What Are the Benefits of Girls & Boys Playing Sports on the Same Team?

by LEIGH REASON  Last Updated: May 15, 2015



As a parent, you may be struggling to find a sports team for your child to play on. An important concern is whether your kid should play on a single-sex team or a co-ed team. A team mixed with boys and girls has many benefits, including friendship building and stereotype smashing.

Prevent Stereotyping, Separate by Ability

Child psychologist Laura E. Berk claims in her book "Child Development" that somewhere between ages 9 and 11 kids begin to develop gender stereotypes. Involving them in coed sports early is an opportunity to curb those notions before they start, according to Sam Snow of Soccer America's "Youth Soccer Insider." Berk suggests it's best to separate prepubescent girls and boys based on ability and cognitive development rather than gender.

Girl Power

Sports for girls in general has many benefits, including better grades, better body image, less depression and higher chance of graduating from high school, according to the Women's Sports Foundation. Allowing girls to compete alongside and against boys enhances their view of themselves and makes them more resilient according to Jeffrey Rhoads, author of "The Joy of Youth Sports: Creating the Best Youth Sports Experience for Your Child."

Friendship Building

Allowing boys and girls to play sports together builds friendships that might not otherwise exist. Learning to view the opposite sex as a friend and not something intimidating is something kids can carry with them for life, wrote Steve Sampsell in "KidSports Magazine." Sports at this prepubescent age is social; the kids are meant to have fun and get some exercise and the camaraderie will serve them well, according to Tim McCoy, director of member services at PA West U.S. Youth Soccer.

Things to Consider

There is no one-size-fits-all time when genders should be separated in sports. Some girls develop faster than boys and may be able to compete with boys their age well into puberty. An example of such a case was a 12-year-old Ohio girl named Makhaela Jenkins, who in 2013 fought her school's district in court over her right to play on a boys-only football team. She won. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, there were more than 1,500 girls playing on boys’ football teams that year, and the trend was growing with a 17 percent uptick since 2009.

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/556545-how-to-be-a-good-captain-of-a-sports-team/>

Accessed 11/13/16