

Many of world's best women basketball players to meet when Team Americas takes on Team World in Aurora Games

Former U.S. collegiate and WNBA stars Lindsay Whalen and Barbara Turner will lead Team Americas, while European standout Laia Palau is among the international players set for inaugural six-sport, all-women's competition in Albany, NY this summer

ALBANY, N.Y.; July 8, 2019 – Many of the world's best women basketball players will take the court at the Times Union Center in Albany, NY, when Team Americas plays Team World in the Aurora Games, the inaugural all-women's sports and entertainment festival to be held August 20-25, 2019.

Lindsay Whalen, a former University of Minnesota star who is the coach of her alma mater's women's team, will play and coach for Team Americas, whose roster also includes **Barbara Turner**, a former Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) star and two-time national champion at the University of Connecticut.

The basketball squads will play at 7 p.m. on Thursday, August 22 at Albany's downtown arena. The roster for Team World will include European stars **Laia Palau**, a longtime member of Spain's national team who helped her squad win a silver medal at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, and **Julie Vanloo** of Belgium, a member of her country's national team.

Fans will have the opportunity to get up close to the players when Team Americas and Team World practice in the Fan Zone on the second floor of the Albany Capital Center, adjacent to the Times Union Center. Team Americas will practice at noon on Tuesday, August 20, and at 2:15 p.m. on Wednesday, August 21, while Team World's practices will be held at 2:15 p.m. on August 20 and at noon on August 21. Admission to the Fan Zone is free with a ticket to the Games at the Times Union Center.

The overall winner of the six-sport Aurora Games competition will receive the **Babe Didrikson Zaharias** Trophy. Didrikson Zaharias was named the "Greatest Female Athlete of the First Half of the 20th Century" by The Associated Press for her achievements in multiple sports, including basketball, golf, baseball and track and field.

Didrikson Zaharias is considered one of the first great women's basketball players. A high-scoring forward on the girl's team at her hometown high school in Beaumont, Texas, she was recruited to play for a woman's team sponsored by a Dallas company that hired her to work as a secretary. She led the team to three straight Amateur Athletic Union national championships in 1930, '31 and '32 and was named an AAU All-American all three years.

"I'm really looking forward to playing with and for my friend Lindsay Whalen, and to joining my all-star teammates in competing against some of the best players in the world in the Aurora Games," said Barbara Turner, who lives in Houston. "I just want to

put on a good show for the fans and I hope they'll come out and support the first Aurora Games.”

“With Lindsay, Barbara, Laia and the other top-notch basketball players coming to Albany, fans will have the opportunity to see some of the best in the world go head-to-head,” said Aurora Games founder and Executive Producer Jerry Solomon. “National championship winners, Olympic medalists, international stars -- they'll all be competing on the Times Union Center's court.”

Whalen, who played 15 seasons in the WNBA, is also a two-time Olympic gold medalist, four-time WNBA champion and five-time WNBA All-Star.

During her four years at UConn, Turner helped the Huskies win national championships in 2003 and 2004. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Turner was the 11th pick in the 2006 WNBA draft, chosen by the Seattle Storm. She also played for the Houston Comets and the Connecticut Sun. She played professionally last season for Hatay BSB in Turkey.

The rest of Team America's basketball squad consists of former college and WNBA players **Kenisha Bell, Emma Cannon, Naomi Davenport, Megan Gustafson, Samantha Fuehring, Jamasha Gayle “Meme” Starr Jackson, Jennie Simms and Krystal Thomas. Carly Thibault-DuDonis**, an assistant coach at the University of Minnesota, will serve as Whalen's assistant coach.

Michele Timms, a member of the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, will coach Team World. A 14-year member of the Australian National Team, she was captain of the Aussie team that won the silver medal at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney. Timms went on to a five-year WNBA career with the Phoenix Mercury.

Playing for Timms on Team World is **Palau**, who has been recognized as one of Europe's best players for years. Palau's teams have won 14 national league titles in four different countries and three medals in the International Basketball Federation's World Cup competitions.

Vanloo helped lead Belgium to a bronze medal in the 2017 European Women Basketball Championship and a fourth-place finish in the 2018 International Basketball Association (FIBA) Women's World Cup.

Among the players joining Palau and Vanloo on Team World are **Joy Burke**, a former Arizona State University star, and **Szu-Chin Peng**, of Taiwan.

Burke played at Arizona State from 2009-2014. Redshirted due to an injury in her junior year, she played in 123 games while making 43 starts for the Sun Devils. Born in Taiwan, she has played professionally in Denmark and Australia, as well as for Taiwan's national team.

Peng, who has been named twice to the Women's Chinese Basketball Association (WCBA) All-Star team, is a two-time Women's Super Basketball League scoring title winner and twice made it to the WCBA's final four, with Shanghai in 2016 and Xingjian the next year.

Team World's roster also includes four players from Australia - **Rebecca Cole, Abby Bishop, Jenna O'Hea and Marianna Tolo** - as well as **Kalani Purcell** of New Zealand.

Cole, named earlier this year to Australia's national team, was runner-up in the most valuable player voting last season in Australia's Women's National Basketball League.

Bishop played for the 2010 WNBA champion Seattle Storm in her rookie season and was a member of the Australian team that won a bronze medal at the 2012 London Olympics. She won three WNBL championships with the Canberra Capitals and was named league MVP in 2015.

"Albany and the Times Union Center have a proud history of supporting women's basketball, including leading all four 2018 NCAA women's tournament regional host sites with more than 20,000 fans attending the semifinals and finals," said SMG/Times Union Center General Manager Bob Belber. "At the Aurora Games, basketball fans can root for some of the world's best players as they compete right here in downtown Albany."

Approximately 150 world-class athletes from as many as 20 countries, including Olympic medalists and world and national champions, are set to compete for Team Americas and Team World in the Aurora Games.

Three-time Olympic gold medalist **Jackie Joyner-Kersey** and five-time Olympic gold medalist **Nadia Comaneci** will serve as honorary team captains for the Aurora Games. Joyner-Kersey, an American track and field icon, will lead the athletes representing Team Americas. Comaneci, the legendary Romanian gymnast, will guide those competing for Team World.

ESPN is the exclusive broadcaster of the Aurora Games, with all six nights to air on ESPNU and ESPN3.

Individual session tickets for the Aurora Games are on-sale now at www.Ticketmaster.com. Tickets range in price from \$15 to \$129 and include access to the Aurora Games FanZone featuring music, athlete meet and greets, food and entertainment. Children may qualify for half-price tickets based on seating selection.

All-session ticket packages, which provide a seat for all six days of the multi-sport competition, are also available at www.Ticketmaster.com.

Group sales and VIP Experiences can be reserved by contacting Carrie Berger at (617) 688-6128.

For sponsorship information, contact Karen Scott Happer at karen@champagnetennis.com.

The official hotel of the Aurora Games is Hilton Albany, located approximately .2 miles from the Times Union Center at 40 Lodge Street in downtown Albany. Aurora Games guests can save on overnight stays by using code 5AGCB when securing reservations by phone at 1-866-691-1183 or online at <https://bit.ly/2U2n1mC>.

For up-to-date information about the Aurora Games, visit AuroraGamesFestival.com or follow the Games on Twitter [@AuroraGamesFest](https://twitter.com/AuroraGamesFest).