

## The Last of Seven

By Ted Witulski

**T**hank you to the members of the commission for your willingness to study and learn about the current interpretation of Title IX. My name is Ted Witulski, I come from a small town in eastern Nebraska. I want to thank you for your time and please consider how sports helped my mother raise a family.

My mother had a difficult job to do in 1969. She lost her husband to a heart attack on his fortieth birthday. Eight months after my father died I came along. I was born the last of seven kids. The unfortunate and seemingly unthinkable had happened-my mother had to make the best of the worst.

My mother was left with seven kids under the age of ten; she had no college degree, and no job. To her credit she persevered through difficult times, became a teacher and raised seven children she could be proud of.

Born out of the hardest of times, my mother will be the first to admit that the success of her family was not just hers' alone. A community of caring individuals made a difference in my family's lives.

To help raise her family my mother used the resources of the community to take care of and teach her kids while she struggled to pay the bills. We were all involved with activities in some way or another, 4H, the Boy Scouts, candy strippers, and the YMCA.

My mother saw the need for me to have someone in my life that would resemble a fatherly influence. When I was five years old she took me to the YMCA and signed me up for youth wrestling. There, amongst the fifty or so kids running around was a coach who was an unpaid volunteer, giving freely of his spare time.

Through him I learned about a sport, embedded in the fabric of the sport of wrestling were the values that altered my life. Without that first step of my mother taking me to a wrestling practice my life would have been much different.

Although I was never

a world-class athlete, my life was shaped by the sport of wrestling. When I went on to high school, I was the kid that was ready to walk down the wrong path in life, wrestling or more specifically a coach was there for me again to straighten me out and get me back on track. Thankfully, I learned to make better decisions and this didn't happen by accident-it was the tough love of a coach that made a difference.

Without those coaches that were real influences in my life, I would have been the kid in trouble, the one falling through the cracks.

I know the members of the commission have heard many reasons why the current interpretation of Title IX should be changed. I would like to add one more.

When sports are cut at the collegiate level, you are not just cutting spots for athletes; rather, the cuts are really closing the training ground for future coaches. Athletes in college become coaches that volunteer selflessly and make an inordinately enormous impact on the lives of youth in America.

Cut sports in college and you are really cutting the likelihood that people will be called to give back to their communities. It seems unreasonable but we have reached a point where schools are forced into roster management, scholarships are capped, and walk-ons are denied spots on the team.

All the while we've become fixated on satisfying a quota called proportionality, it seems we've begun to cut off our nose to spite our face. In the communities that I know volunteerism serves a critical function, especially when you consider the impact on the lives of kids.

We cannot afford to have the interpretation of an important federal law dismantling the training ground of volunteers in this country. While we measure numbers of athletes on the team who is measuring the community volunteers that come from these college teams?

Those volunteers are there, they are critical to our society, but if we continue to axe collegiate sports' programs it is clear we will only be hurting the future of children in this country.


From my high school wrestling team alone four kids went on to wrestle in college. We all became high school teachers and coaches. We all made a difference in kids' lives not just through teaching but through sport.

As a high school teacher for ten years I often felt the biggest impact I had on young people's lives was not just in the classroom but in the practice room. If wrestling was not available to me in college, I doubt I would have ever attended college to get my degree. And, without that degree, I probably would not have made an influence on the youth that I came in contact with.

There needs to be a more reasoned interpretation for Title IX, not just because the current interpretation is unfair to athletes. Rather, the current interpretation leads to the disintegration of the training of athletes that become coaches, who then in turn give back to their communities.

When I was born the last of seven kids, to a single parent, my mother needed help. In my case that help came from coaches trained in college wrestling programs. Thankfully, coaches like Dave Pethoud, Steve Schmidt, Bernie Guy, Dan Oliverius, and Milt Martin were exposed to college sports. Without their influence my life would not be as good today.

Please change the interpretation of Title IX so that the kids who are born to difficult circumstances will have those community volunteers-those coaches-there for them.

We can't afford to lose more college programs, because these programs repay our communities with coaches-coaches that make a difference. 

Michigan's 135 lb. Jason Fellows, Lapeer West, vs. Medbik, Roseville. Jason is a 2001 state champion, All-American, and placed third at state. By Gail Ranger.

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