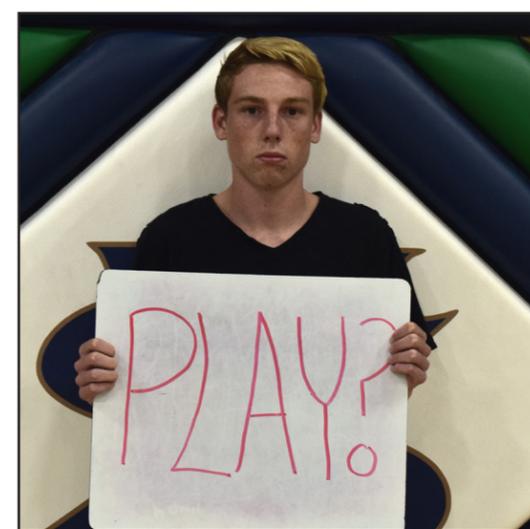
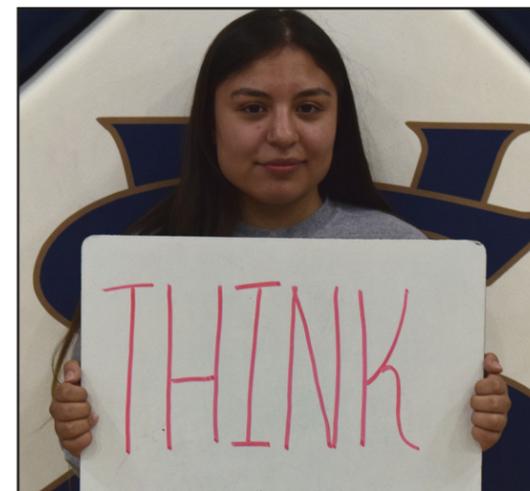
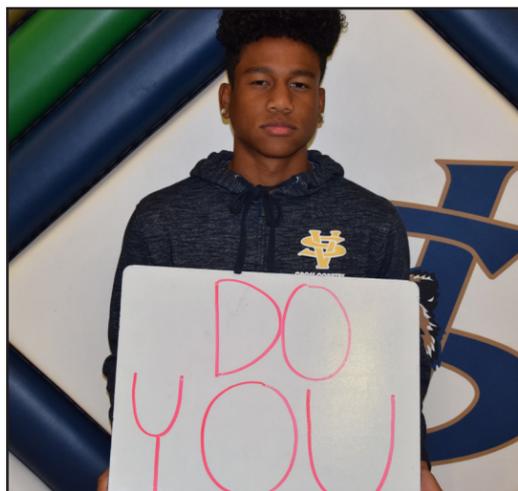
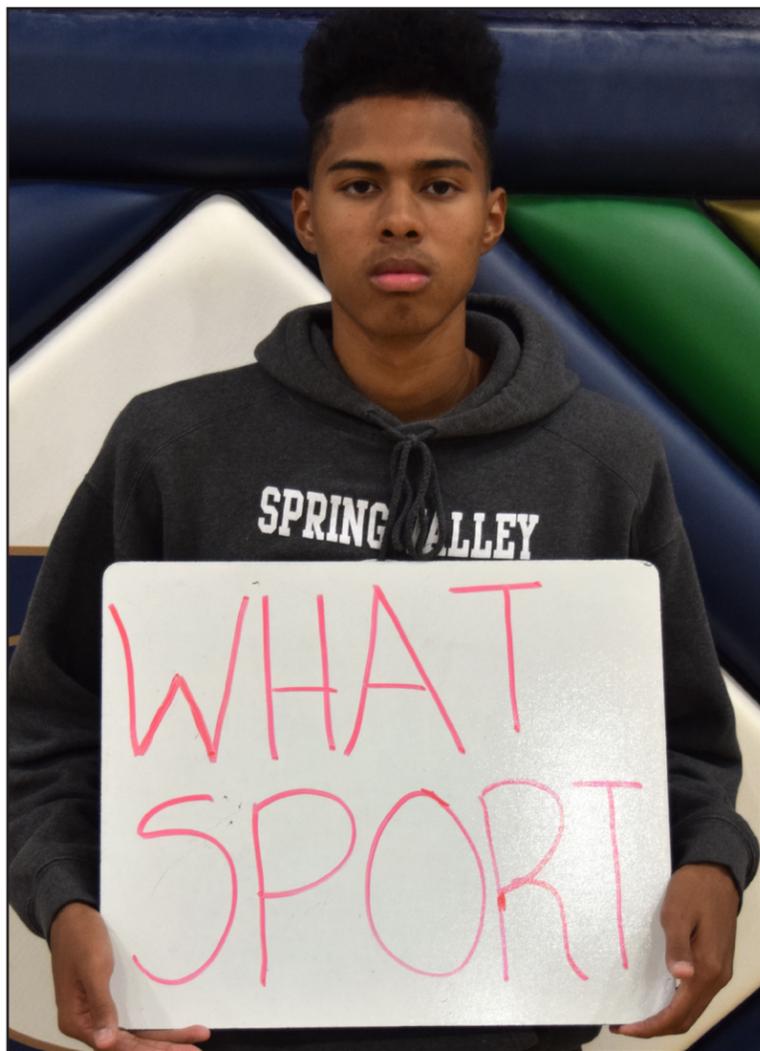


