

Billie Jean King

Name

Institution

### **Billie Jean King**

As the battle for gender equality thundered on from decade to decade, one woman took it upon herself to prove to the world that, indeed, men and women are equals. She was neither a superwoman nor a gladiatrix; but she possessed a will of steel. Billie Jean King, as the world watched in shock and a tinge of admiration, went ahead to dismantle Bobby Riggs in a “Battle of the Sexes” tennis match in 1973. At the age of 55, Riggs had been vocal about the superiority of men over women; challenging and beating various top, female tennis players to hammer home his point. He; however, hit an iceberg in the mold of King, and his chauvinism sank to obscurity. Ruffle (2014) opines that by beating Riggs, King sent out a clear statement that women are no lesser beings. I would like to pick King’s brain on confidence, overcoming the odds, and standing up for oneself.

The very essence of Billie Jean King was woven in confidence. Riggs had defeated Margaret Court- the most successful female tennis player to date- before challenging King. The fact that she accepted to step onto the court with him; with the world watching and the reputation of women at stake, was a major show of confidence. I am more interested in how she built up such a high level of confidence. Notably, life often serves up challenges that demand optimal confidence levels to overcome. Unfortunately, such levels prove elusive in the face of adversity. By talking to her, I would get insight into her recipe for confidently approaching monstrous challenges.

Perhaps a standout factor in King’s famous victory is her ability to stand up for herself and womenfolk. Riggs’ chauvinistic antics were a direct exemplification of a bully picking on a supposedly “defenseless” gender. Her decision to stand up and fight was, in every way, inspirational. According to Naify (2013), King was an entertainer-activist, who championed the

rights of women through a breathtaking match. She believed that if she did not win the match, it would set womenfolk back 50 years (Ruffle, 2014). That she fought and won against all odds was special. Talking to her about her preparation for the match would be more special. In any case, mental preparation is the most important aspect of preparation in battle.

Finally, I would love to speak to her about her experiences after winning the match. Did she get calls from scores of women, who had been inspired by her exploits on the court? Did Riggs apologize for looking down on women? And how was the atmosphere in the days following her victory? How did she feel, personally? These are some of the questions I would like to ask her. Beating a known chauvinist had, definitely, endeared her to a large population across the world. I would be interested in knowing how she copped with juggling between being an activist and a professional athlete. Overall, I would like to speak to Billie Jean King because I am a staunch admirer of her role in silencing male chauvinist voices.

In conclusion, King played a momentous role in defining society's perception of women. Her ability to defeat a celebrated, male, former tennis pro was a milestone achievement. It was proof that women could be as good as men in whatever field. For those who believed it in their bones that men were superior beings, a touch of reality was served by King. In addition to fighting discrimination, King showcased her talent; a feat that was crucial in inspiring modern-day female tennis pros. In a nutshell, King was magical in fighting for equality and inspiring the girl child; and I would love talk to her.

**References**

Naify, M. (2013). Billy Jean King. (cover story). *Lesbian News*, 39(2), 22-25.

Ruffle, K. (2014). Billie Jean King. *Library Journal*, 139(13), 53.