

Equal Pay is Their Goal

By Reg P. Wydeven

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When my kids were little, I coached their soccer teams at the YMCA. While I knew very little about soccer, I knew slightly more than the 5-year-olds I was coaching, so I was able to bluff my way through it.

I remember coaching my son's team when he was in kindergarten. I was grateful that we didn't keep score, because I'm fairly confident we didn't win a game all season. Despite my best efforts, we flat out stunk. But the season wasn't entirely awful – we had one awesome player. One of the girls on our team was stellar. She simply understood the game and was very aggressive, which are great traits in kindergarten soccer.

This girl was all over the field and she scored 80% of our team's goals. In other words, she scored 4 of the 5 goals we scored that year. Despite not winning any games, she had an MVP season. My understanding is that she's still playing soccer and still kicking butt. If she ever turns pro, I'm hoping by that time she'll be paid like an MVP.

For now, though, U.S. women soccer players are feeling underappreciated. Carli Lloyd, Alex Morgan, Megan Rapinoe, Becky Sauerbrunn and Hope Solo, stars of the U.S. Women's soccer team and reigning World Cup and Olympic champions, have filed a wage discrimination complaint against the U.S. Soccer Federation. The players are alleging they earn nearly four times less than their male counterparts.

The complaint, filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, is filled with examples of how the female players are treated less favorably than players on the men's team. For instance, in last year's World Cup finals match, Carli Lloyd scored a hat trick, or three goals in one game. As a result, Lloyd and each of her teammates earned a \$75,000 bonus. If Lloyd had been on the men's team, however, the bonus would have been more than \$390,000 per player.

The complaint also claims that the women earned \$2 million for winning the World Cup. The men lost their World Cup match after only making it to the round of 16 teams, yet earned \$9 million. In addition, last year the federation spent more than \$31 million on the men's team, compared to only \$10 million on the women's. Finally, for exhibition matches, commonly called "friendlies," players on the men's team earn \$5,000 per game, win or lose. The women, though, get nothing if they lose or tie.

In addition to the huge disparity in pay, the women are also fighting for equal treatment in travel, accommodations and field conditions.

A convenient argument would be that the men's team generates more revenue, which is why they are paid more favorably. The women assert, however, that their team has a greater following, has more fans watching on TV and attending matches. After winning the World Cup, experts expect the women's team will earn \$5 million in profit this fiscal year, while the men's team will lose about \$1 million.

In response, U.S. Soccer issued a statement that read, "For 30 years, we have been a world leader in promoting the women's game and are proud of the long-standing commitment we have made to building women's soccer."

The women are hoping they put their money where their mouth is.