
A Brief Overview of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women

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The late 1960s and early 1970s was a time of changing landscape for women and athletics in the United States. Second wave feminism, which sought equality for all, was at its peak when the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) was founded in 1971. The AIAW adopted a stance strongly in favor of Title IX, a federal law specifically prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, enacted in 1972. This push by the AIAW in favor of the law eventually led to the organization's downfall and its merger with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

In the late 19th century women started to enjoy "delicate" sports, like badminton, walking, cycling and riding; nothing too complicated and nothing too competitive for fear of physical harm that might come from such rigorous activity. The exception to this rule was basketball. Women in America started playing basketball in the early twentieth century. Before 1925 over half of the states scheduled high school championships for girls.¹ Many of the fears about women taking part in competitive "masculine" sports were that the women would change or harm their reproductive systems, or make women seem more masculine by causing large muscle growth.² Because of this fear, many physical educators took women and trained them. They stated that only trained women could run women's sports in the education system.³ Fearing that men would be too harsh on women, women coaches were trained to minimize harm to them. Women's basketball rules were less strict than men's as they were written with the idea that women are more delicate and tender in the mind and body than men. In 1899 they created the separate set of women's rules, though by 1914 half the girls in the country continued to play by the boy's rules.⁴

Women educators were initially opposed to the men's model of intercollegiate athletics. In 1901, Senda Benson, a director of physical education at Smith College and creator of the Women's rules of Basketball said: "The spirit of athletics in this country... that one must win at any cost- that defeat is unspeakable disgrace, must be avoided in women's sport."⁵ Some women applauded Benson and her thinking and others were appalled, but more importantly the future of women in athletics was defined by this moment. In 1917 the Committee on Women's Athletics was founded by physical educators in hopes to create a standard within athletics. This committee eventually morphed into the AIAW. The AIAW gained the support of many different organizations through the years, such as the Girl Scouts, YWCA, various women's clubs and the National Armature Athletic Foundation.⁶ In 1923 the platform of "a sport for every girl and every girl in a game" would

¹ Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2004), 221.

² *Ibid*, 222.

³ Rader, *American Sports*, 222-23.

⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵ *Ibid*, 223.

⁶ *Ibid*, 228.

serve as the understanding of women's athletics until the late 1960s; the game was meant for the girl, not the spectator or the business of the university.⁷ In the mid-1920s more than half of the respondents approved interscholastic basketball for girls, and during the Great Depression, fourteen statewide basketball tournaments for girls continued to have participants.⁸ Girls and women also took to baseball during the 1940s. Many large baseball chains were afraid of the failure of the game due to the large amount of men fighting overseas due to World War II; so, they created women leagues such as the All-American Girls Baseball League.⁹ The league folded in the early 1950s due to financial failures and a lack of attendance of the women's games. In the 1950s cheerleading became a focus of the public eye; previously very masculine, women were intent on feminizing it.¹⁰

In 1964, a convention was held to edit the 1923 platform for intercollegiate sports. This led to the formation of the Commission on the Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (CIAW) within the Division for Girls and Women's Sports (DGWS).¹¹ The AIAW was later founded from the Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women. The CIAW was created to be a framework for intercollegiate athletics for women, create and publish guidelines and standards for play, encourage competitive events between universities, and sponsor Division for Girls' and Women's Sports' national championships for women.¹² The mission for the CIAW was also used for the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women "to: foster broad programs consistent with educational aims and objective; assist in extension and enrichment of programs; stimulate quality leadership and encourage excellence in performance."¹³ The first step toward the creation of the AIAW was in 1969 when a demand emerged for an organization that universities joined to follow the rules and regulations for women's athletics.¹⁴ The emergence of the AIAW coincided with the emergence of the women's movement.

The Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women created a model for student athletes that was different than what the National Collegiate Athletic Association had created for male athletes. The AIAW created a focus on the student where education came first and sports came second.¹⁵ They only wanted universities and colleges who believed that the focus of intercollegiate athletes should remain on her academics and also if the schools supported programs that had been operated or stemmed from the DGWS, CIAW and the AIAW.¹⁶ Before the creation of this model the only version of intercollegiate athletics focused on men's competitive sports first, and the student second. The code of ethics for coaches highlighted the AIAW's ideals and focus of the student first sports second:

Competitive sports provide practice opportunities in making value judgments and developing social relations... The coach should recognize the uniqueness and worth of each individual and help her to develop confidence, exhibit cooperation, and make a contribution to herself and others around her.¹⁷

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Rader, *American Sports*, 229.

⁹ Ibid, 234.

¹⁰ Ibid, 231.

¹¹ Ibid, 334.

¹² Joan Hult, "NAGWS and AIAW: The Strange and Wondrous Journey to the Athletic Summit, 1950-1990," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 70 (1999): 26.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, 28.

¹⁵ Jean Taczak, "EXPO '96: Sports An Agenda for Change in Women/Girl Sports," *Off Our Backs* 26 (April 1996): 20.

¹⁶ Martha Adams and Doris Soladay, *AIAW Handbook of Policies and Operating Procedures 1972-197*, 36.

