

**Should Girls Compete in TCYBA? A Report  
for the Board of Directors**

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## Executive Summary

While differences between girls and boys are certainly backed up in surveys, the issue is more complicated than gender owing to the strong socialization behind gender roles. In fact, both the academic literature, including experts around the world who have devoted their lives to studying this topic, and the LTAD model that guides sport in Canada recommend some competition after the age of 10. While there are a few cautionary notes (see Appendix B), **all unanimously agree that offering a choice between competitive and rec is the best policy.** My recommendation is therefore that TCYBA conduct a survey and begin planning for giving a competitive option to the girls. The exact model of what the competitive option looks like should be decided in close consultation with the community and numbers of participants. A survey and several open house discussions would be the best way to get that input and start the process.

## Purpose of Report

I am preparing this report in response to the Board's formal request at its July 2008 meeting. The purpose is to answer 2 basic questions: 1) Is it desirable to have a girls' competitive division? Why or why not? I can contribute to answering this question from the point of view of academic research. 2) If so, what is the best way to organize a girls' competitive division? I attempt to begin to answer this question by examining the logical ways a competitive division should be set up.

## Academic Approach to Research

In the interests of full disclosure, it is important to note that I have argued strongly for a girls' competitive division among the older age groups, *as a parent*. By the time anything in this report is implemented, my daughter will likely have finished her eligibility, so I stand to gain nothing by the outcome of this report. I am preparing this report, however, *as a professional*. I have taken the most recent research on the topic, without vetting, summarized the findings, and contacted several of the authors as well as amateur sports organization personnel to get their input. I have also sent a draft of the report to the e-mail interviewees, asking for their feedback on it.

Most non-academics do not really get what we do. This is probably because their exposure to academics is either as a student or via the few who appear occasionally on the media to give their expert opinion. These experiences are not really representative of the bulk of our work, which is based on peer review in depth research. That is, we acknowledge for most issues, particularly social issues, there is no simple argument about what is true and sound policy. If there were, there would be no reason to discuss it. Moreover, we recognize the major fallacies of personal experience, including bias based on where and when you were born and lived, how you were socialized in education, religion, etc, and any particularly important life experiences. We all tend to see in the world what we want to see ("projection"), and ignore or downplay the rest, when life and reality are truly complex. Before World War II, the idea of a female CEO let alone a professional athlete such as Mia Hamm, would've seemed laughable, and most girls, if

asked, would have probably said girls shouldn't be pro athletes or presidents. Indeed, as one researcher pointed out to me, a survey done in 1912 in the US showed that a majority of women were against voting rights for women! Therefore, while personal experience is important, it is a very blunt, weak, and risky instrument for getting to effective answers when compared with the academic approach that can examine hundreds of experiences over space and time. As researchers, we recognize that there are more enduring aspects of human behavior, such as the desire for fairness, but these need to be distinguished from what is largely a very dynamic tableau of changing social relations, as has obviously been the case in regard to gender and sport, particularly from the 1950s on.

In a nutshell, the approach taken in academics and this report is to be open to what anyone around the world at any time and place has found in regard to the topic and which can be backed up by evidence whose findings can be reproduced. Because information on topics is specialized, requiring decades of study and research before claiming any level of mastery, I have taken more of a synthesizing approach here. I have conducted a literature review to find recent books and articles on the topic. Recent work is the best place to start as it reflects cumulative knowledge and current disputes about a topic. Secondly, I have written e-mails to recent authors and researchers on the topic and the particular issue we are confronting for their advice. Thirdly, I have tried to take a very succinct approach to the literature. I believe for our purposes this both a sufficient and thorough approach to understanding the basic conclusions about gender, youth sport, and competition.

## Summary of Academic Literature on Gender and Sport

### *Understanding Gender*

The literature suggests that there are 2 main sources for how gender operates. The first is biological and evolutionary. From this perspective, women's biological roles in terms of procreation and their weaker physical capacity in general have led to different roles in families and society. The second is social construction; the ideas, norms and attitudes that society creates around gender. A social construction, such as the idea that caregiving is a feminine occupation, can have real consequences, such as few male nurses. Researchers note that the attitude towards females as repositories of beauty are damaging as is evident from the well-publicized problems of obsession with weight gain and fashion. In a hunting and gathering society, which was the case for most of human history, biologically-specified roles might make some logical sense, but as society moves farther away from such constraints, liberalization should take place. Social constructions can constrain such growth. For example, there is a strong discussion now about why there are fewer females entering graduate school in sciences and engineering. One reason given is that such professions and the study of them have been viewed as "male" occupations. The rising acceptance of homosexuality is one example of how social constructions are continually being transformed by social pressures and contradictions; and the role of gender in sports is no exception. It is important for social organizations therefore to sometimes be more progressive and open than current social attitudes. For example, if you asked girls in the 1950s if they should work outside the home, most

would probably have said no. In fact, recent studies have noted that women in traditional South Asian communities were not aware of the benefits of formal education and access to health care, thus “Relying on personal preference in judgments of well-being will, in contexts like these, simply reinforce dominant structures...” (Bailey, et. al 2007, 133). So, it is extremely important to identify stereotypes and the myriad ways that they are perpetuated in society- the same is no less true for gender and youth sport.

### *Gender and Sport in Canada<sup>1</sup>*

Despite heavy public subsidization, researchers both academic and governmental note that athletic participation has been declining in Canada, as has been the case elsewhere. Participation decreases with age and increases with income and level of education. Researchers also note that women’s participation tends to be more in individual fitness activities rather than organized sport.

