



Societal Debate over Girls' Physical Activity Returns

There were 223 girls' basketball teams in the Kentucky High School Athletic Association in 1929, but despite the popularity of girls' basketball, its future was not assured.

In 1924, UK President Frank McVey reportedly said that basketball had proven to be a strenuous sport for boys and was too strenuous for girls.*

Some women shared his opinion. Emilie A. Watzenborn, a physical education teacher at the new J.M. Atherton High School for Girls in Louisville, did not want girls to play five-on-five, full court basketball and made a motion at the 1925 KHSAA annual meeting that "girls be required to play basket ball by official girls' rules."

Members voted it down—as they would in 1926 when it came up again. The discussion may have introduced another idea to the group, however: one member moved to "eliminate girls basketball from the tournament."

KHSAA members took no action on that motion at the time, but the idea did not go away.

*The University of Kentucky and University of Louisville dropped their women's basketball programs in the mid-1920s.



Lawrenceburg High School girls' basketball team and coach, 1926. (Wolff, Gretter, Cusick and Hill Studios Negatives, Kentucky Historical Society.)

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Kentucky
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

100 W. Broadway, Frankfort KY

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