

# Joanne W. Iverson

President  
Iverson Gaming Systems

As many Olympians know, the true spirit of the games is not in victory but in the effort to achieve greatness. It is passion like this that has helped Joanne Wright Iverson succeed time and again in the face of challenges. After starting her career as a systems programmer, she is now the founder and president of Iverson Gaming Systems, which offers innovative gaming management solutions.

Having started her company in 1996 as a newcomer to the gaming industry, Iverson is thrilled to be honored as a Proven Leader. "To be recognized as a Great Woman of Gaming at this stage in my company's development is greatly appreciated considering the tremendous effort it took to get this far." Now, after serving 18 years as president of Iverson Gaming Systems, it is clear she knows what it means to be a leader in the gaming industry.

Iverson's path to leadership can be traced to her early involvement in the sport of rowing. While she was just learning to row, she dreamed of competing in the Olympics before women were even allowed to row in the Olympic Games. But little things like rules weren't going to deter her for long. Iverson co-founded the National Women's Rowing Association (NWRA), and in 1976 she led the first U.S. Olympic Women's Rowing Team to the Montreal Games as manager.

During this time, Iverson worked as a secretary at Unisys Corporation before a system programming training class caught her attention. She contacted the head of the programming department about joining the class but was told she needed a math degree to attend. Instead she developed an executable program after a detailed study of the Univac 1050, and was able to attend the class and begin her work as a systems programmer.

Ten years later, Iverson became the vice president of electronic funds transfer operations at Girard Bank in Philadelphia. At Girard, she was responsible for developing and installing the first ATM system in Philadelphia, as well as an early bank-by-phone service.

In 1984, Iverson founded her own company, Iverson Associates, Inc. (IAI), which developed custom software applications for the new PC market. Making the transition between her IT career and managing her own firm was one of the biggest career challenges Iverson faced. She explained, "I had to develop new skills and acquire experience by doing." Overcoming these challenges proved fruitful, as it drew Iverson into the gaming industry.

"My first company was hired to do software development for a casino in the Bahamas. This exposure to the gaming industry piqued my interest such that I spent a year investigating the industry," she said.

With this newfound interest, Iverson Gaming Systems was founded in 1996. Iverson uses her experience in systems

programming, electronic funds transfer and custom software development to focus on information management solutions for the gaming industry. Demonstrating creative innovation, her banking experience led her to envision a different way to capture slot activity and led to the development of a wireless slot and player tracking system that uses power-line data transmission to communicate between slot machines. The SLOTMaster Slot and Player Tracking system has since been implemented in more than 100 cruise ships worldwide.



A key qualification of a Proven Leader is commitment to mentoring. As Matthew Brown, director of business development at Iverson Gaming Systems, noted, "Joanne has the gift of recognizing nascent talent, fostering that talent, encouraging it, challenging it and selflessly guiding it to its fruition so that it makes everyone else around her shine ... She is the President of two companies and a boat club, but she still makes time to have thoughtful one-on-one conversations with young adults to teach them, train them and challenge them."

Susan Hufnagel recalls Iverson's dedication to mentorship when they met in 1980 working together at Girard Bank. Now vice president of Iverson Gaming Systems, she remembers how Iverson encouraged her audit department. "She arranged for several of the department members, including me,

to attend the same class people hired to work in the Data Center attended. After completing the class, I was promoted to IT Auditor with a staff of three ... [Iverson] could draw on her own experience as a programmer to help us advance our careers."

Despite her busy schedule, Iverson maintains several personal interests. She is an avid reader and is a published author of the book *An Obsession with Rings: How Rowing Became an Olympic Sport for Women*. She is the president of the Vesper Boat Club in Philadelphia and still rows to this day. Asked about her future goals, Iverson said she plans to "continue growing my company and to write my next and greatest book." She is also five years into martial arts training and working toward her black belt.

In true Olympic spirit, Iverson said her favorite aspect of the gaming industry is, "The constant challenge." Iverson's accomplishments more than demonstrate her prowess as an industry leader and innovator, and her drive, determination and passion remain as strong as they were when she dreamed of rowing in the Olympics. As Brown said, "She absolutely believes that nothing is impossible, and she has retained her zest for life despite the setbacks and disappointments that are unavoidable in business and life in general. She exudes a strong, positive and lively spirit."