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FOR

LOVE OF THE GAME

THESE LOCAL SPORTS STARS GIVE BACK IN THE
BEST WAY THEY KNOW HOW: ON THE FIELD.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIK KELLER



DORIS COLGATE: *The Women's Sailing Pioneer*

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Over 150,000 students have passed by Fort Myers-based Offshore Sailing School since it opened in 1964 and like Doris Colgate—the school's president and CEO—most had never stepped foot on a sailboat before enrolling in the course.

"I did not know what I was doing," Colgate recalls about her first sailing lesson, which happened when she was working as an ad rep for Yachting Magazine in the '60s. "It gave me a huge sense of self esteem that I could make the boat do something. I was in control."

The pioneering female mariner who literally wrote the book on the subject, "Sailing: A Woman's Guide," wanted other gals

to feel the same sense of empowerment she feels at the helm.

When Colgate first started working at the sailing school, which she now owns with her husband, it was mostly men who called in. "When I spoke to a man who wanted his wife or girlfriend to learn how to sail, she was afraid to try because she thought the sport was too masculine," she says.

In 1990, she founded the National Women's Sailing Association, part of the charitable Women's Sailing Foundation, to draw women into the sport. Discouraged by the idea that there were girls in marginalized areas of her community who never got out into the ocean, she founded the Women's

Sailing Foundation to expose girls ages 9 to 14 to sailing. Through NWSA and other initiatives like AdventureSail, a mentorship program for at-risk youth, she inspires the young women to dream big. "When a girl learns how to make a sailboat go where she wants it to go by using wind alone, she knows she is in command," she says.

Her philanthropic efforts haven't gone unnoticed. In 2015, the Edison Sailing Center named a female sailing event after the role model, the Doris Colgate Clinic & Cup, which took place in Lee County, And, this year, Pace Center for Girls named the 76-year-old one of its 2019 Grande Dames for her work.