

TAKE  
A SIDE

## Debate

**Directions:** Read the article. Study the facts. Decide what you think. Go to [www.scholastic.com/storyworks](http://www.scholastic.com/storyworks) for more debates!



# Should Girls Play on Boys' Sports Teams?

More girls than ever are playing "boys only" sports. Some are superstars. So why isn't everyone cheering for them?

By **Kathy Satterfield**

**A**s a pitcher and outfielder for the West Side Hawks in New York, New York, Sara Tobias doesn't expect special treatment. The 12-year-old is treated like everyone else on her team. "They include me in inside jokes," Sara says. "They give me high-fives when I've made a good play." Still, there is something different about Sara: She's the only girl on the team.

Sara joined her local Little League when she was 6. The only girl, she had to work hard to win over the doubters. "Maybe it took the other players longer to believe that I can play just as well as them—or better," she says.

### A Growing Number

Sara is not the only girl playing on a boys' team. Today, more than 100,000 girls play sports once considered to be "guys only." Female athletes are throwing strikes on the baseball diamond, kicking field goals on the football field, and taking slap shots in the hockey rink. Female athletes, thanks to laws that require

leagues to welcome girls, have opportunities to play virtually any sport they want. Some of these girls have become leaders on their teams. The best Little League pitcher in Syracuse, New York, is Nadia Diaz, a sixth-grader.

She struck out 19 batters, all boys, in a championship game last summer.

In some cases, however, girls playing on boys' teams have caused controversy, particularly in contact sports, such as football, hockey, and wrestling. Cassy Herkelman, 15, wrestles for her high school team in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Lean, quick, and strong, Cassy has won dozens of matches against boys. But in 2011, at the Iowa State Wrestling Championships, one of her opponents, Joel Northrup, refused to wrestle her. "Wrestling is a combat sport," he said later in a written statement. "I do not believe that it is appropriate for a boy to engage a girl in this manner."

Joel's decision to forfeit the match was unusual. Most boys who play with girls say they quickly forget that they are competing with or against a girl. Though girls tend to be smaller and less muscular than boys,



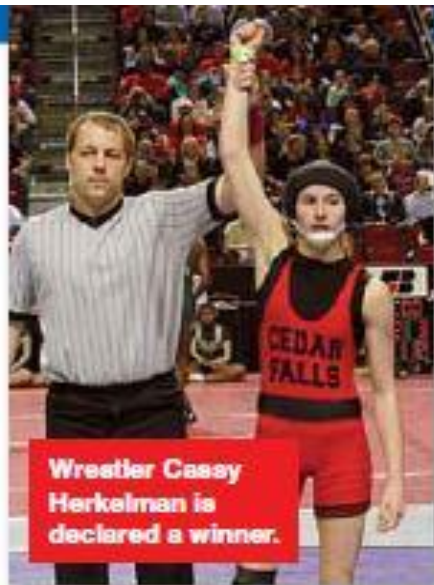
Sara Tobias pitching for her New York City team

there is no evidence that they are more prone to injury than the boys playing on their teams.

### “Big League” Practice

Still, the critics insist that girls should stick to their own teams. Some say allowing girls to participate in boys’ sports could hurt girls’ teams by drawing away some of the top players. And isn’t it unfair to boys, who must risk the embarrassment of losing to a girl?

In fact, that’s exactly why many experts say there should be more opportunities for boys and



girls to compete together and against each other. In school and at work later in life, boys and girls must learn to work together, to respect each other’s different skills and strengths.

For girls like Sara and Cassy—and the boys competing with them—playing sports is great practice for the “big leagues” of life. ■

**This debate goes perfectly with this issue’s fiction story, “Parker the Pitcher”!**

**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

## Should Girls Play on All-Boy Teams?

Go back to the article and find information to support each side. Write the information on the lines below.

**YES** Let ‘em play!

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**NO** Boys only!

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Study the points on both sides of the argument—and think about your own opinion.** State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become the thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

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