

6-5-2006 Male Practice Players-Women's Basketball

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2 JOSH CENTOR: Welcome to "Mondays With  
3 Myles".

4 Dr. Brand, how are things in your world?

5 DR. MYLES BRAND: I'm doing fine. Thanks,  
6 Josh.

7 JOSH CENTOR: Today, we'd like to discuss  
8 male practice players.

9 Why do women's teams practice against men?

10 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, you certainly  
11 picked a difficult topic. It would be nice if there were  
12 easy answers to complex questions. There aren't. This  
13 is a complex question.

14 The women's teams practice against men  
15 mostly in basketball in order to improve. They want to  
16 practice against the best they can find. And the women's  
17 teams -- the coaches think that there's some opportunity  
18 to improve by practicing against the men.

19 JOSH CENTOR: But what about those girls  
20 who are maybe your Player 7, 8, 9, 10, and they're not  
21 getting as many opportunities, even in practice, if you  
22 have men coming in to practice?

23 DR. MYLES BRAND: And that's the other  
24 side. I think it's -- I frankly am only listening in  
25 this particular case. I want to hear both sides of the

1 story. I haven't made up my mind.

2 What some of the women's basketball coaches  
3 tell me is that they invite the males in to make the  
4 first team better, but they don't do that all the time.  
5 They want to make sure that the other players, the ones  
6 that are sitting on the bench, maybe freshmen and  
7 sophomores, have a chance to develop. And so they need  
8 to have practice times too. And I guess it comes down to  
9 what proportion of your practice is devoted to men and  
10 what proportion is devoted to all women.

11 JOSH CENTOR: Now, I assume that there are  
12 teams that don't do it. I don't know for sure. But do  
13 you think that teams that don't use male practice players  
14 might find themselves at a disadvantage?

15 DR. MYLES BRAND: I don't know that, and I  
16 don't have information about how many do it. The women's  
17 basketball players I've talked to directly all have done  
18 it, but that doesn't mean that every women coach is doing  
19 it.

20 Does it have a disadvantage? Well, I think  
21 those who use this system probably believe it gives them  
22 an advantage. I don't know if it's true, but that's what  
23 they believe.

24 JOSH CENTOR: Now, it seems that the people  
25 who would be against the use of male practice players are

1 worried about the reduction in opportunities; is that  
2 correct?

3 DR. MYLES BRAND: They're worried about the  
4 reductions in opportunities and practice and improvement  
5 about the young women who are sitting on the bench.

6 I mean, you have to at least practice. If  
7 you're not going to get in the game, you're going to have  
8 to at least practice to improve. And I think the problem  
9 is that once you get past the elite players, you don't  
10 have enough young women who are at that high level of  
11 play.

12 You know, and one of the issues we have in  
13 women's basketball, in general, is to make sure that the  
14 parity we're now seeing continues to improve. And if you  
15 don't have women playing enough at all levels, it's not  
16 likely you'll have that parity develop.

17 JOSH CENTOR: You know, what worries me is  
18 that as a Division III baseball player who didn't come in  
19 as a -- the stud, if you will -- I sat on the bench for a  
20 few years before I got my opportunity to play my senior  
21 year. And I really treasured those intersquad baseball  
22 games that we played in the fall, and my chance to throw  
23 inside the batting cages in the winter -- maybe more so  
24 than the starters because that was my chance to play. I  
25 didn't get that opportunity.

1 I guess that's where I look at this issue.  
2 But I do understand the other side of this as well.  
3 Definitely complex.

4 DR. MYLES BRAND: It's complex. And I  
5 think some of the young women who don't get to practice  
6 as much against the first team probably feel the way you  
7 feel about it.

8 But then you have, on the other side of  
9 issue, the teams are very competitive. How do you make  
10 your first team as competitive as possible to keep up  
11 with those in your conference? And also, once you get to  
12 the tournament, how do you make sure that the players are  
13 prepared for it?

14 So it is complex. I think it has two sides  
15 to the story. We want to give women the maximum  
16 opportunity to participate and improve, but of course,  
17 the coaches and the teams themselves want to be highly  
18 competitive.

19 JOSH CENTOR: Is this something -- is this  
20 being discussed somewhere with some group?

21 DR. MYLES BRAND: You know, it's being  
22 widely discussed. I'm not sure we're discussing it in  
23 only one form, but it is controversial. It's important.  
24 I think it is an issue that women's basketball is dealing  
25 with. It's not the most important issue, but it is an

1 issue that I think is being discussed by the Women's  
2 Basketball Coaches Association and being discussed by  
3 various conferences. I know that for sure.

4 JOSH CENTOR: Well, it promises to be an  
5 issue that stays hot for a while. I'm pretty sure about  
6 that. We'll have to keep our eye on it.

7 You just listened to "Mondays With Myles",  
8 featuring NCAA president Myles Brand.

9 Dr. Brand, thank you for being here.

10 DR. MYLES BRAND: Good to be here, Josh.

11 JOSH CENTOR: We'll see you next week.

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