

Glendale Raptors Women Honored As Team Of The Year By Sportswomen Of Colorado

by John Arthur

Writer for and on behalf of the City of Glendale

In January of this year, just weeks after closing out a second consecutive season as National Champions, the *Glendale Raptors Women* were named recipients of the prestigious *Team of the Year* award by the *Sportswomen of Colorado*. The Raptors Women were honored at the organization's 42nd Annual Awards Celebration on Sunday, March 13, 2016, alongside other top female athletes from the state.

Founded in 1974 by the *YMCA of Metropolitan Denver* and in cooperation with *Gart Brothers Sporting Goods Company*, *Sportswomen of Colorado* is recognized as the first community-based organization in the nation to solely honor female athletes. The organization's mission statement is "to promote, honor, and empower Colorado girls and women in sport." The *Glendale Raptors Women* are being recognized for their outstanding achievements in 2015.

Sportswomen of Colorado Executive Director Hannah Krieger said the organization was thrilled to honor the Raptors, saying, "We couldn't be prouder that they represent Colorado and to name them our *Team of the Year*."

When asked about the award, Mark Bullock, Director of Rugby for the *Glendale Raptors* at *Infinity Park*, was quick to point out the team's considerable on-field achieve-

ments in 2015. "This award is a huge compliment to the women's team and the hard work that they've done over the past 12 months," he said. The Raptors Women lost only one game in 2015, securing a second consecutive National Championship in convincing fashion, a fact the rugby director attributes to the team's openness to change and growth.

Raptors flanker Laura Miller was gracious and confident when asked for a comment on receiving the prestigious award: "I think our selection for the award speaks to the important role that rugby plays in the state of Colorado. We are thrilled to have been recognized by the greater sporting community as well as by an organization that values the role of women in sports." Miller attributes the positive team culture as the Raptors' greatest achievement, a culture of "grit and growth" that she believes led to the 2015 championship victory. The success the Raptors Women enjoyed in 2015 as a result of the mentorship of experienced players like Miller will no doubt continue in future seasons under new head coach Kitt Wagner Ruiz.

Team President and center Jeanna Beard also expressed gratitude at receiving the *Team of the Year* award. "It is a huge honor to have received this distinction from this organization," she said. "It's incredibly satisfying to see the teamwork between my friends, coaches, and staff pay off." Beard was particularly impressed with receiving

the award given the field of nominees, a group with truly inspirational stories. Asked about the success of the Raptors Women, Beard said it all comes down to one thing — camaraderie. "We push each other and ourselves to be the best version of us that we can be," she said. The team's success on the pitch is clearly a reflection of that push.

In addition to the team's on-field success in 2015, rugby director Mark Bullock stressed the importance of their work in the community as a defining characteristic for the team, and as an important aspect of the recognition they have received from the *Sportswomen of Colorado*. "It's not just about competition on the field," he said of the award. "It recognizes the community service work the team does for local non-profits like *Children's Hospital*, the *Special Olympics*, *Big Brothers/Big Sisters*, *March of Dimes*, and the *VA*." The investment the Raptors Women have made in their Colorado community is an indication of their openness to change and their desire to grow together and as individuals. Bullock concluded, "Growth on the field is reflected in the team's off-field activities. I think this award is a reflection of that growth."

The *Sportswomen of Colorado* *Team of the Year* award is a well-deserved recognition of the success of the Raptors Women, both on the rugby pitch and as leaders in their community.



The National Champion Glendale Raptors Women were honored as Team of the Year by the Sportswomen of Colorado. Photo by Kirsten Kreiling



The Glendale Raptors Women celebrate their back-to-back national championship victory in the Women's Premier League in rugby. Photo by Seth McConnell



Glendale Raptors Jeanna Beard and Taryn Brennan accepted the Glendale Raptors Team of the Year award from the Sportswomen of Colorado. Photo by Kirsten Kreiling

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