

Pressure pushed girl away from sport

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her pole vault. I wanted to try that in high school, but they said, ‘Girls can’t do that.’”

This school year, Jayci said, she will be out for volleyball, basketball, track, swimming and a summer basketball program. She is a leading scorer for the Cowgirls basketball team and pole vaulted her way to the state tournament last spring.

“I just think from the time she was a little girl,” Karen Stone said, “I never wanted to say, ‘You can’t do something because you’re a girl.’”

While laws and some minds have changed, Karen Stone said, many young men still believe that girls can’t or shouldn’t compete against boys. Jayci’s brothers, she said, may have not wanted their sister to play high school football for that reason or because they were teased by friends.

But Jayci’s father understands, Karen Stone said, that high school is many kids’ only chance to participate in the sports or clubs that they choose.

“Her dad has always felt,” she said, “that this is the one time in your life you can experience anything.”

While Dennis Stone said he is glad Jayci stopped playing football, he said it was her decision. If she had hung in there, he said, he would have backed her.

Dennis Stone said his daughter knew she was going to have to throw in the towel eventually because she could no longer compete against boys who were growing stronger and faster. But, he said, Mike Johnson, former Cowboy head coach, made her decision come quicker and easier.

He said he thought Johnson, who coached the Cowboys for 12 years before moving to Waverly, Neb., last year, was trying to run Jayci off.

“He told me they couldn’t build a program around a girl,” Dennis Stone said. “After the third or fourth game, he started to put in players that weren’t necessarily better than her.”

Johnson, who now coaches in Waverly, admits he tried to discourage Jayci from playing. He said he did it for her own good.

The coach said he knew Jayci’s main sport was basketball, and he didn’t want a football injury to stop her from excelling.

“She did a great job,” Johnson said. “The thing is, when she took a



hit, I thought, ‘There goes a great basketball player.’ We were afraid the boys would eventually catch her.”

Deep down, he said, he wanted Jayci to play volleyball instead of football and that’s one reason why he benched her. Johnson said it had nothing to do with the fact that she’s a girl.

“It was nothing like, ‘I don’t want any girls around here.’” he said. “It was mainly because of physical maturity.”

Johnson said he had other reasons for not starting Jayci. For one, he said, he wanted to win football games. Besides, he added, Jayci had no future in football, where other players might.

“It was terribly unrealistic,” he said, “to think that she was going to be a varsity quarterback in high school.”

Johnson said Jayci sat out or

played other positions to give more-talented players a chance at quarterback. In the last two games of the season, the coach said, Jayci played defensive end.

“I did that because we wanted to win the games,” he said. “She’ll probably still be mad at me for some things.”

Richard Liess, Goodland High School athletic director, said Johnson did not violate Title IX — which says no one can be excluded from education programs or activities at a school that receive federal money — by taking Jayci from the starting lineup or having her play another position.

“Jayci had an opportunity to play football if she chose,” he said. “That



was never denied to her, nor would it have been. But coaches make decisions based on what they see in practice.”

Title IX didn’t enter into his decision to let Jayci on the team, Johnson said, or his decision to let her take the quarterback position for a time.

“We didn’t play her because we wanted to show we could play a girl,” he said. “I think she was physically better than a lot of the guys.”

But Tige Stone, Jayci’s older brother, said it did matter that his

sister is a girl, and she was treated differently because of it.

“Some of the politics played into it more than when she was in junior high,” he said. “During her freshman year, sometimes she didn’t get to play because she was a girl. Even when she was as capable or more capable than others.”

Although her brothers constantly nagged her to quit, Tige Stone said, that’s not why Jayci gave up football. He said she quit because she wasn’t getting to play.

“She had a little bit rougher go,” he said. “More than anything I said or anyone else said, that’s what made her quit.”

Johnson admitted that his actions on and off the field may have discouraged Jayci.

“I figure there was enough negativity from everyone, including me,” he said, “that it discouraged her from playing.”

Dennis Stone, Jayci’s father, said his daughter’s pride and competitive nature — both characteristics that run in the family — factored into her decision. If she thought she wouldn’t play again, he said, that would be enough to convince her to quit.

Tige Stone said Jayci was insulted when she had to sit on the bench. He said she has always competed against Luke — the Cowboy’s quarterback this school year and the brother closest to her in age — and has always wanted to be in the spotlight.

“She likes to be the best,” he said.

But Jayci’s mother said there was another reason that her daughter quit, one that Jayci doesn’t like admitting to.

Jayci’s doctor didn’t tell her to stop football, Karen Stone said, but warned that young women are prone to knee injuries because their hips do not provide as much support as a man’s. She said her daughter was scared of ruining her knees.

That was another reason, Tige Stone said, why he and his brothers bugged her to go out for volleyball instead.

“She has bad hips and knees,” he said. “There are places where she can do well, but she wouldn’t excel at any of it if she hurt herself playing football.”

Other doctors, experts in physiology, say they would have given Jayci the same warning. They say the

hormone testosterone, which is more abundant in males, creates larger muscles and longer bones, making men bigger, stronger and faster.

