

## Competing for a Worthy Cause

*An activity of "The 'Battle of the Sexes' did not help women's sport".*

Read "The 'Battle of the Sexes' did not help women's sport" (page 27, *What's Up* February 2026). Focus on the two famous "Battle of the Sexes" tennis matches. Our sports columnist, Omar Chaudhuri, tells us about them.

- In 1973, former tennis champion Bobby Riggs claimed that though he was an older man, he could still beat any top woman player. The world's best female player, Billie Jean King, rose to the challenge. She won. King was driven by a mission — to prove that female players should be valued more. Chaudhuri writes, "King did not just play for herself; she played for every girl who wanted to be taken seriously in sport."
- In 2025, the second "Battle of the Sexes" was between Aryna Sabalenka (Number One woman player) and Nick Kyrgios (ranked 671<sup>st</sup> in the world because of sports injuries). The rules were changed to help Sabalenka against Kyrgios' strong hitting. Yet, Sabalenka lost.

Sports experts wonder why Sabalenka lost to Kyrgios when King beat Riggs. Could it be that King's mission made her more determined to show that women were as good as men? Was Kyrgios more motivated than Sabalenka because he had something to prove — that he was better than the low ranking suggested. We may never know. But, we too can speculate about all possible factors.

1. In pairs, brainstorm about all the likely reasons for the outcomes of these two matches. Jot them down in point form.
2. Single out one possible reason — that the winners were more driven because each had something to prove. Reflect on this possibility.
3. Share situations you know of where having something to prove made the person try harder to do well. The examples could be about yourself or about someone else.
4. Share two of your stories with us by writing to [letters@whatsup.sg](mailto:letters@whatsup.sg). In your letter, refer to the *What's Up* story. You will find details about writing on page 2 of *What's Up*. Both of you could win a prize if your letter is selected.

Our *What's Up* story's last words offers another important lesson:

*"The future of sports is not about men versus women. It is about everyone playing on the same stage and being cheered for their own incredible talents." — Omar Chaudhuri*