

Burdensome equality

Title IX should not be used in realm of athletics



New elements of Richard Nixon's presidency turn up tricky every day.

And another American is all too aware of this now; his name is Gus Picardo.

You don't know Gus. And until a few weeks ago, Gus didn't know a boy could play on the same high school team with the girls.

Ah, but Gus knows now.

Gus also knows that in 1972 — year of the Watergate break-in — Congress signed a law called Title IX, a phrase affectionately used by nearly every woman athlete who hath ever lived from that day forth. And a few who hath lived before that, too.

Gus is an ardent supporter of Title IX. As an athletic director of a high school district in Erie, Pa., Gus is a big fan of the law that is commonly credited with leveling the playing field for sports-loving females all over the country.

But thanks to a boy named David Conklin, Gus is beginning to learn that Title IX is a complicated thing.

A moment for the law's particulars ...

Title IX is part of the 1972 Education Amendments, which were modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In truly American fashion, the spirit of law, which helped women gain equal funding and opportunity in government-regulated institutions (mainly colleges), doesn't match the vague wording.

It reads:

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational programs or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

It's a law that has done so much for women in fields outside of athletics, though that progress is largely ignored.

As the Department of Education points out, the law can have a substantial impact on academic-related fields. These impacts include exponential gains in law and medical

school entrances.

But our screwed up culture doesn't care about female lawyers and doctors. We'd much rather watch breasts stuffed into sports bras.

So Title IX law tells us the number of sports for boys and girls needs to be equal, among other things. So Gus added girls' bowling to the Erie school district long ago.

"It was the only bowling league in the state," Picardo said proudly in an interview with the Daily Nebraskan.

Along came David. He is 17, loves to bowl, even watches it on ESPN, Picardo said. David had no outlet in which to bowl in high school. So he wanted to try out for the girls' team.

When he tried to do so in the fall, he didn't know if he could.

But a state court has paved the way for Conklin to make a go at it next fall, Picardo said. He made his claim in a local newspaper, and then it spread over The Associated Press wire.

"It made it all the way to Nebraska?" Picardo said.

Yes. And the story might get bigger if Conklin actually plays next fall.

"Our lawyer said there's not a whole lot we can do," Picardo said.

Of course not. Individual judges must decide the spirit of laws. But Title IX itself is open to interpretation. In academic-related fields, it's not a problem.

Women and men, as a whole, are equally good doctors, equally good accountants, equally good writers. Equally qualified to be president. And equally qualified for the role of mistress or mister.

But there is one thing they're not equal in: sports.

Women can play. To be sure. I'm also sure that any woman at this university could best me in any of their respective sports. But they couldn't best their peers of the opposite sex.

Which brings about a problem for Gus, an opportunity for David.

David is much better than all the girls on the team, Picardo said.

I would have thought bowling might be a sport where men and women might be able to compete equally, but Picardo said David has an average 60-70 better than the gals.

And David doesn't seem to be backing down.

"I asked David's father 'What are you doing this for, publicity?'"

Picardo said. "This could destroy the entire league."

Gus is in a bind. If he adds boys' bowling to the sports list, his district is no longer Title IX compliant. If he lets David compete, he claims the entire league will be skewed.

Gus may not have any other choice than to find boys for the other teams, no matter how crappy they might be.

What Gus really wants is David to give up this loopy desire. Girls who want to play on boys' teams, like football, can take their chances. But boys who want to play with the girls? Just spoiling all the fun.

It'd be easy to blame David. It'd be easy to scold him for not being a good sport and kicking a diseased horse.

But why should he be left out? Why should anyone? If David is left out because he's a boy, how is it different from Janie being restricted because she's a girl?

What Gus really wants misses the real issue behind Title IX: it shouldn't extend to athletics.

There needs to be another rule. Actually, a complete, separate rule; one that isn't so hard on men's sports, and one that doesn't allow for crossover craziness.

There needs to be one that addresses the unique financial situation that is an athletic department, rather than lumping it in with arts and sciences colleges, which operate on much smaller offerings.

I feel for Gus. In his position, I'd be none too happy.

But I've seen plenty of college coaches left out in the cold because their men's sports were slashed in favor of Title IX standards. Players were forced to go to other universities. Successful programs died off in favor of token women's programs.

Of course, we don't see that here at Nebraska,

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land of sunshine and happiness, where football gouges us just enough to make every sports program well off.