¹⁷ *AIAW handbook-Directory 1975-1976*, 33.

The empowerment of the student athlete was at the highest desire of the AIAW and the universities that supported the AIAW. The NCAA continued to focus on the athleticism and commercialism, while the AIAW maintained the belief of student first.

Men's intercollegiate athletics also allowed scholarship opportunities, recruitment, and biased actions. Women's athletics through the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women did not allow many of these same things. In the 1972-1973 AIAW handbook, it states that the disapproval of scholarships was "not intended to diminish but to protect, the continued development of athletics for women."¹⁸ Their anti-scholarship position was intended for sport related scholarships not academic or need based, which allow for the focus to be on studies.¹⁹ According to a report produced during the time period, the AIAW in 1973 abandoned the policy forbidding female competitors to accept any financial aid or scholarship based on athletic ability. It was due to a court case that the AIAW changed.²⁰ The women in athletics had seen how the men's athletics turned into a "meat market... a farm for future professional athletes," and many members thought this was what the AIAW sponsored intercollegiate athletics would turn into.²¹ It caused women to wonder if this is what they wanted their organization and athletics to turn into.

The Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women focused on empowering women to take charge of their own athletic situation. Although not all of the AIAW were self-proclaimed feminists, both the athletes and the women's rights movement did share similar trains of thoughts. The second wave feminist movement was divided between members of National Organization of Women (NOW), created in 1966, and the Women's Liberation Front. They aimed to combat sexism.²² In the early 1970's, feminists sought to even the playing field in academics and in life between males and females. AIAW and other women's athletic groups craved to gain equality for women's intercollegiate athletics; this led to the passing of Title IX in 1972. Title IX was aided by the women's lobbying efforts and pushed through Congress by Representatives Edith Green of Oregon and Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana. Initially meant for the equality of women working within the University setting, the bill was later enhanced to provide an understanding for sports equality.²³ Title IX states that no individual, on the basis of sex, could be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.²⁴ The men of the National Collegiate Athletic Association fought hard to have Title IX rejected. The fight of Title XI for the AIAW is similar to that of feminists and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was proposed initially in 1920 and revisited by feminists in 1971, though both times the amendment failed.²⁵ Similar to how Title IX was opposed by the NCAA, the opposition to the ERA was led by Phyllis Schlafly, a woman who held a Master's degree in government from Illinois.²⁶ The ERA did not pass because only 28 states ratified it due to Schlafly's efforts.

The Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women held its own against the National Collegiate Athletic Association throughout the majority of the 1970's, until the universities were forced to comply with Title XI in 1978—when the NCAA gained interest in women's intercollegiate athletics. The National Collegiate Athletic Association, founded in 1906, initially opposed the

¹⁸ Adams, *AIAW Handbook*, 27.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Judith Miller, "AIAW Champions Women's Athletics," *Change*, 7 (Taylor & Francis: 1975) 17 and also Rader, 334.

²¹ Ibid, 18.

²² Edmund Wehrle, "The Women's Movement," Lecture, Contemporary America, Eastern Illinois University, November 2, 2015.

²³ Rader, *American Sports*, 334.

²⁴ "Overview Of Title IX Of The Education Amendments Of 1972, 20 U.S.C. A§ 1681 Et. Seq. | CRT | Department of Justice." Accessed November 28, 2015. <http://www.justice.gov/crt/overview-title-ix-education-amendments-1972-20-usc-1681-et-seq>.

²⁵ Wehrle, class lecture 5 November 2015.

²⁶ Wehrle, class lecture 5 November 2015.

legislature. The organization called the equality of Title IX the “doom of men’s intercollegiate sports,” because they suspected funds would be taken away from men’s athletics and then be given to women.²⁷ As the NCAA had failed multiple times to get athletics removed from the guidelines of Title IX, it realized the only way to get what they wanted was to take over both men and women’s athletics.²⁸ Before the women’s model was absorbed by the NCAA, men’s intercollegiate athletics had been under the head of the athletics department and women’s intercollegiate athletics had been within the physical education department of universities.²⁹

The National Collegiate Athletic Association had become an “economic cartel”. No longer was the NCAA focused on the athlete; they were focused on the money that came with the athlete.³⁰ According to an article from the *Gadsden Times*, the NCAA “had built up reserves... from ‘football revenue.’”³¹ The NCAA offered universities membership deals and incentives for women athletics that the AIAW could not keep up with. The National Collegiate Athletic Association offered free trips for women’s teams who participated in national championships, free women’s membership for those whose men’s teams joined the NCAA, and had made deals with television networks to air men’s and women’s basketball championships when AIAW held its championship game.³² The AIAW tried to halt its demise by claiming that the NCAA was becoming a monopoly under the Sherman Antitrust act, which would be considered illegal.³³ The AIAW lost the case, and thus lost the majority of its financial base and was forced to fold. Its last year of existence was 1982; the 823 college and universities who stayed with the AIAW were forced to join the NCAA’s system.³⁴

