



Museum of the History of Football of Puerto Rico Makes History of Its Own with Glass Ceiling-Shattering Honors for Women

Museum inducts two women into its Gallery of the Immortals (Hall of Fame) and honors the 1998 PRWNT with its highest honor, The Century Medal

AthensWFS announces the launch of an exciting series of webinars entitled Pa'lante: Puerto Rican Women in Football

While we are seeing major advancements in women's football within the big leagues of Europe and the United States, the island of Puerto Rico reminded us that respect for the women's game is growing across the globe, even in countries that are better-known for other sports, like – in the case of this U.S. territory – baseball. In March 2021, the Museum of the History of Football of Puerto Rico for the first time in its history inducted two women into the Hall of Fame of the Gallery of the Immortals of Puerto Rican Football, and awarded the first Puerto Rico Women's National Team (PRWNT) the institution's highest honor: The Century Medal.





Marilyn Acosta and Anita Rabell were members of the first PRWNT, which in 1998 became the first of any Puerto Rican side to break into the CONCACAF Championship / FIFA World Cup Qualifiers, playing three matches at that year's qualifying tournament in Etobecoke, Canada. While that event was a groundbreaking moment for women's football on the island, it was Acosta as a coach and Rabell as an administrator who seized the moment to pull the Puerto Rico Football Federation's women's program in the right direction, by developing talent identification programs, setting up training for coaches and goalkeepers, formalizing the scattered leagues under the auspices of the Federación Puertorriqueña de Fútbol (FPF), and establishing national

teams from U15 to senior level.

Thanks to the unflinching dedication of Acosta and Rabell, the women's game in Puerto Rico expanded from a ragtag collection of independent teams trying to find each other into a movement of explosive growth. Today, women and girls play the game in leagues with categories from U5 to the First Division, and student athletes play in Puerto Rico's scholastic programs league. The senior national team went from unranked in 1998 to 98th currently. Puerto Rican women are getting scholarships to play on the U.S. mainland, and two are now playing professionally in Europe.

"This is so long overdue, it is embarrassing," said Rafael Ayala, the



Medalla del Centenario a la Primera Selección Nacional Femenina en un Campeonato Clasificatorio para el Mundial Femenino 1998

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1) Ana Rabell Fuentes | Faltan en la fotografía: |
| 2) Kristen Rivera Patnode | 16) Noemí Hernández |
| 3) Marita del Toro | 17) Michelle Carrasquillo |
| 4) Marily Acosta Santiago | 18) Katherine Wohlauer |
| 5) Natalia de Cuba | |
| 6) Pilar Marichal | *Miguel Hurtado (izq.)
(Entrenador de porteras) |
| 7) Sylvette Reynoso | *José Luis López (der.)
(Entrenador) |
| 8) Alyssa Johnson | |
| 9) Kendra Loomis (QEPD) | |
| 10) Tere Durán | |
| 11) Molly Smith Rodríguez | Faltan en la fotografía: |
| 12) Julianne Baraldi Pérez | * Albert Farmer |
| 13) Nancy Williams Couden | (Entrenador asistente) |
| 14) Maria Rivera | *Dr. Collazo |

Executive Secretary of the Museum of the History of Football of Puerto Rico, in a remarkably candid and moving speech at the awards ceremony earlier this month. “They should have been honored a long time ago. But we are proud to say that today we correct this situation.”

This is the sixth induction of Immortals, and the first to include women, but the Museum has been evolving to include more women in recent years. In 2018, the Museum opened its first gallery honoring the women’s game on the island. On that occasion, the 1998 PRWNT inaugurated the gallery as part of the 20th anniversary celebrations of the first ever Puerto Rico Women's National Team.

For their part, Acosta and Rabell and

their 1998 teammates are delighted with the recognition.

“I want to thank the Gallery of Immortals for this initiative. I am humbled by such an honor. To be recognized in this manner feels incredible. I hope the legacy of this is that it breaks the glass ceiling and opens the door for other women,” Rabell tells AthensWFS.

This award sends several important messages as the world celebrates women’s history: Puerto Rico and the rest of the Caribbean and Central America are regions to watch for women’s football; male dominated organizations are beginning to recognize both the merit and the potential of the women’s game even in unexpected places; and it is never



ATHENSWFS PRESENTS:
**PA'LANTE: PUERTO RICAN
WOMEN IN WORLD FOOTBALL**
A WEBINAR SERIES



**Hosted by
Natalia de Cuba Romero**
Captain of the first Puerto
Rico Women's National Team



too late to say thank you for a job well done.

Pa'lante: Puerto Rican Women in Football – An AthensWFS Webinar Series

The Athens Women's Football Summit (AthensWFS) is the year-round global home of the girls' and women's Beautiful Game at all levels. On the occasion of this exciting celebration of the Puerto Rico Women's National Team (PRWNT) and its intrepid heroines – and in support of our efforts to empower girls and women and grow women's football in Latin America and in Latino populations globally – AthensWFS is excited to announce the launch of a series of webinars entitled **Pa'lante: Puerto Rican**

Women in Football. This series will recognize pioneering Puerto Rican women and their male allies, and discuss the exciting development of girls' and women's futbol in Puerto Rico and in Puerto Rican communities around the world.

Please be sure to join us monthly as acclaimed writer, educator and public speaker Natalia de Cuba Romero – the Captain of the first Puerto Rico Women's National Team – hosts powerful conversations about the personalities, business, sporting excellence, and culture of Puerto Rican women's football and inspiring stories of perseverance, innovation and triumph.

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By the AthensWFS Staff



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2021
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Moreover, please feel free to visit our [YouTube](#) page where many interviews and panel discussions can be found.

Join us at the Athens Women's Football Summit (AthensWFS)

Are you, your club or your corporation interested in genuinely committing to the healthy, long-term growth and prosperity of women's football? Then please reach out to us directly at info@athenswfs.com,

our website www.athenswfs.com, or via our Co-Founders [Agisilaos Toumazatos](#) or [Marios Christos Sfantos, Esq.](#)

Further, we invite you to join us at the **Third International Conference of the Athens Women's Football Summit**, our annual international gathering of top stakeholders from the sporting, business, investment, governmental, NGO, academic, and supporter communities of the game! Virtually on October 4-5, and in person in Athens on October 6-8, 2021.

Thank you for your support of girls' and women's football, their unique values and culture, and the fight for gender equality, inclusion, diversity and positive social change which all are central to AthensWFS's mission!