

Girls on the Athletic Field: Small Gains, Long Way to the Goal

By NADINE BROZAN

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Last year the girls' volleyball team at West Hempstead High School in Long Island had to walk a half a mile to practice in the gymnasium of the Cornwell Elementary School. The reason: the gym at their own school was being used for boys' basketball.

This year the girls have won a concession: They can practice at their own school except for once or twice a week, when they go to Cornwell. But they are still disgruntled because, as Debra Holmberg, a senior, explained, "We don't think it's fair that the boys' varsity basketball team never has to go there."

John Meyer, director of athletics at the high school, defended the discrepancy. "The elementary school gym is not big enough for 17-year-old boys involved in an intense activity," he said. "We revised the schedule so that younger boys practice at Cornwell even more often than the girls."

The gains made by the volleyball players toward attaining equal treatment of the sexes in athletics are being duplicated, in varying degrees, across the country. Absolute equality, however, remains elusive and in some places the gaps still run wide.

Under a 1972 act of Congress—Title IX of the Education Amendments—it is illegal for the 16,000 public-school districts and 2,700 colleges and universities that receive Federal aid to discriminate against women in physical education or athletic competition. Regulations to implement the law were issued last July by the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

The sports regulations have generated a furor that has almost obliterated from the public eye the fact that Title IX also bans discrimination in all school courses, extracurricular activities, services, financial aid, other benefits and the use of facilities, as well as in the employment and compensation of faculty and staff.

Because of anticipated complications, the government granted an adjustment period for full compliance in sports programs.

Elementary schools were given up to a year to make all physical education classes coeducational. High schools and colleges were given up to three years to do such things as permit women to try out for men's teams in noncontact sports where no female teams existed, allow women to have their own teams in contact sports if warranted by demand, award athletic scholarships to women at institutions that give them to men and guarantee equality in supplies, facilities, coaching and travel allowances.

But the law specifies that no school is obligated to spend equal amounts of money on women and men. The aim is not duplicate programs, but equal opportunity.

Schools and school districts were required to publicize Oct. 18 their intentions to ban discrimination on the basis of sex and to appoint an official to handle grievances. They were given a year to conduct self-evaluation of their athletic curriculum.

At present, educators, administrators, coaches, government officials, Title IX officers and feminists are involved in meetings to interpret the law and its ramifications.

"We're concentrating on orientation, guidelines and principles," said Margaret Wigiser, supervisor of girls' athletics for the city's Bureau of Health and Physical Education. Since 1969 her office has organized 70 interscholastic girls' volleyball teams, 39 bowling teams, 62 basketball teams, 56 softball teams, 32 swimming teams, 40 gymnastics teams, 44 tennis teams and 45 track and field teams.

"You can't provide the remedy until you're aware of the problems," she said, "and sometimes there's not even the realization that there has been discrimination," she said.

Bernice Sandler, director of the project on the status and education of women for the Association of American Colleges, helped formulate the law. As she sees it:

"Athletics really gets at the basic stereotyped notions of what men and women are like. Everyone is struggling with legal precedents and theories that are not so clear in sports as they are in other areas. You know you need some separate but equal offerings and some integrated ones, and people are trying to figure out what fits where."

In the view of Margaret Dunkle, associate director of the project on the status and education of women, who directed a recent conference entitled "National Institute: Women in Sport," progress was inevitable.

"Title IX has given it a push," she said, "but God forbid, if it were ever

repealed, we could not turn back the tide. There has simply been too much pressure from women athletics, women in the professions, women's organizations, even parents.

"So far there has been more activity at the college level. The question of sex discrimination has long been recognized there as an issue. It's just starting at the elementary and secondary level."

A spot check of universities supported her contention.

At Harvard, for instance, Andronike Janus, who had been assistant to the president of Radcliffe College, was named assistant director of athletics for the entire university last year. Women became eligible to wear the coveted Harvard "H."

At the University of Oklahoma, women's sports, long under the domain of the Women's Recreation Association, have been upgraded into the department of athletics.

At the University of California in Los Angeles, the budget for women's athletics was increased from \$190,000 last year to \$260,000 this year. At the University of Washington, the 10 women's intercollegiate teams have since last year been entitled to use the same training facilities and staff as the 10 men's teams and have been insured under university policies.

Still, for every step forward, many steps remain.

At the University of Texas in Austin, which in many ways typifies the big-time football campus, funding for women's sports has been increasing by more than 100 percent a year. Two years ago the budget was \$27,500 last year, it was \$58,000 and for the current academic year it is \$128,000.

But as Donna Lopiano, the university's new director of intercollegiate athletics for women, reviewed the criteria for equality suggested by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, it became apparent that inequities persist at Texas.

