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NCAA Cheats Female Athletes—Again

Its transgender policy is reminiscent of its resistance to Title IX half a century ago.

By William Bock III

Feb. 20, 2024 5:45 pm ET



An athlete stands near an NCAA logo during a softball game in Beaumont, Texas, April 19, 2019.

PHOTO: AARON M. SPRECHER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The National Collegiate Athletic Association needs leaders with the courage to protect female student-athletes and stand up for fair competition. Instead, NCAA's leaders—including president Charlie Baker—have doubled down on regressive, discriminatory, antiwoman policies. That's why I resigned in protest from my role as a longtime NCAA committee member.

President Richard Nixon signed Title IX into law in 1972 to ensure equal opportunities for women in college sports. The NCAA, which dominated men's college athletics, vigorously fought Title IX for a decade. Today, history is repeating itself as the NCAA once again puts males first at the expense of females.

The NCAA in January 2022 updated its transgender student-athlete participation policy. Phased in between 2022 and 2025, the policy centers on testosterone levels and allows males to compete as “females” simply by reducing their testosterone below a certain benchmark. The framework is founded on the false premise that a woman is merely a testosterone level. This policy harms women, denies biological reality, ignores that testosterone suppression doesn’t offset the enormous performance advantage of being male, and provides cover for NCAA member institutions to violate federal laws protecting women.

During nearly 14 years as the general counsel for the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, or USADA, my goal was preserving competitive fairness and leveling the playing field for athletes. I was the lead lawyer in USADA’s case against cyclist Lance Armstrong, who used performance-enhancing drugs to win seven Tour de France titles. Yet the competitive advantage that Mr. Armstrong obtained through doping pales in comparison to the one that transgender swimmer Lia Thomas had over female rivals due to retained male advantage.

The NCAA’s transgender policy promotes sanctioned cheating. It gives colleges the green light to steal records and win championships with trans-identifying males on women’s teams. It deprives women of competitive opportunities and subjects them to physical, mental and emotional harm.

In its mission statement, the NCAA commits to “provide a world-class athletics and academic experience for student-athletes that fosters lifelong well-being.” That promise rings hollow to female student-athletes changing in locker rooms with trans-identifying males exposing them to full frontal views of male genitalia. Nor is it a “world-class” experience for a collegiate All-American female athlete to seek shelter in a custodian’s closet to avoid changing in front of a male.

The NCAA’s leaders have shown that falling in line with the latest trends on woke college campuses is more important to them than protecting fair competition and integrity in women’s sports. That won’t change until the NCAA’s leaders summon the courage to acknowledge the uniqueness of women and reject the campus orthodoxy that has turned women’s sports competitions into a social science experiment gone awry.

Mr. Bock, a sports lawyer, was general counsel for the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, 2007-20.

Appeared in the February 21, 2024, print edition as 'NCAA Cheats Female Athletes—Again'.