“Before the age of 10 there is no difference,” said Dr. Craig Harms, an assistant professor and exercise physiologist at Kansas State University in Manhattan. “It’s common to see boys and girls playing sports together. It’s when they reach puberty that you start seeing a difference.”

Women usually mature faster, he said, but are typically 30 to 35 percent weaker than a man of the same maturity level and size. He said that puts them at a definite disadvantage in a contact sport like football.

“You always hate to discourage anyone,” Dr. Harms said. “You hate to squelch their dream, but at the same time you have to look at reality.”

But Jayci said she didn’t feel that her male opponents or teammates were any stronger.

“I never felt like that,” she said. “I felt like I could compete well.”

Jayci noted that she never gave the coach, her brothers or her father any reason to think that she would be injured.

“That’s dumb,” she said. “I played football for three years and I never got hurt. I switched to volleyball and rolled an ankle in the first month.”

Dr. Harms agreed with that, saying it’s wrong to assume that a woman will be injured more easily than a man.

“It’s not a gender issue,” he said, “it’s a size issue. Saying just because she’s female she’s going to get hurt more easily isn’t a good argument.”

A woman who is the same size and has the same basic build as a man, Dr. Harms said, may not be as strong, but can be as aggressive.

“It used to be thought,” he said, “that boys are more aggressive than girls, but I think that’s a learned behavior. Studies have shown that if girls are treated as equals, they will behave as equals.”

Of course, Dr. Harms said, the perception hasn’t changed much.

“Guys are still perceived as being tough,” he said, “and girls aren’t.”

But Jayci doesn’t really care about all that. She still thinks she should be able to play football if she wants to, even if does mean she could get hurt.

“That’s kind of up to me isn’t it?” she said. “I mean, it’s no one else’s decision.”

Junior high wrestlers say it’s about winning, not boys and girls

By Rachel Miscall

The Goodland Daily News

They’re girls competing in a boys’ sport, but when the young wrestlers step on the mat they say it’s all about who is stronger and faster.

“It’s not about whether you’re a boy or a girl,” said Jenna McGinley, one of three girls on the Grant Junior High wrestling team this year. “It’s about getting a person pinned.”

McGinley and teammate Clenisha Yarbrough, both 14 and in eighth grade, said they joined the wrestling team in seventh grade and stuck with it because it’s fun.

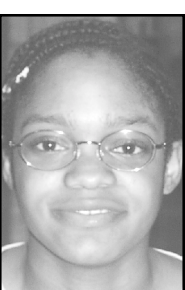
Tiffany Jones, a 12-year-old seventh

grader, said her older brother Adam, who is on the high school wrestling team, got her interested in trying the sport this season.

Despite some criticism from other students and some male wrestlers on other teams, Jones and her teammates say they enjoy wrestling more than other sports and don’t understand why they shouldn’t be able to do it.

“Most girls don’t like wrestling,” Jones said, “‘cause most people say it’s not right, but it’s right to have girls do any sport they want.”

Coach Greg Craig said he tries to stress to his wrestlers that the girls are members of a team.



Yarbrough



McGinley



Jones

that she can do anything a boy can do.

“He treats us equal,” she said. “No one is better.”

But the wrestlers say not everyone has that same attitude.

McGinley said people ask her why her mother lets her wrestle. She said she tells them that her mother supports her.

“She trusts me enough,” she said, “that she’ll support me in anything.”

Sometimes at matches, Yarbrough said, she hears other wrestlers saying that it’s a waste of time to get on the mat with her.

But, she said, it doesn’t bother her much.

“I don’t pay any attention to it,” she said. “I’ve never heard of a law that said girls can’t wrestle.”

Yarbrough said the criticism has affected her wrestling some.

She said she pinned one wrestler last season, but hasn’t done as well this year.

“The eighth graders encouraged me more last year,” she said.

While coach Craig said there isn’t a

big difference in size or strength between boys and girls in junior high, the girls said they feel like the boys are stronger.

“They are stronger,” Jones said, “but I’m working on getting stronger.”

McGinley and Yarbrough said they are also working on increasing their strength and skill level, but said their wrestling career will probably end with junior high.

“I’m probably not going to wrestle in high school,” McGinley said. “Now it’s all fun and games, but next year the seniors will take it a lot more seriously.”

Director says wages are equal

TITLE, from Page 1

Jayci Stone joined for one year before quitting because she wasn’t playing much — is so large.

Title IX does not require equal playing time, Liess said, adding that coaches make decisions on who to play based on what they see at practices.

“You have to believe,” he said, “that every coach wants to win. If that player will help you win, you’re going to play him or her.”

He said the law does provide a degree of tolerance, allowing around a 10 percent gap between the number of girls and boys participating and considering that some districts have trouble finding female coaches.

“We have a lot more male coaches,” Liess said, estimating that there are five female coaches at the high school compared with 25 men, “but that’s pretty typical of most districts in northwest Kansas.”

Despite that, he said, the female coaches with the same qualifications are paid the same as the men.

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