

# PLAYING FAIR

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORTS

BY JOLEIGH UNDERWOOD, MAGAZINE EDITOR

The gender gap in sports has been a topic of discussion for many years surrounding professional leagues, but that isn't the only place this gap is present.

My interest in this story first started after the NCAA tournament TikToks went viral, and it made me realize there is a disparity of treatment on every level, including college and high school. Salaries are a huge talking point when looking at the gap in professional sports, but there are also significant differences in spending and budgets for high school programs across the country.

From just plain observation and research, it's become clear that the gap that begins in the professional world eventually trickles its way down to us. Women's professional sports are less popular, and now girls sports in schools get less attention too.

The gender gap in sports may have started with Male professional sports generating more revenue, but it has evolved into a fundamental disparity ingrained within society. Girls

have 1.3 million less opportunities in school sports than boys. Let that sink in. So yes, biology and revenue might play a factor, but that doesn't change the fact that girls never even get an equal chance from the start.

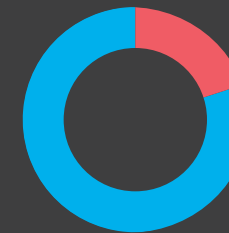
Title XI was a great step toward gender equality in at least public schools, but it isn't perfect either. There are little to no repercussions for violating Title XI guidelines and huge organizations such as the NCAA aren't even liable under it. Essentially, some good things are happening for women in sports, but we have a long way to go before women have the same access to that industry as men do.

It truly comes down to society's attitude. America is supposed to be the country where you can do anything, so why is it that women pursuing sports is like swimming upstream?

GIRLS HAVE  
1.3 MILLION  
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IN HIGH SCHOOL  
SPORTS  
THAN BOYS.



ONLY 8% OF WOMEN AGES 15-24 EXERCISE REGULARLY (MORE THAN FOUR TIMES A WEEK)



20 - 30% OF COACHES ARE WOMEN

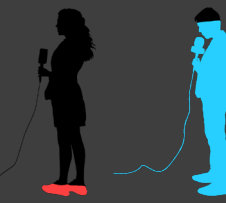


THERE ARE 33 WOMEN ON THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPICS COMMITTEE OUT OF 144.

## A MAN'S WORLD

92%

of sports articles are written by males according to a survey of 22 countries.



In professional sports such as golf, basketball, tennis, and soccer, males make anywhere from 15 to 100% more than females.

The salary cap for the WNBA is \$117,500. The salary cap for NBA players in the league for less than 10 years is 38.2 million. After that, there is no cap.

11%

of sports media coverage is dedicated to female athletes.



In 2015, the US Womens soccer team was ranked 1st in the world compared to the US Mens team ranked 30th and generated \$20 million more in revenue than the mens team, yet the womens teams salaries were 60% less.

## THE HIGHEST PAID ATHLETES IN THE WORLD

Serena Williams, the highest-earning female athlete makes

\$29.2 million/yr

Lionel Messi, the highest-earning male athlete makes

\$127 million/yr



Photos courtesy of WikiCommons

## TITLES MATTER

TITLE IX EVENS THE PLAYING FIELD

Title IX was implemented as a part of the Education Amendments of 1972 and drastically changed the landscape for gender equality in schools, including regulations and guidelines regarding sports. Title IX is a big part of the gender-equality in sports conversation because although it increases equality in many ways, there are also some loopholes and flaws that maintain the gap between male and female sports in schools.

One double-sided coin of Title IX is its use of total program comparison, meaning it evaluates a school's entire athletic program for each gender, not individual sports teams for each gender. This is good and bad, because on one hand it allows gender-specific sports such as softball and baseball, but on the other hand allows there to be major disparities between individual teams such as boys and girls soccer.

## WORD FROM A PRO

Deputy Managing Editor of "The Athletic" Jenny Dial Creech sounds off on women in sports and how to overcome the gap  
*Interview by Kaiya Little, Editor-in-chief*

### HOW DO YOU THINK THAT GENDER-BASED PERCEPTIONS THAT PEOPLE HOLD AFFECT THE WAGES AND THE BUDGETS THAT GO INTO PROFESSIONAL SPORTS?

"I think things are getting better on that front, we're really starting to see that if you put women's sports on TV people are going to watch them. If you invest in writers to cover women's sports, you're going to have the readership, you're going to have the page views. Women's soccer certainly is moving the meter; they're a lot better than the US Men's Team, so that helps. And then I think things like this being an Olympic year is good for women. You know, when you have Simone Biles dominating every athlete at the Olympics, she started to get a little bit more attention put on female sports. I think if your perception is always going to be that there's not a LeBron James in women's basketball, I think you could turn around and say the same thing; but there's not a Breanna Stewart in the men's game, right? I think younger people who have an appreciation for the analytics and the style and the actual game are seeing that the women's game has elevated a lot and that is, if you look at it as its own product and stop trying to compare it to men's basketball, it's a very entertaining product. And we can make that separation like, stop saying women's soccer needs to be like men's soccer, women's basketball needs to be like men's basketball. They don't have to be that way, they're different leagues, they're not playing against each other."

### SO, WHAT COULD WE BE DOING TO BRIDGE THIS GAP BETWEEN MALES AND FEMALES IN ATHLETICS, GOING FORWARD?

"You have to keep talking about it, and you can't just say you would like things to be different, you need to watch a woman's game, you need to support a woman's team. It's that simple. Title Nine can only do so much. I think there's a lot of people who pay a lot of lip service and talk about how there should be more equality and women should have all the same opportunities as men do, but do something about it. You know, care about them the same way that you care about the men's product, if everybody did that you'd see a massive, massive turn."