

*Why Everyone Deserves a Sporting Chance: Education, Justice, and School Sports**

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Speaking at a college athletic banquet, Donald Kennedy, the former president of Stanford University, spoke about when he had been a college athlete thirty years earlier:

It occurs to me to wonder: what would the reaction have been if I had predicted that soon women would run the Boston Marathon faster than it had ever been run by men up to that point? There would have been incredulous laughter from two-thirds of the room, accompanied by a little locker-room humor.

Yet that is just what has taken place. My classmates would be astonished at the *happening*, but they would be even more astonished at the *trends*. If we look at the past 10 years of world's best times in the Marathons for men and women, it is clear that the women's mark has been dropping over the decade, at a rate about seven times faster than the men's record.

While Kennedy was in school, the swimming teams of Harvard and Yale were the best in the country. He used them for comparison:

What would have happened if you had put this year's Stanford women into the pool? *Humiliation* is what. Just to give you a sample, *seven* current Stanford women would have beaten my friend Dave Hedberg, Harvard's great sprint free-styler, and *all* the Yalies in the 100. The Stanford women would have swept the 200-yard backstroke and breaststroke, and won *all* the other events contested.

In the 400-yard freestyle relay there would have been a 10-second wait between Stanford's touch and the first man to arrive at the finish. Do you know how *long* 10 seconds is? Can you imagine that crowd . . . seeing a team of *girls* line up against the two best freestyle relay groups in the East, expecting the unexpected, and then having to wait *this* long-for the men to get home? (1)

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Kennedy's anecdote asks us to reexamine assumptions about male-female differences that are based on past performance. Short-distance swimming and long-distance track records of men are better to date than those of women, but the rate of improvement for women is far better than the rate of improvement for men. What has changed is the opportunity for women to participate and train in these sports, because about ten years before Donald Kennedy spoke, Title IV, the federal legislation prohibiting sex discrimination in school programs, was passed. The lesson is that we must be careful about attributing differences in sports ability to sex differences: Opportunity produces far greater improvement in performance than anyone would have predicted.

Equal opportunity is an important value in our society. It is often invoked to support controversial positions because everyone agrees that it is good. But it is not always clear what or how much should be done to achieve this goal, or how to provide equal opportunity for people who are not equal at the start. In sports, there is a special problem: Sports are physical, and females and males are different physically. Some of the physical differences are the result of different experience. Some differences in stamina, flexibility, or strength are assumed to be innate. But how do we handle such differences if our goal is to provide equal opportunity in sports?

Should equal resources be used for male and female football teams? Should males and females compete together or separately in particular sports? Are there some sports that females should not play? Some that males should not play? Should the rules of some sports be changed to promote equal opportunity? If so, why? And if not, why not?

This essay attempts to provide a means to answer these questions by comparing sports with education, recommending that our experience in trying to increase equal opportunity in education be applied to opportunities in sports.

Recommendations for improving sports opportunities for females have met with opposition. Title IX has been obeyed slowly and begrudgingly in the area of sports. Portions of the legislation allowing sex separation in certain sports have been used to continue sex inequalities. Institutions claim to comply with the legislation with unequal facilities because fewer females participate in sports. Yet in other areas of education, attempts to provide equal opportunity have resulted in programs designed to increase interest and ability: "Head Start" preschooling, special training for parents, attempts to connect education with more popular activities such as sports and television, special training in math and science. Even though the success of these programs may be modest, they have not been resisted the way proposals for changing school sports are have been.

In the first half of this essay I will compare sports with education. To the extent my analogy is successful, it will follow that beliefs we have about equal opportunity in education also apply to the goal of equal opportunity for participation in sports. Then I will examine proposals for changing school sports to foster equal opportunity.

WHY EQUALITY MATTERS

First, we need an explanation of why equality in sports for women is important. In what follows, I argue that access to sports is like access to education, and therefore the arguments for equal opportunity in education hold for equal opportunities in sports. And the very solutions that provide equal opportunity in education for people with different abilities also work for sports.

The Use of Analogy

I am going to explain why I believe sports opportunities should be treated like educational opportunities. Such an analogy says: "A is like B." Of course no A is ever exactly like a B. But if A is a controversial topic and no one knows exactly how to handle it, then an analogy can help. If B is better understood and less controversial, thinking of problem area A as if it were B may lead to a better understanding of A.

