

You have recently read a newspaper article about gender equality. In the article, it said, “In the Olympics, men and women should not be separated in any of the sports. Men should race against women, and there should be mixed-gender teams in all sports. This would be true gender equality.” You felt strongly about it. Write a letter to the editor expressing your opinion on this statement.

Yam Long Hin Aaron

Dear editor,

As an athlete in the national team, I feel totally irritated by the article called ‘Gender Equality in Sports’ posted on your newspaper dated 2nd January. Therefore, I am writing to express my strong opposition against the advocacy that men should race against women and there should be mixed-gender teams in all sports. My arguments in which my stance is justified are threefold.

Probably my top concern is the physical variations between the genders that lead to true inequality. It is common knowledge that the physical structures of male and female body are completely different, ranging from body strength, endurance, flexibility to simply average height. With a host of differences in their bodies, how is it possible to say that men racing against women are fair and equal? True equality lies in fair competitions without any assistance from including equipment, medication and body mechanisms. Generally speaking, men have stronger strength and longer endurance due to their development of muscles while women normally perform better in flexibility. In Olympics, some events such as track and field and football favour men who have better strength while some others like gymnastics and volleyball matches favour female competitors. It is unequivocal that both genders have their unique advantages over each in some particular events, and in turn leads to inequality. This advocacy is no difference as a call for matches in which adults are competing against children. Such suggestion should by no means be introduced into any sports.

Apart from the theoretical physical differences between the two genders, such proposal for ‘true gender equality’ is also barely pragmatic. As an athlete, I am familiar with the regulations and standards of international sports competitions. From the perspective of the international standards of matches, scarcely is it possible for the majority of female competitors to reach the standard of conventional male matches. In Olympics, the world record of 100 metres is 9.55s, owned by the ‘Flash’ – Bolt from Jamaica. And the average result of top-notch male athletes like Justin Gattin, is below 10s. However, top female runners and swimmers cannot perform as well as the male do. Meanwhile, some events like gymnastics is dominated by female athletes, the male competitors have little hope to attain the level as the female do.

Besides difficulties in attaining standards, it is also infeasible in terms of length and intensity of various games. According to the Olympics and the World cup, the length and requirements of male and female competitors are not the same. For instance, some long-distance run and

ball games have lower requirements for women. Taking the physical strength of female athletes into account, it is neither fair nor practical to require them to ‘run an extra mile’ as they may not be able to complete the race. Of course, it is vice versa that male competitors are weaker in some events. Under such limitations, such proposal is undoubtedly unrealistic.

On top of this, the sports events may lose its true meaning if the aforementioned claim is agreed. Currently, both male and female athletes can unleash their potential to the fullest and complete races with flying colours. However, with the suggested reform, events are no longer granting equal chances to every athlete. The true meaning of sports is to achieve equality with diversity. If such suggestion is implemented, the female athletes are more likely to dissipate from the award podium and the field, as a result of physical differences. Prominent male athletes like Bolt, Gattin, James and Rex Tso will dominate the prizes in male-favoured games. This goes against the rationale and mission of every sports event and the spirit of sportsmanship. It is conceived that the international sports events such as the Olympics, World Cup and premiere league will lose its fame if this claim is realized. It is not worthwhile to destroy the longstanding spirits of sports.

Some may counter that such proposal acts as the best policy to achieve fair competitions between two genders and crack the traditional stereotypes. However, such argument is way too ideal that cannot succeed in reality. The only outcome is that most women will fall into disadvantaged situations that their fair chance of winning diminishes. How could this be claimed as a fair competition?

Based on the above grounds, it is unjustifiable that allowing men race against women or mixed gender teams can achieve gender equality. Instead, it brings disadvantages to athletes of different genders. On the contrary, the sports field has been reformed and become less ossified that female athletes nowadays enjoy equal and fair treatment in games as the male athletes do.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Wong

