

Equality in women sports

[Media](#)



Equality in Women Sports Gender equality in sports is something women have been trying to pursue over and over again. As in professional publicity of sports, men vs. women is no competition, men blow women out of the park on this issue. Men are more dominant in the sports world, and women just live in the shadows. Women are not given the chance they deserve to prove that they are just as good, so as of now, the media presumes them to be inferior to men. The myth many people believe for this reason, is the simple answer that women are not as strong as men.

Others say that women's sports are not as popular because they are not as entertaining to watch. Many people have different reasons for why women do not get the equality that they deserve, but there are more reasons for why women should be just as successful in professional sports as men. Women in sports began with very few opportunities, until a few pioneers paved a way for the future of women sports. Such female athletes that paved the way for other females were Babe Didrikson and Wilma Rudolph.

Babe competed in the 1932 Olympics and qualified for five events, but at the time, women were only allowed to complete in three. Babe also took up golfing and won 55 tournaments in all, with 13 consecutive in 1946. Wilma Rudolph was another admirable female athlete, whose forte was in track. Rudolph was the first woman to win three gold medals in the 1960 Olympics. Her winnings allowed for more women to take part in what was previously, all male track and field events. Both of these remarkable female athletes are recognized among ESPN'S Sports Century Greatest Athletes, ranked 10th and 41st (Elyachar and Moag, n. .). During the Olympics, at the time of Babe Didrikson and Wilma Rudolph, women were allowed to compete in various

events, such as swimming, diving, tennis, and short distance sprints, but were not allowed to compete in the marathons. This is because experts said women could damage their organs from all the destructive bouncing and long endurance that the marathon required. It was not until 1984, when women were allowed to run the marathon in the Olympics, that a woman by the name of Benoit Samuelson ran the first marathon.

Benoit ran 26 miles in competitive time, proving that the female body could handle just as much as the men's ("Joan Benoit Samuelson," 2007.) The universal myth that everyone assumes is the reason for why men are so much more dominant in sports than women is that they are stronger. It is commonly believed that women are not as skilled as men in sports because they lack muscle strength. According to the GenneX Healthcare Technologies, Inc. (1999), in recent studies, this myth was proven fiction.

Up until this study, doctors would beg their female patients not to perform in any sports activities because they said their bodies were too weak to handle such pressures. Since women have been out of the sports scene for so long because of this myth of weakness, men have been dominating because they have had so much more time to perfect their skills. Women now have a lot of ground to cover since they have been so inactive for so many years. The best women's marathon time was recorded at only 10 minutes behind men's, proving that women are catching up to men and their bodies can handle anything a man's can.

The woman who set the women's world record marathon time in an incredible 2: 15: 25 was Paula Radcliffe (Msn, 2007). But there's a catch to this recording. Since male sports have been around for so much longer, they

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have been recording for that much longer as well. Women; however, have only been recording since 1964, which means that since they just starting running these marathons they can easily pass the male record. According to Kevin Drum (2001), " Women might even complete evenly with men in the 100 meter dash by around 2010 or 2020, and the marathon by 2050. As of more recently, women are starting to participate in sports that were only meant for men, such as ice hockey and boxing. These extreme sports require skill and physical endurance, which if a woman can play this kind of sport, means that she is capable of playing any sport, just as good as any man. The only reason that women are lagging behind men thus far is because men have had so much more time to improve on their sports. Men have been practicing and perfecting sports ever since they were first created, women, in comparison, have had no chance to do this.

If women started off at the same time as men, they would easily have the same performance and same skill level. In 1972, Title IX was passed to make women participate in sports more. Title IX was brought to the public's attention with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 60s. This law states, " No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education programs or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. " (Elyachar and Moag, n. d.).

This law gave women the right to be athletes. It opened new opportunities to women as more colleges and high school were forced to have a certain number to sports teams. This new law paved a way for new female athletes. Men at this time were starting to form leagues of their own, while women

were first starting to participate in sports. When basketball was first in existence, men were allowed to play by the rules however they liked, but women were supposed to maintain proper decorum, so female basketball players were not allowed to snatch or dribble the ball more than three times.

Women basketball players also started off played three and three rather than five on five, and on half a court. Many people believed that women could not handle the pressure and strength to play like men. Females were not considered strong enough to play a full court game until 1971 (Rick Torbett 2007.) Five year later in 1976, the first professional basketball league for women was formed. This league consisted of eight teams, but was not very successful. In 1997, the Woman's National Basketball Association (WNBA) was founded with 12 teams, six from the Eastern Conference and six from the Western Conference.

The first year running attendance reach nearly one million and it had 65 million viewers, and is currently still running today. The WNBA had shed some light on women's ability to be equal. This league has also opened opportunities for girls, as most of them look up to them as idols. Women's basketball really sprung into popularity within the end of the 21st century. Basketball instructor Rick Torbett (2007) states, " I saw Nancy Lieberman grab, not touch, but grab the rim at 5" 9! I was 6" 3 and only jumping a little higher than her! Those girls could play, and were actually flat out better than some of the boys. Rick Torbett, an expert at studying the tactics of basketball, states that from his studies, women show the same skill level as men. This proves that women can perform just as well as me do in this sport. At the end of his report, Tobett concluded with, " Oh yeah, there is one

definite difference between boys and girls basketball, to quote my friend, Hall of Famer Rick Barry... " They're a lot prettier. " If there is absolutely no difference with men vs. women in basketball, why can't the rest of the world notice women's basketball more? It is just as exciting as men and involves the same exact game.

