

WOW
Women of Ohio Wesleyan
S P E A K E R S E R I E S



MARILU FORTSON



A.J. JOHNSON '25



**PAMELA BLEDSOE
MALONE '82**



ROBYN MORGAN '73



**LEIGH A. SEARS
'91**



**MODERATED BY
CATIE BUTT '91**

Marilu Fortson:

Born and raised in Mexico City, Marilu Fortson is a Head Squash Professional, player, coach, and teacher with decades of experience. She has been the Squash Head Professional at Portland Community Squash for the past eight years, where she works closely with youth athletes from a variety of backgrounds underrepresented in sports. Her coaching philosophy draws from her experience as a woman athlete: focusing on and identifying each player's strengths; supporting and guiding players; and when coaching female players, helping them to awaken their inner confidence.

Marilu competed in the 1995 Pan American Squash Games as part of the Mexican National Squash Team, after becoming the Mexican National Champion in 1993. She went on to work as the assistant coach for the women's team at Tufts University in Boston. Around the same time, she was involved in the beginnings of the pilot program that would later become SquashBusters.

Marilu later moved to Maine with her family, where she worked alongside her husband as a volunteer assistant squash coach at Bowdoin College for almost twenty years. She founded the Brunswick Squash Clinics for kids, which she ran for seven years, and co-directed the Fortson Summer Squash Camps at Bowdoin College, an innovative overnight summer program, which hosted hundreds of junior squash players from across the country. Both in Boston and Maine, Marilu played and won various tournaments in both the men's (mixed) and women's draws. She has won the Maine State Open multiple times. In the past ten years, Marilu has played two national tournaments as well, in which she placed within the top three of her age group.

Marilu also taught preschool for seventeen years. Although her focus is now on squash, she remains a lifelong teacher, mentor, and student.

A.J. Johnson '25

A.J. is a junior, Politics & Government major from Roanoke, VA and is a member of the swimming and diving team at Ohio Wesleyan.

<https://www.owu.edu/news-media/details/southern-africa-studies/>

More about A.J.:

Why did you choose Ohio Wesleyan?

- I chose Ohio Wesleyan because my grandmother is an alumna and because I wanted to utilize OWU's excellent study abroad program.

Why did you choose your major?

- I chose my major because I originally wanted to be a politician, but I realized very quickly that I didn't. However, I wanted to stick with the PG major because there is a huge variety of jobs that I am interested in that fall under the PG avenue.

Why did you choose to compete in sports at Ohio Wesleyan?

- I chose to compete in sports at Ohio Wesleyan because I had 12 years of competitive gymnastics under my belt and I wanted to remain active throughout my time in college. Coach (Richard) Hawes also played a huge role in my decision and he thought that I would catch on quickly.

Why do you like your event?

- I like diving because it is so similar to gymnastics and it has taught me how to remain poised under pressure and to be persistent. The best feeling in the world is to overcome a mental block and to learn new dives.

Pamela Bledsoe Malone '82

For the past 35 years, Pamela Bledsoe Malone has taught health, physical education, and sport managements at Chagrin Falls (Ohio) High School. She is the winningest female soccer coach in the state of Ohio with 398 victories, as well as the first female coach in the state to reach that milestone.

Her soccer career also includes two state championships (1996 & 202) and a state runner-up finish (2019). She has been selected as All-Ohio Coach of the Year 4 times, as well as the State of Ohio recipient of the Sportsmanship, Ethics and Integrity Award twice. She also was a regional coach of the year for the National Soccer Coaches Association of America in 1996 and 2021 and most recently was named United Soccer Coaches National Coaches of the Year in 2021.

She retired from coaching after the fall 2021 season. She also has coached field hockey, lacrosse, cheerleading, and softball. She has been a national speaker for the organization The Positive Coaching Alliance since 2016.

