**Throwing Like a Girl - Can Coed Teams Work?**

13 year-old Mo'ne Davis made Little League World Series the other week as the first female pitcher to throw a shutout in the Little League postseason. She is one of the two girls playing in the 2014 Little League World Series. More than a thousand girls in the U.S. play high school baseball, [according to Justine Siegal](http://espn.go.com/espnw/news-commentary/article/11367099/why-mone-davis-play-matters-girls), the founder of Baseball For All, which "fosters, encourages and provides opportunities for girls to participate in baseball." Mo'ne Davis is not the first girl to ever choose baseball over softball, and she certainly won't be the last. But her shutout game got a lot of attention and has a lot of people talking about coed sports. Can they actually work? Can girls compete with boys even as they get older?

**Will boys accept girls?**

A big concern regarding the creation co-ed teams, especially sports that are predominantly male, is that the boys will be less accepting and supportive of their female teammates. Would a team of boys resent their female teammate, especially if she were better than them? [According to NPR](http://www.npr.org/2014/08/16/340912807/mone-davis-throws-like-a-girl-at-70-mph), "Davis throws a 70 mph fastball, while most of the boys she faces pitch in the high 50s and low 60s." Her team seems perfectly happy to have her, especially since it means they continued on in the tournament, but would other teams be as accepting?

[River Road Independent School District](http://amarillo.com/sports/high-school-sports/2013-02-09/going-co-ed) in Texas decided to start a high school soccer program, but it didn’t have enough players for a full girls team. So the school created one team that has 14 boys and four girls on the roster. Head Coach Roy Cash said the girls have fit into the team well and have "played tough." One male player said playing with and practicing against the girls on the team hasn’t been too unusual because they have talent and play aggressively. “As long as they work hard, they’re my teammates,” he said.

There is also some concern, especially among coaches, that having girls on the field would change the way the boys play. Soccer coach Matthew Driver said he didn’t have a problem playing a co-ed team, but it did affect the aggressiveness of his team.“Challenging a girl is different than challenging other boys,” he said. Even if the boys accepted a girl on the field would they change their own way of playing (possibly for the worse)?

**Is it safe for girls to play?**

Girls typically get their growth spurt as much as two years sooner than boys, and that keeps them competitive (in terms of size if not skill) through most of elementary school. But there is no denying that a 300 pound male linebacker could do some serious damage to a 150 pound girl during a high school football game, so many argue that sports should NOT be coed after puberty simply because male athletes tend to be bigger, stronger, and faster than most female athletes. It's not that they are inherently better athletes, but just that genetics kick in around 13 and men and women will develop differently. But in non-contact sports like baseball (and to some extent soccer), does the size difference really matter? Every athlete assumes some level of risk when they step on the field, and clearly plenty of boys play football even knowing how dangerous a concussion can be! And while female athletes have the greatest risk of ACL injuries, with [rates 4 to 6 times as high](http://contemporarypediatrics.modernmedicine.com/contemporary-pediatrics/news/prevention-acl-injuries-adolescent-female-athletes) as for their male counterparts in the same sports, approximately 80% of ACL tears occur without any physical contact with another player.

<http://blog.sportssignup.com/blog/bid/200843/Throwing-Like-a-Girl-Can-Coed-Teams-Work>

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