Celebrating 40 Years of Title IX
How Far Have We Really Come?

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Celebrating 40 Years of Title IX: How Far Have We Really Come?

Gina Pauline

As this year marks the 40th anniversary of Title IX, it provides an opportunity to look at the past, present, and future of women and sport. Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 states, “No person in the U.S. shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal aid.” Since its passage, young girls and women have significantly benefited from the sport opportunities it created. The value of these opportunities is most perceived at the high school and college levels. According to Acosta and Carpenter (2012), there are today 4,494,406 boys and 3,173,549 girls participating in sport at the high school level. In the college setting, there is an average of 8.73 women’s teams per school and a total of about 200,000 female intercollegiate athletes—the highest in history. Furthermore, there are currently 9,274 women’s NCAA teams, an increase of 2,928 teams in the past 14 years (Acosta & Carpenter).

More opportunities to participate have translated into athletic accomplishments among women at the highest level. The timing of the 40th anniversary of Title IX could not have been more suitable, as women were a focal point of the 2012 Olympic Games in London. More female athletes participated in the 2012 London Olympics than in any other Olympic Games in history—nearly 5,000 from more than 200 nations, 44.4% of the overall total (Brennan, 2012). Female athletes participated on all 204 national teams and in 26 sports; this includes Saudi Arabia, who allowed women to compete for the first time in their history. This year, various national teams from across the world saw women claim more medals than men. More specifically, women won 49 of China’s 87 medals, 43 of Russia’s 78 medals, and 20 of Australia’s 35 medals (Brennan). Women took home 63% of the gold medals earned by the U.S. Olympic team. An even more astonishing figure is that if U.S. women were their own nation, they would have finished ahead of every other country’s total gold medal count except for China. An examination of the main storylines of the 2012 Olympic Games shows that they consistently emphasized the astonishing accomplishments of females, not only in their strong performances but in the obstacles they had to overcome to get there. While athletes such as Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt were expected to dominate the world’s attention, as the games began to unfold, they ended up sharing the spotlight with female athletes such as gymnast Gabby Douglas, swimmer Missy Franklin, and heptathlete Jessica Ennis. U.S. Olympic Committee chief executive Scott Blackmun traced the success back to the fact that Title IX legislation has made sports more available to girls and women. “Title IX (legislation) really gave the U.S. a head start in having a national commitment to make sure that young women are getting an opportunity to be involved in sport,” Blackmun said (Bryan, 2012).

As women have left a mark throughout the world by demonstrating their athletic talent, what does this mean for the next 40 years of Title IX? Certainly the media attention on the abilities of women can help inspire the next generation to achieve their dreams. Interest in sports among young girls will no doubt rise, particularly in soccer, gymnastics, swimming, track and field, and volleyball. This is a trend that we wish to see continue into the next era of Title IX, to build the next generation of Olympians.

While we expect participation and interest in sport among young girls and women to continue to rise, it is also important to look at how the implications of Title IX will further translate into opportunities for women in other areas, such as employment in the sport industry. In today’s society, as men still constitute the majority of decision makers within the industry, sport is still perceived as a primarily male domain (Massengale & Lough, 2010). In the sport industry, which includes professions in marketing, finance, event management, facility management, communications, sales, law, and governance, women are underrepresented, are paid less, and are marginalized in the workplace (Pauline, 2012). Women still do not have the same opportunities to hold traditional male positions and upper management positions (Whisenant, Miller, & Pedersen, 2005).

While the sport industry is still primarily controlled by male managers, and it is evident that other disparities still exist, organizations at all levels have begun to try to change the existing landscape by initiating programs, policies, and opportunities to further the advancement of women in the industry. It is important to highlight some of these. For example, the National Football League (NFL) has made gender equity a prior-
ity among the league. In August 2012, they hired the first female NFL referee, Shannon Eastin. Eastin stands among a small group of women to crack the officiating ranks at the highest levels of sport. Violet Palmer, one of Eastin’s inspirations, began officiating National Basketball Association games in 1997 and remains in the league. Bernice Gera became the first woman to work in baseball’s minor leagues, serving as an umpire in a New York–Penn League game in 1972. The NFL also signed a partnership with Women in Sport and Events this past spring to work on developing mentoring and instructional programs to help women advance in the sport industry. Major League Baseball (MLB) has taken on a similar mission, for which their efforts have paid off. Since September 2010, seven women have been hired as general managers in the affiliated minors (Borzi, 2012). The hiring followed a diversity initiative introduced by MLB president Pat O’Connor at the winter meetings in 2008. They have also sponsored several conferences and workshops to begin to open the doors for women.

