

HAIL MARY Discussion Questions
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1. Hail Mary, the title of the book, is significant, as it represents some of the prevailing themes throughout the book. What are those themes? And what specifically does the title represent to you?
2. In chapter one, A Heated Contest, the book opens right in the thick of the 1976 NWFL season and in the middle of an intense football rivalry between the Oklahoma City Dolls and the Toledo Troopers. This was intentional by the authors. What purpose do you think it serves in the larger narrative of the book?
3. Despite his many shortcomings, Sid Friedman plays a pivotal role in the evolution of women’s football. What is his legacy and how did he set the groundwork from which the NWFL was eventually built?
4. Before Sid Friedman formed the USA/Cleveland Daredevils in 1967, women and young girls had aspired and attempted to participate in football since the sport was invented. What are some examples of this and what are some patterns you notice in many of these stories?
5. From its inception, women’s football has flourished in the Rust Belt region and, more specifically, in Ohio. The NWFL was no different. Why were women’s football teams so prevalent in this region of the country?
6. There are key lessons to be learned from the way the owners mismanaged some of the teams and ran the league itself. What could they have done differently? Have women’s sports leagues of today learned from those mistakes? What could they be doing differently?
7. The players in the NWFL were largely covered in the media as a punchline and a novelty. They were often asked about their feminist beliefs, their sexuality and quizzed on their football acumen. Their looks and bodies were often the main focus. How did the male-dominated lens of the sports media industry influence that coverage?
8. Throughout the entirety of the NWFL’s tenure, the players fought against numerous stereotypes while giving their all to a sport most of society said they shouldn’t be playing. What are some of the ways in which women athletes of

today face similar challenges and scrutiny?

9. NWFL players were routinely shoehorned into a narrative that positioned them as members of the women's liberation movement. The truth was much more complicated. What are some of the misconceptions people may hold about the players' involvement in women's lib and what was the reality of the way the league intersected with the second wave of feminism that was peaking at the time?
10. Title IX affects interscholastic sports and the NWFL was an independent pro league. Even so, the groundbreaking legislation that gave women and girls more access to sports was passed in 1972, just two years before the NWFL launched. How did Title IX, in some ways, pave the way for a league like the NWFL to exist?
11. Not all of the players in the NWFL were gay, but many of them were. The authors made an intentional choice to include stories that highlighted the openly queer players and the ways the NWFL teams intersected with the teams' local lesbian communities. Why do you think that choice was made? What does it add to the larger story?