Let us look at one well-known analogy. We have been told that alcoholism is a disease and should be treated like one. That is, it is *like* a disease. Those who make the analogy want us to think of the way we treat people who have diseases—with sympathy and understanding and special care, with government money and foundation grants to search for cures and remedies, with hospital care and sick leaves if necessary. If people get pneumonia, we do not usually fire them from their jobs, denounce them from pulpits or laugh at them on street corners. A person cannot help getting pneumonia; at least he or she cannot control the disabling consequences. So also, the analogy tells us, for alcoholism: Alcoholics need special treatment, as if they were sick; they should not be blamed and punished by society.

If the analogy is accepted, certain actions are called for, certain things become clear. The analogy helps us focus on some issues and rule out others. For example, we might suppose that people who become alcoholics have weak constitutions, that perhaps they are genetically disposed to be that way. But with the disease analogy, we can see that even if this is true, becoming an alcoholic is not inevitable or disgraceful, any more than getting pneumonia or breast cancer is. Given the analogy, having a "weak constitution" is not reason for blame or shame.

Most of us have inherited predispositions for some illnesses or weaknesses; most of us have some kind of weak constitution.

If the analogy is not accepted, then it is up to the rejecter to show what is wrong with the comparison, to show how the differences between alcoholism and cancer or pneumonia are significant and relevant enough that what we say about one does not apply to the other.

Some might think the example does not go far enough. Alcoholism is not *like* a disease, they would argue; it *is* a disease. If the analogy with sports and education works the same way, people might begin to think the same thing—sports participation is not *like* education; it *is* education, an essential part of it.

If the analogy of sports with education turns out to be a good one, it will help us when we define the issues, recommend solutions, and talk about equal opportunity in situations where abilities may differ. While it may not necessarily help us find solutions or decide between alternative proposals, it will help us focus on the important dimensions of the problem.

Our View of Education:

Let us look first at education. In the United States we think that education is a right. Everyone should receive an education, whether or not that person is going to appreciate it, benefit from it, or use it later, whether or not that person is any good at learning. No one would say, "I don't really believe in education for boys. Everyone knows that boys lag behind girls in learning ability and many of them are not really interested, so there's really no point." Education is too important to deny to the unskilled or uninspired.

When it comes to education we have a better idea of what equal opportunity means. It does not mean only that there are no legal barriers preventing people

from learning some sorts of things. And it does not mean merely that everyone has an equal chance at the start. Nor does it mean that everyone is given instruction in everything, or allowed to attend any school whatever. Our experience with education has taught us that providing equal opportunity requires much more than allowing everyone to try out and excluding those who do not make it. We have to provide extra teaching, eyeglasses, hearing aids, or Braille lessons for some. We do not exclude people from education because they cannot see or hear or are slow to learn. We try to provide role models of different sorts, educational television programs, earlier preschooling, extra tutoring, and incentives for the unmotivated. We do more than give people an equal opportunity for learning; we try to make sure they do learn.

Even higher education of some sort is available to nearly everyone who has graduated from high school and to many who have not. There are adult education classes for people who want extra education, literacy courses for people who missed out when they were younger, and special education for those with mental or physical disabilities. Up through high school and in many colleges and universities, the primary responsibility of the institution is to provide a basic education for everyone. The resources go first to basic courses for the majority and then to special classes for the gifted.

Equal opportunity is taken seriously even where the educational opportunities are restricted. For example, Smith College, one of the few remaining institutions reserved (at the undergraduate level) for women, defends its restriction by arguing that in this society men dominate to such an extent that even in education women tend to be ignored, women's interests tend to be given second place, women students tend to be given less attention. Smith therefore provides an opportunity

for women to be educated in a setting where *they* are the more important gender, where they are not discouraged from areas of study that are dominated by males. Perhaps the best arguments for Smith College's policy are the statistics it cites about the percentage of math, science, and computer science majors it produces, far in excess of coed universities with larger facilities and Nobel laureate science teachers. Smith argues that by reserving its undergraduate education for women, it contributes toward equal opportunity on the larger scale.

