

## FAIR PLAY

Students will read about Sam Rapoport and her mission to connect women and girls to football through her work at the NFL. Then they'll participate in an activity to identify barrier-breakers in the sports industry.



## Common Core State Standards


CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.RI.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.RI.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2

## Materials

Class set of “Fair Play”; access to Kahoot! quiz, Your  Job website

## INTRODUCTION

Ask the class to name people in the world of professional sports. Explain that these can be coaches, managers, owners, or players. List these names on the board as students share them, and have them explain who the person is and what their role is. Then reflect: Are any of the names on the board women? If so, how many? Open up a discussion about gender representation in sports. Tell students they'll be reading about a woman who works for the National Football League. Test students' football knowledge with the Kahoot! quiz at [ti.me/footballKahoot](https://ti.me/footballKahoot). Who in the class was in the top three? What is the class's gender representation like in football knowledge?



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What started Sam Rapoport's interest in football?
- Why do you think Rapoport was rejected the first time she applied for an internship?
- What is Rapoport's advice for young people?
- Name a job or industry that needs greater diversity. What would you do to open it up to a more diverse mix of people?

## CLOSING

Ask students to think of other careers that are either male- or female-dominated, or ones they associate with men or with women. Create a list on the board. Why do students think certain fields have more women or more men in them? Challenge them to research someone who is breaking barriers in that area, as Sam Rapoport is doing in the NFL. Students can use the [Your 🔥 Job](#) site to conduct research. Allow them to do outside research, if time permits. Bring the class together to discuss the people students have found who are helping to make an industry more inclusive. What industries do these people work in?



# FAIR PLAY

**Sam Rapoport works to make the National Football League more equitable and inclusive.**

It has been Sam Rapoport's mission to connect women and girls to football. Rapoport is the senior director of diversity, equity, and inclusion for the National Football League (NFL). Her dedication has helped her clear her own path through a male-dominated sport. That has led to great things—not just for herself, but for others, too.

## GOAL-ORIENTED

Rapoport grew up playing flag and touch football. In the early 2000s, she was a quarterback for two Canadian women's teams.

While in college, Rapoport applied for an NFL internship. She was rejected. She tried again. This time, along with her résumé, she sent a football and a note asking, "What other quarterback could accurately deliver a ball 386 miles?" That was the distance from her school to the NFL's office. She got the job. Six years later, in 2009, she won the NFL Commissioner's Award for Innovation.

But Rapoport wanted to do something for women. In 2010, she left the NFL and created a program called Women's World Football Games. The event brought together women from 21 countries to play football for a week. "The result is that now we are connected and working together to grow the sport," she says.

But Rapoport also recognized a problem: Women were more than capable of coaching football, but they were not considered for

coaching positions at the collegiate or professional levels of the sport.

In 2016, Rapoport rejoined the NFL and helped create the NFL Women's Forum. It's designed to put women into the running for coaching, scouting, and operations jobs. "This past summer," she says, "we had more women coaching than in any male professional sport in the world—15, total."

## GAME ON!

Now that women are more visible in football, Rapoport says that girls—and anyone else who feels under-represented in male-dominated sports—can draw inspiration and

confidence from that success.

She has some advice for young people wondering where to start: "Get as much experience as you can while in high school. Volunteer to be an assistant coach or an equipment manager. Play tackle or flag football. Study the game. Do things that demonstrate your love for the game, because that will differentiate you from other people."

—By Rachel MacPherson

### Power Word

**operations** adjective: having to do with making sure an organization runs smoothly

your<sup>🔥</sup>job  
— FIND YOUR FUTURE —

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SPORTS AGENT



**CAREER-FOCUSED** Sam Rapoport, seen here at NFL headquarters, in New York City, is the league's senior director of diversity, equity, and inclusion.



**FORWARD THINKING** In 2020, Rapoport speaks at the NFL Women's Forum, in Indianapolis, Indiana.



**PLAY TO WIN** Rapoport (back row, in a black sweatshirt) appears at the Women's World Football Games in Tampa, Florida, in 2014.