Among her findings were the following:

On the nature and extent of sports programs for women: "You might argue that seven sports for men and seven for women is absolute equality, but if you have places for 290 men and 148 women on those teams and women comprise 42 percent of the student population, that is not proportionate."

On the provision of equipment and supplies: "Men get \$350,000 a year. We get \$26,000. We're not saying we want \$351,000; after all, it costs \$700 to outfit a male football player and less than \$70 for a female basketball player, but to be equal we do need \$71,000. We're not even minimally equipped for any team."

On travel and per diem allowances: "This year the men have \$167,000, we have \$16,000. That raises the question of whether we can stay in the same quality accommodations."

On the nature and extent of opportunity to receive coaching and academic tutoring: "Most of the 21 men's coaches are on staff full time. The seven women's coaches serve part time."

On compensation of coaches and tutors: "The average salary for an assistant football coach is \$20,000 a year. A head coach for women gets \$2,100."

On scholarships: "There are now 216 scholarships available for 290 men, or two for every three athletes. Women have 10 full scholarships, or one for

every 15 athletes."

On the provision of housing and dining services: "Male athletes on full scholarship have housing and dining included in their grants. Women do not. Male athletes have a \$240,000 training table for meals. We have none."

"What is happening," Dr. Lopiano said, "is that the university is being forced to take a hard look at men's athletics, something it has never done before because they're self-supporting through gate receipts. Now that the university must provide equal opportunity, where will the money come from?"

Many educators contended that although discrimination in athletics was more blatant at the university level, its abolition was more crucial in the lower schools.

"Junior and senior high school is a critical time, but girls are still being told that there's no room for them as athletes, that being an athlete is weird," said Holly Knox, director of the project on equal education rights sponsored by the legal defense and education fund of the National Organization for Women.

"For the girl who wanted to play basketball in junior high school and didn't because there was no team," she said, "it makes no difference if there's a team in college. She will already have dropped out."

Still, Miss Knox is optimistic. "Before the regulations came out," she said, "some of the school districts began to initiate change. Now thousands are saying, 'What do we have to do?' Changes have accelerated tremendously this year."

Some of those changes have already been documented in 22 hours of inter-

views with high-school athletic directors conducted by Bonnie Polk, Title IX officer for the Fairfax County, Va., school district.

"It is so encouraging," Mrs. Polk said, "to hear almost everybody say, 'This year for the first time the girls are—' It's a phrase that can be filled in lots of ways, from use of the main gymnasium to scheduling of games at night so that parents can watch their daughters play, to more money for travel and uniforms. But," she added, "girls do not yet get what boys do in the major sports."

In New York City, the entire issue of equality in school athletics is clouded by the budget crisis: the intramural program was eliminated this year to save money. But what holds true for, say, Beach Channel High School in Rockaway Park, Queens, does not apply to Adlai Stevenson High School in the Bronx.

At Beach Channel High, "Girls and boys have exactly the same chance to learn everything, and everything in our school, including funds, is shared equally," said David Fried, assistant principal in charge of health, physical education and athletics.

The school was opened only two years ago. "Most classes are coed, including volleyball, tennis, handball, paddleball, dancing, yoga and karate," Mr. Fried said. "The only single sex programs are in wrestling, football and basketball for boys."

Five interscholastic teams are open to girls, compared with seven for boys, but the reason is more a lack of money than bias, Mr. Fried said. "We wanted to add gymnastics, bowling and tennis for girls this year he said, 'but we just couldn't.'"

As pleased as Mr. Fried is with the program at his school, Gail Jaffer of Adlai Stevenson High is dissatisfied with the program at hers. "Theoretically, there should be changes to upgrade the girls' program so that it is comparable to that for boys, but so far, nothing has been done," said Mrs. Jaffer, who is assistant principal for health and physical education.

"For example," she said, "we received a directive from the Bureau of Health and Physical Education saying that, because of the budget, boys' and girls' swimming teams should be combined. The men's department here never advertised is, and when four girls inquired about tryouts, they were told it was too late."

"The existing teams are not treated equally and the facilities are different. In measurement, the gyms may be the same size, but what's in them? We have ordinary backboards for basketball, the boys have Fiberglas. They have bleachers, we don't. They have a handball court, we don't. We never came out with even near what the boys got, but now [with budget slashes] we've taken 20 steps back."

Budget crises aside, not everyone in the field takes such a bleak view. As Margaret Dunkle said, expressing a common thought: "If when Title IX was passed in 1972, opportunities for women were terrible, now they've improved to bad—and that's certainly progress."



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Equal treatment of the sexes in school athletics remains elusive but is slowly improving. Left, the women's crew at Trinity College several seasons ago.