Our View of Sports:

When it comes to sports, equal opportunity does not play the same role. People rarely talk about a certain basic level of athletic proficiency being achieved by all, or about special training programs for the athletically disadvantaged, at least not in the United States. We do not hear about recruitment of minority coaches or players, or attempts to get girls interested in sports by associating sports with other things they are interested in. In contrast to the educational rationale for Smith College, many sex-segregated sports provide benefits for males that are not offered to females.

Unlike education, in sports resources are provided mainly to the elite. The vast majority is neglected. Only if the resources are plentiful do secondary teams receive support. If there are cutbacks, it is the less skilled who suffer.

Many have argued that to provide sports opportunities for everyone would require an enormous increase in funding. There is not that enough money available. Therefore sports opportunities are treated as a scarce resource. No attempt is made to distribute them evenly. Instead, they are reserved for the few who can benefit most, or can provide the most glory or money for the institution.

The same argument could be made for education. We *could* provide a much better education to the especially talented by depriving the majority. We could treat education as a scarce resource to which only a given amount of time and money can be dedicated, and give it out only to the specially deserving, the privileged few who would really benefit the most. But this does not seem either wise or fair.

There are countries where education *is* treated as a scarce resource. Until recently, the British and Chinese systems of higher education were reserved for the privileged few, those who show an aptitude early in life. But, as the quotation from Donald Kennedy at the beginning of this essay shows, increased access to sports can produce successes not previously imagined. The changes in women's participation in basketball and soccer, the success of the WNBA and the World Cup soccer win by American women would not have happened without that Title IX legislation enacted nearly 30 years ago.

The U.S. attitude toward education, and increasingly the British and Chinese attitude as well, is that everyone can benefit, and that the country as a whole, including the specially talented, would benefit more from distributing educational benefits widely than from reserving them for the elite.

If we treated sports resources the way we treat educational resources, we would distribute them more widely to include more people. We would not reserve them for the few who "make the team." We would make sure there were teams, coaching, and facilities for everyone. We could still give out trophies, medals, and high scores to the best, just as we can give out As to the best students or limit enrollment in some schools to the academic elite. We could still have some teams and games and tournaments reserved for advanced players, just as certain courses,

certain types of laboratory equipment, and rare book collections are reserved for advanced students. But the basic resources of sports—instruction, coaching, team and tournament organization, supplies, and whatever else is necessary for participation and the achievement of a certain level of proficiency—would not be denied anyone just because he or she is not exceptionally talented.

Why We Might Think Sports and Education are Different

Let us look at why we think education is a basic benefit that should not be denied to anyone, and why we think sports are not.

Some people may resist the analogy of sports and education because they think the skills acquired are quite different in nature and importance. The education one receives in school, they would claim, is about thinking—mental activity, part of our work, our career, something that is the essence of what it means to be human—while sports are merely recreational, a physical activity, and therefore less important.

One might point out that to be human is to have both mental and physical abilities. To encourage equal opportunity in the development of mental abilities while denying equal opportunity in the development of physical abilities is analogous to encouraging equal opportunity in literary education while denying equal opportunity in math education.

However, it is not clear that the difference between education and sports can be characterized as a difference between mental and physical activity. Sports require mental activity to learn the rules and strategies of the games. And many school subjects require physical activity in the form of practice and hands-on experience. Some obvious examples are courses in art, theatre and music. Language learning is another area where physical as well as mental activity is needed. Students have to

practice forming the sounds, listening and imitating the phrases of the language over and over to begin to master it. In the sciences, collecting specimens, using laboratory equipment, and conducting experiments all require physical activity. Medical students need to practice before they can perform even routine examinations. The list could go on.

While a distinction between the physical and the mental may not serve to separate sports and education, some would say the two are distinct in other ways. Getting an education is important, while playing a sport is merely recreational, a leisure activity. An education is necessary for full participation in civilization. In many cases an education is necessary for getting and keeping a job or for getting a promotion. And without the ability to read, write, and do basic math, one cannot understand much of the society, acquire new information, and use it to work with others. Education helps people understand their world, to get along in a changing and complex society, to appreciate its benefits and recognize its dangers. We may think of education as a means and participation in civilization as the end. The more education you have, the more you can participate. That is why we think that everyone should have access to an education, and that if they are not quick to learn they deserve more resources.

In contrast, people usually think of the benefits of sports differently. Sports provide personal pleasure, enjoyment of the game and the pleasure of competence, camaraderie with other players (including opponents), and sometimes the exultation of winning. Where education is thought to be necessary, sports are thought to be optional.

