



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

## NEWS RELEASE

### **NFHS to Host First-Ever Women and Sport Leadership Virtual Summit in May**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Lindsey Atkinson

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (February 1, 2022) —In pursuit of the continued advancement of educational and competitive opportunities for women in sports, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) is hosting its first-ever Better Together: Women and Sport Leadership Virtual Summit on May 1-3.

The three-day virtual event features discussion from influential female leaders at all three levels of sport. It is designed to develop meaningful, actionable solutions to continue the growth of women in sports through coaching, officiating and administration.

“Title IX’s passage nearly 50 years ago served as the flagship legislation for the growth of high school girls athletic programs,” said Dr. Karissa Niehoff, NFHS CEO. “The Better Together: Women and Sport Leadership Virtual Summit strives to build on that growth, assisting attendees in connecting the skills learned in activities to those associated with being an effective leader.”

Through the virtual summit, participants can also expect to learn how to identify and articulate their personal strengths; identify gender stereotypes that create barriers; understand the importance of mentorship; and understand the value of advocating for other women.

Niehoff opens the virtual summit and its “Breaking Down Barriers” session at 6 p.m. Eastern time on Sunday, May 1. She will be joined during the three days by fellow featured speakers **Dr. Jen**

**Welter**, the first female NFL coach and a sports psychologist; **Betsy Butterick**, a communication specialist and former collegiate and professional basketball coach; and **Violet Palmer**, a retired collegiate and professional basketball official who now serves as the NBA Referee Operations Manager and is the coordinator of women's basketball officials for the Big Sky, Pac-12, Western Athletic and West Coast Conferences.

**Welter** highlights the inaugural event's opening general session at 6:45 p.m. on May 1. A female trailblazer in her own right, Welter was the first female to coach in the NFL, having worked with Arizona Cardinals linebackers in 2015. She previously coached the Texas Revolution of Champions Indoor Football (CIF). It was with the Revolution that Welter also competed as the first female running back in a men's professional league in 2014. The coaching roles proved to be a springboard to other opportunities. Welter most recently served as a defensive specialist for the Atlanta Legends of the Alliance of American Football (AAF). As a player, Welter had a highly decorated career in women's professional football, including four world championships and eight all-star selections. She also won gold medals earlier in her career as a member of Team USA in the 2010 and 2013 International Federation of American Football's (IFAF) Women's World Championship.

"Reimagining Through Innovation" lays the foundation for day two, which begins with **Butterick** hosting the second general session at 2 p.m. on Monday, May 2. A former coach with college- and WNBA-coaching experience, Butterick uses her unique background to help improve communication for individuals from the locker room to the boardroom. She meets coaches where they are and supports the growth that they're looking to make. Through her work as a communication specialist, Butterick also helps teams improve communication effectiveness while working collaboratively to create positive change at all levels of the team.

The third and final day of the virtual summit, coined the "Realizing Your Power" session, kicks off at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, May 2. Following the second day of moderated panel discussion at 3 p.m., the virtual summit draws to a close as retired basketball official **Violet Palmer** bookends the event as its closing general session speaker at 4 p.m.

Boasting experience in the NBA, WNBA and NCAA, Palmer made history in 1997 when she officiated an NBA game, making her the first woman to do so for a men's professional sporting event. That same year, she also officiated the inaugural WNBA Championship. Palmer added to her legacy nearly a decade later when she became the first woman to oversee a NBA postseason game, and, in

2014, became the first woman to officiate an all-star game of any major sport in the United States. A native of Lynwood, California, she was a star point guard at nearby Compton (California) High School. Palmer helped later lead Cal Poly Pomona University to back-to-back NCAA Division II national championships (1985, 1986).

Breakout sessions led by esteemed coaches, administrators and officials follow introductory remarks on each day of the virtual summit. They feature discussion from experts with experience working alongside the Little League World Series, USA Track and Field, NCAA, Atlantic Coast Conference, Pac-12, and state high school athletic/activity associations.

For more information and to register for the Better Together: Women and Sport Leadership virtual summit, please visit: [meetings.nfhs.org/btwls22/](https://meetings.nfhs.org/btwls22/).

*This press release was written by Cody Porter, manager of media relations at the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).*

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#### **About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)**

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.9 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

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