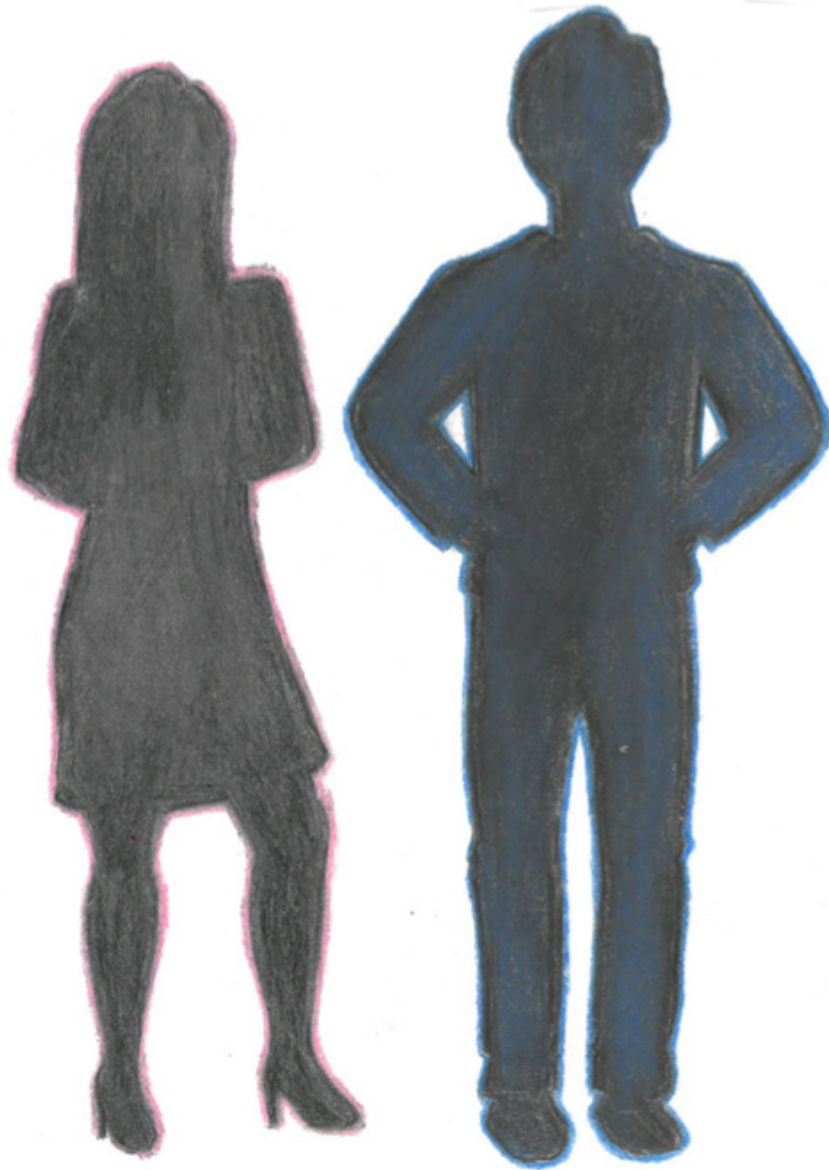


DIFFERENCE



Artist: Marissa Giordano

The Debate of the Contrast Between Men's and Women's Sports Just Got Interesting

Mocked, ridiculed, dismissed -- women's sports has had to face many challenges since its conception. But women continue to fight for equality on and off the playing field.

By Max Arnold and Chase Brown



In light of a nation seeking equality, women are searching for the right to be treated as equal to men, especially in the sports industry. America loves winners, and loves athletes that produce when the lights shine the brightest. But why do the lights seem to only shine on men?

Media coverage on women's sports is minimal. Major sports networks such as ESPN, FOX, CBS, and NBC fill their time slots with men's sports. But just how rare is it to see women's sports on television? In a study conducted by The Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota, they found that 40 percent of all sports participants are women, but only 4 percent of sports media coverage is dedicated to those sports.

Networks claim to be hesitant to cover women's sports as it has lacked popularity in the past and its financial value does not give the networks incentive to cover the events. Women's

sports, however, are not the only sports to struggle both with finances and with popularity; the Major League Soccer (MLS) organization loses an average of \$100 million annually -- even with a TV contract and 20 corporate sponsors. In contrast, the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) has only three corporate sponsors and no TV contracts. If Goliath struggles, what chance is there for David? Leagues such as the NWSL are at a disadvantage as they are put into a self-defeating and self-perpetuating cycle. Without corporate sponsorship and investment, exposure for these sports will decline, which in turn, will lead to a decrease in the interest and demand.



Jordyn Wilson has been a four year letter winner with the Kilbourne Girls Basketball team and will be attending Ohio Dominican next Fall. (CaughtMyEye)

“I don’t believe that all that hard work and being away from home would be worth the low salary.”
-Jordyn Wilson

WKHS Junior Morgan Schutte, a member of the girl’s lacrosse and basketball teams noted that she enjoys watching both women’s basketball and lacrosse, but prefers to watch men’s sports because they are “more intense and more competitive most of the time”.