Opponents of equal opportunity in sports are likely to reason thus: Sports may provide pleasure, but there is no special reason why a society has to try to provide

such pleasures for everyone. People ought to be free to seek such pleasures, but there are different ways of having fun, and if some people cannot participate in sports, they should look for another way to enjoy themselves—listen to music or take up knitting, for example.

Therefore, in order to argue for equal sports opportunities on the model of equal opportunity in education, we need to show that sports participation is like education in its importance, that it should not be considered just an optional activity for some students to enjoy and excel, any more than math and literacy should be considered optional activities.

There is no doubt that sports are important in our culture. Sports professionals become famous and are highly paid. Sports are highly valued and receive attention, even devotion from many people. Still we might think its importance is essentially different in kind from the importance of education. (2) Yet there are ways in which the importance of sports is very much like that of education.

How Sports are like Education

Review for a minute why education is important, and why we think that equal opportunity in education is important. It provides the tools for success in our culture. It gives people the opportunity to use and contribute to the benefits of our culture. It gives people the means to participate fully in the world.

But these benefits are just what many people claim about sports, even by those who would reserve the greater portion of sports resources for males.

For many, sports participation is seen as more than just fun, more than optional recreation. It helps to build character. It teaches leadership. One learns to try harder when things get tough instead of giving up, to persevere, to concentrate, to practice. One learns how to compete with friends, (3) to play with people one does

not like, to consider game strategies, even to sit on the bench. One learns the capabilities of one's body, to have a positive self-image, to have greater self-confidence. (4) The clichéd metaphors about being "team players," about "playing ball," "touching base," having a "field sense," "playing by the rules," "running interference," even "knowing the score," all testify to the value of sports participation in learning to flourish in our society. (5)

Someone might argue that the important things that can be learned through sports might be taught in other ways. However, the same thing might be said about formal education. Perhaps the things one learns in classrooms can be taught in other places, by informal conversations or on-the-job training. Perhaps. But just as the possibility of outside training does not diminish our belief in the goal of equal opportunity in education, the possibility of learning by other means some of the things sport teaches should not diminish our belief in the goal of equal opportunity in sports.

Even if one denies the particular values claimed for sports participation, there are other reasons to distribute access to sports more widely. Mary Anne Warren has pointed out that school sports function now to identify *who* is valuable. (6) The attention and prestige given to school sports leaders make them heroes. To the extent that students learn that only boys can be heroes, they are learning that boys are going to become the dominant people and girls are not. And Warren thinks this is a bad thing to learn.

There *are* other outlets for leadership in school so Warren's point may not be as strong as she would like it to be. The best scholars, the class presidents, the leads in school plays, the students with musical talent, all are possible school heroes, possible school stars. While the relative value of these different abilities

may vary from school to school, excellence in sports is only one way to become a hero.

But Warren's idea that school sports teach something about roles in life is a good one. We learn in school which sports are interesting, what kinds of players are interesting, and what we are going to play or watch later in life. Playing a sport makes it much more likely one will be a spectator of that sport. Most importantly, as Warren says, we learn whether we are going to be included in this aspect of civilization.

This aspect of civilization—sports—involves an immense amount of time and energy and resources: Sporting events garner more television viewers and more advertising money than any other event. There are sports facilities in cities, in private clubs, in backyards; sports equipment in stores; television, newspaper, and magazine space; the time and money devoted to reporting scores, gossip, highlights of sports events; Olympic games, "battles of the stars," football games on television that sometimes delay all the later shows; the time people spend reading about, watching, and discussing games; statistics and predictions; the teaching of sports to children; the organizing of sports events. If some people are deprived of sports opportunities when they are young, they are less likely to develop the interest or the knowledge needed to participate in this aspect of their culture.

A society comes with rituals and activities and organizations that constitute its civilization. Barring people who live in that society from important aspects of the civilization is unjust, whether or not what they are excluded from has particular value. It is unjust if those activities, as Warren points out, are used as symbols of power, signs of who is allowed to have power. It is also unjust because those

people are excluded from an important aspect of the civilization, denied a chance to fully participate in the society, denied the common interests and common experiences with other members of their society, deprived of a chance to learn about those aspects of the society.

