

FEMALE ATHLETES EXPRESS AGGRAVATION TOWARDS THE

# GENDER DIVIDE

■ Whether it was shared uniforms catered toward male sports, or simply much smaller crowds at females' games, the inequality in girl's and guy's sports was significant and discriminatory. When crowds at girls' basketball games were made up almost exclusively of their parents, junior Marisa Tomlen was not surprised.

"Everyone always comes to the end of the fourth quarter just to get there for the guys' game," said Tomlen. "I was like, wow, that's kind of disappointing because I'm a young person on varsity and I just wish that more people would come and bring energy."

The boy's team recognized the difference in their games' attendance rates.

"I think for guys when there's a bunch of people at the games, it makes them play better and want to play for something," senior Quentin Robertson said. "While at girl's games there are not as many people there so they feel like there's nothing to play for."

The girl's basketball team suffered through wearing old, worn jerseys, while the boy's team received new jerseys. Girls wore shorts that were specifically made for boys and there was no thought put into the girl's uniforms or needs.

"We've had the same jerseys for so long and we literally have one size small jersey, they just don't fit anybody," senior Lily Ba said. "We just got new bags this year, which was like a holy grail."

The inequities seen in basketball were only one example of how, even after the 50th Anniversary of Title IX, girls' sports weren't treated with the same respect or appreciation as boys' teams. It was disappointing for female athletes to not feel love from their school with no one cheering them on in the stands. Volleyball had an unmatched winning tradition with innumerable State appearances and three State Championships since 2005, yet their stands did not compare to the crowd sizes enjoyed by boys soccer or football.

"It's mentally draining, and I can see the frustration in other female athletes," senior Caroline Orr said. "You look in the stands and want to see people cheering you on, recognizing you and the achievements you've given to our school."

When school social media pages from other sports teams or clubs made a point to promote girls' athletics, there was typically an adequate turnout.

"It was exciting to hear people cheering in the stands," Orr said. "With people supporting female athletics, it makes us want to represent Blue Valley West."

Receiving recognition from their peers made female athletes finally feel like they had something to play for.

Orr said, "It makes us excited to put on the jersey, swim cap, or dance uniform."