

6-16-2008 Unisex Sports

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2 JOSH CENTOR: Good morning. And welcome to "Mondays  
3 With Myles".

4 Dr. Brand, today we are going to tackle a hot one. I  
5 want to talk about boys and girls playing together, playing  
6 separately in sports.

7 A few weeks ago I caught an article about a  
8 12-year-old girl who was playing basketball on a boy's team,  
9 was dominating the opposition and was a star player on her  
10 team. Some parents complained. And she was banned from the  
11 league because a girl was beating up on the boys. That was  
12 the general sense of the article.

13 Should she be permitted to play with the boys?

14 DR. MYLES BRAND: I don't see why not. I mean, would  
15 those parents have been upset if it was a 12-year-old boy that  
16 was beating up on their sons in this sport? I don't think so.  
17 They might have been.

18 I think there's opportunities for unisex sporting  
19 events and organized sporting events. And even in the NCAA,  
20 as you probably know, Josh, there are two sports right now in  
21 which we have co-ed unisex approach to it -- namely, rifle and  
22 skiing. May there be other opportunities? Possibly so.

23 JOSH CENTOR: Well, let me ask you this, if there was  
24 a boy on this team that may have been at the end of the bench,  
25 at 12 years old, and might have had better opportunities to

1 compete playing in a girls' league at the same age, is that  
2 appropriate?

3 DR. MYLES BRAND: You know, I think it's okay to have  
4 girls and boys leagues, if you want to do that. But you can  
5 also have unisex leagues in which it is open to the best  
6 players, whatever gender you might be. You might have unisex  
7 races, for example. Women are, for example, outstanding in  
8 endurance running. I remember a time where they weren't even  
9 permitted to run a marathon or run over 5,000 meters, for  
10 example.

11 But, of course, they have physiologically a great deal  
12 to offer -- in swimming too. Maybe not at every event because  
13 sometimes just pure brute physiological strength matters. But  
14 there are many opportunities for women where a unisex approach  
15 might make more sense.

16 JOSH CENTOR: Well, will it make sense for the boys?

17 DR. MYLES BRAND: A unisex approach means both play.

18 JOSH CENTOR: Right. I understand. But if you have a  
19 boys league where --

20 DR. MYLES BRAND: It is not a girl playing in a boys'  
21 league or a boy playing in a girls' league that I'm thinking  
22 about. I'm thinking about a unisex approach.

23 Now, the boys may out number the girls, at least  
24 initially, in such a unisex approach, but there is no reason  
25 not to have that as well.

1           JOSH CENTOR: Okay. So then we are getting -- we  
2 would maybe be getting rid of boys' and girls' leagues solely?  
3 Or keeping those and having the unisex option?

4           DR. MYLES BRAND: We, right now, in rifle have only a  
5 unisex option. So if you want a unisex option, that's an  
6 arguable approach to take. But then you don't have three  
7 different teams unisex, boys, and girls. I mean, you would  
8 decide to do unisex or you don't. You may break into that  
9 slowly.

10           You know, there are some differences between boys and  
11 girls. I feel I don't really have to tell you that much about  
12 it, Josh. But there are some differences physiologically.

13           For example, in basketball, women have much more  
14 problems with ACL than boys do, and that really affects high  
15 school and college basketball.

16           Now, some of it has to do with body shape, some of it  
17 has to do with early training, for example, and muscular  
18 development. And maybe we can help young girls avoid some of  
19 these injuries if we did have a unisex approach, for example.

20           But I don't think we should, for artificial reasons,  
21 rule out that type of approach. It depends who's good and who  
22 can play.

23           JOSH CENTOR: Yeah. That's really interesting. And  
24 it brings me to the next question I have.

25           There is actually a girl, Lily Jacobson, who plays on

1 the Vassar baseball team. And I should say a woman rather,  
2 who plays on the men's baseball team at Vassar. She had a hit  
3 this year, and she's an integral part of that team. So there  
4 are no big female baseball teams. We don't sponsor woman's  
5 baseball, so if a young woman wants to play baseball in  
6 college, she has to play with men. But we don't have a men's  
7 softball option.

8           Should male student-athletes be permitted to play on  
9 women's softball teams in the NCAA?

10           DR. MYLES BRAND: If we say it's okay to have a unisex  
11 approach to it, I don't know why not. We haven't moved in  
12 that direction, but I don't see anything in principle why we  
13 can't be thinking along those lines. We need to a little more  
14 progressive about this than we have been in the past.

15           JOSH CENTOR: So it is possible it conceivably could  
16 happen?

17           DR. MYLES BRAND: It could happen. Now, I'm not sure  
18 how our sports community would react. We would have to change  
19 some minds to get to that position. But I think it is worth  
20 having those discussions. They are not the easiest  
21 discussions. They have a philosophical side to them, besides  
22 a practical side. They do have medical issues attached to  
23 them, perhaps.

24           Although, woman are playing football now. That's a  
25 good example. We see that women are kickers, for example, on

1 some football teams already -- male football teams. So I  
2 think some activity of unisex may make good sense to us. We  
3 shouldn't be afraid to talk about it.

4 JOSH CENTOR: Well, very interesting stuff. Thank  
5 you, Dr. Brand.

6 DR. MYLES BRAND: My pleasure.

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