Compare sports with subjects taught in schools. One could argue that although literature and history, for example, may be interesting, they are not important for daily life. However, it would be harder to deny their value in allowing people to participate more fully in our culture and civilization. People who do not learn about the Civil War or Tom Sawyer or Romeo and Juliet will not have that information in common with other members of their culture and will not be able to appreciate or understand references to these subjects.

The importance of being able to jog or play softball or tennis with co-workers or to converse intelligently about baseball and football should not be underrated. People who have not played sports are less likely to follow them, which can be a cultural disadvantage as great as if they had never learned any history or literature. (7) It does not matter whether we think sports are culturally worthwhile or not. Merely because sports are valued in our society, it is important that people not be denied access to them.

We measure a civilization in terms of the education of its people. And it is not just the number of Nobel laureates who are measured, but the education of all its citizens. A growing illiteracy and school drop-out rate in the United States or a poor performance by U.S. students in worldwide science and math tests are causes for everyone's concern because they indicate a downturn for our society.

Countries are also evaluated by the physical abilities of their citizens. It is a source of pride and patriotism to produce world champions, and it is women who

have produced the biggest international wins for the U.S. recently. While this argues for increased opportunity for women athletes, still, unlike education, it is mostly the stars that boost national pride, not the athletic ability of the general population.

Increased opportunity for all would increase the pool of potential stars and improve eventual quality. It might also change our criteria for comparing and evaluating other cultures.

Because we do not think of sports participation the way we think of education, we do not value it in the same way. But maybe we should. Consider our concern about poor performance by American children on physical tests, a problem that could be solved by making sports participation more attractive and more widespread, as we try to do with science and math education. Consider our worry about the increasing obesity of U.S. residents. Instead of looking primarily at the eating habits of other countries to try to improve our own, we might do better to increase the sports opportunities and enjoyment for everyone.

By thinking of sports in terms of education, we can benefit from what we have learned about working toward equal opportunity in education to promote equal opportunity in sports. The comparison will help us to evaluate the proposals for providing more sports opportunities for females. For example, many of the educational programs have been attempts to motivate—to get educationally deprived children to want to learn. Perhaps we should spend more energy doing the same in sports—getting sports-deprived children, especially girls, to want to play sports.

Fine, some might say. Equal opportunity is a good thing, but what more do you want to do? We already have Title IX legislation that has led to astonishing increases in women's sports. Since this legislation, the number of high school girls playing

interscholastic sports increased eight times to more than 2.4 million. While the ratio of males to females on athletic scholarships was once 1000 to 1, it is now roughly 2 to 1. (8) Yet males still participate in sports more, and get more opportunities and encouragement to participate, than do females. How do you change that?

PROPOSALS TO INCREASE EQUALITY

In what follows, we will look at proposals to encourage equal opportunity for sports. On the model of equal opportunity for education, a 2 to 1 ratio of participation by different groups should be cause for alarm, and other programs to encourage the less involved group need to be considered. In what follows, I hope to show that the proposals designed to encourage more girls, to play do not require radical changes, nor do they threaten the quality of sports—at least no more than changes and variations that routinely occur in sports.

Allow Females Access to More Kinds of Sports.

This proposal would go farther than the federal legislation designed to provide equal opportunity for females in school sports. The legislation allows exceptions for certain college sports in the distribution of resources, allowing sex segregation in sports that involve bodily contact and then providing no team organization or coaching for female football, ice hockey or wrestling, claiming lack of interest. This proposal would merely allow females to participate in all the sports that are now restricted to males, allowing the possibility that a new generation of women skilled in those sports might achieve the same earning power and star power, and become the kind of role models that men in those fields now have. It would remind those who consider female participation in some sports to be inappropriate, that before Title IX legislation it was thought inappropriate to have women run the

New York City Marathon and inappropriate to let girls play in Little League Baseball. Allowing females access to these sports has changed those beliefs.

Change the Rules.

Some sports emphasize physical activities that males are more likely to excel in. In order to allow females full participation in such sports—that is, to allow females to participate in those sports even though they may not be as good as the males they play with—some have proposed restructuring scoring techniques and team composition. (9) Unfair, defenders of the status quo would say, forgetting that such scoring techniques already exist—handicaps in golf, for example. Relay races in running, cycling, and swimming add the scores of individual performers, so that the less skilled members of a team participate with the more skilled to do the best they can. Coed softball and volleyball usually require a certain minimum number of players to be female. Municipal softball leagues have all-female, all-male, and mixed-sex leagues.