Canada’s main sport, hockey, has strong gender inequities, where just 6% of players were female in 2000. By contrast, soccer is the most popular sport, with 37% participation. In volunteer positions in amateur sport, the ratio of females to males is now even after being just 50% of males as recently as 1992. However, there are far fewer women at the higher levels. Within the CIS (university sports) in 2000, only 15% of the coaches were female.

In soccer, an important and relevant case came up in 1992 in Ontario, where 2 high school girls successfully won a case with the Ontario Human Rights Commission to be able to compete for a spot on the boys’ soccer team. As a result, the Ontario Soccer Association was barred from any such barriers.

### *Research on Gender and Sport*

The passage of the Title IX act in the US in 1972 helped to open access to sports for females in the US and served as an important example of parallel actions elsewhere, yet many problems remain. Some are related to the negative stereotypes noted above and reinforced by a lack of resources and recognition given to females in sport (as is evident from differences in professional leagues). In general, female participation in sports at all levels remains lower than males internationally.

While in the minority, there are some voices that highly criticize the changes that Title IX type changes brought to women’s sport. These critics claim that sports has become too professional, particularly in the US, where recruitment at the university level may involve compromise of educational standards. The critics fear that a professionally-oriented system could be reproduced among female athletes, leading to similar problems. These critics state that certain females will be identified and groomed early, to the detriment of late bloomers. They fear the increased expectations and cite increasing numbers of injuries. There would be an overemphasis on training for one sport in order to compete at the highest levels, rather than seeing athletic activity as a natural

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Hall (2000);

complementary activity (Suggs 2005). There appears to be some evidence for this issue, as researchers note that one of the main sources of negative experiences in sports is a sense of shame and humiliation, however, this applies to boys as well as girls (Wellard 2007, 3).

There are other critics who claim that Title IX type actions have taken resources away from men's sports, forcing budgetary changes that force universities to shut down smaller attendance sports in order to support women's teams (Gavora 2002).

A recent book by McDonagh and Pappano (2008) argues just the opposite. The authors suggest that our perceptions of differences in capability between the sexes are exaggerated because of social constructions. While they acknowledge some physical differences, they suggest that any attitudinal differences are more the basis of social reinforcement than any natural differences. They point to, ironically, the former Communist states' emphasis on female athletic excellence as demonstrating that females could compete at the highest levels. They cite the examples of Anika Sorenstram who recently competed in the men's PGA tour and Candace Parker, a U of Tennessee basketball player who became the first woman to dunk in a college game as examples that women can compete with men. They recommend allowing a coed option so that such stereotypes of women athletes can be broken. From their analysis, our evaluation of women as not being competitive or capable is reinforced by separation from the amateur through to the pro leagues, and inhibits girls' athletic development and prospects.

Researchers who focus more on data rich studies tend to find much more complex results, not surprisingly. In a Norwegian study of 357 secondary students found significant differences between male and female attitudes towards sports. Males valued strength and endurance while females valued flexibility and appearance more. The genders also valued different sports differently (boxing vs. gymnastics). The researchers suggest further research on whether and how gender stereotypes of sports are passed on (Klomsten, Marsh, and Skaalvik 2005). In an ethnographic study of girls participating in sport in the UK, researchers found that the attitudes and approaches of 12 and 13 year old girls varied considerably. While many were interested in the social aspect, some were more interested in the physical competition. Moreover, the social aspects were not seen as entirely benign. Girls' socialization often took the shape of cliques, status, and exclusionary activities in sport as elsewhere (Hills 2007). As one set of authors state (Bailey, et. al 2007, 132):

“The second difficulty with hedonistic theories concerns the association (or, worse, reduction) of sport with (or to) fun....In fact, focusing completely on pleasure might deprive learners of sport's more significant long-term benefits, such as competence in the skills necessary for lifelong participation....'Part of understanding sport, then, is paying attention to the prose, the everyday, the arduous, the repetitive....'None of this should be taken to mean that sport experiences ought not be positive and enjoyable, nor that teaching sessions should not be fun. It is merely that such feelings alone cannot provide an adequate basis for justifying the value of sport or explaining its contribution to well-being.”

So we see that there is considerably more at stake here than having fun. Bailey et. al. (2007, 137), note that participation in sports can contribute to a sense of empowerment among women, lead to new community affiliations and operations, and have long-term benefits.

A study of 1,235 UK teens between 12 and 20 reinforced other findings of differences along the lines of gender as noted, but adds considerable complexity. The study suggests that there are at least 4 different psychological categories of motivations for why males and females participate in sports. Personality tests revealed that the clusters of motivations, including relative priorities for achievement orientation, socialization, self-fulfillment, fitness, energy release, situational (e.g. parent pressure or like the coach) cut across gender lines (Sit and Lindner 2006). The most comprehensive recent report on the topic was released by the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota in 2007. The report notes the key importance of family attitudes and support on girls' sports activities. The report states that girls participate in sport for a variety of reasons- to get in shape, socialize, develop physical skills, have fun, socialize, and to compete (xv).

One of the few studies that attempts to separate out these multiple factors is a recent (2006) analysis by Shaffer and Wittes. They conducted a survey of 245 college women asking them to explain their reasons for (not participating) in sport in their precollege years. They not surprisingly found that those who participated in sport were more likely to continue to do so later in life and that it helped their self-esteem. But more interesting still was their ability to tease out the "fun" or "enjoyment" variable, commonly cited as the primary motivation for women participating in sports from other variables, such as positive benefits to health. They state "(1) girls enjoy sports to the extent that they perceive themselves as benefiting in some way from sporting activities, and (2) the perceived benefits, rather than enjoyment per se, explains any positive effect of earlier sports participation on the self-esteem of college women." (230). They recommend that the benefits of such activities be highlighted, particularly as social comparison, gender-stereotypes, and social exclusion work against sport participation among females in the absence of perceived tangible benefits. Cheryl Cooky, a researcher in the University of California system, states that the idea that girls only participate in sports for "connectedness" is a myth that needs to be debunked. She states "Girls *want* to compete. Girls *want* to win. This is not to say it is true for all girls, but neither is it true for all boys. Yet, we would never see research that explained boys' drop out rate due to their rejection of the 'win-at-all-cost' mentality in sport." Cooky goes on to say in her study of girls' participation in basketball teams, that it is the level of support and promotion that an organization provides that makes the ultimate difference in levels of participation.

