

HOW SPORTS WILL HELP YOUR DAUGHTER CRACK THE GLASS CEILING



By Eleanor Beaton

If you want your daughter to smash the glass ceiling and have the career of her dreams, keep her in competitive sports.

A review of the backgrounds of some of the world's most powerful women tells a compelling story about the long-term value of sport.

Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund was a member of France's national synchronized swimming team. Annette Verschuren, former Home Depot CEO, founder of NRStor and one of Canada's most powerful businesswomen, played high school basketball. Meg Whitman, president and CEO at Hewlett-Packard, played squash and lacrosse at Princeton. Ellen Kullman, former chair and CEO of DuPont, played college basketball at Tufts University. PepsiCo's Indra Nooyi played college cricket in India. And on and on.

Research conducted in 2014 by Ernst & Young and the sports network ESPNW showed a clear correlation between a woman's background in sport and her career potential. Just three per cent of the global senior women executives surveyed who occupied c-suite jobs had not played competitive sports. Meanwhile, half of the c-level executive women surveyed played sports at the college level. The survey also revealed that a majority of c-level executives (75 per cent) say that a background in sport has a positive influence on hiring decisions. (Pro tip: if your daughter has a background in competitive sports, encourage her to emphasize this during interviews.)

The conclusion: in a world where children have unlimited extra-curricular activities to choose from, competitive sports give them a distinct, tangible and long-term advantage in business. According to Beth Brooke-Marciniak, a global vice-chair of EY and named by Forbes as one of the World's Most Powerful Women, "sport teaches intangible leadership skills that can't be taught in the classroom."

This message has acute importance for your daughters who, after age 14, drop out of sports at twice the rate of boys, according to research from the Women's Sports Foundation. Perhaps not coincidentally, this is also the age where a girl's self-confidence traditionally begins to plummet.

So, if you want to prepare your daughter to succeed in business, here are five reasons to keep her in competitive sports.

1. Sports build confidence.

According to the Women's Sport Foundation, girls who play sports have higher confidence and self-esteem than those who do not.

2. Sports teaches girls how to make friends with their inner competitor.

Competitiveness is helpful in the world of business. Sports teaches young women how to engage in healthy competition — how to strive to win, and how to lose gracefully.

3. Sport teaches perseverance.

If your daughter is going to one day take her seat at the tables where the big decisions get made, she's going to need perseverance to handle the inevitable knock-downs. Sport teaches resilience, perseverance and the benefits of showing up to practice day in and day out.

4. Sports teaches the value of team.

One of the biggest challenges of the modern professional woman is isolation. Sports reinforce the value of working and achieving as a team, which is an invaluable leadership lesson.

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5. Sports help women network.

The ability to network with men is critical for women leaders. A background in sports not only equips women with "street cred," but it also gives them a common language with male executives — many of whom, unsurprisingly, also have a passion for, and background in sport.

The bottom line: if you want to equip your daughter for a successful, confident and happy career and life, bypass the mall and get thee to a field or court as quickly as possible.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to get an extra strength Advil. I crushed it in basketball last night and these joints don't recover like they used to.

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