At the collegiate level, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has placed an emphasis on gender equity since the early 1990s, when they implemented a gender equity survey. This led to a series of initiatives, including the formation of the NCAA Gender Equity Task Force, the certification process with a gender equity component, and Title IX seminars that have since been expanded to gender equity and diversity forums. The result has been a relatively balanced workplace, particularly at the lower- and middle-management levels within college athletics. Acosta and Carpenter (2012) noted that there are more female athletic administrators today than there were even four years ago, yet they are still the minority, particularly at top management, including the Division I-A athletic administrator level. Mark Emmert, president of the NCAA, noted, “Very few educational experiences surpass the power of sports to develop confidence, leadership, and the expectation that hard work and the opportunity to pursue life’s grandest goals can lead to a stronger future for its participants” (Lawrence, 2012). Most recently, the Alliance of Women Coaches and an international conference have led their efforts in promoting gender equity. To commemorate collegiate women’s athletics and the 40th anniversary of Title IX, the NCAA sponsored the International Olympic Committee (IOC) conference on women in sport that attracted more than 600 participants from more than 130 countries. Institutions and conferences that are a part of the NCAA have also worked hard to provide workshops and events for young women aspiring to careers in sport management.

Another area of progress that demonstrates the increased recognition of women in the sport industry is within membership. Of historical significance is that, for the first time in its 80-year history, Augusta National Golf Club opened its doors and accepted two female members. The home of the Masters golf tournament, which has been criticized for the past decade because of its all-male membership, invited former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and South Carolina financier Darla Moore to become the first women members this year. This serves as a milestone for women in business, as it sets the tone for other exclusive groups and clubs to begin to accept women as members.

Each of these cases is meant not only to exemplify the strides that women are making in sport, but, more important, to emphasize the power of management to serve as a catalyst for changing the landscape of the sport industry. For future generations of young women to have more opportunities to participate, compete, and work in the sport industry, change is imminent. Industry leaders and upper management need to continue to make a conscious effort by reflecting on their own perspective as well as on that of the organizations they lead. In particular, they need to consider the impact of their choices and how day-to-day decisions can contribute to or ameliorate the existing gender disparities within sport. Unless leaders recognize the issues and take an aggressive approach to make changes, the experience of women within the sport industry will remain the same and young girls will be denied the opportunity to fulfill their aspirations. The first 40 years of Title IX provide a great starting point, but what the current landscape has taught us is that if women are given an opportunity on an equal playing field, the possibilities are endless.

References


Bryan, R. (2012). Women make... Continues on page 56
in aerobic exercising (116.2%), running/jogging (85.4%), tennis (80.8%), workout at club (41.1%), exercise walking (22.8%), kayaking (13.6%), cross-country skiing (12.5%), and hiking (11.7%).

Youths (12-17 years old) followed a similar pattern. Declines since 2001 have occurred in baseball (-35.9%), basketball (-19.8%), football (-9.6%), softball (-5.4%), volleyball (-2.2%), and soccer (-1.4%). Ice hockey was the only team sport that increased (8.9%) among this group. Like the younger children, the youths increased their participation in numerous lifelong fitness activities and individual sports: aerobic exercising (89.1%), workout at club (78.3%), kayaking (59.2%), running/jogging (38.5%), exercise walking (32.6%), cross-country skiing (24.7%), exercise with equipment (22.0%), and archery (19.8%).

The survey was based on a sample of 25,000 individuals in the United States. It defined the participants as persons age seven or older who had participated in a sport more than once, or at least six times for a fitness activity, in 2011. Then the responses were projected to 280,834,000, the U.S. population age seven or older in 2011. Since 2010, the survey has been conducted online rather than through the mail. Readers should keep this in mind when making direct comparisons with data published before 2010. For more information, go to the NSGA web site (www.nsga.org).

Correction
An article in the May/June 2012 issue of JOPERD, titled “How Teachers Can Use PE Metrics for Grading,” unintentionally mischaracterized the availability of PE Metrics’ “Ability Score Calculator.” In fact, delays in developing the Ability Score Calculator have led to it not yet being available to PE Metrics users. The author and the editors regret any inconvenience or confusion that this may have caused.

Cost Reduces School Sport Participation
Tight funding has forced school districts across the country to cut their athletic budgets, and many schools have resorted to charging participation fees in order to maintain school sports. According to a recent poll of parents of middle- and high-school-age children, this new trend has reduced sport participation. The University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health found that 12 percent of all parents and 19 percent of lower-income parents report that their children are participating less in school sports due to the extra costs. Sixty-one percent of children playing middle or high school sports were charged a pay-to-play fee. The average fee was $93, but 21 percent of children had to pay $150 or more. After adding other sport-related expenses, such as uniforms, equipment, and additional team fees, the average cost per child amounted to $381. The poll also found that only six percent of participants received a waiver of pay-to-play fees, indicating a need for schools to revise their waiver policies (e.g., consider partial waivers, installment payments) in order to ensure that all children are able to enjoy the many benefits of sport participation.

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