

THE ORIGINAL NINE: CREATING A NEW FRONTIER FOR
WOMEN PROFESSIONAL TENNIS PLAYERS AND WOMEN
IN SOCIETY

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Senior Individual Website

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Process Paper

As a girl who has been playing competitive tennis since I was eight years old, I definitely knew who Billie Jean King was, a famous top women tennis player. In fact, I met her when I was young tennis player at a nonprofit tennis center in the Bronx. But recently, I started reading articles on various websites about how Billie Jean King and eight other women professional tennis players were courageous and created their own professional circuit because the tennis establishment in 1970s was not paying women the same amount of money as men. I realized that the fact that Billie Jean King and others stood up for themselves helped allow me not only to play competitive tennis just like boys, but to also pursue being a STEM student, just like boys. I realized I wanted to know more about that historic movement and I also knew that would be a good project this year for the National History Day competition. Billie Jean King and the other eight women professional were pursuing a new frontier, not just for professional tennis but for American society. The more research I did on the Original Nine, plus other people who helped them, such as Gladys Heldman, the mother of one of the Original Nine, the more I realized what amazing heroes they are for all women. What really helped me with my research was obtaining an old book that Billie Jean King published in 1988 that is out of print: *We Have Come A Long Way, the Story of Women's Tennis*. Reading her book, which not only discusses the Virginia Slims Circuit, but also all the amazing women who were top tennis players going back to the 1880s, made me realize I wanted to go deep into the history of women's tennis. These women were amazing pioneers in society for playing top tennis competitions and changing societies' views of women.

I conducted research by: 1) reading the 1988 book that Billie Jean King wrote about women's tennis; 2) reading Billie Jean's autobiography that came out on 2021; 3) reading Julie Heldman's book about her tennis and her mom, Gladys Heldman, who helped create the Virginia Slims Circuit; 4) reading various interviews of the Original Nine members; and 5) watching various documentaries and videos of the Original Nine and the creation of the Virginia Slims Circuit.

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I chose to make individual website about this part of history because this part of history is complex and by building different webpages that are connected I could tell this complex story about the history of women's tennis and the incredible fight that the Original Nine made in the early 1970s for women professional tennis players to have equal rights with men. Also, I could tell how these heroic women fought for their equal rights in professional tennis and society. I have some computer experience so this helped me make this history website.