### Conclusion on Academic Literature

The academic literature recognizes that there are differences between boys and girls' participation and motivation for participating in sports, however, almost all accounts attribute such differences to social constructions (stereotypes) rather than innate differences between girls and boys. All the research agrees that both girls and boys participate for a variety of reasons that cut across genders. This affirms the obvious fact that we all recognize in the women we know- no one is unidimensional. Should all sports be coed, then? There are 2 ways that researchers look at this. In the short-run, pushing all girls to compete in boys' leagues in the presence of strongly embedded stereotypes could leave them alienated and marginalized from the field of play. However, in the long-run continuing to separate out females from males serves to *reinforce* the stereotypes that females are not as capable of competition as males. On the contrary, if the current consensus is correct, there are also boys who suffer from the stereotypes, ones who would prefer to participate in a more recreational and less competitive format. Some experts do suggest that at older ages, girls should compete separately because only the most physically capable will be able to match boys' physicality. Regardless, when someone claims that girls only want to play with their friends, they are not only stereotyping and assigning a unidimensional motivation to every girl, but by implication, they are saying that boys do not want to play with their friends. It is an indefensible position, by logic if nothing else. We can not make policy on the basis of one line answers or a singular personal experience.

The effect of Title IX type reforms has been to open the door for women to be able to participate in sports, however, its view of separate but equal is also potentially damaging in creating a 2-tier system of sport, in which females continue to be seen as inferior and incapable of the same levels of physical activity as men. In other words, by seeing females as being inherently different from males, whether softer, less capable, less physical, or more social, we push them and males to behave as such (thus confirming what we actually want to see). (As an aside, my own experience in a 2008 summer adult basketball league revealed that while there were fewer females competing, the overall quality of their game was considerably higher than that of the men and they were equally if not more competitive).

What do the Steve Nash Philosophy and Long-term Athletic Models Say About Competition? (Note: I have bolded particularly relevant passages for emphasis)

#### *Steve Nash Philosophy*

- The program is administered by members of the local community and allows for consideration of specific community needs
- The program is designed as a participant-centred, resource supported program administered for youth
- The program's foundation is the teaching of basketball fundamentals **in a fun, positive environment**
- **The program is designed primarily for boys and girls 5-13. (Older players can participate and modifications can be made at the local level)**

- All players receive equal playing and practice time (subject to attendance, discipline, etc.)
- Weekly practice guidelines are no less than one practice for every game
- **Team parity is a goal for all leagues** (local considerations may be a variable)
- **Scorekeeping and individual statistics are discouraged before the age of 10**
- **Metro, rep, all-star teams are not encouraged until the 12 year old and older level**

### *LTAD*

The Long Term Athletic Development Model guides Canadian sport at all levels. The LTAD divides up appropriate activities according to age and gender (females mature faster and so move to the next stage at an earlier age). The early ages are about fundamentals and developing a variety of skills and sporting activities. The LTAD sees organized sports and competition as closely related to recreation and school sports (p.15). It suggests specialization in sport, depending on the sport, should occur after age 10. For girls **8-11**, the learning to train stage suggests sport specific training 3X/week and other sports training 3 X/week. The ratio of training to competition is 70% training to **30% competition**). In this stage, one should begin to “**structure competition to address differences in training age and abilities.**” (40)

For girls **11-15**, the training to train stage, the LTAD recommends sport specific skill development 6-9 X/week “including complementary sports.” It recommends a ratio of 60% training to **40% competition** (31). In this stage, the recommendation is “**too much competition wastes valuable training time and conversely, not enough (competition) inhibits the practice of technical/tactical and decision-making skills.**” (41). From age 15-21, the LTAD training to compete stage recommends sport, event, and position-specific training 9-12 X/week (40% training and 60% competition).

### *Conclusion*

**TCYBA’s prohibition of competition clearly violates both the Steve Nash Philosophy and the LTAD.** It violates it first, by not providing for team parity or addressing differences in ability. It violates it second, by not allowing for competition, which according to the LTAD, should be introduced after age 8. There is no logical reason to claim that someone who wants to compete can not have fun or vice versa. There is nothing in either source of guiding principles that states that girls should be treated differently than boys. The only difference, as noted above, is the slightly *faster* maturation rate of girls. The founders of the Steve Nash league did not really think through how the game would change once they started including older kids. **There is universal agreement among all experts consulted that Choice is the best option. It is as important to maintain a rec option as it is to give a competitive one.**

Sources: Steve Nash Philosophy- TCYBA website

LTAD Resource Paper V2 *Canadian Sport for Life* Ottawa: Canadian Sport Centers no date, downloaded in June 2008.

### Current Status of Girls Competition in the Lower Mainland

I conducted an e-mail survey in July 2008 in order to summarize where other leagues stood. Unfortunately, I received a very limited number of responses. Blank cells mean no response.