But other major universities, like Michigan State and Syracuse, haven't been so lucky.

Eventually, though, I believe something will happen at Nebraska. Either a men's sport will get dropped, or some troublemaker will make a go at the women's soccer team.

Depending on the courts, he just might win that chance. Title IX, like affirmative action, is not crafted out of pure benevolence.

Where David ends up, I don't know. He's courageous if

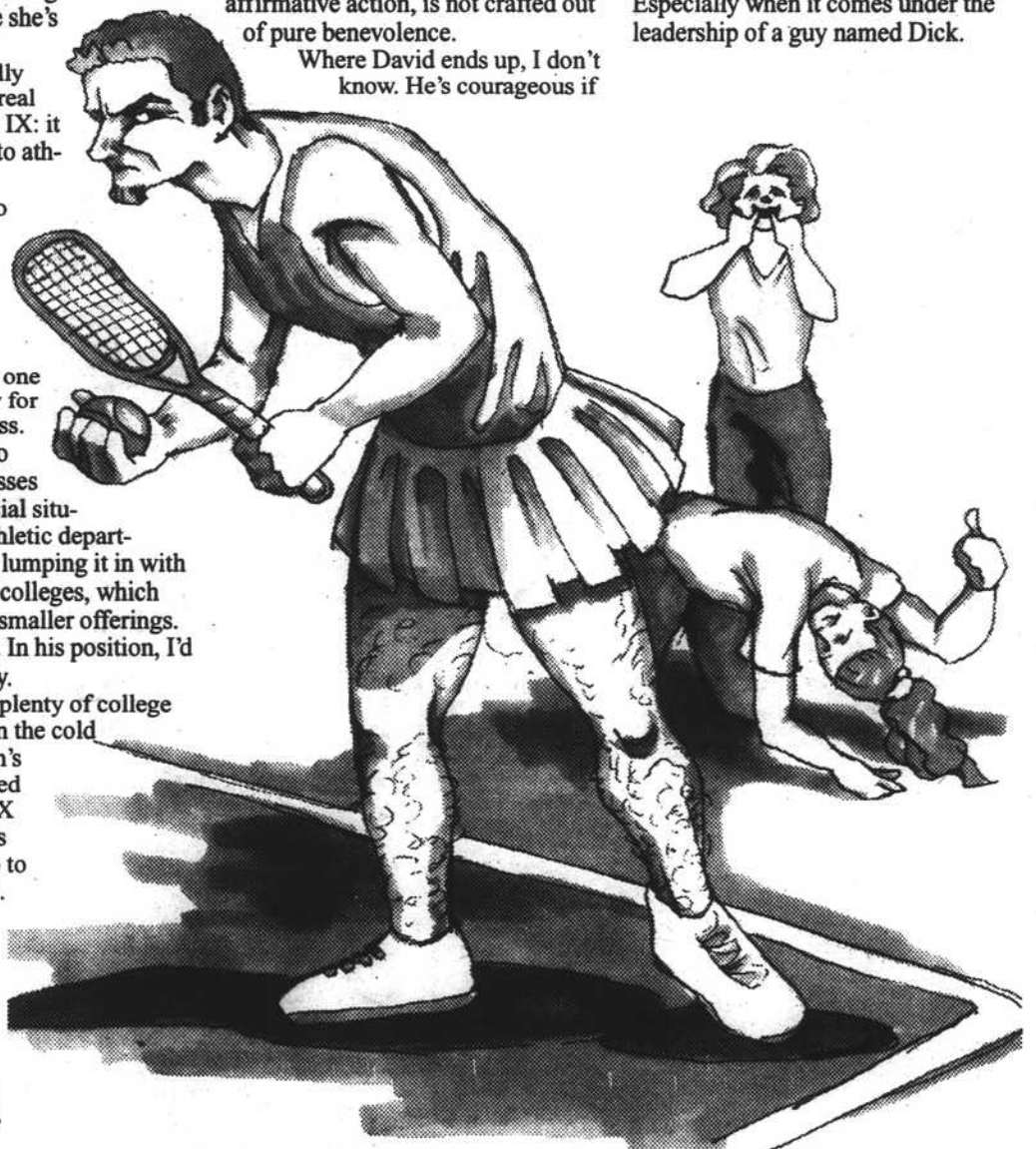
he goes through with it; imagine the jokes he'd get from his classmates.

