

Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes Ignites New Era for Women in Sports with the Launch of 'Her Game, Her Future Fest' in New Orleans

First-of-its-kind, hands-on career experience creates a direct pipeline for high school and college women to enter the sports industry

NEW ORLEANS, LA, UNITED STATES, May 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes](#), Commissioner of the HBCU Athletic Conference and founder of [SYWACIA™](#), announced the launch of [Her Game, Her Future Fest](#) yesterday as she was honored by New Orleans Magazine as a 2026 “Top Female Achiever”. A one-day, high-impact career exploration festival designed to introduce high school and college women to real opportunities across the sports industry.

On Thursday, July 2, 2026, at the newly named LSU New Orleans, students will engage directly with women working in sports through hands-on activations across media, business, science, and innovation.

“This Fest is about creating real access, not just awareness. We are building a direct pipeline for young women to see themselves in this industry, connect with leaders who are doing the work, and walk away with the confidence and tools to claim their place in sports. When you open doors intentionally, you don’t just change individual paths, you shift the future of the industry,” said Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes.

Her Game, Her Future Fest introduces participants to the full scope of careers in sports through four core experience zones: The Spotlight, The Front Office, The Lab, and The Next Play. Each session is led by industry professionals and designed to help students build, create, analyze, and



Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes, honored by New Orleans Magazine as a 2026 Top Female Achiever, with her husband, Dr. Marc Barnes, Senior Vice President, Principal Gifts and Strategic Impact Investment Fund at UNCF [photo credit: SPINXX/VerbalSlick]

present in real time. The day includes a powerful opening keynote, rotating career activations, a high-impact Mentor Match-Up connecting students directly with sport/industry professionals, and a closing experience featuring an amazing Styled for the Game fashion showcase.

Confirmed sponsors and partners include Ochsner Sports Medicine, Girl Scouts Louisiana East, Lakeside Shopping Center, Faces of Virtue, and Tracee Dundas, Executive Producer of New Orleans Fashion Week, who will produce the Styled for the Game fashion experience. Their collective support helps expand access, confidence-building, mentorship, style, wellness, and real-world career exposure for participating students.

Visionary supporter, Hahn Enterprises, reinforces the long-term economic and community value of investing in emerging leaders. “The leaders of tomorrow are shaped by the opportunities we create today. Investing in their development drives innovation, economic progress, and lasting community impact,” said Tania Hahn, President of Hahn Enterprises.

As host, LSU New Orleans anchors the on-campus experience, positioning the Fest as both a community and cultural event. “LSU New Orleans is thrilled to host this festival, which aligns closely with our mission to engage with our community and promote student development. We are especially proud that one of our alumnae, Dr. Baker Barnes, is leading this effort to open doors to careers in the sports industry for so many young women. She is a remarkable force for good, and an ongoing source of inspiration,” said Dr. Kathy Johnson, President of LSU New Orleans.

Her Game, Her Future Fest is continuing to seek additional sponsors to help ensure every young woman who wants to attend has access to this opportunity. Sponsor support directly fuels student participation, access to mentorship, and hands-on career experiences that create a lasting pipeline into the sports industry.

During the July 4th holiday week, Her Game, Her Future Fest reframes independence as access, opportunity, and the freedom to define one’s future. Early registration is now open with scholarship opportunities available. A \$125 sponsorship secures a spot in the room, connecting her to mentorship, career pathways, and industry access. To register a student and for additional details, visit: <https://go.sywacia.com/her-game-her-future-fest>.



Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes with students from her non-profit organization, So You Want A Career in Athletics? [photo credit: SPINXX/VerbalSlick]

ABOUT DR. KIKI BAKER BARNES:

Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes is the Commissioner of the HBCU Athletic Conference (HBCUAC), overseeing 16 member institutions and leading one of the nation's most prominent HBCU conferences. A nationally recognized sports executive, educator, and former Division I athletics leader, she has been honored for her impact in advancing equity, leadership, and access in sports. Known for building pipelines and opening doors at scale, Dr. Barnes continues to shape the future of the industry through transformative programming and executive leadership.

ABOUT SO YOU WANT A CAREER IN ATHLETICS (SYWACIA):

So You Want a Career in Athletics (SYWACIA™) is a national career development platform founded by Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes to connect high school and college students to real opportunities across the sports industry. Through direct access to industry leaders, hands-on experiences, and scalable programming, SYWACIA is redefining how young people enter sports careers and building a pipeline that turns exposure into execution.

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