League	Responded?	Keep score?	Track fouls?	Tryouts	Girls div.?	Metro?	comments
Chilliwack	Y			N	N –coed	N	
West Vancouver	Y	Y Gr.4+	Y Gr.4+		Y		
North Langley	Y				N –coed	maybe this year	
RBL	Y	Y Gr 4+	Y	tourn teams only	Y	N	have tryouts for U13 tournament teams
Burnaby - Victory Sports	N				Y	N	
Delbrook-N Van	N			skills & drills sess.	Y	Y	will have U13 M tryouts in Sept.; players attend skills & drills in order to be placed on a team
Richmond Youth BB	N				Y-Gr 5+	only boys in the past	
South Burnaby	N				Y	Y	
South Delta	N			for Metro	Y	Y for next season	they expressed interest in a Girls B team
Surrey	N						not sure which email is theirs, website linked to a YMCA website, no info avail. there
Vancouver Eagles	N					not mentioned	

With such a poor response, it is hard to say much about what is happening in girls' basketball around Vancouver, besides that there is poor communication. What we can say is that there is limited evidence that girls are competing in basketball. Some clubs keep score and fouls and hold tryouts for a metro or tournament teams.

## Other Examples

### **3D Basketball**

website: 3dbasketball.net

#### Summary

**3D Basketball is the only alternative for tcyba girls who currently want to play in a competitive format. However, 3D requires tryouts, thus there is no guarantee of making a team. More importantly, the fees are over \$1000/year. Finally, 3D is based out of North Vancouver with extensive travel thus adding to the commuting time. Therefore, like the Metro League, 3D should not be seen as a ready substitute/alternative for tcyba's lack of options. It is only for the most elite and dedicated bball players and cuts out late bloomers or those who want to compete at a lower level.**

-Membership fee is \$50, get jersey, discounts to tryouts and other programs.

-3D offers a wide range of programs ranging from a "jumpstart" program for children in grades 1-3 where the focus is on teaching skills in a fun environment to their "Elite" competitive touring teams. They also have programs for high school athletes to practice their skills in the off-season and they have individual and small group training available.

-They offer an "academy" program where most kids practice once per week. The focus of these programs is skill development/fundamentals. The fees last winter were \$185 for the term for grades 4-7 in the Development (non Elite) program. They have a Fall, Winter and Spring session. From looking at the schedules (Winter and Spring from last year are still online) it looks like non-elite players train once per week.

#### **Competitive programs**

-Elite players in grades 6/7 practice twice a week and their fees were \$300-\$400 per term.

-3D has Elite touring teams (I think they play mostly in the US) for the following age groups:

Boys

Girls

U13

U12

U14

U13

U15

U14

U15

U16

There are also “premier elite” team for both boys and girls.

**Tryouts** are held each year for spots on the elite teams. I know that there were tryouts for the U13 elite teams in late June. There is a fee charged (I think it was \$20-\$25) to participate in the tryouts.

There are special summer camps for these elite players (“by invitation only”)

Here are some more details from the website (cut and pasted):

Fall programs are designed for players that would like to train and prepare their skills for the upcoming high school season. Training takes place 1-3 times per week with emphasis on the fundamentals such as shooting, passing, ball-handling and individual defense. Although the main focus is not team play, players may have the opportunity to competing in some local exhibition games and AAU tournaments in Seattle, Washington. In addition, players will be put through a strength and conditioning program to better prepare themselves for the long basketball season ahead.

Winter programs

These programs cater to the specific need of individual skill development and operate in conjunction with the high school system to allow athletes to maximize their playing potential.

Athletes typically train once per week with emphasis on the fundamentals such as shooting, passing, ball-handling and individual defense. Grade 7 boys and girls Elite programs prepare to compete in upcoming tournaments throughout British Columbia and the United States including the U13 Provincial Championships in April.

### *Other Competitive Basketball Clubs*

For the competitive basketball clubs that I found with good websites (one US and 2 in Ontario) it appears that teams are chosen at open tryouts. They play teams from other “competitive” clubs and compete in tournaments (similar to 3D). It appears that Ontario has a competitive basketball “circuit” several clubs/ tournaments etc...

## **Central Illinois: 7th Grade Girls**

### **TRYOUT & TEAM INFORMATION**

The Central Illinois Predators will be holding basketball tryouts for their Girls’ 7th Grade Club Team at 6:00 PM on **Saturday March 8, 2008**. All 7th grade girls are invited to tryout. The roster will consist of 8 – 10 players.

The Predators are looking for players who are dedicated to the sport, want to sharpen their skills, and want to compete against the best players at their age level. Rich Fetter will be the coach for the upcoming season.

The Central Illinois Predators is a competitive club basketball program offered at THE GYM of Springfield. The club was established to fill a need in the Central Illinois area for talented girls and boys who want to play at the most competitive levels of basketball. It is our goal to compete with other teams vying for State, Regional and National titles. The team will compete in approximately six tournaments throughout the state and Midwest. Each player who makes the team is expected to commit through the summer.

Club Fees for the spring and summer will be approximately \$400 per player and the fee will be due as soon as the player makes the team. **Actual fees will depend on the number of players on the team and the number of tournaments entered.** Club fees cover coaching, practice facilities, two sets of uniforms (excluding shoes, take \$80 off if you have a uniform from last season), team equipment, and tournament costs. Hotel and travel accommodations are the responsibility of the individual not the club.

All fees are non-refundable and will not be prorated. There is a Tryout Fee of \$20.00 per person and the registration form is available on-line at <http://www.thegym-il.com/>, or at THE GYM of Springfield 1823 Camp Lincoln Rd. Springfield, IL 62707. The registration form and fee are due at the tryouts. For questions call Rich Fetter or Steve at (217) 522-7122 or email [stevek@thegym-il.com](mailto:stevek@thegym-il.com).

### **The following information is about a club in Ontario...**

**Email address is [info@kingstonimpact.ca](mailto:info@kingstonimpact.ca)**

They have a separate “house league” and then this competitive league – teams are chosen by holding tryouts.

