



Activate Your Brain

How do you feel when you see women playing professional sports?
What can schools do to encourage more girls to participate in sports?



Listen carefully to the story. Then, follow your teacher's instructions to read it again.

Breaking Barriers: The Evolution of Women's Professional Sports in the US



In the US, women in sports have made amazing progress over the years. Not so long ago, girls and women were not encouraged to play sports as much as boys and men were. But things have changed a lot! Now, there are many sports leagues just for women, and they are getting more popular every day.

One of the biggest changes happened because of a law called Title IX (Title Nine). This law was made in 1972, and it said that girls and boys should have the same chances to play sports in school. Before this law, not many girls played sports in school. However, after Title IX, many schools started sports teams for girls. This was a big step forward!

Because of Title IX, more girls started playing sports from a young age. They grew up loving sports just as much as boys do. This helped women's sports leagues to grow, too. Now, there are professional leagues for women in soccer, basketball, and many other sports. These leagues show that women can be just as exciting and skilled in sports as men.

Let's talk about some of these leagues. The Women's National Basketball Association, or WNBA, is a big deal. It was founded in 1996 and has helped women's basketball become very popular. The players in the WNBA are some of the best basketball players in the world!

Check

for Understanding

- What does Title IX say about sports?
- In what year was the Title IX law enacted?
- What changes occurred after the enactment of the Title IX law?

Baseball also has a place for women. The Women's Professional Fastpitch (WPF) started in 1997 as a professional softball league that serves as an alternative to traditional baseball. Softball and baseball are like cousins in the sports world; they share similarities but have distinct differences. For instance, a softball is larger and softer than a baseball, which is smaller and harder. Additionally, the softball field is smaller, and players pitch the ball underhand, unlike the overhand throws in baseball, making each game uniquely exciting. While the WPF may not be as universally recognized as the WNBA, it represents a significant step forward, providing women athletes with a platform in a sport closely related to baseball. The skill and dedication of these players highlight the growing interest and support for women across all sports fields.



Another important league is the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), which started in 2013. Soccer is loved by people all over the world, and the NWSL has shown that women's soccer is super exciting to watch. The United States Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) has won the World Cup several times, and many of those players play in the NWSL.

These leagues have grown a lot, but it has not always been easy. Women's sports leagues usually do not get as much attention or money as men's leagues. But people are working hard to change that. The fight for equal pay in women's sports is about making sure female athletes get the same money as male athletes for the same work. This battle has been going on for a long time. It's part of a bigger push for fairness in jobs, sports, and everywhere in society.



Check for Understanding

- In what year did the WNBA start?
- What tournaments has the USWNT won?
- What are the main differences between baseball and softball?

A famous example is the US Women's Soccer Team. They won lots of games and even World Cups, but they were paid far less than the men's team, which had not won nearly as much. The women's team fought hard against the US Soccer Federation, wanting equal pay and treatment. Their struggle got a lot of people worldwide to pay attention to how unfairly women athletes are often paid. Equal pay isn't just about money. It also means having the same chances to train, get good coaching, and be treated well by doctors. Women athletes say they need these

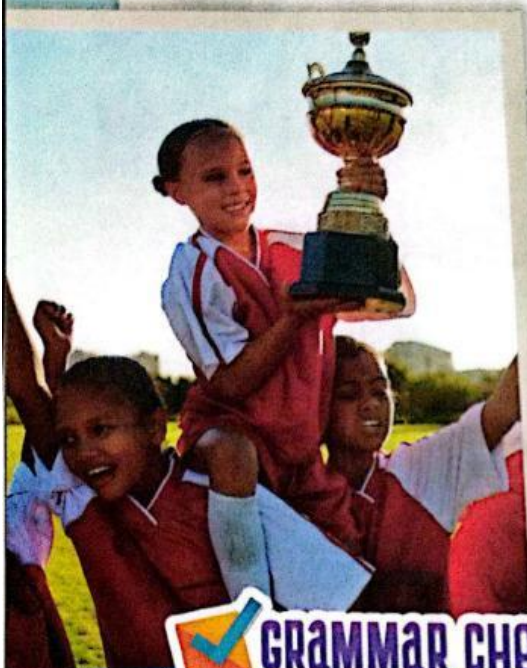
things too, to be their best. Their fight tells everyone that women's work is just as valuable as men's, not only in sports, but in all parts of life.

Women athletes have become heroes to many people. They show that with hard work and passion, you can achieve great things. Women's sports have come a long way. But, there is still a long way to go. The progress continues, and the future looks bright for women in sports!

Check

for Understanding

- What can people do to strengthen women's leagues?
- What does equality in sports mean?



GRAMMAR CHECK!



Read the sentences. Find the verb in each sentence and circle it. Then, rewrite the sentence in the simple past tense.

1. The players in the WNBA are some of the best basketball players in the world!

2. These leagues show that women can be just as exciting and skilled in sports as men.

3. Baseball also has a place for women, notably through the Women's Professional Fastpitch (WPF) league.
