



Val Ackerman

Commissioner, Big East Conference

Val Ackerman was named the fifth Commissioner of the Big East Conference on June 26, 2013. She was the founding President of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and is a past President of USA Basketball, which oversees the U.S. men's and women's Olympic basketball program. She has had a long and accomplished career in the sports industry and is one of the few executives in sports who has held leadership positions in both men's and women's sports at the collegiate, professional, national team and international levels.

While at the helm of the BIG EAST, Val has presided over the rebirth of the conference following the decision in 2012 of seven then-current BIG EAST schools (DePaul, Georgetown, Marquette, Providence, St. John's, Seton Hall and Villanova) to separate from the original BIG EAST Conference and align with Butler, Creighton and Xavier to form the present configuration. She led the relocation of the conference office to its current site in New York City and has managed the BIG EAST's fruitful partnerships with Fox Sports, which provides wall-to-wall coverage annually of BIG EAST men's basketball on FOX, FS1 and FS2, and with Madison Square Garden, which has hosted the conference's men's basketball tournament since 1983. In 2018, the BIG EAST and MSG entered into a venue agreement extension that will keep the Garden as the home of the BIG EAST tournament through 2028. In 2019, Val also led the negotiations which resulted in the return to the BIG EAST of the University of Connecticut, one of the conference's charter members, effective July 1, 2020.

Following its return to its basketball-centric heritage, the BIG EAST has continued its national excellence in the sport over the past seven years, with nine of the league's 10 men's basketball programs receiving NCAA tournament bids since 2013-14 and Villanova winning the national championship in 2016 and 2018. Other BIG EAST team athletics accomplishments since reconfiguration include national titles for Providence in women's cross country in 2013 and for Georgetown in men's soccer in 2019.

Conference initiatives launched under Val's leadership include the BIG EAST Digital Network, which carries more than 200 live sports contests annually; BIG EAST Serves, the conference's student-athlete development and community service platform; non-conference men's basketball scheduling challenges with the Big Ten Conference and the Big 12 Conference; an officiating alliance with the Atlantic Coast Conference and seven other Division I conferences; the annual BIG EAST Student-Athlete Well-Being Forum, which provides guidance on a wide range of student-athlete wellness matters; a conference-wide e-sports initiative; BE the Change, a diversity, equity and inclusion platform; Freshmen Fundamentals and Transition Game, league-wide programs designed to assist men's and women's basketball student-athletes, respectively, in their endeavors off the court; and BIG EAST University, a career and professional development module.

Val attended the University of Virginia as one of the school's first female student-athlete scholarship recipients. She was a four-year starter, three-time captain and two-time Academic All-American for the Cavaliers' women's basketball team and the first 1,000-point scorer in the program's history. She graduated with high distinction with a degree in political and social thought in 1981 and played one year of professional basketball in France before earning a law degree from UCLA in 1985.

Val started her legal career as a corporate and banking associate at the New York law firm of

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Simpson Thacher & Bartlett and joined the National Basketball Association as a staff attorney in 1988. She was as an executive at the NBA for eight years, serving as Special Assistant to NBA Commissioner David Stern and Director (and later) Vice President of Business Affairs before being named the WNBA's first President in 1996. She guided the league to a much-heralded launch in 1997 and headed its day-to-day operations for its first eight seasons.

In 2005, Val was elected President of USA Basketball for the 2005-08 term, leading the organization to an overall competitive record of 222-23 and gold medal performances by the U.S. men's and women's basketball teams at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. She was one of the NBA's original appointees to the USA Basketball Board of Directors in 1989 and served as an organizational liaison with USAB during the early years of NBA participation in national team competitions, including the 1992 and 1996 Olympics and 1994 World Championships. A USA Basketball Board member for 23 years, Val played a key role in the long-standing success of the U.S. women's national basketball team program, which during her term won gold medals at the 1998, 2002 and 2010 FIBA World Championships and the 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games. In 2013, Val was named the recipient of USA Basketball's Edward S. Steitz Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions in international basketball.

Val also served two terms (2006-10 and 2010-2014) as the U.S. representative for men's and women's basketball on the Central Board of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA), the sport's world governing body. She was a member of FIBA's Competition Commission and served on the Central Board of FIBA Americas, FIBA's zone authority for North, Central and South America. She also served from 2017-19 as an at-large member of the U.S. Soccer Federation Board of Directors.

Val served on the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics from 2005-2017 and the NCAA Men's Basketball Oversight Committee from 2014-2019. In 2019, she was appointed co-chair of the NCAA Federal and State Legislation Working Group, which was tasked with examining the NCAA's rules relating to student athlete name, image and likeness. The Working Group's efforts led to a report in 2020 recommending ground-breaking new NIL opportunities; the changes are expected to take effect in 2021.

Val is currently on the Board of Directors of Women Leaders in College Sports, which recognized her as Conference Administrator of the Year in 2018. She is also on the Board of Directors of the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, which inducted her as a contributor in 2011, and is a Lifetime Trustee of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, which presented her with the John Bunn Lifetime Achievement Award in 2008. She has done consulting work for the National Hockey League, which she assisted in 2011 in formulating a long-term plan to support women's ice hockey, and the NCAA, for which she prepared a comprehensive white paper in 2013 on growth strategies for women's college basketball. She also worked as a free-lance columnist for ESPNW, where she authored a series of articles on the subject of women and sports and participated as a member of the inaugural ESPNW Advisory Board.

Val's accomplishments in the sports business have earned her numerous awards, including the University of Virginia's Distinguished Alumna Award; the March of Dimes Sports Achievement Award; induction into the GTE Academic All-America Hall of Fame; the Girls Scouts of America National Women of Distinction Juliette Award; the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund Equal Opportunity Award; inclusion on the Atlantic Coast Conference's 50th Anniversary Women's Basketball team; induction into the International Scholar-Athlete Hall of Fame; the Women's Basketball Coaches Association President's Citation; the NCAA Silver Anniversary Award; the International Olympic Committee Women and Sport Achievement Diploma; the Sports Business Journal Champions in Sports Business Award; inclusion as a Women's Sports Foundation/ESPNW 40 for 40 Honoree; induction into the National Consortium for Academics and Sports Hall of Fame; the Women in Sports and Events (WISE) 20th Anniversary Women of

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Distinction Award; the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health Sports Ball Award; the Marquette School of Law Master of the Game Award; and the Emily Couric Leadership Award. In 2016, Val received the Women's Sports Foundation's Billie Jean King Contribution Award for significant contributions to the development and advancement of women's sports.

Val is married to Charlie Rappaport, a retired tax partner of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett. They have two daughters, Emily (a 2014 graduate of Yale) and Sally (a 2017 graduate of Wesleyan).