### **Competitive Program**

#### **General**

Basketball Ontario offers a competitive playing environment for every community by hosting competitions in Division 1 through Division 6, with Division 1 being the highest absolute level of competition. The Kingston Impact will form teams and compete in as many Basketball Ontario age categories and skill levels as is practical. Decision criteria for the number of teams includes (but is not limited to): availability of certified coaches; gym space; financial situation of the Club; and player interest/calibre. The Club Executive will analyse the situation and decide on the number of teams in any given year. **In principle, the Club will strive to form as many teams as possible in each age category.**

Age categories for both boys and girls for the 2007/2008 season are:

Atom(U11)  
Born 1997 or younger  
Major Atom(U12)  
Born 1996  
Bantam(U13)  
Born 1995  
Major Bantam(U14)  
Born 1994  
Midget(U15)  
Born 1993  
Major Midget(U16)  
Born 1992  
Juvenile(U17)  
Born 1991  
Junior(U19)  
Born 1989

#### **Commitment**

The competitive program demands significant time and financial commitment. Each team will have on average two practises per week and three to seven tournaments (depending on the age group), most of which will be out of town and span entire weekends. There is no league in the city, therefore most games, less a few exhibition games, are played at the tournaments.

Financially, there is the initial player registration fee, which will cover all uniform and equipment costs, gym rental, tournament registration and officiating fees, and registration with Basketball Ontario. The additional costs that players will incur are primarily associated with travel. Hotel rooms, food and transportation costs are not covered in the player registration fee. Also, the players will no doubt pressure their families to purchase quality basketball shoes and perhaps some clothing apparel with the Impact logo. The coaches can give you a general idea of all of these additional costs and we would strongly recommend that each family enter the season understanding the expenses that lie ahead. That said, there are also many things that can be done to reduce costs, including some charitable programs. If costs are a concern to you, please speak to your coach and we will see what can be done.

The player registration fees will be set by each team depending on the level of activity planned for the year. However, to ensure a measure of uniformity throughout the Club, there will be a minimum fee imposed by age group – which will be reviewed annually. Minimum fees for 2007/2008 season are:

- Atom and Bantam: \$325.00 per player. Fees for Novice age (if we have a team) to be determined.
- Major Bantam and Midget: \$400.00 per player.
- Major Midget and Juvenile: \$450.00 per player.

### **Tryouts and Seasons**

Players are invited to try out by age category. Tryouts are free of charge. The head coach organizes the tryout and evaluation process. Assistant coaches and other coaches from other teams within the Club (on invitation of the head coach) assist in the tryouts. Although the Club may make recommendations, player selection is the sole responsibility of the appointed coach.

All tryouts are held in just prior to commencement of season.

Coaches will provide details on their seasons at the tryouts. Generally speaking, the younger teams (up to Major Bantam Boys and Girls) begin their seasons in November and end in late March or early April. More senior Girls teams begin after their school basketball season (mid to end November) and end in late April or early May. Senior Boys teams do not begin until late February and end in late May.

### **Policy on “Playing Up” (playing in an older age group)**

The KIBC policy is that players must play in their own age category unless there are exceptional circumstances. Each case will be treated individually. Coaches are not authorised to permit players to “play up”. The Director Competitive Program, in consultation with the VP Operations, must provide permission to any players wishing to play in an older age category. Requests are made either directly to the Director of the Competitive Program or, preferably, to the applicable coach who will then forward the request with a recommendation. Under no circumstances will a player be permitted to play up more than one age group. Although it will only be by exception, the following circumstances are examples of possible situations where playing up one level might be authorised:

- The older age category has insufficient players to form a viable team.
- The player wishing to play up provides a unique capability that is non-existent within the remainder of the players trying out (ie. the only true point guard available).
- The player has consistently in years past played up either on a competitive or high school team.

- There is a strong personal desire to play up and no child in the older age category will be denied an opportunity to play competitive ball as a result.

"Playing up" is always a difficult policy to manage. Being categorical is not the solution therefore judgement calls are required. No single decision will ever be viewed as a precedent since each case must be judged on its own merits.

### **Playing Time and Information**

The coaches within the competitive division are expected to place great emphasis on player development and therefore they will make a concerted effort to have all players play. Depending upon the calibre of the team's players, the substitution patterns of the opponent, and the actual game situation, our coaches will work towards ensuring that each player's involvement is a positive experience. That said, there is no minimum playing time per game, except for any age categories where this is mandated by Basketball Ontario. All coaches will make their participation guidelines clear to all parents and players at the beginning of the season and will update both parents and players throughout the season should the situation warrant changes. Concerns about playing time are to be resolved between the player/parent/guardian and the head coach for the team. Ultimately, decisions on playing time are the responsibility of the coaching staff.

There are usually many questions and a certain lack of understanding by both the players and the parents/guardians in the competitive program – especially at the beginning of a season. The questions range from financial and time commitments, to travel exigencies, to issues such as playing time. Every Head Coach within the competitive division will hold a meeting with his/her players and available parents/guardians to discuss the season in detail, prior to commencement thereof.

-There is also a Hamilton Wildcats Basketball Academy in Hamilton, ON. From their website it appears that you must tryout in order to join the club. Girls league starts at U13 (youngest age group). It appears that they play in tournaments (don't have a league within the club) or play exhibitions against other clubs.

