

Teen homosexuality in athletics

Business



“ You get tired of constantly watching what you say, watching how you act. You’re almost paranoid,” says Lucas Goodman about being a gay athlete.

He was on a nationally ranked junior rowing team, yet he felt paranoid around his teammates (Wharton). What if they found out that he was gay? Some of the gay teens that have “ come out” to their teammates have found support among them; however, many teens have to deal with bully and isolation. Slurs and put downs affect homosexual teen athletes that have the potential to be superb athletes and role models. Gay athletes perform just as well and in some cases better than straight athletes do. Lucas Goodman is a perfect example of this fact.

National ranking of a team is not something that many athletes can say they are part of. The term national is a very prestigious title. Lucas Goodman can say this about himself, which truly shows that gay athletes can be just as good if not better than straight athletes can (Wharton). On the professional level, there have been many gay athletes who have come out as being gay after they have retired from their sport. They did this to avoid persecution from coaches and other teammates. These athletes include John Amechi (NBA- basketball), Esara Tuaolo (NFL- football), and Bruce Hayes (USA swimming).

Swimmer Bruce Hayes won a gold medal in the 1984 Olympics on the 800-meter relay team (“ The brief history of gay athletes”). Bruce Hays was a truly talented athlete. Many gay athletes have proved themselves national or worldwide competitors. Allen Acevado is a former student athlete from Bonita High School in California. Talking to teammates before a race, he said,

“ When I get married, the guy has to be-” “ Did you say guy?” another teammate interrupts.

“ Oh, you didn’t know?” replies Allen. Allen was a runner at a high school in California. He dedicated many of his free hours volunteering for gay rights groups. He wanted to enlist in the military; however, he confronted the “ don’t ask don’t tell” policy, and his paperwork was declined by the recruiter. He aims to break stereotypes. He found that at practice many of the other athletes on the team would run harder than normal; they did not want to lose to a gay person.

Allen and his parents fought over his sexual orientation when he came out, so he moved in with his older sister and worked two jobs to support his monetary demands. Working two jobs, he had to skip his senior year of track, and had to run on his own for the remainder of the year. He then took an internship with a gay rights group in Washington, D. C., where he continued to run on his own to stay in shape, with hopes of running at San Diego State in the fall semester.

“ When I get there, I’ll come out again,” he said (Wharton). Allen is not just gay, and he is not just an athlete, he is more than that. He is a role model. What can you do about gay athletes on your team? Being a high school student myself, I notice many slurs and titles thrown with negative connotation at practice and in the locker room. “ Homo”, “ fag”, and “ lesbian” are just a few of these.

Sometimes the words are directed toward other teammates, “ Dude, stop being a fag and pass me the ball,” or other times the words are used in

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general, “ Ugh, this is so gay!” Why are these words heard so much? To make the speaker feel better about themselves, they put others down using these derogatory terms so that other teammates do not think that they themselves are homosexuals. Other times it is because the athletes using these terms try to cover up their sexual identity by making it seem like others are homosexuals. By being the aggressor, they are protecting themselves from the truth. Being called any of these names would hurt. I would imagine would feel like getting a ball thrown right at your face.

Not only would it sting, but you would also have a mark that everyone could see. Fighting and calling each other names, teams do not function well; however, when honesty and acceptance are portrayed, athletes will feel comfortable with their environment and will perform at their highest potential. By using appropriate language and trying to understand where a teammate is coming from, your team will perform at a higher level when faced by adversity. Teammates and coaches often frown upon homosexuality in teen athletes. I do not understand why. Homosexuals can be great athletes and role models, and they do not need to be called names and put down because of it.

They are more than “ just gay”, or “ just athletes”. They are people just like you or me. The fact that I have to refer to homosexuals as “ they”, as if they are in another group of human beings, is disheartening. Homosexuals should not have to be referred to as another group of people. They are people just like you or me. If you would not want to be isolated or persecuted by your team, family, or people who you thought were your friends, then why would you do it to someone else?