

Fairness in Women's Sports: Connecticut

Case Name: *Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools*

Case Status: Lawsuit filed in federal court on February 12, 2020. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights declared the CIAC's policies in violation of Title IX on May 15, 2020.



Significance: Allowing males to compete in the girl's category creates an unfair playing field and violates Title IX.

Background:

Selina Soule, Chelsea Mitchell, Alanna Smith, and Ashley Nicoletti are elite athletes from Connecticut. As dedicated competitors, they have all devoted countless days, nights, and weekends to training, striving to shave mere fractions of a second off their race times. They have done so hoping for the personal satisfaction of victory, an opportunity to participate in state and regional meets, and a chance to earn a college scholarship. Yet, despite their best efforts, Selina, Chelsea, Alanna, and Ashley entered races over the past few years knowing that they and their fellow female competitors have little chance of winning. That's because the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) allows males to compete in girls' athletic competitions based on gender identity. Not only does the CIAC's policy—and the endorsement of it by public high schools—create an unfair playing field for female athletes; the policy reverses nearly 50 years of athletic advances for women.

Key Points

- Girls deserve the same opportunity as boys to excel and chase their dreams. Allowing boys to compete in girls' sports shatters dreams and takes away opportunities.
- Comparably fit and trained males will always have physical advantages over girls—that's the reason we have women's sports.
- Men and women are different, and those differences matter. When schools and society ignore biological reality, it's girls who pay the price.

Key Facts

- In Connecticut, two boys have won 15 women's track championship titles between 2017-2019—titles once held by nine different girls. Because of the CIAC's policies, girls have lost over 85 opportunities to participate in higher levels of competition.
- Science and common sense tell us that males are generally bigger, faster, and stronger than females. For example, males have greater strength, denser bones, larger hearts, and greater lung capacity. No amount of testosterone suppression can eliminate all those advantages.
- This isn't just about winning. Girls are losing the opportunity to compete fairly, showcase their talents to college scouts, and potentially earn the college scholarships that are crucial to launching their future careers.

The Bottom Line: Girls deserve to compete on a level playing field. Forcing female athletes to compete against biological males ignores real differences between the sexes, isn't fair, and destroys their athletic opportunities.

Connecticut Girls Just Want Fairness

When the law ignores biological reality, it's women and girls who pay the price. In athletics, girls deserve to compete on a level playing field. Unfortunately, these four female athletes are just a small sample of girls who have lost medals, championships, advancement opportunities, publicity, and the thrill of victory due to a discriminatory policy that allows biological males to compete in girls' sports in Connecticut. Two males now hold 15 women's state championship titles that were once held by nine different girls.



Selina Soule | Glastonbury High School

- Pronounced “soul.”
- Missed qualifying for the state championship 55m final and an opportunity to qualify for the New England championship by one spot in 2018-19 season—two spots were taken by males.
- “It’s very frustrating and heartbreaking when us girls are at the start of the race and we already know that these [male] athletes are going to come out and win no matter how hard you try. They took away the spots of deserving girls, athletes ... me being included.”

Chelsea Mitchell | Canton High School

- Lost four (4) girls’ state championships, two (2) all-New England awards, and many other awards to male competitors.
- Was ranked the fastest high school female in Connecticut in the 55m in indoor 2020 but was denied the opportunity to fairly compete for a state championship victory because boys were allowed to compete in the girls’ category.
- “I knew that I was the fastest girl here, one of the fastest in the state. I remembered all my training and everything I had been taught on how to maximize my performance ... I thought of all the times that other girls have lost. I could feel the adrenaline in my blood and hope that wafted from me. That just possibly, I could win this. Then, the gun went off. And I lost.”





Alanna Smith | Danbury High School

- Father, Lee Smith, was inducted into MLB Hall of Fame in 2019.
- Won the 400m at the 2019 outdoor New England Regional Championships as a freshman.
- Ran a 2nd place finish in the 200m at the New England Regional Championships, but was dropped to 3rd behind a male competitor.
- “Even before I get to the track, I already know that I’m not going to get first place, or maybe even second place . . . I know that no matter how hard I work, I won’t be able to have the top spot.”

Ashley Nicoletti | Immaculate High School

- Missed an opportunity to compete at the 2019 outdoor State Open Championship due to two male competitors.
- Won the 400m at the 2019 outdoor New England Regional Championships as a freshman.
- “I remember when I first had to race against a male athlete—it was intimidating. I felt nervous even at the thought of such an unfair race. I knew I had a chance against other girls, but not against a male athlete.”

