
Dina Rini

is a sixth grader at Saint Mary Byzantine Catholic School in Cleveland. She is an athlete and competes in hockey and gymnastics. Dina enjoys reading, writing, and learning about history. One of her hobbies is to collect snow globes. Her future plans include being either a crime scene investigator or a teacher.

Stop the hate! I have experienced gender discrimination on my co-ed hockey team. Unfortunately, some men still feel that hockey is just for boys. The scary thing is, these men are coaches.

I started playing hockey about three years ago. I played on a girl's team, but they didn't have enough girls to play competitive games. Last year I decided to join a co-ed team.

The parents and coaches at the organization I play for have been very encouraging and supportive. There are many girls playing at all levels there. I have three girls on my team. At the organization they have a separate locker room for woman. Other organizations are not as liberal. Some of the teams we play do not have any girls. They do not try to make hockey a sport for everyone to enjoy. Some of the boys I have played against think that girls are easy targets. They take cheap shots just because I'm a girl. To be a girl playing a "boys" sport, I have to skate faster and hit harder to prove I deserve to be on the ice. The boys don't have anything to prove. They get to skate just because they are born male. This just isn't fair.

Even worse than the players are the attitudes of some of the coaches. We played a game earlier this year against the Columbus Capitals. I got checked into the boards in front of their bench. The Capitals' coach leaned over the boards and said, "That's where you belong honey, the ice is for boys." It upset me to realize that he believed girls couldn't play as well as the boys. I believe he is so very wrong.

Women have worked hard in many cases much harder than men to prove they are just as good or better. There are still too many men that believe they are superior to women. This needs to change.

I believe that this could change if there was a board or committee to complain to. If the same coach got multiple complaints he or she and the victim should have to present the problem in front of officials, like a jury. If the officials see something, the coach could be banned. If the officials don't see anything, you would have to drop it. This would hopefully make the coaches and the players think twice about what they say. The coaches that are like this are teaching the boys it is all right to mistreat girls. I think this would cut back on the discrimination against different genders.