In fact, finger pointing might be the one thing that keeps the law intact. Women might get to play now, but the social stigma of playing with them still exists.

Either way, Gus chooses to impart us with this message about his situation.

"What David wants to do - it's not what the law was intended for," he said. "It's not right."

Not a whole lot in life is. Especially when it comes under the leadership of a guy named Dick.



Scott Eastman/DN

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Bored, but not to death

Columnist suggests the inane to occupy time

Very recently, I found myself with a lot of time on my hands.

It turns out that school was getting out for the semester. I was working and studying and studying and studying, and all of a sudden I did not have so much studying to do.

See, I guess in the process of keeping myself BUSY and of running to many different places in short succession, I sort of FORGOT to check the calendar.

I forgot to give myself some time to plan my newfound time. So now I have unorganized time that I didn't happen to have before.

I'm confused. I'm looking around. I'm lost; what do I do?

Now I'm just a CRAZY KOOK. So I need to do something that fulfills that crazy urge inside me. I have to be crazy and SHOUT IT OUT. "I'M CRAZY! LOOK AT MY UNORTHODOX GESTURES! I DON'T SEEM TO BE A NORMAL PERSON!"

There are all sorts of fun things to do, but I can only tell you five ideas. I need some ideas for later columns.

1. Turn existing crap into creative crap.

Here's the scenario: You have a small wooden box, a paper plate, some glue and some glitter.

Take the glue and dump it all over the box. Then throw the paper plate at the box, and maybe an old rag, a used tube of Carmex, a shoelace or other stuff that would look nice stuck to a box.

Dump some glitter on it and WHAMMO, it's a monumental artistic expression. Then WOO HOO — what the hell? Give it to someone as a present.

Will he or she like it? Probably not, because you just did something excessively stupid.

OH-NO — we've lost people's respect! That is NOT good. Know what the up side is? You've probably been doing stupid stuff for a long time, and they probably never respected you anyway.

So look at you now. You've just wasted a bunch of time, and that was the ultimate goal.

2. Push the heck out of those but-

tons.

Lots of things have buttons. Televisions, blenders and little televisions all have buttons. Certain buttons produce certain responses.

It's an unfortunate paradox that some buttons do not exude noises when touched.

"Bloof" and "Kacha" (KAH-chuh) are common noises that buttons make. So are "Cling-Clong" and "Acht!"

Push that button. Now what? Push it again; push it, push it and keep pushing it.

Now look at your watch. It's later than it was before you pushed the button. Now you're getting somewhere.

3. Read the Daily Nebraskan.

Oh, I know! I can look for a job in the Daily Nebraskan! Or, maybe I can do a crazy-neat puzzle!

Gosh, isn't the DN great? I know! Maybe I'll just read it because it's the only thing to read.

I don't count my textbooks as actual "reading material."

Look at the first page and then the third page. Then look at the fifth page

and then the seventh page. Please don't read them — just look at them.

Reading is constructive and is conducive to learning. We want to EXTRACT MEANING FROM CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES IN A WAY THAT IS NOT CONSTRUCTIVE. Looking at or even reading the DN is not constructive. See, you are still on the right track.

4. Make sandwiches.

If you have some bread this is easy to do. But bread is LAME, so let's use something different.

Just find two things that are edible and look the same, such as Pop Tarts, tortillas or unrolled fruit roll-ups. Use your college-cultured imagination.

Now you need something to use as filler. You have a MYRIAD of options.

Use: something hard, or something gooey.

Or, both of these, or neither of those, or something else that people may or may not want to eat.

Slap everything together in a

somewhat haphazard fashion.

Then MASS PRODUCE your sandwiches. A successful food product can be duplicated with ease.

Remember — you have just created something rather atypical. Typical logic is thrown out the window. Just make several snack treats that look somewhat similar.

Oh boy, here comes the fun. You can initiate a picnic. Call all your friends and have them come over for a sandwich festival. Put all your sandwiches in a picnic basket.

If you don't have a basket, don't worry. Just use a box or something like that and write "picnic basket" on the side, denoting it as a basket so no one gets confused.

(Who wants to be confused on a picnic? Picnics are supposed to be fun!)

5. Throw up

You don't need food. Gag yourself. FOOD makes you FAT.

So what are your time-management suggestions? Gee, that's great.

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