## Evaluation of Possible Actions to be Taken

### *1. Return to status quo-*

#### Advantages:

- could allow late bloomers, entrants to bball a chance to play with better players and coaches
- makes league organization simpler
- allows girls to stay with friends and keeps teams together

#### Disadvantages:

- could stunt the growth of more serious players
- violates Nash and LTAD guidelines for the introduction of competition after age 10
- leads to disparity among teams and weaker player development as exposure to other players and coaches is limited
- is not enjoyable for more serious players and leads to reduced quality as they leave for 3D and other private operators; could mean they would be less likely to come back as coaches or in other mentorship roles
- makes development very difficult for both rec and competitive players as there are contrasting styles among teams; competitive players tend to cluster in returning teams

### *2. Continue with Metro Team Tryouts*

Note: in Spring 2008, with < 1 weeks notice, we had > 30 girls turnout for tryouts for the U13 Girls' Metro teams

#### Advantages

- requires minimal organizational change and maintains overall rec nature of league
- gives an outlet for the girls who want to compete to do so outside the league, and hopefully an incentive to stay in tcyba

#### Disadvantages

- Will be more difficult for girls who want to play multiple sports, as it may require an extra practice and playing days
- Does not allow late bloomers or lower skill players the chance to compete
- Breaks up friends and forces them to choose to join another team
- metro skill level is way above that of tcyba
- creates elite teams and thus increases disparity

### *3. Competitive and Rec Divisions*

Note: Conceivably, the rec division could be co-ed.<sup>2</sup>

#### Advantages

- allows girls and parents to select according to their motivations

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<sup>2</sup> One expert thinks this is a bad idea, that it will turn off girls. On the other hand, co-ed divisions do exist in both rec and competitive and other experts and players do think it is a good idea.

- separates out players that are more serious and allows beginning players a more relaxed atmosphere in which to develop and to test out skills (they will get the ball and score more)
- will increase the overall quality of play, at least in the competitive division
- will make the game more exciting to the girls and parents, reduce the best players leaving the league, and ease the transition and success rates at the HS and College levels

#### Disadvantages

- may reduce the quality of coaching at the rec level
- may lead some players at the rec level to not feel as good about the game
- there may be very few teams and they will have to play each other all the time
- if it includes tryouts, could break up long-standing teams and girls who want to play with each other (but preferences could be considered in making up the teams)

#### *4. Allow for a girls or co-ed team in the competitive boys division*

#### Advantages

- reduces the possibility of not enough participation
- raises the level of competition for the girls and prepares them better for the physical nature of HS and College ball
- girls' superior teamwork will improve boys' teams
- reduces organizational strain

#### Disadvantages

- physical nature of boys game may be challenging to the girls
- girls may be marginalized by some boys
- some parents and girls and boys may not feel comfortable with this

One of the key questions concerning modalities is how many girls are interested in a competitive division. Since we have never given the option, we just don't know what the size of the motivational clusters (mainly friendship, or mainly competition or somewhere in b/t) is among our girls and parents. An easy way to solve this would be to simply announce a girls' competitive division if there is enough interest. But this would not tell us how to best set up the league. By conducting a survey with girls' registrations, you will get a full population sample and the information you need to think more carefully about both the level of interest and how to set it up. More importantly, as a community-based organization, it allows you to have direct input from the community itself. It might look something like this:

Dear Parent:

TCYBA is currently considering setting up a competitive division for the girls. We need your input in order evaluate this proposal. We would appreciate it if you could fill out the following survey. It is very important that we receive as many responses as possible. We assure you that all responses will be anonymous.

1. How old are your girls that participate in tcyba? \_\_\_\_\_  
(Place a comma in between each age).
  
2. Would you prefer tcyba to keep score and fouls for the girls?  
No \_\_\_\_\_  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, from 4/5, 5/6, 6/7 or 7/9 division (circle your preference)?
  
3. Would you consider entering her into a competitive division if tcyba offered one?  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
  
4. If not, why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. If yes, would you want the competition to start at 6/7 or 7/9 (circle your preference).
  
6. If yes, would you want there to be tryouts? With tryouts, tcyba would try to set up even teams according to ability, though girls' preferences could be considered.  
Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
  
7. Please list any other concerns you would like to pass on to the TCYBA.

Thank you for your time and input. The results will be tabulated and given at a future Board meeting.

<b>From:</b>	<b><u>Ann Hall &lt;m.ann.hall@ualberta.ca&gt;</u></b>
<b>To:</b>	<b>ahira@sfu.ca</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Thu, 24 Jul 2008 10:19:55 -0600</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Re: advice on girls' sport</b>

Hello Andy,

This is an interesting issue. I'm presently at my cottage in Ontario with no access to research materials, and also a very slow dial-up connection!

However, I just did a little survey with family members here and we had a great discussion among parents and also grandchildren: two girls (age 11 and 8) who play youth league soccer, and a boy, 14, who plays competitive volleyball.

A couple of interesting points emerged:

(1) Treating boys and girls differently is wrong. There are probably just as many boys who prefer "fun" basketball as there are girls who would prefer the more competitive game. In the best possible world, the league should be able to accommodate both varieties of the sport but this is usually impractical. This being said, the more "accessible and fun" aspect of the league is important because there is ample evidence in the literature about girls and boys (especially the latter) being turned off overly competitive sport at a young age.

(2) Perhaps a more important point is that being "competitive" and "socializing" are not mutually exclusive or incompatible. The mother (of the two girls) made a strong point that girls do socialize at the same time they play sport (competitive or otherwise) and this is an important reason why they play. Before soccer games they need to chit-chat and catch up with their friends. Her experience is that they also do this on the field at the same time they are playing. Boys probably do this less, but this does not make them more "competitive" and the girls less so. It is simply a different way of playing. I would add that there are obviously some girls who want to be just as competitive as boys.

