



Mia Hamm

Soccer Hall of Fame Induction Address



Delivered 27 August 2007, Oneonta, New York

AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio

Oh, my. Julie¹, this is a lot like a wedding.

Anson, thank you so much for that [introduction]. A lot of people might not know but I...still haven't figured out if it was a good thing or a bad thing, but Anson² and his wife, M'Liss, had power of attorney over me, after my parents. I was 17 years old when I went to college, and my parents went to live over in Italy, and so all major decisions -- I had to pass through him. But I am completely honored and blessed that you were the one that stood up here today.

Whenever I give speeches, whenever I'm asked to talk, I think about Anson and the way he -- he so eloquently expresses his thoughts and his feelings; and I truly believe that is a gift. And, you know, for me -- Julie and I did talk about what we were going to say today. And -- And first I just want to start off by saying thank you, because there are so many thank yous to be said. First of all, to the Century Council, and the Hall of Fame and all its members and staff -- you guys are here -- for all you've done for me and my family in making this event absolutely wonderful, and memorable. So thank you so much.

I want to extend my congratulations and gratitude to fellow inductees, Alan Rothenberg -- any time you want to buy me a bottle of wine, Alan, just call me up. And Smitty³ -- I feel I can call you "Smitty" -- I've met your entire family, and your friends. I have to say, there [are] a couple I'm afraid of. But you can see the love and the passion that you have for them, so thank you for sharing them with us and it was wonderful to meet you guys -- especially you, Gabby⁴.



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I also want to say congratulations to the '86 team. You guys, you basically established the standards that all of us had to live up to. I also wanted to send out my best to the current National Women's team. As Kristine⁵ said, they played last night; they defeated Finland 4-0; and they leave tomorrow – (Yeah!) [audience applause] -- and they leave tomorrow for China, and I know that they will continue to make us proud.

And Jules¹: Man, I always have to follow Jules. You know, this event is so great and so wonderful, but it's even more so to the fact that I not only get to enter the Hall of Fame with one of my teammates, but one of my closest friends. And I think it's only fitting that she be inducted in the first ever female class. You have been such an ambassador, an advocate for young girls and women all over this country who are searching for a voice, and opportunities and ways to make a difference. I truly believe that your greatest hour is yet to come, and that we have only witnessed a small glimpse into what your impact and legacy will be.

You know, my life and career have been a collaborative effort, and there are so many people that are here today that have helped me arrive at this moment. And I want to say thank you. First of all to the fans -- you guys are the best. To pull into a stadium and see your face painted, and there is, I will tell you, not a more humbling experience to walk into a stadium and see so many girls wearing your jersey. And I am so proud of that; and I hope you can see that every time I took the field, that I was playing for you guys. So thank you so much.

To the media, who came out and on so many occasions when they probably thought they got the short end of the stick -- but came out and helped us create this wonderful, amazing revolution that you see out here today; that you will see in two weeks time at the Women's World Cup, and so I want to say thank you to them. U.S. Soccer and all the Women['s] National Team staff members, thank you for supporting this team, and as Julie said, "setting the standard for all other national teams to follow."

To the W[U]SA, staff and investors, for believing in our dream and the dreams of so many young girls; and I promise you we will be back.

My sponsors, some who are here today -- Nike and Gatorade -- they supported me from the beginning, and they helped me realize not only the dream of being a professional, but of helping our sport grow to incredible heights that we never thought possible.

To Johnny Langel and his wife Jackie and their family, I can't even begin to think where we would be without you. Your wisdom and support has given us courage; and you always, always believed in us. (Yeah!)

My agents, Dave, Dan⁶ -- as my husband told me, they started off as a business relationship, but they've become part of our family. And thank you for helping me learn and grow and get a greater sense of responsibility. And thank you for bringing in Michelle⁷ -- for helping us to continue the Mia Hamm Foundation, to make a positive impact in so many people's lives.



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To my coaches -- and so many of them are here today -- Anson, Tony, Lauren, and Jim -- for realizing my potential and creating an environment that pushed me when I needed to be pushed, challenged me every single day to constantly improve, nurtured me when they saw that I needed it, and molding me not only into the player but to the person that I am today.

And thank you to all my teammates, from youth soccer, club, University of North Carolina, the Washington Freedom, and of course the Women's National Team. Anson would always say in one of his pre-games: You know why I love playing a team sport? Because there are going to be times out there when you're playing, when you're not at your best; and there are going to be times out there when you're playing and you are at your best, and you will carry this team; but when you're not at your best, they will carry you. And let me tell you, I have been carried much more than I have ever carried. So, thank you.

To my family -- so many are here today. I know there are some that can't be, and my thoughts and prayers are out there with them. You guys have been my rock, my biggest fans. And all that memories that I have: '96 Olympics; tie-dye shirts; walking into the first-ever Olympic stadium and seeing -- I can see my sister Lovdy now, wiping tears away, and we walked in; getting hugs from your nieces and nephews when you came off the field; all the trash talking that was done to the referees. This experience is nothing -- and I mean nothing -- without you. I love you, and thank you so much.

And to my husband, Nomar, you are beautiful in so many ways. And thank you so much for being here. I know it wasn't easy -- and I owe Grady a bottle of Champaign -- but I'm so grateful that you are here to share this moment with us as a family. And thank you for giving me the greatest moment in my life -- and that is seeing you with our girls for the very first time.

You know, I've thought a lot about what I wanted to say, and especially what I wanted to share to my girls, Ava and Grace, about my career, since they will never see me play. A friend once said to me, "Two of the greatest gifts you can give your children are values and memories." So when I look back on my life at the values and memories that I have, so many of these lessons I learned are from this game, and through the relationships I have gained through it. And I'm not just talking about the victories and the occasional defeats. What I'm talking about are values and memories that are encompassed in words like "friendship," "hard work," "sacrifice," "compassion," "dignity," "love," "respect," and "perseverance."

Things that I have learned through this game that I would share with you: that girls should have every to compete and develop as boys; that there is no substitute for hard work; that the words "you will pass out before you die," as we ran fitness still haunt me to this day; watching Kristine Lilly get her 100th cap, and then her 200th, and then her 300th; being able to watch the best player ever in Michelle Akers; that you have the power to define your own legacy; to always respect the game, as well as your opponents; that dancing before a game and celebrating after you score a goal are a must; that referees and I "always saw eye-to-eye"; that second place is only second best if you allow it to be.



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I learned about the joys of motherhood through Karla and Joy who so graciously shared their children with us. I learned that wanting to be the best, as well as being a team player, are not mutually exclusive; that a 0-0 game in 100 degree heat in the Rose Bowl can be one of the most exciting and life-changing sporting events in history; to always maintain humility in victory and defeat; and that there will be times when you're friends really are laughing at you and not with you; and more importantly, that believing that we all can make a difference, that having a voice is one thing and using it is another.

And lastly, Grace and Ava, I hope and pray that you are as lucky as I was to be able to love what you do; and that your father and I have helped you find the strength and confidence to do it in your own way. And through the values that we share, and the memories that I share with you, that you will be able to create and experience your own. I love you, my sweet and beautiful girls.

Thank you, again, for this wonderful honor.



¹ Julie Foudy

² Anson Dorrance

³ Bobby Smith

⁴ Daughter of Bobby Smith

⁵ Kristine Lilly

⁶ David Bober and Dan Levy

⁷ Michelle Akers

⁸ Grady Little

⁹ Carla Overbeck and Joy Fawcett