Unfortunately, the leadership opportunities for women in the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women would not be continued throughout the merger with the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Within the NCAA’s model of intercollegiate athletics, women, like former presidents of the AIAW Carole Oglesby, Christine Grant, Charlotte West, and Donna Lopiano, would have to find different paths in that organization. Grant and West translated a copious amount of former AIAW policies into the NCAA. Lopiano left the NCAA, but went on to become an executive director of the Women’s Sports foundation.³⁵ These women were not the only ones who felt dismay during this period. There were over 300 women who made decisions for women’s athletics between 1975 and 1985: twenty-one of these women involuntarily gave up their positions during the merger while sixteen had left athletics completely; none of these women had control of their budgets post-merger.³⁶ Not only did leadership positions within universities disappear but so did coaching opportunities after the organizations merger with the NCAA:

In 1972 [one year after the establishment of the [AIAW] more than 90% of the coaches of women’s intercollegiate teams were coached by women. Today [1996] 48% of women’s intercollegiate teams are coached by women and 1% of men’s ... are coached by women.³⁷ Those statistics are almost twenty years old, but still stand relatively accurate in today’s intercollegiate athletic world. In 2006, forty-two percent of coaches in Division I athletics were women, dropping six percent in a span of ten years.³⁸

²⁷ Linda Jean Carpenter and R. Vivaian Acosta, “Back to the Future: Reform with a Woman’s Voice,” *Academe* 77 (American Association of University Professors: 1991), 24.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 29.

³⁰ Rader, 280.

³¹ “NCAA Entry looms Over AIAW Meeting.” *Gadsden Times*, January 4, 1981.

³² Carpenter and Acosta, *Back to the Future*, 24.

³³ Hult, “NAGWS and AIAW”, 30.

³⁴ Carpenter and Acosta, *Back to the Future*, 24-5.

³⁵ Hult, “NAGWS and AIAW”, 28-9.

³⁶ Ann Uhlir, “Athletics and the University: Post Woman’s Era”, *Academe* 73, no. 4 (1987): 27.

³⁷ Taczak, “EXPO”.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association has not just changed the coaching staff or the athletic departments throughout the nation but within Division I schools themselves. Women's Rugby is still categorized as an emerging sport by the NCAA, meaning that they do not have enough participants nationwide but soon hopes to. There are only nine Division I women's Rugby Teams, two Division II teams, and two Division III teams; overall, eleven women's rugby teams are sponsored by the NCAA, although one of these programs has been placed on an indefinite temporary suspension by its university, Eastern Illinois University (EIU).³⁹

The Eastern Illinois University's women's rugby team had amazing success during the first five years of its existence. Soon their finances and recruitment efforts by the university were depleted. Women's Rugby at Eastern Illinois University was only allowed one major scholarship, and many of these student athletes, if they had received aid for their sportsmanship, were only getting between \$500- \$1,000.⁴⁰ Ironically, the reason the university gives for not continuing the rugby program during the 2015 season is "due to an inadequate number of participants" for the 2015 season.⁴¹ The program itself was self-sustaining until recently when its funds were absorbed into the general athletic funds, according to the EIU Rugby Alumni Organization.⁴² For many years, the lack of aid from the university made this full contact sport dangerous for its student athletes. There were periods when the team of eight women would go against teams of fifteen to thirty women.⁴³ Many programs throughout the country have gone through similar situations. With money being tight, women's athletics are cut. Potentially, if the NCAA would not have absorbed the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women this particular program would not be in danger due to finances, as the men's program would still be housed separately than the women's budget wise; however, only an alternate timeline would tell for sure.

American intercollegiate athletics were just beginning for women in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women changed the scene for the future of athletics from the beginning of the women's athleticism. The women's rights movement and Title IX, along with the AIAW merger with the National Collegiate Athletic Association changed the landscape of sports forever. They attempted to provide equality and protection to women athletes, while at the same time diminishing the role of women in athletic coaching and executive decision-making. While women are seen as equals externally, there are still issues within the current intercollegiate athletic system throughout the United States. Overall, intercollegiate athletics need help understanding how to make things equal between the genders.

³⁸ Susan Welch and Lee Sigelman, "Who's Calling the Shots? Women Coaches in Division I Women's Sports," *Social Science Quarterly* 88 (2007): 1415.

³⁹ "NCAA Sports Sponsorship," accessed December 2, 2015. <http://web1.ncaa.org/onlineDir/exec2/sponsorship>.

⁴⁰ Becky Carlson, "We Were Not Empowered at EIU... We Were Marginalized," *LinkedIn Pulse*, accessed December 2, 2015, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/we-were-empowered-eiu-marginalized-becky-carlson>.

⁴¹ "2015 Women's Rugby Season Suspended," accessed December 2, 2015, http://www.eiupanthers.com/news/2015/9/3/WRUGBY_0903155554.aspx.

⁴² Carlson, "We Were Not Empowered".

⁴³ Carlson, this information can also be found in print Sean Hastings, "Rugby Team suspension to be analyzed" *The Daily Eastern News*, December 7, 2015 or online as "The season that was never played" *The Daily Eastern News*, accessed December 7, 2015. <http://www.dailyeasternnews.com/2015/12/07/the-season-that-was-never-played/>