

The Business Advantage for Women with Sports Skills

“In the seventies we had to make it acceptable for people to accept girls and women as athletes. We had to make it okay for them to be active. Those were much scarier times for females in sports.” Billie Jean King , professional tennis player

While no one questions the various athletic activities girls have access to in high school today, there was a time when athletic funding was predominantly allocated to male sports.

Girls didn't get a chance to level the playing field until 1972. Under **Title IX** of the 1972 Education Amendment to the 1964 Civil Rights Act all schools were **mandated to increase their female rate of sports participation** to near equal that of their current male sports participants.

Just how serious were girls about participating in athletics – between 1972 and 1978 the rate of sports activities for girls changed from 1 in 27 to 1 to 4. By 2010 the rate increased to 1 in 3 for girls while over half of boys continue to engage in some form of sports.



Besides sports being touted for athletic prowess, it was also viewed as a means to later career success.

Betsey Stevenson, an economist at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, conducted **research on the effects of Title IX**. She found that athletic experience had been traditionally associated with well-know business CEOs, job candidates were favored over those lacking a sports background and lifetime earnings were greater.

However, Stevenson said a significant question remained – **were valued success skills acquired from athletics or were highly skilled students being drawn into sports?**

Undertaking an extensive study of the effects of Title IX, Stevenson found **the factors for education and employment increased** for women who had engaged in high school sports activities.

- approximately a 20% increase in education
- a 40% increase in employment for women ages 25-to-34-year-old, and
- an increase in women entering male-dominated professions

As to higher wages, Stevenson's research showed a positive effect but it could not be proven to be a true casual relationship.

The greatest impact of Title IX supports the idea that valued skills are acquired through athletic participation. According to Stevenson, girls are acquiring skills in *communication, team building, competitiveness, assertiveness, and discipline*, which can be used to "...maneuver their way through traditionally male occupations later in life."

In my neck of the woods the girls are no longer playing tennis. **Lacrosse is now favored** – no surprise here – definitely uses the skills of communication, team building, competitiveness, assertiveness, and discipline.

Looks like these young girls will be moving on to level the business playing field.

by Joyce Hansen