

RM 3–SI: Human Rights Appeal

Winnipeg Girls Win Right to Play on Boys' Hockey Team*

Two Winnipeg sisters have the right to try out for the boys' hockey team at their high school, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission ruled Friday.

* This story is available at the following website:
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). "Winnipeg Girls Win Right to Play on Boys' Hockey Team." 24 Sept. 2006. *CBC News*.
<www.cbc.ca/canada/manitoba/story/2006/09/22/hockey-decision.html>.

RM 3–SI: Human Rights Appeal (*Continued*)

Human Rights Appeal*

September 22, 2006

The Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association is disappointed with the decision regarding high school sport programs. The association strongly believes that its eligibility rules promote equal opportunity for boys and girls to participate in high school sport.

In this case, both the West Kildonan boys' and girls' high school hockey teams had approximately the same number of games and practices. The coaching staff of the girls' team consisted of a Level 2 coach, and a specialized goaltender coach, and other assistant coaches, while the boys' team only had Level 1 coaches.

The MHSAA followed the guidelines as set out by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport (CAAWS) who assert that it is preferable for athletes to play on a gender specific team, when resources are similar. The MHSAA policy is consistent with all other provincial associations across Canada.

The MHSAA allows girls greater opportunity than boys in high school hockey. [The girls] could have played for an "AAA" or "AA" boys' hockey team, but stated it was too expensive or they did not like the coach. They could have played both high school hockey and community hockey, which is an opportunity not available for boys in Manitoba. They chose not to play. They could have attended another school that didn't have a girls' hockey program and tried out for the boys' hockey team there. They chose not to play any hockey for two years and then requested financial compensation for their choices.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission should consider that educators guide the Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association and its rules and regulations. They should appreciate that these individuals know what is appropriate for sport development at this level and what is best for the student athletes. It is regrettable that the Manitoba Human Rights Commission has chosen to uphold this challenge. This decision is a significant backward step for girls' high school sport progress, and amateur sport in general.

The school had opportunity to appeal the initial decision of the MHSAA Board. They chose not to appeal. The mother and superintendent were informed that another appeal could be put forward. The original appeal was not based on the differences of the games, but simply, "Can girls play on a boys' team, when the school has a girls' team?" It is regrettable that the school chose not to appeal. The school had the opportunity to present a formal Motion to change our rules. This could have been considered at an Annual Meeting, but no motion was ever submitted.

This decision paves the way for a purely merit (ability)-driven high school sport program. This is contrary to the expert evidence from the vast majority of school administrators, principals, and coaches. Does this now mean that boys can try out for girls' teams? Do we eliminate gender specific teams? How will this affect female participation? Can this carry over to Canada Games and other activities? The MHSAA feels that by providing funding and coaching in separate categories for competition, they promote maximum participation and opportunity for all student athletes to achieve personal success.

* Source: Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association (MHSAA). "Human Rights Appeal." *News*. 22 Sept. 2006. <http://www.mhsaa.mb.ca/pages/news/06_07/sep22a.php>. Used with permission.

Note: For updates, refer to the MHSAA website.