Networks will showcase what they think will produce the most entertainment for its audience. The networks look at the numbers and see that the American people want to see competitive, fast paced sports, and that’s what they will get.

The Women’s Media Center report on “The Status of Women in US Media” showed that 10.6% of reporters who report on sports are woman. So the question is, would we have more coverage on women’s sports if more reporters and editors were women? Sarah Spain an espnW columnist and radio host, says yes. Lindsey Gibbs a reporter for ThinkProgress agreed, “Women would be more in tune to other women.”

Dr. Cheryl Cooky and two colleagues for American Studies at Purdue conducted a 25 year study on the issue of women’s sports coverage. They found that the amount of blatant sexist remarks by reporters against women’s sports has significantly decreased since the 1990’s. These remarks refer to women with neglect to their abilities in comparison to men. Girls also see a double standard in covering women’s sports, but the issue has improved in the last two decades. The study also found that when male athletes receive media attention, such coverage is primarily focused on their skilled performance. When female athletes

receive media attention, the media is much more likely to focus on their physical attractiveness or non-sport-related activities. An example of this is Anna Kournikova, who has yet to win a professional tennis tournament is one of only six women ranked among the most important people in sports because of her appearance and name recognition.

Pay inequity is the main focal point of the fight for equality for women in sports. While men and women’s sports differ in physical ability, both involve heavy training and competition that takes up the majority of the year. On average, starting professional athletes spend anywhere from 3-8 months in competition, and the rest practicing, lifting, and conditioning in the off-season. A life committed to sports is a full-time occupation that requires the most out of an athlete everyday. So with the same time committed, regardless of gender, why do men get paid more than women for their respective sports? Men are often regarded as bigger, faster, and stronger than women, making them more entertaining to watch. While it may be more entertaining to watch men’s sports over women’s, the skill and ability of women cannot be taken away from them.

WKHS Senior Jordyn Wilson, who recently committed to Ohio Dominican University to play basketball was asked about women’s sports at the professional level “Playing basketball professionally would be amazing, but I don’t believe that all the hard work and being away from home would be worth the low salary.”

The sports that are notably targeted for
NEWS 21



The U.S. Women's National Team celebrates its win at the 2015 Women's World Cup. (ESPN)

“It feels good when friends come and support you; it makes you want to play better.”
-Maggie Crozier

their pay disparity are golf, soccer, and basketball. The gender of the participants change, but the game itself does not. Each sport contains a separate league for men and women to compete in. According to Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) the total prize money, or money won by all the players combined, of the PGA tour in 2014 was \$340 million, which is more than five times that of the new-high for the LPGA tour of \$61.6 million set in 2015. In addition, the WSF took a look into the major inequities in the payment of soccer. In 2014, Germany's men soccer team received \$35 million dollars for winning the World Cup. The U.S. men's team finished in 11th place and received \$9 million, and each team that was eliminated in the first round received \$8 million. In contrast, the U.S. women's team took home \$2 million for winning the 2015 Women's World Cup. Finally the WSF concluded that for a WNBA player in the 2015-2016 season, the minimum salary was \$38,913 and a maximum salary of \$109,500 for veteran players, the team salary cap was around \$1 million. To put this issue in perspective, NBA players in the 2015-2016 season had a minimum salary of \$525,093 and a maximum salary of \$16.407 million with exceptions to the league veteran superstars such as Kobe who made \$25 million during the season. The team salary cap was at an all-time high of \$70 million and will continue to rise in the years to come.

The U.S. Women's National Team took home only \$2 million for winning the 2015 Women's World Cup. Teams eliminated in the first round of the men's tournament received \$8 million.



Maggie Crozier is a three-time letter winner on the girl's soccer team and two-time winner for girl's basketball. (CaughtMyEye)

At the high school level, athletes are not affected by how much he or she gets paid or the media coverage of his or her sport, rather the attendance of the games. “Attendance at girl's sporting events is a problem,” said Wilson, “I think it's disrespectful that we put so much emphasis on boy's sports instead of girl's.” Kilbourne's student section, or as they're called “The Kilbourne Krazies”, provide an atmosphere that make the gym, stadium, or natatorium a tough place to play. “The student section transfers energy to the players in the game,” said WKHS Junior and five time letter winner, Maggie Crozier, “it feels good when friends come and support you; it makes you want to play better.” Crozier, who is a member of both the girls basketball and soccer teams recognized that students attend the events they want to see, but encourages students to make a difference by attending games for sports that don't get as much recognition.

Female athletes continue to fight for equal representation in the media and for the gap of pay inequities to close. The protest has seen improvements but is still a long way from its conclusion. While women do not have the same qualities as men, their skill and expertise in their respective sports can't be taken away from them. One day we may see the respect these women deserve on and off of the field.