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Women's Sports

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Twenty-five years ago Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 mandated that women not be discriminated against in any educational institution receiving federal funds. Although Title IX does not mention sport specifically it is clear that sport is one of those activities covered. When you see the hype being generated by the arrival of the WNBA, you might think that Title IX has been a major success. It has not.

A recent study by the NCAA which updates its 1992 study of the issue was, according to Cedric Dempsey, Executive Director of the NCAA, "disappointing." It showed that although half the students in the 300 Division IA schools are women, only 34 percent of the athletes are women. This is an improvement from the 29 percent five years ago.

What is interesting is that while these numbers went up, and while women's athletic budgets went up from an average of \$263,000 to \$663,000 over the past five years, the men's budgets have gone up from \$1.5M to \$2.4M. This means that the women's budgets are now 27% of the men's budget rather than 17.5% of the men's budget as they were five years ago. At this rate funding equity should be reached in a mere thirty five years, or ten years longer than it has already been since the original passage of Title IX. This of course is the optimistic view.

A Women's Sports Foundation study released this week affirmed these trends, and showed that women received \$146.5M less in athletic scholarship money than men, and that women's teams receive 27% of the recruiting money, there are more men coaches than women coaches in both men's and women's sports, and men's salaries are higher than those of women coaches.

What is more distressing is that for the most part universities and colleges have expended more energy trying to find ways to avoid compliance than to find ways to achieve equity.

Major college men's programs are not being trimmed of their considerable fat in order to comply with the equity requirements. When you look at the growth of coaching staffs, travel budgets, and training programs it is no wonder that things have changed so little. If you are going to make significant changes in these areas then the big programs must be cut. To make a big dent in costs it is useless to cut inexpensive small programs. You cut where you can make real

substantial cuts in a budget. In intercollegiate athletics that means football and basketball.

What is happening instead is that the College Football Association, representing 67 institutions, is lobbying vigorously to exempt football from Title IX coverage. The argument is that there are so many football players that equity could not possibly be achieved if football is counted. This is true especially if football costs continue to skyrocket, if extravagant numbers of football scholarships continue to be awarded, and if athletic directors continue to do the bidding of football coaches.

Both football and basketball supporters argue that these are the sports that bring in the money. This is true, but at a very small percentage of schools. Of the major football programs in the country only about 17% actually make money, and all of them spend massive amounts of money in order to try to turn a profit, however small. It is then an argument that collapses on examination at most institutions.

As for the NCAA itself it has spent most of the past twenty-five years fighting the growth of women's athletics. It should be remembered that the NCAA through all its history did nothing to support women's intercollegiate sport until the AIAW (Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women) demonstrated that such competition was possible, and with Title IX might even be profitable.

During the 1970s the NCAA was lobbying to get legislation to remove athletics from Title IX coverage, and failing that the NCAA tried to achieve the same thing in the courts by suing the Federal Government. This too failed. With that the NCAA moved into the area of women sports in 1981 proclaiming its devotion to intercollegiate athletics for women. Within a year the NCAA had driven the AIAW out of business and taken control of women's intercollegiate sport.

At the time there were many who feared the worst. Whether women's sport would have grown faster with the AIAW is doubtful, but it might have grown in a different fashion with less emphasis on the big-time sport model.

What we do know is that a different organization controlling women's sport would be run by women, it would not be concerned about the future of College Football, and it would devote its

energies to the promotion of women's sport. Wouldn't that be interesting!

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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