As more time passes, and once more people start to realize the skill level of women, the WNBA will be just as popular as men's. The first extremely successful women's league was in 1943 and was called the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. This league was the most successful women's league ever, and the major reason behind this league's popularity is the fact that it was played during the Second World War. While America's men were on the battlefield, America's women were giving the rest of the country entertainment for their favorite pastime.

Even during this league, women were still not given equality. These women were chosen to compete in the league had to attend charm school before to ensure the natural style of a women's grace despite vigorous play (JSW 1999). Even then, most people were against this league because they strongly believed that this much stress and endurance would harm the female reproductive system. The movie, *A League of Their Own*, was based around this league, and it showed the dramatic sexist experiences these women had to go through just to play. In the end, the fans loved it, and just as much as they loved men's.

This league ended when the war did, as all the men came back to claim their sport, the women were sent back to their roles as housewives (Riverdeep Interactive Learning 2007). This league was at one point, the most successful
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and popular sport. Because a majority of the men were fighting in the Second World War, only women were left to compete in sports. The only barrier causing the problem of no women's baseball league is the fact that no one would watch it. If the country loved this sport played by women as much as they did in the 1940s, then they can still love it today.

Women should be allowed to have their own league again, and be able to build on form what they started in the 1940s. By far the most successful women's sport is tennis. This women's sport has gained so much popularity to viewers because women have been catching up to men. In 1973 when women's tennis was not as prominent as men's, Bobby Riggs challenged Billie Jean King to tennis match that became widely known as the " Battle of the Sexes. " Bobby Riggs was the world champion tennis player in 1939, at the age of 16. Billie Jean King was the women's lib leader at the age of 29, and had won 20 titles at Wimbledon, making her the richest tennis player, with an income of \$100, 000 a year. Bobby, now at the age of 55 wanted to prove to the world that men were better athletes so he challenged a match against Billie boasting that a woman was no match for him. Bobby even went as far as wearing a men's liberation t-shirt to the match to make matters even worse. On top of that, he even rode into the tennis courts in a carriage pulled by women. In the end Billie Jean beat Bobby in three straight sets of tennis by simply wearing him out with long rallies. The final scores were 6-4, 6-3, and 6-3. After the match Bobby stated, " She was too good, too fast.

She returned all my passing shots and made a great plays off of them. " (Essortment 2002) This proves that women can out beat men, and that men do not give them enough creditability. Even though there was an immense

age difference between the two, the winnings of Billie Jean gave women confidence that women are just as good as men. This winning set a new era for women, an era of strength and determination to be just as good. Also women did not get paid as much as men did, until now. Women are finally being recognized as equal athletes to males, and this is the first sport that women have practically gained their equality (Sportingo 2007).

Besides the physical strength behind athletics that makes people think that women are not as serious in sports as men, there is the reason behind the advertisement. Women athletes are not known for their talent, they are known for their appearance. In mostly all women sport ad's the women are beautiful, making people believe that women athletics is a joke (Carty, V 2005) For example, Nike recently came out with an ad that's focus was to reshape the ideal female image from a fragile figure to a strong, toned build. In the ad, there is a woman who has an oversized, muscular backside, wearing boyshort underwear.

On the side, the text reads, " My butt is big, but that's fine, those who scorn it are invited to kiss it. " (Youngblood 2007) The main purpose of this ad is to prove that women are strong and tough, but the message that it really sends out is sexualized. This ad asks the question, how should women athletes be portrayed, with strength or with femininity that sometimes pushes in exploitation of the female body? Mary Jo Kane, director of Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport stated, " Media should represent the reality of sports, combining beauty, strength and power; showing a female athlete when she fails and when she is victorious; and accurately depicting what and who women are in sports. " (Youngblood 2007) An extreme

example of female athletes putting themselves out there in the media in a non-athletes kind of way, was when German Olympic gold medalist Katarina Witt posed nude in Playboy in 1998, a decade after she won her Olympic medals. (2007) This ad in no way is going to make people recognize her for her winnings in the Olympics; instead she is going to be known as a nude model posing for the human interest. The media is a major reason that women are not taken seriously in sports.

In ads for male athletes they are fully clothed and are trying to show off their skill level and achievement within the sports industry. This is not the case for women, some of the time they are showing off their skills, but most of the time they are showing off their looks and sexuality. Once females are seen for their skill, then the world will take them seriously and they can pursue their careers as professional athletes and can compete evenly with men. Women in sports have come a long way since the early 1900s. From barely competing in the Olympics to dominating in tennis, women's sports are slowly increasing.

Many people still refuse to accept that women's sports are serious and successful, because of all the bumps in the road, like the media. Once the world can see a female athlete for the talented person she is, then women's sports will be just as successful as men's. Women have come so far in pursuing their athletic ability in comparison to men. They have done this by increasing their endurance and strength, internally and externally, and one day very soon a woman is going to break that record marathon time held by a man.

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