

Why are there Fewer Female Coaches?

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There is no doubt that the number of sports available to women and girls, as well as female participation in sports, has increased since the U.S. Congress passed Title IX legislation in 1972. This is great news – or is it?

In 1993, more than 3 million female students in kindergarten through grade 12 participated in organized sports. In 1971, before the advent of the Title IX, only 300,000 female students participated in intercollegiate athletics. It was assumed by women's groups like the Women's Sports Foundation that an increase in female participation in sports would mean an increase in women in sport leadership positions as well (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985). Instead, from 1972 to 1993, the number of female administrators, coaches and officials decreased drastically. In the same period of time, the number of women who coached female sports at the secondary and college levels also decreased, from more than 95 percent to less than 40 percent.

In 2007 in Starkville, Miss., the Mississippi Soccer Association hosted the Coaches' Cup, a tournament for recreational teams. Thirty-seven soccer teams (boys and girls) from across the state registered for the weekend competition. It may not be surprising that men coached most of the teams – both boys and girls. Further investigation showed that out of the 37 head coaches present at the tournament, only five (13.5 percent) were women.

At the intercollegiate level, Title IX equalized the salaries and benefits for male and female coaches, which made coaching female teams more respectable and attractive to male coaches. Title IX created more coaching positions in

female sports, but men filled these positions. In 1992, 90 percent of all NCAA Division I female soccer teams had female coaches; five years later the number had decreased to 50 percent, and the number continues to shrink.

The trend of men replacing women is evident in the coaching of all collegiate women's sports. The percentage of male head coaches of female teams

The NCAA 2004 report shows that significantly fewer women hold head coaching positions than men in all sports among NCAA member institutions. About 3,280 of the 7,925 college coaches who coached women's sports were women (41 percent); of the 808 head coaches of female teams, only 247 (31 percent) were women, with the remaining 561 (69 percent) head coach positions occupied by men.

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at the collegiate level increased 137 percent from 1974 to 1997, and the number of female head coaches decreased by 20 percent.

In order to comply with Title IX requirements, many intercollegiate and interscholastic athletic departments reacted by eliminating separate athletics departments for men and women and creating one athletics department. When departments were combined, the incumbent male athletics director usually took over the merged program (Acosta & Carpenter, 1985).

Unfortunately, after the mergers of male and female athletic programs, when male directors had to hire someone to supervise women's programs, they turned to male friends or colleagues. Collins (1997, 19) wrote: "They'd get Joe instead of Josie to fill the basketball job. It wasn't deliberate. They were just using their natural networking skills." Barker (1998) referred to this practice as institutional occupational discrimination and identified it as one of the major reasons why the number of female coaches has declined.

These statistics confirm that women are underrepresented in sports leadership and coaching positions. However, experts do not agree on the cause of the decline. Some experts believe that Title IX is the root cause of the problem. It is hard to imagine that before 1972, female administrators directed more than 90 percent of women's athletic programs, but by 1984 32 percent of all collegiate programs did not employ women in any athletic administrative position. More than 40 percent of student-athletes are women, but NCAA Division I data (1997) indicates that only 9 percent of athletics director positions are held by women.

Experts have given several other reasons for the decrease in the number of women in sport leadership and administrative positions. Some even have suggested that the spread of programs that combined the management and operation of male and female sports teams after the enactment of Title IX was the primary reason for the decline. Other reasons:

- Women do not apply for coaching positions as they arise.

- Women are less interested than men in becoming head coaches.
- The salaries for head coaches of female teams is significantly lower than the salaries for head coaches of male teams.
- Coaching is viewed as a nontraditional vocation for women.
- Unconscious or conscious sex discrimination leads women to resign from coaching positions.

Each of these reasons individually may contribute to the low number of female coaches; it is more plausible that a combination of two or more of these factors contribute to the lower number of women coaching sports. It is my opinion that the enactment of Title IX was the genesis of this problem. Title IX is a double-edged sword. Many experts and feminist organizations assumed that an increase in the number of female sports and participation in sports would result in an increase in the number of female coaches and administrators. Boy, were they wrong.

This problem is not unique to the

United States. The Norwegian Confederation of Sports gradually has addressed female demands for equal opportunities and full integration at all levels. However, the politics of sports and coaching in Norway is characterized by male dominance, partly because of recruiting problems and the high dropout rate among female coaches (Hovden, 1999). Hovden further stated that women themselves are responsible for their minority status in sports administration and coaching. He pointed out that a central issue for women in sport organizations today is whether or not the struggle for equal status and opportunity is worth the price. Hovden described the female minority status in athletics as an individual choice, not an organizational challenge. That was a strong indictment, to say the least. I am confident that there is plenty of support (even from some women), as well as opposition of these views.

Regardless of where you stand on this issue, one thing is unarguable: There are significantly fewer women in sport leadership today than Pre-Title IX.

References

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Editor's note: The above article is an excerpt from Dr. Eguaoje's book, Bridging the Gender Gap in Sports Leadership. Dr. Eguaoje is Technical Director of Coaching for the Mississippi Soccer Association and Adjunct Professor of Athletics Administration at Nova Southeastern University.

Request for Nominations for the NSCAA Board of Directors

This is to notify the NSCAA membership of an upcoming election for the following positions on the Executive Committee of the NSCAA Board of Directors:

- Vice-President for Communications and Marketing
- Secretary

Elections also will be held for the following positions on the NSCAA Board of Directors:

- College Men's Representative
- High School Girls Representative
- Youth Boys Representative

The election will culminate Jan. 8, 2010. Election results will be announced at the Annual Meeting of the membership, Jan. 15, 2010, in Philadelphia, Pa.

Any active or life member may submit one or more nominees for these positions to the Nominations and Election Committee, which then will select a maximum of three names per position based on the following criteria:

- Current NSCAA member who has been a member at least five of the past eight years;
- Ability to fulfill the duties in the job description that will be provided to the nominee (to view the job descriptions, go to the "About NSCAA" section of NSCAA.com);

- Have served on the Board of Directors for a minimum of three years, been the chair of a standing NSCAA committee or council for a minimum of three years, been a member of the Academy staff for a minimum of three years or be able to demonstrate distinguished service to the sport of soccer.

No person may be nominated for more than one position in a given election. Nominations should include a brief description of how the nominee(s) meet the aforementioned criteria and should be submitted to:

Al Albert
Attn: NSCAA Nominations
514 Newport Ave.
Williamsburg, VA 23185

Nominations must be postmarked no later than May 31, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,


James A. Sheldon
Executive Director