Rules of sports are constantly undergoing revision in order to make the games more challenging for players and more interesting to spectators, and in order to better exhibit the skills of the players. The rules of men's lacrosse have changed through the years so that it is more like American football than the original sport. Women's lacrosse remains closer to the original, emphasizing skill in handling the ball and flexibility rather than physical strength and mass. Some children's soccer leagues reduce the number of players and the size of the field to help children learn soccer skills. The height of basketball hoops has been changed through the history of the game. The introduction of the shot clock changed the pace of play. Someone might even want to reconsider the special rules in wrestling and boxing that are designed to protect males' more delicate parts—rules that females would not need.

As it is now, athletes are used to adjusting their play to rule changes, and systems of scoring now exist to allow players at different levels to compete together. Informal games of many kinds are played with whoever shows up, and every school athlete has played in such games. The rules are freely revised to take into account the number of players, the playing field ("If it hits the tree it's a foul"), the level of skill, and anything else that is considered important. People who object to making changes in the standard rules may not realize how very often such rules are altered in practice.

Change the Coaching.

Some people believe that it is not just the access to sports but the present emphasis on aggression and competition and winning that prevents equal opportunity. (10) As long as sports training emphasizes traits that females are socialized to avoid, they will be at a disadvantage. In order to promote equal opportunity, sports training should emphasize skill and teamwork and personal achievement. Usually this position also argues that it is not just females, but males and the world of sport itself, that would be better off. (This explanation might also claim that a more equal allotment of sports opportunities in the first place would have produced a better attitude about sports—that it is the absence of females from sports that has resulted in this biased emphasis on aggression.)

It is not always easy to recognize how coaching in sports is affected by socialization. I learned through experience that the different expectations we have about boys and girls affect the way they are taught to play games. One season I coached first-, second-, and third-grade girls in soccer. In our town the boys' league did not want to allow girls to play, so the girls formed their own league. In a nearby town that was even smaller than ours, the girls and boys played together, a few girls

on each team. At the end of the season, we arranged to play our girls' team against the girls from the teams in the neighboring town, an exhibition game. Our girls won, with the highest score they had had all year. We expected to win, given the magnificent coaching they had received. What surprised us was the difference in the way the two teams played. The girls from the next town were rough, often fouled our players, and broke all sorts of rules. We were astonished and talked to their coaches, people just like us who volunteered to teach kids soccer, some of whom we played soccer with ourselves. We had similar beliefs about how the game should be played. But we had emphasized the rules to our all-girls' team, made sure they knew the proper behavior, been quick to correct them when they were too rough or did something illegal. In contrast the coaches of the teams in the neighboring town, where most of the players were boys, had not been picky about the rules. They thought that these kids were so little they could hardly hurt each other. There were so many things to teach that conveying what counts as a foul could be done later. If we had been coaching boys, we probably would have done the same thing. But we were not coaching boys, so the girls we coached learned to play a different game than the ones who played with boys. We did not do it consciously. We saw little girls tripping and pushing each other as abnormal behavior and corrected it. But our friends in the next town did not see it as abnormal when their little kids, who just happened to be mostly boys, tripped and pushed each other, so they let it go. And since these coaches were *not* sexists, they did not correct the little girls on their teams either. (Interestingly, at a more advanced level, in college soccer, the reverse seems to be true. Referees who are used to male players hardly ever call the fouls that occur in games between females. Perhaps they do not see how these slimmer, smaller bodies can really hurt each other.)

You might think that we, the Northampton coaches, were the sexists, teaching little girls to be too proper and making them unable to adjust to the “real” world of sports, where well-placed fouls are part of game strategy. Don't be too sure that the real world is like that. Remember that our team won. And they won because they learned to pass and dribble around their opponents instead of pushing through them. And if these children grow up to play in the weekend games that we play in, they will all have to learn to play more like our little girls’ team. For we adults play without referees and do not want to risk injury, so we stop rough play and call fouls that referees might let go by. Everyone who plays with us learns to play more carefully. Sometimes high school boys have had trouble adjusting to sports in this real world.

Adding new sports.

