

Sports Funding Still Favours Male Athletes, Report Says

By Jennifer HENDERSON,
Atlantic Bureau

HALIFAX (CUP) -- While women's university sports teams have finally begun to command the same respect on the field as men's teams, a recently released report from Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) shows they are still far from catching up to their male counterparts in terms of funding opportunities.

According to the data collected by CIS, Canadian schools provided over \$4.3 million in award money to student athletes in 2001-2002 with 67% of these funds being directed to male athletes.

Nova Scotia's St. Francis Xavier University (St. F.X.) had the country's third largest athlete awards budget. Almost 83% of the school's \$260 000 in award money was granted to male athletes. Tom Kendall, St. F.X.'s director of athletics and recreation, admits the statistics do not paint a rosy picture of the opportunities for female athletes at his school.

"That looks horrible. I think it reflects the history in terms of how money has been raised and inherited in the past. The bursaries are very skewed. There are

just not the number created for women's sports as there have been for men's sports," he said.

Kendall points to strong alumni support for the university's football team and national championship wins for the men's basketball team as contributing factors to the success of men's athletic fundraising. Although contributions from the university itself are roughly equal for men's and women's teams, Kendall believes that a female sports dynasty would go a long way to ensuring public financial support for women's clubs.

"I know for a fact it would help. It's just like everything else. People want to see a winner," he said.

This is a sentiment shared by Kathy Mullane, Interim Athletics Director at Halifax's St. Mary's University. She cites the school's Vanier Cup win as providing a needed shot in the arm for the football team's fundraising efforts. However, Mullane believes that winning records aside, creating and supporting women's sports teams is the best way to close the athletic gender gap.

"All the new teams we have added since I've been here have been

women's teams. By adding women's hockey and rugby we've achieved gender equity in the number of men and women athletes. We actually have more women's teams than men's" she said.

For her part, CIS CEO Marg McGregor confirms that university support for sports teams cannot be measured by the bottom line alone.

"Athletic awards represent a small portion of the support Canadian universities contribute to student-athletes,"

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she said. "Universities in Canada make a staggering contribution to the sport system and to student-athletes through facility development, coach employment, running competitive leagues and programs and hosting high performance events and camps."

While many universities are moti-

vated to tackle the gender gap in athletes awards on their own, CIS has designated 2005-2006 as the target by which they'd like to see a nationwide parity in monies given to male and female athletes. For his part, Kendall concedes the target date may be optimistic, but he's confident that St. F.X. will achieve award parity in the near future.

"If we're not, it won't be because we are not trying. The fact of the matter is there is no rational reason for providing more op for men than women, whether in terms of sports, academics or anything."

Body Image Problems Sparked by Media

By Cortney PACHET,
Central Bureau

WINNIPEG (CUP) — Society is waging an "anti-fat" campaign said three speakers at the University of Winnipeg and it's hurting self-esteem and causing eating disorders.

Speakers Elaine Stevenson, Ann McConkey and Tamara Robert, gathered with students to discuss eating disorders and the media's influence of the perception of beauty.

According to Stevenson, the vice-president and a founding member of Eating Disorder Association of Manitoba, 11,000 women between the ages of 14 and 64 suffer from an eating disorder.

In August of last year, Stevenson's daughter, Alyssa, passed away after an 11 and a half-year battle with anorexia.

"Our society is in the midst of an anti-fat campaign," Stevenson read from an article in the Calgary Herald, noting that 95 per cent of diets fail and 35 per cent of people who start off dieting devel-

op eating disorders.

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McConkey, a dietitian at Women's

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Health Clinic, a Winnipeg health clinic, cites weight preoccupation as being on a continuum, from occasional dieting to a cycle of constant dieting and even bingeing and purging.

"At the Women's Health Clinic, we believe healthy people come in all shapes and sizes," said McConkey. She emphasized that when individuals lose weight and are praised, they often wonder what people thought of their appearance prior to weight loss.

Robert, who works with street-involved youth and has developed programs in self-esteem, anger management and conflict resolution, emphasized that

many street youth are forced into an eating disorder, because they are starving.

"You can't respect that which you don't value," said Robert. "How can we get to the point where we value ourselves?"

All three speakers noted the importance of being critical of the media and writing to magazines, demanding they feature models of all shapes and sizes or refusing to purchase magazines with size zero models.

Several years ago, an ad campaign for the NBC sitcom Friends displayed the three female leads on a billboard above the words "cute, anorexic chicks". Although the ads were pulled after a series of complaints, Stevenson believes the damage was already done.

"The media is turning something that is unhealthy and making people strive for this," said Stevenson, stressing that the media perpetuates a notion that people must be thin to be happy or successful.

Robert believes it's essential to change the way we think about our body image and ourselves.

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"I can't wait for society to accept me, because that's never going to happen," said Robert.

McConkey cites self-respect is an essential part of maintaining a healthy body image.

"My value as a human being will never be tied to the weight on the scale," said McConkey.

Stevenson believes people need to learn to value individual for who they are, not how they look. "People matter, people count, not size, shape or colour."