



Why are boys allowed to play ringette?

Alberta's Human Rights legislation does not allow discrimination based on gender.

But Ringette is a girls' sport, why should boys be allowed to play?

While ringette was initially designed to provide girls and women an option to play a team sport on ice, that doesn't mean it always has to be that way. In 1963, females were not allowed to play hockey which gave Sam Jacks reason to invent ringette. Today, females can play hockey, so males should be able to play ringette.

Why don't they go play hockey?

There are several reasons why kids chose the activities they do – they enjoy it, their friends play, they like a group of coaches, they are good at it and the list goes on. It would be unwise to assume what motivates individual kids to join and continue to play a sport.

Some ringette players (male and female) play hockey as well. There are no rules that prohibit athletes from playing multiple sports. In fact, it is encouraged, especially at the younger ages. Hockey and ringette, while appearing similar on the surface, are different sports with different skills, rules and strategies. They are also governed by different sport organizations. So, a rule that a player cannot play on "two teams" does not apply in this circumstance.

But males are stronger, faster, bigger and have more skill than females. Doesn't that give the males an unfair advantage?

Not all males are stronger, faster, bigger, and more skilled than all females. Some may be. Some may not be. We can't generalize and say all males have an advantage over all females.

Then, why can't we do assessments to determine if individual boys are too strong, big, fast or skilled to play with the girls?

That is discrimination based on gender and violates the Human Rights Act. If we're prepared to do the same kind of assessments for all players, regardless of gender, and place all players onto appropriate teams based on those assessments, that would be acceptable.

Perhaps one day, a fully fleshed out Athlete Development Matrix, with systems in place and buy-in from stakeholders, can be used to assess and place players. Until then, we can't single out males.

But the males dominate the game and make that team too good for its competition. How is that fair?

The Leagues and Ringette Alberta have a system in place to advance or retreat teams to improve competitive equity. It isn't perfect, and the reality of sport is that some teams win and some teams lose.

We look at the relative competitiveness of the teams, not individual players.

It is important to point out that there doesn't seem to be any issue when there are female players on a team that dominate the game so, rhetorically, why is there an issue if those players are male?

Athlete placement needs to be based on several factors, but sex and gender are not among them.

Okay, so what about it being about the girls? Doesn't the presence of the boys ruin that female environment?

Some girls couldn't care less about a boy playing on their team. Some do. This is where our focus needs to be if we're to legally accommodate all genders in our sport. While we can't discriminate based on gender, we can create female-only environments (and male-only and co-ed) and Ringette Alberta is working on this right now on a Ringette Canada task force. Our desire is we have this addressed for the 2019-20 season, but we must be sensitive to all stakeholders and that may mean a phased in approach over a couple of seasons. In the mean time, ringette is essentially a co-ed sport.

Huh? How can we create female-only environments, which means no males, but not violate the Human Rights Act?

Other sports are farther along in this regard. Sport organizations can create female-only, male-only and co-ed options and participants can make their choice accordingly. Males could then choose from co-ed or male-only options, leaving the female-only option to preserve the female-centric environment for those who want it. But that leads to the next question....

With the current number of male players and perhaps for the foreseeable future, how are there ever going to be enough interested in the male-only or co-ed option to make them viable?

The first step is creating the options. We then invite people interested in these options to participate in them and to recruit others. We establish flexibility to make it easier for these smaller numbers (initially) to participate.

So, the teams that have males on them today would play co-ed in the future?

Yes.

So, what do we do now if we are playing a team with a boy on it?

First, how would you know? There are many teams that have male players that you may not be aware of. Second, treat that player and their team with the same respect that is expected of any participant in ringette, following the [True Sport principles](#) and [Ringette Alberta](#), League and individual Associations policies for codes of conduct. Third, if you see or experience any negativity directed towards the individuals or teams, speak up. State facts. Empathize – recognize that it may be challenging for them to be perceived as different. Report incidents to the appropriate body.

It is up to ALL of us to create the kind of sport community and sport experience we can be proud of.

What is Ringette Alberta's Position on all of this?

Fundamentally, Ringette Alberta believes in the value of the current female-centric environment for the girls and women who are the foundation of our sport. We believe in preserving that environment and remaining focused on increasing participation of girls and women at least for the foreseeable future. Girls and women represent our competitive advantage over other sports and most importantly, we don't want to erode the interest girls and women have in our sport by chasing a male demographic.

Some have argued that if we weren't so focused on girls and women, we'd get far more males playing and our sport would grow. Perhaps, but we're not about to risk the participation of the females that choose ringette.

This does not mean we choose to discriminate against males. Being focused on girls and women does not mean shutting out males. It does, however, mean finding a place for males to participate.

Ringette Alberta's goal is to preserve the female-centric environment for those girls and women who prefer it. Our hope for the future is that ringette develops male-only, female-only and co-ed options to accommodate all sexes. We are currently promoting this position via a Ringette Canada Task Force that is preparing policy for the Ringette Canada Board of Directors to consider. Ringette Alberta's position has traction.