

# Women in Athletics

## IS IT ALL ABOUT TITLE IX?

Title IX, a landmark civil rights law of 1972, profoundly affected all aspects of collegiate and professional sports by requiring greater opportunities for girls and women.

The following information on Title IX was taken from the Department of Education website.

*No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational programs or activity receiving federal financial assistance. – From the preamble to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972*

*Title IX was adopted by the Conference Committee and sent to the full Senate, which approved it on May 22, 1972. It then went to the House, and was passed on June 8. President Nixon signed Title IX on June 23, and on July 1 it went into effect. While developing the implementing regulations for Title IX, the then-U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) received more than 9,700 comments. The final regulations were published on July 20, 1974. President Gerald Ford signed the Title IX regulations on May 27, 1975, and they were then submitted to Congress for review.*

*a college swimming scholarship. It took time and effort to improve the opportunities for young women: Two years after Title IX was voted into law, an estimated 50,000 men were attending U.S. colleges and universities on athletic scholarships – and fewer than 50 women. In 1973, the University of Miami (Florida) awarded the first athletic scholarships to women – a total of 15 in golf, swimming, diving, and tennis. Today, college women receive about one-third of all athletic scholarship dollars.*

“The University of Wisconsin-Parkside and Title IX dovetailed at an absolutely extraordinary time, as the initial hiring practices of the university were in alignment with the objectives of Title IX,” said Linda Draft, associate athletic director and clinical associate professor.

Draft began her UW-Parkside career in 1977, and today has the responsibility of making sure the university complies with all government and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) regulations regarding athletic competition.

“UW-Parkside’s approach to athletics is extremely equitable,” Draft said. “However, we still have work to do. Compliance with Title IX requires opportunities for men and women to be in proportion to the gender ratio of the general student body. We don’t meet that standard yet, but have a plan for doing so once funds become available. Title IX requires a plan to be in place for eventually achieving a balance of opportunities.”

But is it all about government regulation?

Less than 15 years ago in Wisconsin, local newspaper coverage of girls’ high school athletics was usually a recap column – assuming the coach phoned in the score. The photo on the front page was of a boys’ team. When a writer was assigned to cover a high school game, it was a boys’ game.

Open the local sports section today and the girls are right there with the boys. While government regulation didn’t bring about a change in editorial policy, the regulation did create more opportunities for female athletes and that resulted in more participants. Increased participation caused sports editors to rethink their approach to local sports coverage.

Another example: A ticket to the boys’ state high school basketball tournament in Wisconsin has always been a scarce item. Less than 10 years ago, a ticket to the girls’ state tournament was pretty easy to come by. Today, both tickets are tough to get. Government regulation? Not directly; but the regulations that created opportunity have created more fan interest.

Draft acknowledges the role Title IX has played in the emergence of athletic competition for females, but the parents – especially the dads – have had a hand in this as well. “While I was in high school and in college, the guys, the jocks, etc., didn’t see anything wrong with women not having an opportunity to participate,” Draft said. “However, once my fellow classmates established families of their own, these same men with daughters of their own now wanted their daughters to participate in athletics free from bias, misogyny and or sexism.”

Today at UW-Parkside, more women are enjoying the fruits of tireless advocates that shocked a generational mindset more than 30 years ago. The women’s soccer team participated in the NCAA Division II national tournament this past fall. The women’s cross country team won the Great Lakes Valley Conference (GLVC) title. The women’s basketball team battled for the league lead in the GLVC; is an annual participant in the GLVC post-season tournament; and this year the women made their first appearance in the NCAA Division II tournament.

Is all that success the direct result of government regulation? No, but the opportunities Title IX created have created opportunities for success for many female athletes at UW-Parkside and throughout southeastern Wisconsin.

## LATOYA HENRY: CHASING HER DREAM ONE STEP AT A TIME

LaToya Henry has been running competitively since she was five years old, and race walking competitively since she was seven.

“My godfather had a track team and he told my mom that I should start running,” Henry said. “And I’ve been running every since.”

*Title IX has helped girls and women participate in interscholastic and intercollegiate athletics in far greater numbers than they had in the past. Just one year before the enactment of Title IX, in 1971, a Connecticut judge was allowed by law*

*to disallow girls from competing on a boys’ high school cross country team even though there was no girls’ team at the school. And that same year, fewer than 300,000 high school girls played interscholastic sports. Today, that number is 2.4 million.*

*Before the passage of Title IX, athletic scholarships for college women were rare, no matter how great their talent. After winning two gold medals in the 1964 Olympics, swimmer Donna de Varona could not obtain*



The sophomore from New Rochelle, N.Y., came to UW-Parkside to train with coach Mike DeWitt. DeWitt directs the women's track and cross country teams. In Henry's case, running wasn't the main reason she decided to go to college halfway across the country – it was DeWitt's reputation for developing world-class race walkers.