In my view, the Board's claim that "girls play sport for different reasons and very few really want to compete" is complete nonsense. It is the reason why over the years girls have had fewer opportunities to play sport -- in other words, why should we create programs if they don't want to play in the first place. However, when you do create programs especially for them (e.g., On the Move), they come out in droves.

You will find some useful information on Canadian women sport advocacy websites such as CAAWS (<http://www.caaws.ca>) and your own provincial group proMOTIONPlus (<http://www.promotionplus.org/content/home.asp>)

On the research-side, it's been a while since I looked at the literature on this topic and I would have to do a search myself, which I can't do from here.

I hope this has been helpful, and please contact me again if I can be of further assistance.

Best wishes,

Ann

\*\*\*\*\*

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At 02:32 PM 7/23/2008, you wrote:

Dear Dr. Hall:

I noticed that you have published extensively on the topic of gender, youth, and sport. I recently came across your very interesting chapter in the Hartmann-Tews and Pfister collection. I am writing to ask your input on a matter of personal interest. I am involved in a local community youth basketball league, TCYBA, here in Vancouver. The league was set up by Steve Nash to make the sport more accessible and fun. As a result, we do not keep score or track fouls, and there is no seeding according to ability. The girls and boys divisions are separate. However, this past year, we introduced competition in the boys' division, including seeding for teams. There is some argument now about whether girls should be afforded the same option. There is strong resistance to this notion, with some on the Board stating that girls play sport for different reasons and very few really want to compete. They play to socialize. As an academic with a young daughter (12), the Board has asked me to make a report to them on the issue. I am wondering what you think of this issue and whether you could steer me to any conclusions researchers have reached about whether girls are different and should be treated differently, and specifically the effects of competition on their

development.

I appreciate your input.

regards

andy hira

<b>From:</b>	<b>"Eileen McDonagh" &lt;e.mcdonagh@neu.edu&gt;</b>
<b>To:</b>	<b>&lt;ahira@sfu.ca&gt;</b>
<b>Cc:</b>	<b>&lt;LPAPP@aol.com&gt;</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Fri, 25 Jul 2008 12:01:07 -0400</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>RE: advice on girls' sport</b>

Dear Andy,

The case you describe below is fascinating, though not very unusual. It is an example of the problem Laura Pappano and I address in our book, as you note. And you are correct that I/we would strongly urge that girls be given the same opportunities as boys, preferably on sex integrated teams.

In the United States, one of the most prominent arguments that women should not have the right to vote is that women themselves did not want the right to vote because they were different from men and did not need the right to vote. And it is certainly the case that many women opposed woman suffrage to the extent that women organized anti-suffrage campaigns, even in Massachusetts a liberal, Northern state.

One of the important points is that "even if" it is true that not all girls, or even most girls, want to play like or with the boys, it should be the right of the individual girls who wish to do so to be given the opportunities to do so. What is more, these girls should not merely be tolerated -- they should be encouraged to participate and excel in nontraditional activities.

In addition, if there is value in the way girls do things rather than boys, such as focusing more on socializing than competition, then boys should be exposed to those alternative values, also. This argues for teams with different emphases -- some teams oriented more toward competition and skill development and some more oriented toward socializing and recreation. What is wrong is to assume that such a difference in emphasis corresponds exactly to sex classifications.

I think I can speak for Laura when I say that we applaud sports programs oriented toward recreation and social play as much as we do sports programs oriented toward developing athletic skills. What we do not applaud is the assumption that all girls belong in the former and all boys in the latter.

Such an assumption is a vicious circle that reproduces the gender stereotypes responsible for such categorization in the first place. Girls and boys deserve as individuals an opportunity to explore all options in order to find out what is the best match for them. Deciding in advance solely on the basis of a child's sex what they want or what is good for them short-circuits the exploration of who and what each child can be and become.

Laura most likely will have quite a bit to add to this discussion because she is in the midst of dealing with issues like this with her own children who are younger than mine. I am sure she will be eager to weigh-in on this.

Meanwhile, do keep us posted on what happens.

Thanks for contacting us.

Best wishes, Eileen

Eileen McDonagh, Professor  
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Visting Scholar  
Institute for Quantitative Social Science (IQSS)  
Harvard University

<b>From:</b>	<a href="mailto:ian.wellard@canterbury.ac.uk">&lt;ian.wellard@canterbury.ac.uk&gt;</a>
<b>To:</b>	<a href="mailto:ahira@sfu.ca">&lt;ahira@sfu.ca&gt;</a>
<b>Date:</b>	Sun, 3 Aug 2008 10:19:06 +0100
<b>Subject:</b>	RE: advice on girls' sport

Andy

I think there are a number of issues here.

Girls AND boys play sport for many reasons and it is misguided to attempt to make distinctions between purely girls and boys. There are girls who may thrive in more physical types of sport in the same way that many boys may not enjoy aggressive sports. I think the central issue here relates to competition and the way in which your club develops.

It seems that you are experiencing the dilemmas faced by many successful sports initiatives which have been established to promote access for young people - with a priority of inclusion and making it fun leading the way. However, often success brings with it increased participation and coping with a range of abilities and having to deal with how to 'progress'. Often this is where the structures of traditional sports become more apparent and these overtake original priorities. Thus, there is the pressure to start to conform to adult understandings of what sport should 'look like' and with it increased competition, rules, structures, leagues etc.

I think there is nothing wrong with introducing an element of competition - for those who want it - and there is the argument that there is more opportunity for boys to experience competition elsewhere, so providing a

chance for girls is good. However, if it replaces what has been there already (which sounds like a pretty inclusive environment) - there is the risk that it will deter many young people (boys and girls) who may not have opportunities for physical activity in the future (and more importantly, make them see sport as not for them). Providing the opportunity for girls and boys to experience physical activity in the way that they want is important - rather than what adults want them to be like. The club is not compulsory.

