Sports Vs. Women Essay, Research Paper

Sports are a very important part of the American society. Within sports heroes are made, goals are set and dreams are lived. The media makes all these things possible by creating publicity for the rising stars of today. Within society today, the media has downplayed the role of the woman within sports.

When the American people think of women in sports, they think of ice skating, field hockey and diving. People do not recognize that women have the potential to play any sport that a man can play, with equal skill, if not better. Right now in some part of America, there is a women who aspires to play hockey for the New York Rangers, but what she does not realize is that the media will not give a positive backing to her effort. This negative coverage will shatter her dream within a matter of seconds.

Women today have found the intensity that drives people to play sports. One of the most recent electrifying events that shows women expressing their love for the game, regardless of which game, is when Brandi Chastain tore her jersey off after the United States women?s soccer team won the Women?s World Cup final. After this incredible display of victory, the media put Ms. Chastain?s face all over the world. She was a feature on Sportscenter on ESPN and she was on every news broadcasts for a solid week. But this was not the biggest accomplishment, Brandi made the cover for Sports Illustrated the following month. For winning the World Cup the women each received a sum of $12,500, whereas if the men won they would have each received a s um $388,000.

This event also influenced sitcoms. In a March 2000 episode of the television sitcom, Third Rock From the Sun, on of the characters makes a direct quote in relation to the extravagant display of triumph. The character was quoted to say, ?She is about one goal away from ripping her shirt off.? Since the World Cup, taking your shirt off is something that people relate with women soccer and its players.

Coverage of another female athlete, Laila Ali, was due to reasons other than ripping off her shirt. The reason that Ali was covered was due to the fact that she is a legacy. She is a the daughter of the famous Muhammed Ali. Laila, 22, started to box and try to follow the famous foot steps of her famous father. The media coverage of this up and coming female boxer is phenomenal. In her first fight, Laila ?Madam Butterfly? Ali, knocked out her opponent, April Fowler, in thirty-one seconds. The main focus of her fame is in direct relation with the fame of her father and his reign of her famous father.

Laila fame has brought a whole new light to the world of female boxing. Other former heavyweight champions, George Foreman and Joe Frazier, have encouraged their daughters to participate in this brutal sport. These women who are successful in the business world, working an attorney and a nail salon owner, are very interested in trying to share the spotlight with their famous counterpart fathers.

The media has deemed women boxing as an unruly display of masculinity. Labeling women who participate in this sport as a dyke or lesbian. Since boxing is such a brutal sport, some parts of the media have labeled the sport as an act of unnecessary roughness with a strong undertone of un-called for violence.

Throughout time women have gone through a lot within the world of sports. In 1999, Newsweek, published an article outlining the ?Leaps and Bounds? the women have overcome to be where they are today. The events outlined in this article include dates which have made history such as in 1920 when the first woman competed in the Olympics and won three gold medals and 1965 when Donna De Varona became the first women to a sportscaster on network television. One of the most important stats within this article lies in the fact that in women sports have taken off so much that in 1996 the WNBA, the first women? pro basketball league is launched.

One of the most important public documents was passed in 1972. Title IX, aimed to provide equality within the sports world. The main purpose of this document was to ban the sexual discrimination in federally funded school programs, which included the sports programs. The current statistic of girls playing sports in high school was 1 in 27. In 1996, 1 in 3 girls in the United States was involved in some sort of federally funded and privately funded sports activity.

Jon Alter, a NBC News contributor, is a strong believer in Title IX. ?Many American are learning that the triumph of women?s team sports is the result of something called Title IX.? In fact, men have noticed the change in the media attention much more than they have been gien credit for. Even the president of the United States, Bill Clinton, enjoyed the USA victory at the World Cup. The women?s World Cup victory had more fans watching than Game 7 of the 1999 Stanley Cup Finals. With 90,000 fans present for the event and another 657,000 tuned in on ESPN at home, the event drew massive amounts of publicity. The night that the game was replayed, it drew more attention than baseball?s All-Star Game that was aired the same night.

One of the most surprising rises in women?s sports has seen in the field of softball. In the years past, softball has been a female dominated sport with leagues around the country. In Fairfield County, Connecticut, the Brakettes are a legend. The women who participate in this fast pitch sport have no fear of getting dirty or suffering from the unbearable injuries that this sport puts them through.

