

REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ATHLETICS

1. ACTION ITEMS.

None.

2. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS.

Association-wide.

• **Male Practice Players in Women's Intercollegiate Athletics.**

The NCAA Committee on Women's Athletics (CWA) believes that the use of male undergraduate students as practice players in women's intercollegiate athletics violates the spirit of gender equity and Title IX. The committee believes that any inclusion of male practice players results in diminished participation opportunities for female student-athletes, contrary to the Association's principles of gender equity, nondiscrimination, competitive equity and student-athlete well-being. The CWA recommends the elimination of the use of male practice players throughout the NCAA and, in support thereof, has written the attached position statement.

3. LEGISLATIVE ITEMS.

None.

Committee Chair: Janet Kittle, Indiana University, Big Ten Conference.
Staff Liaison(s): Nicholas Castro, Karen Morrison and Matt Stach.

NCAA Committee on Women's Athletics

Male Practice Players in Women's Intercollegiate Athletics Position Statement

December 6, 2006

The NCAA Committee on Women's Athletics (CWA) believes that the use of male undergraduate students as practice players in women's intercollegiate athletics violates the spirit of gender equity and Title IX. The committee believes that any inclusion of male practice players results in diminished participation opportunities for female student-athletes, contrary to the Association's principles of gender equity, nondiscrimination, competitive equity and student-athlete well-being.

It is difficult to actually identify where the custom began of recruiting male undergraduate students, not to participate on men's varsity teams, but solely for the purpose of participating in practice with female athletic teams. Most observers feel that it started at the highest levels of Division I women's basketball. In recent years it has spread to all levels of NCAA women's basketball and many other NCAA team sports. This practice results in nonstarters experiencing a lesser opportunity for development than starters and top substitutes.

The most common argument in favor of using male practice players is that it improves the skills of female student-athletes and strengthens the team as a whole. While there is no way to measure the true validity of this argument, if accepted, it still leads to the question -- what cost in participation opportunities for women is the association willing to pay for such improvement? A decision should not always be based solely on the positives of an action, but must also weigh the negative impact it may have. The message to female student-athletes seems to be "you are not good enough to make our starters better, so we need to use men instead." This approach implies an archaic notion of male preeminence that continues to impede progress toward gender equity and inclusion. Without the use of male practice players, does women's athletics not inherently retain its own unique quality of competition and skill?

Participation in intercollegiate athletics has come a long way since Title IX was enacted 34 years ago. The increasing use of male practice players is a threat to the growth in female participation at all levels. To have talented, capable female student-athletes stand on the sidelines during official practice while the team's starters practice against "more talented men" is a lost opportunity. Many of these female student-athletes are on full scholarship and were recruited to participate in intercollegiate athletics at many other institutions. To have them sitting out of practice while a full "scout team" of men come to practices is costing them the opportunity for growth and betterment that they were promised during recruitment.

While progress has been made with female participation opportunities in intercollegiate athletics, women comprise 57 percent of the college student population, yet receive only 43 percent of the athletic participation opportunities. Any action such as the use of male

