee State University track team. At age sixteen, she won a bronze medal at the 1956 Olympics as a member of the 4 x 100 relay team. That set the stage for her triumph at the 1960 Olympics where she became the first American woman to win three gold medals – in the 100-meter dash, the 200-meter dash and as the anchor member of the 4 x 100 relay team. Rudolph's inspirational story made her a star during those first televised Olympics. Rudolph also inspired generations of women athletes who came after her. Rudolph has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.



Team USA's women's soccer team has won seven Olympic medals – five gold (1996, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2024), one silver (2000), and one bronze (2020). **Mia Hamm**, who is cited as the world's best all-around women's soccer player, is well-known for her seminal contributions to the U.S. women's soccer team's first gold medal at the 1996 Olympics. Hamm was the youngest player ever to play for the U.S. National Team (at age 15). She retired from competitive soccer in 2004 after seventeen years, two World Championships, and two Olympic Gold medals. Her records in appearances and goals, MVP awards and overall performance put her at the top of the sport. She has scored more international goals than any player of soccer – male or female. Hamm has been inducted into

the Soccer Hall of Fame and the National Women's Hall of Fame as well as the Alabama and Texas Sports Halls of Fame.

Wilma Rudolph and Mia Hamm are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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