Athletes rail against racial stereotypes



Amai Mims

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Co-Sports-Editor

When Senior Kobe Shields played soccer, friends and teammates would often joke that he belonged on the basketball court, not the soccer field. Although Shields said most were only joking, the constant racial stereotypes ultimately stopped him from playing soccer and joining the basketball team, where many said he belonged because he is tall and black. Although Shields found that he enjoyed basketball, he said the pressure should have never been about his race.

"I don't play basketball just because I'm tall and black, I play because I enjoy it," said Shields.

Racism and stereotypes have recently changed sports culture, according to many Spring Valley athletes. Often times, students said they overlook it because they feel uncomfortable and don't know how address the issue. But the comments, joking or not, can lead

to serious problems later. According to the London School of Economics and Political Science, comments like this can affect the person's physical performance in the sport and increase anxiety.

Shields said he played soccer his freshman year of high school but was criticized for not playing basketball. Stereotypical comments pressured him to stop playing soccer and start playing basketball. Now, Shields said he enjoys playing many sports and doesn't worry about people's opinions. This year, he plans to play basketball and volleyball, with volleyball being his main priority.

"People said I should focus on basketball, now I just focus on volleyball," said Shields. Shields said the experiences has helped him grow as a person and that he loves his sports not because of society's expectations.

Many other student athletes said they face the same pressures from society. Senior Kiran Tello plays basketball but is often asked why she doesn't play soccer because she's Mexican.

"People should be able to play what ever sport they want without questions asked," she said. Tello also said she gets asked if she's scared to play against other black people, since they are viewed as good at the sport.

"People should be judged on their talent and work ethic, not their race," said Tello.

Junior Jamel Dixon also suffers from society's racial expectations. Dixon played basketball his freshman year, but transitioned to cross country because basketball wasn't exciting for him anymore. When he switched, people had a hard time understanding it, and often asked why didn't he play football because he fit the description: black and athletic.

"People don't think twice about what they say and they never think about the effects it will have" said basketball player Alexis Quadman.

Even coaches hear stereotypes about their players such as "he's not smart he can only play sports" or "he's only making good grades so that he'll be

eligible to play."

Varsity Basketball Coach Paul Blair says he hears comments like this often, but advises his student athletes to take the highroad.

"We hold them to a high expectation so they can push themselves to be better and obtain a high GPA," said Blair "he's a student first and an athlete second."

Blair acknowledges that there are always individuals on either side of a stereotype. Blair, a young black male coaches varsity basketball. According to Blair, young black people usually don't get head jobs but considered himself "lucky enough to get the opportunity."

Coach Jose Ramirez said that growing up he never let the stereotypes affect him from doing what he enjoys. Now when coaching, he tries to disregard the stereotypes and pushes his athletes to play as one.

"Different nationalities don't matter when we play the game because when we play we're unity, we're one" said Coach Ramirez.



Senior All-State athletes commit to Division 1 universities



"I chose to go to UNR because I want to be a part of changing the program around. I believe in the coaches and the process they have instilled. I also believe going to UNR is in me best interest academic wise."
— Essence Booker, basketball player



"I chose Texas Tech because I believed it was the best fit for me and I felt confident in choosing it because I trust that it will further my baseball and academic career."
— Jack Sellinger baseball player