"(DeWitt) is known for getting his race walkers to the Olympic trials and even to the Olympics," Henry said. "So if you are a dedicated athlete, then I feel he can get you that far. And I feel I have the dedication to get that far."

Competing in track and race walking in her pre-teen years, Henry said she didn't feel odd or different because she was a girl. By the time she reached high school, she began to notice that track and race walking fans seemed more eager to watch the male athletes compete.

"I realized that when guys would race, it would be more appealing to the audience rather than when females would race; I got that kind of vibe," Henry said. "Now it's more balanced – not all the way balanced, but more balanced than before. But you still have that audience waiting to see the men's relay race ... more than the women."

The fact that fans seem more interested in watching male athletes doesn't really bother Henry. What does bother her is the lack of respect given to race walkers of both genders.

"A lot of people take race walking as a joke, and I take offense at that," Henry said. "Because I am a race walker and a runner I know how it feels to be a race walker. It's actually harder than running and people make jokes about it: 'Oh I can do that you guys are just walking.' But it's more than just walking. They have no idea what I go through, they've never been a race walker."

When she's not race walking or running, Henry is pursuing a bachelor's degree in communication here at UW-Parkside. She plans to attend graduate school and someday sees herself involved in the corporate world of advertising.



Given that many people view New York as the center of the advertising world, and given that Henry grew up in the shadow of the Big Apple, you might expect her to pursue her advertising dream at a graduate school closer to home. But to achieve her race walking dream, she might stay closer to UW-Parkside and DeWitt.

"There are a lot of things to consider," Henry said, "I'm not sure if I want to go back to New York for grad school, because if I'm training for the Olympic trials I would want to stay around here."

Because Henry is a race walker, there is competitive athletic life after college. Unlike some Olympic sports, such as gymnastics, where female competitors are past their prime at age 20, world-class race walkers compete well into their 30s. Henry has a clear idea of what it will take to attain her ultimate athletic goal.

"First of all, I have to want it," she said, "plus having focus and knowing in the back of my mind that I can do this. This has been my goal for a while and I know I can get there. I have the coaching to get there, so it all depends on me."

### CARRIE WEIR: PLAYING A GAME SHE LOVES

The scene is somewhere in West Allis, Wis., about 12 years ago. A 10-year-old Carrie Weir steps onto the basketball court for the first time. Little did she know that it was the start of an amazing basketball career.

Weir played sports in grade school at St. Matthias where she said there were plenty of opportunities for girls to participate on teams. At Nathan Hale High School, she was on the softball and volleyball teams in addition to being a standout basketball player. She helped the girls' basketball team reach the WIAA state tournament and earned all-state honors as a junior.

"When I was younger my dad and brother would come out and play with me," she said. "And I had a coach in high school (Scott Herick) that really did a lot for me. He brought my game to a whole different level and made me realize how good I could be – made me realize the potential that was there."

Weir chose UW-Parkside because it was close to home, yet far enough away. Plus, Jen Braier from Wauwatosa, Wis., had

already committed to UW-Parkside. Weir and Braier had played AAU basketball together and Weir said it was nice to know someone on the team.

As a UW-Parkside freshman, Weir scored 28 points in a game versus Southern Indiana. She averaged more than 10 points per game as a sophomore. In her junior year, Weir ranked 15th in the Great Lakes Valley Conference in both scoring (13.4 points per game) and rebounding (6.0 rebounds per game).

"When I came here, coach (Jenny) Knight helped me tremendously and she's brought me to the level I'm at right now," Weir said.

Speaking of right now, Weir finished her senior season as the team's second leading scorer (15.2 points per game). That effort helped the Rangers make the NCAA Division II tournament, something no other UW-Parkside basketball team had accomplished.

In the NCAA tournament, the Rangers were seeded eighth in the Great Lakes Region and faced the number one seed, Grand Valley State, on the Lakers home court. With just over a minute remaining in the game, Weir hit a jump shot that pulled the Rangers to within one point, 65-64. It was as close as the Rangers would come. The Lakers won 73-



69. Weir finished her UW-Parkside career as the second-leading scorer in school history. She is one of just two women – the other being teammate Sammy Kromm – to earn first team All Great Lakes Valley Conference honors.

During the time she's played basketball, Weir has witnessed an improvement in her skills and those of the players around her. She also witnessed a growing interest in girls' and women's sports. "Guys always seem to draw bigger crowds; people find the guys playing more exciting than the girls," she said. "But I think people are starting to get used to women playing sports and that's drawing more attention."

At UW-Parkside, interest in women's sports – along with the success of the teams – is growing. "We didn't have crowds as large as the guys until this year

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