Robyn Morgan '73

Robyn Morgan graduated from OWU in 1973 with a B.A. in Physical Education and Religion where she was later inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame for field hockey, basketball, and lacrosse.

After graduation, she taught physical education and coached on the Navajo Reservation and later in the Denver metro area for several years before finishing a M.S. and a Ph.D. at the University of Colorado. As a licensed School Counselor and Administrator, Robyn spent the majority of her career working with students, parents, and staff members in those roles and was once named Colorado Counselor of the Year.

Currently, Robyn teaches suicide prevention workshops and volunteers on The Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Team. She remains active in many sports and attributes her professional and personal success to having had Dr. Harriet Stewart as a professor and mentor.

Leigh Sears '91, Head Women's Soccer Coach, Associate Professor of Kinesiology at Hope College

Over 22 seasons, Dr. Leigh Sears has become Hope's most successful women's soccer coach with a 260-128-37 overall record through the 2022 season.

Sears has guided the Flying Dutch to six Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association championships and seven appearances in the NCAA Division III Tournament.

In April 2022, Sears was named recipient of the college's Karen Page Courage Award for her brave fight and recovery from breast cancer during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a collegian, Sears was a three-sport standout at Ohio Wesleyan University. She was an all-conference player in the North Coast Athletic Conference in three sports — soccer, basketball, and track. In her senior year in soccer, she was voted the Ohio and conference player of the year and achieved All-America recognition as a midfielder. In 1998, she was inducted into the Ohio Wesleyan University Athletic Hall of Fame.

Sears earned her bachelor of arts degree in physical and health education from Ohio Wesleyan in 1991. She then went onto receive a masters of science degree in exercise science from Ithaca College (N.Y.) in 1994 and in 2007, she was awarded a Ph.D. degree in exercise science from The Ohio State University.

Prior to coming to Hope, Sears was the women's soccer coach at Marietta College, Ohio (1994-99). In addition to her teaching and coaching responsibilities at Marietta, she was faculty advisor to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

Sears has served as a chief clinician for women at the Ohio High School Soccer Coaches Association and has been a member of the NCAA Division III Great Lakes region women's soccer advisory committee.

Sears has been a director and clinician at numerous soccer and basketball camps.

Moderator: Catie Butt '91, Executive Director, A&O Consulting

Prior to joining magic circle firm Allen & Overy's consulting group A&O Consulting, Catie was a senior in-house lawyer and business executive for various technology, telecom and IT outsourcing companies including BBN Corporation, GTE Internetworking, Genuity, Level 3 Communications and Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC). She was a Deputy General Counsel at CSC for 14 years, leading the global

transactions, contracts & commercial management and legal operations functions, when it merged with Hewlett Packard's Enterprise Services division to form DXC Technology in 2017, where she was then at the center of DXC's legal department transformation. Catie then joined UnitedLex for a couple of years to serve as SVP, Enterprise Legal Services and Global Operations Executive for the DXC project.

Catie is now an Executive Director with A&O Consulting focused on providing business transformation services for corporate, legal & compliance functions. Given her extensive in-house and legal service provider experience, she delivers scalable business solutions comprising technology, data, process innovation and right resources for right tasks.

At Ohio Wesleyan, Catie won 4 letters in swimming and helped the 400 freestyle relay team tie for sixth at the 1991 NCAA Division III championship meet, the best finish ever by an Ohio Wesleyan women's relay team. She won 3 All-America citations during her Battling Bishop career. Catie has continued her support of Bishop swimming and Ohio Wesleyan athletics through service on the Ohio Wesleyan Board of Trustees, as a women's swimming representative of the "W" Association, and through swimming alumni reunions. She was inducted into the Ohio Wesleyan Athletics Hall of Fame in 2002 and was the first woman to receive the George Gauthier Award in 2021 which recognizes graduates of Ohio Wesleyan for exemplary "service above self" and sustained contributions to the Ohio Wesleyan athletics department as both an undergraduate and alumnus.