

TITLE IX AND THE LADY LIONS

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This is the 25th article I have written to commemorate Rush County's Bicentennial. The topic for this writing is Title IX and the effect it had on girls athletics at Rushville Consolidated High School.

First of all, what is Title IX? In 1972 former Indiana Senator Birch Bayh, Jr., authored a federal law that prohibited federally funded education programs and activities from discriminating on the basis of sex. The law passed, and it had an immediate impact on public schools and universities.

According to Sara Baker, an equal rights advocate, Title IX requires institutions to pass a three prong test that covers participation, athletic and financial success, and treatment. She states that the legislation increases womens education and employment rates. Another plus is that girls who play sports are more likely to experience success, high self esteem, and positive image.

I interviewed former RCHS teacher and coach Cindy McDaniel about the early days of IHSAA and RCHS compliance with Title IX. Cindy commented that Rushville already had in place a good GAA program (Girls Athletic Association). Along with Cinda Brown, Vicki Kirby, Cindy McDaniel, and many other coaches there was a strong foundation of support for girls athletics. The GAA provided intramural competition in volleyball, basketball, tennis, golf, track

and field, gymnastics, and bowling. There were also limited contests with other schools. I remember a picture of a girls basketball game during the GAA years. The players wore long-sleeved shirts with taped on numbers! They played in the RCHS multi-purpose room (today's library).

In 1972 the IHSAA hired a lady named Patricia Roy to oversee Indiana's implementation of girls sports. Thanks to Roy's efforts, the IHSAA hosted its first tournaments in 1972-73 for volleyball and gymnastics. Golf and track and field tournaments followed in 1973-74, swimming and tennis in 1974-75, and the first ever IHSAA Girls Basketball Tournament in 1975-76.

Cindy McDaniel was Rushville's volleyball coach from 1975-1981. She remembers that locally there wasn't major resistance to girls sports. But, facilities were limited. Often the high school girls teams practiced at the elementary gyms. Equipment was also a concern. Eventually new volleyball standards and nets were installed at Memorial Gym. The floor was taped to accommodate volleyball court dimensions. Later the floor was refinished and restriped. By 1984 RCHS had the Memorial Gym Addition with two regulation volleyball courts and standards with in-floor support systems. Cindy stated, "It was exciting to see girls have opportunities that I didn't have."

Coach McDaniel also coached track and field at RCHS. She had several state qualifiers. Later her husband Jeff McDaniel coached girls track. Jeff was assisted by Judy (Hovermale) Dorrel.

Cinda (Rice) Brown was a guidance counselor at RCHS, and she became the Girls Sports Director. In 1975 she decided to concentrate her coaching efforts on girls basketball. It was a momentous decision. For the next 24 years the Rushville Lady Lions basketball team was the dominant program in east central Indiana. Her teams made three trips to the state finals in 1981, 1985, and 1993. At one point Coach Brown's teams had won 18 straight IHSAA Sectional Tournaments, a state record.

The biggest supporter of girls athletics was the Rush County community. Cyral Turner was RCHS Principal in 1975-76, and it was my first year as Athletic Director. We understood that compliance with Title IX and the IHSAA initiative was a high priority.

With Cinda Brown's leadership, we moved forward to secure equal practice time, new equipment, and an equal competition environment. For instance: At girls basketball games we worked to provide season tickets, game programs, concessions, the school pep band and cheerleaders.

RCHS was blessed with talented basketball players, and they were winners. When the Lady Lions took the floor...it was show time! The band would strike up their rendition of Sweet Georgia Brown, the Lady Lions would perform their pregame routine in their new red and black warm-ups, and the adult fans and student cheer block were there in force. Faculty members David Doyle and Jeff Hufford would sing the National Anthem, and the stage was set. The local team seldom lost.

Pat Roy, the IHSAA Assistant Commissioner for girls athletics, loved for Rushville to advance in the basketball tournament. Not only did Rushville usually have more fans in the stands, the Rush County community invested thousands of dollars in support of the IHSAA tournaments.

When Cinda Brown retired from coaching, one of her former players, Melissa Marlow became head coach of the Lady Lions basketball program. I think its noteworthy that at this writing RCHS has had only two girls basketball head coaches since 1975; Cinda (Rice) Brown, a New Salem High School graduate, and Melissa (Winkler) Marlow, an RCHS graduate.

I interviewed Coach Marlow for this article, and the following short biography is typical of many Lady Lion success stories: Melissa was born in Rushville and attended grades K-8 at Arlington Elementary. She started playing basketball in the 5th grade. Her coaches were Paul David Smith and Boyd Mosley. Then in 6th grade her AAU coaches Faith (Hamner) Mock and Judy (Hovermale) Dorrel led the team to the National AAU Tournament in Louisiana. In high school she played four years of volleyball for Coach Faith (Hamner) Mock, and four years of basketball for Coach Cinda Brown. After Melissa graduated from RCHS she attended Florida Southern University where she played for the Lady Moccasins. When she returned to Rush County she substitute taught and returned to nursing school. She became Benjamin Rush Middle School nurse, then RCHS nurse. She coached at BRMS, was RCHS freshman coach for two years, then became RCHS Girls Basketball Head Coach in 1999. Today she is also the RCHS Athletic Director.

I asked Coach Marlow what she learned from Coach Brown. She replied that “Losing never entered your mind. We were well prepared and confident, and as women we can be whatever we want to be.”

Marlow credits former Assistant Coach Shirley Jones as being an integral part of the teams’ successes. Jones’ organizational ability and counsel were important. Another coach that Marlow credits with teaching fundamentals through the AAU program was Bev Stull.

Resistance to equal rights for women and girls sports existed in many places. Melissa Marlow laments that in college her coach drove the team in a utility van to play a game in Miami, Florida. The mens team traveled by plane. There continues to be plenty of work to do to attain quality. This month (May, 2022), professional womens soccer has finally achieved equal pay.

The next time you are at Memorial Gym, take a walk through the Hall of Fame. You will notice the large number of girls that have excelled in the RCHS athletic program. There are pictures of the State Finalist Basketball Teams in 1981 (State Runner-up), 1985, 1993, and 2010. Girls Basketball All Stars include Melissa Kilgore (1983), Noelle Young (1984), Missi Nelson (1988), Jennifer Marlow (1995), Amanda Stull (2006), and Shelbie Justice (2011). In Track and Field you will see pictures of the Hall sisters, Pam and Lisa, that ran in three State Finals. You will see pictures of Amy (Cohee) Tush, a four-time State Finalist distance runner. You will see team photos of Coach Bill Gray’s Girls State Finals Golf Teams from 1978, 1979, and 1981.

There is also a framed photo of Jan Kleiman, IHSAA Mental Attitude Winner in girls golf (1978). There are many others pictured that participated in State Finals competition in six different sports. One of the most recent is Charity Griffith who participated in the high jump in the State Finals of 2018 and 2019.

But how about all of those that are not pictured? They are just as important to the legacy of Lady Lion athletics. Athletes like Rhea Newman, the first RCHS female athlete to be awarded a college basketball scholarship (Butler University), and outstanding collegiate basketball player Stephanie Kramer (Franklin College). The list goes on and on.

The year 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of Title IX. One thing that hasn't changed is that many little girls in Rush County still aspire to be a "Lady Lion."