Some people have proposed that even the sports be changed. Develop new sports that have less emphasis on height and muscle mass and physical brutality and more emphasis on flexibility and skill and endurance. (11) This proposal to develop sports that emphasize women's superior physical abilities seems the most radical and the most difficult to realize. If we have to invent new sports, new forms of physical prowess, just so women can have equal opportunity in sports, such equality is not in the foreseeable future.

At least that is what I thought before I spent a year in China. There I learned that many games and sports in other countries count flexibility and grace more important than stopping power and size. In China students regularly had "slow races" on their bicycles to see who could take the longest time to travel a distance without falling off—once an important skill in the crowded streets of China. And such races elicited the same sort of wild cheers and shouts of encouragement that "fast races" and combat sports do in the United States. Chinese physical education

universities train future Olympic hopefuls—in volleyball, crew, swimming—along with participants in sports that would not be seen outside Asia were it not for Kung Fu movies. The fighting and weapons-wielding shown in those movies are learned and practiced at a very early age through elaborately choreographed routines and treated as sports in China.

Eight-year-old girls and boys participate in contests of sword play and martial arts acrobatics, performing feats that seem to require trick photography. The grace and flexibility required for these martial arts are certainly not less difficult to master or less impressive to watch than the field goals and slam-dunks of our popular sports.

If we look around to other countries where women do much or most of the physical labor, it is not hard to find physical skills in which women excel. Remember those pictures of women carrying huge loads on their heads? Studies have shown that these women expend far less energy and use up fewer calories and so can carry heavier loads farther than even the strongest men. It would not be hard to work that skill into a game or a contest, one in which those women, because of their daily activities if nothing else, would have an advantage. New sports would not be hard to find.

Summary

I have compared sports with education, citing the benefits of sports to the development of the individual, the full participation in a country's culture, and in the evaluation of a culture. I have claimed that knowledge and interest and basic ability in sports are as important for getting along in daily life in our society as knowledge and interest and basic ability in many academic subjects. The purpose of the analogy was to help us see the many values in sports participation and

encourage us to think of sports participation as something that everyone, and not just the talented few, should enjoy.

People resist making changes, and without good reasons to change, they would rather keep things the way they are. The ideal of equal opportunity works as a good reason for changes in education. Similarly, the ideal of equal opportunity can be used to motivate changes in sports in order to increase participation for everyone.

Notes

1. Donald Kennedy, quoted in Douglas Hofstadter, "Metamagical Themas: 'Default Assumptions' and Their Effects on Writing and Thinking," *Scientific American* 247 (November 1982): 36.
2. Bob Cohen pointed out that entertainment is very important in the U.S., its stars are well paid, etc., but it does not follow that acting lessons should be provided for everyone. If people without acting experience were unlikely to enjoy performances, then perhaps we would have to consider this suggestion.
3. G. Ann Uhler, "Athletes and the University: The Post-Woman's Era," *Academe* 73 (July-August 1987): 25-29.
4. Judith Andre and David James, editors of *Rethinking College Athletics* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991) mentioned these benefits.
5. *Newsweek* reports that Jack Nassar, a top executive at Ford Motor Company said, "that playing sports as a kid—particularly Australian 'football' with its loose rules—prepared him well for the top job. 'It's a very practical education system for growing potential leaders,' he said." (January 17, 2000, p 52).
6. See Mary Anne Warren, "Justice and Gender in School Sports," in *Women, Philosophy and Sport: A Collection of New Essays*, ed. Betsy C. Postow (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1983).
7. A qualification to this claim: As long as a subculture of our society, such as that of women, is denied access to sports, then sports will be unimportant for participation *in that subculture*. But the same holds true for education: illiteracy and undereducation create a subculture that one does not need an education to belong to.
8. "Achieving Success under Title IX" at: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/TitleIX/part5.html> (June 1997).
9. Warren, *Op. cit.*, pp. 12-35.
10. See Mary A. Boutilier and Lucinda SanGiovanni, *The Sporting Woman* (Champaign, III: Human Kinetics, 1983).
11. See Jane English "Sex Equality in Sports," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1978): 269-77; and J. Theodore Klein, "Philosophy of Education, Physical Education, and the Sexes," in Postow, *Women, Philosophy, and Sport*, pp. 207-30; also Betsy C. Postow, "Women and Masculine Sports," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 7 (1980): 51-58.