The women who come out and play this sport are there for the reason that is lacking within sports today. This reason is why sports originated in the first place. Athletes participate in sports for one reason ? the love of the game. Within professional sports today, the love of the game has been lost. We see that players are no longer on the playing field for the feeling of victory, but are out there for the seven figure pay check that they receive for dedicating half of the year to their sport. This is the beauty that is captured by the media. The media covers the purity that women?s sports still holds. Women participate in sports for the love of the game, not because they will bring home millions of dollars doing it.

Marketing has also been a strong hold of women?s sports recently. With Nike commercials featuring Mia Hamm, a female soccer star, ruling your television, you can not miss the tons of young girls sporting their USA soccer jerseys while they kick around a soccer ball in the park. Although the spotlight has not yet been removed off marketing male-associated sports, television advertising of women athletes and their sports has greatly increased in the past couple of years.

With all of the frenzy comes the birth of something that has been tied to sports since the beginning. Heroes. The youth of America has dreamed of the day that they will be able to step up to the plate at Shea Stadium, stand next to the Green Monster, or hover over the line of scrimmage. Men have always had sports heroes of the same sex to look up to. There is not a man alive who at one point in their life has not pretended like his was hitting a homerun off Roger Clemens or catching a pass thrown by Joe Montana. Now women have the opportunity to score on a pass from Mia Hamm or run next to Jackie Joyner-Kersey. These women have provided themselves as positive role models for the youth of today.

As quoted in Business Week, women have ?few Leagues of their own.? The American Basketball League was forced to fold after the television networks turned down all offers to broadcast the games. On the other hand, the National Football League was being offered 17 million dollars to for their rights to be televised. The women?s basketball league was not offered any money, but had to offer to pay the networks to air their games. Due to the fact that the ABA could not even pay to have their games televised it seemed that the ABA ?had too much red and not enough green.?

The WBNA is tagged as a ?runaway hit? due to the fact that it is the first women?s sport to sign a deal with a major network to air their games. In 1999, media coverage up for the league as well as ratings, while the attendance for the games is up twelve percent. The WBNA commissioner believes that the only way to have a successful league is based on one single solitary element. ?You need TV, TV, TV?national TV. That breeds credibility with fans.? The WBNA plays in the summer so that they do not have to compete with the NBA, NFL, NHL, or NCAA for the airtime that is required to run a successful league.

Sean McManus, president of CBS Sports, believes that there is little room for women?s sports on today?s network?s. ?Advertiser?s are not convinced that the way to reach women is through women?s sports. A lot more women watch the World Series than the WBNA.? McManus believes that the whole women?s sports movement is still in its early stages and will need serious room to grow.

Other sports teams that were scheduled to sign network deals include the Women?s Professional Hockey League (WPHL) the National Soccer Alliance (NSA) and the Women?s Pro Fastpitch (WPF). The WPHL was scheduled to start in the winter of 1999 with four teams in Quebec, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. This league was to start with a 2.5 million dollar budget. There were twenty players with signed letters of intent, six of which were Olympians. The tickets were priced at five dollars a piece and the maximum salary for a player was $21,000. This league never took of and the networks dismissed then completely. The NHL is now working on starting on plans for a women?s league.

The NSA was supposed to start in 1997. They had a commitment from twelve Olympians including American star, Mia Hamm. This league also never kicked off because there was hostility due to the worry that the NSA would interfere with Women?s World Cup Soccer. The softball league, WPF, was backed by AT&T Wireless and had six teams set up to begin play in 1997. The six teams were from states such as Florida, Georgia and North Carolina. The planned salary cap for the entire team was a mere $25,000. The coaches would drive the buses and the players would stay at shady hotel rooms. They played one year and went bankrupt in November of 1999.

Sometimes it is not money that decides the media coverage which women?s sports receive. Henry Freeman, who was a sports editor, increased the amount of coverage that the LPGA received. This was excepted, but no one knew the reason that Freeman had for backing the LPGA so strongly. It all came out when a local pro uncovered her relationship with the network? sports editor from USA Today. Although Freeman increased coverage to please his friend, the publicity helped to turn out record breaking attendance for LPGA events. Gene Policinski, managing editor for USA Today, points out that 25 to 30 percent of the readers of USA Today are women. He also points out that women?s sports play are second to what he calls the ?Big Three? which include men?s baseball, basketball and football.

Libby King, who works for ESPN, states that

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