

A Swift Kick in the Face of Disparity

U.S. Women's Soccer teams rise up against a system built on inequality.



On July 3, 2015, the U.S. Women's Soccer Team defeated Japan in the World Cup with a score of 5-2 in Vancouver, Canada. This win was the team's third and became the most-watched soccer game ever in the United States with 25.4 million viewers. The total prize money to be split between the teams for the tournament was \$15 million, which was only 2.6 percent of the winnings that was given for the Men's World Cup a year earlier. The U.S. Women earned \$2 million for being victorious, making their prizes only 5.7 percent of the money given to the male champions of the World Cup (\$35 million).

The high-performing, equally talented U.S. Women's Soccer Team is paid monumentally less than their Men's National Team counterparts. They are also given inferior playing conditions: while the men compete on brand new, perfectly maintained grass, the women are relegated to dangerous, carcinogenic, poorly-kept turf. The U.S. Soccer Federation's budget report projects that the Women's Team is going to bring in \$17 million in revenue and another \$5 million in 2017 alone. On the other hand, the Men's team is projected to bring in less than half of that, causing a deficit.

This issue means a lot to me because I have felt it personally. Playing for intown soccer club Inter Atlanta, the Arizona Avenue soccer fields became somewhat of a

second home for me. Unfortunately, in this home, the girls play on the tiny, torn up side fields while the boys use the regulation-sized, well-maintained grass fields. Not only do the boys get the superior fields, but they also get better equipment. This taught the little boys at the club that it was okay to take the higher quality resources from us because we are girls. Although this is just my little, inter-city club, it is easy to see how these younger experiences translate into the unequal circumstances seen at the professional level.

The Women's Team's third World Cup win raised my awareness of just how terrible the wage gap between men and women has become. Growing up and idolizing the players on the U.S. Women's National Team, I identified with their struggles and was excited when they shed light on this important issue. On March 29, 2016, five players on the U.S. Women's National team filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against the U.S. Soccer Federation. The EEOC is beginning its own investigation after bargaining between the players and the Federation failed to create more equal pay. This has made me want to band together with other players who have felt the same disparity and join the National Team members to make a difference.

—Lily Soto
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