I think that you need to highlight the possible directions your club could go in. This is a good exercise in revisiting the original aims of the club and decide what it wants to be and who it wants to cater for. There is quite a lot of literature around on these areas - although I'm aware you don't have much time. I've added a few references which may be of use. I'm not in my office for a few weeks so cannot send pdf attachments - but they are generally available. Hope they are of some use.

Good luck with your report - I would be interested to hear what happens.

all the best

Ian

<b>From:</b>	<b>"Karin Lofstrom" &lt;klofstrom@caaws.ca&gt;</b>
<b>To:</b>	<ahira@sfu.ca>
<b>Cc:</b>	<b>"Stephanie Legault" &lt;slegault@caaws.ca&gt;, "Bev@Promotionplus.Org" &lt;bev@promotionplus.org&gt;, "Sydney Millar" &lt;snmillar@caaws.ca&gt;</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Thu, 24 Jul 2008 09:57:38 -0400</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Re: advice on girls' sport</b>

Thanks for your email. This is often a topic of discussion. The one thing we would say would be to let the girls have an option, ask the girls what they would prefer to do. Some will like playing for fun and others may want to play more competitively. I think this probably the case with the boys as well.

There is lots of discussion and program development occurring around the Canadian Sport for Life Model <http://www.ltad.ca/content/home.asp>. This looks at the path of a person's involvement in sport and physical activity and when the focus should be on skill development, when competition should be introduced, etc.

Also you may want to check out the CAAWS On the Move Program <http://www.caaws.ca/onthemove/e/index.htm> and some of the information there.

Karin

Karin Lofstrom  
Executive Director  
CAAWS

<b>From:</b>	"Sydney Millar" <snmillar@caaws.ca>
<b>To:</b>	<ahira@sfu.ca>, <klofstrom@caaws.ca>
<b>Cc:</b>	<slegault@caaws.ca>, <bev@promotionplus.org>
<b>Date:</b>	Thu, 24 Jul 2008 10:29:46 -0700
<b>Subject:</b>	RE: advice on girls' sport

Hi Andy

I actually think some leagues are happening for girls, I believe, in East Vancouver through MoreSports <http://www.moresports.org/>, but it is at a more recreational level - you might also contact Bev Siver at ProMOTION Plus, the BC organization for girls and women in sport and physical activity (address above) - they would have additional contacts. ProMOTION also has a resource on Coaching Female Athletes that would provide helpful information for you, and the coaches involved in the program.

I echo Karin's comments that it's important to have CHOICE for the girls and young women. Through the work I do with On the Move, for example, in some communities there is a very strong "competitive culture" and that's what the girls want to do...where as in others, the girls just want to be there to have fun.

But what is fun?? Research that has found that both girls and boys identify "fun" as the number one reason they participate in sport. However, boys often define "fun" as competition, whereas girls define "fun" as participating and being with their friends. These are VERY important differences to keep in mind. I would guess that if we can keep competitive programs "fun", with the goal of ensuring everyone is participating and successful, girls would be more open to those types of experiences.

I suppose my last piece of advice is this - "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". Unless the girls are asking for more competitive programs, why introduce them? Just to be like the boys? Because that's what sport "is"? It may be important for the board to examine their assumptions/beliefs. At the very least, you should be asking the participants, maybe those that have been involved in the program for a year or more, what type of experience they are looking for. And who knows, their answers may surprise you!

Sydney

Sydney Millar  
On the Move National Coordinator  
Team Spirit Project Manager  
Canadian Association for the Advancement  
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...increasing opportunities for girls and women to participate and lead in sport and physical activity in Canada.

<b>From:</b>	<a href="mailto:LPAPP@aol.com">LPAPP@aol.com</a>
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<b>To:</b>	<b>ahira@sfu.ca, e.mcdonagh@neu.edu</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Wed, 6 Aug 2008 18:18:43 EDT</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Re: advice on girls' sport</b>

Andy --

I have been following the e-mails between you & Eileen and find your situation amazing, if troubling -- but not altogether surprising. I think Eileen has it just right in her detailed response and I appreciated the depth of analysis in your report. Very thorough.

What you describe sounds familiar. In recreational youth sports there are numerous examples of limitations and restrictions placed on girls' play in an apparent effort to shield or somehow protect girls from the perceived stresses, strains, and ills of competition -- when, in fact, it is just that very competition that is a prized experience and which suits young men for top jobs and leadership positions.

When my daughter last year at age 12 considered playing in a golf tournament (she played this year), she learned that 12 year old girls play 9 holes and 12-year-old boys play 18 holes -- a difference based on out-moded beliefs about female capabilities. I can tell you that at Nike golf camp this summer she had no trouble playing as long, as hard, or as well as the boys her age.

The systematic limitation of female athletic play serves only to label it as a second-rate pursuit, the junior varsity version of play compared with the male "standard." This has social consequences not only on the court -- but off it as well. A paper I read recently in draft made the very cogent point that female athletes are too often pressured to think of the social aspects of their play and to bend their own interests to suit the broader aims of athletic programs. On the other hand, organized sports routinely encourage male athletes to develop their individual skills, seeking the highest, most competitive level of play they are capable of participating in. When people criticize girls who want to participate in mixed-sex or more competitive play, they often complain that this will take the top female players from the girls teams, leaving them without plays. No one, on the other hand, worries that letting top freshmen boys play on the junior varsity or varsity team will sink the freshman team. So, in fact, creating a competitive team for girls should only INCREASE interest in -- and participation among girls.

Best of luck & keep us posted. My apologies for my late response.

My best,

Laura

Laura Pappano  
NY Times Education Life, Harvard Education Letter  
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