Title IX and the evolution of HS sports

By Ellen Wilson-Pruitt
Morgan County History Center and Museum

March is not only Women's History Month, but it's also the time of year here in Indiana when the "madness" known as basketball comes to a fever pitch.

This isn't ancient history, but for some of the young people in high school today, the subject would seem archaic.

More than 50 years ago, a big change came about that totally revolutionized the opportunities for women not only in sports but all aspects of life.

It was called Title IX and is part of the Education Amendments of 1972 that was signed into law June 23.

It states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Indiana U.S. Sen. Birch Bayh, along with Rep. Patsy Mink and Rep. Edith Green, introduced the bill to the U.S. Senate and House. Bayh is known today as the "father" of Title IX because of his role in crafting the original legislation and seeing through to passage.

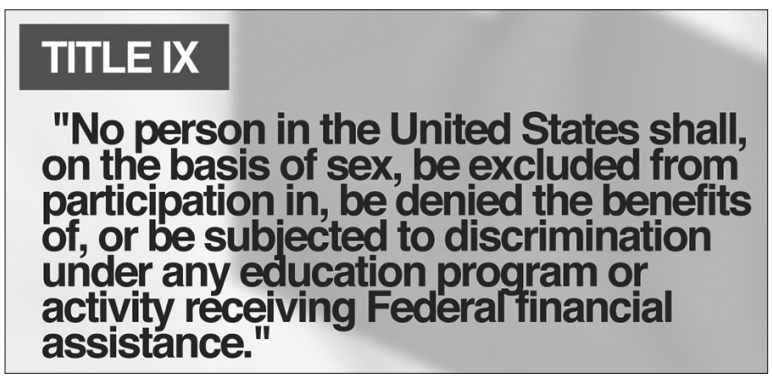
As a female high school athlete beginning in 1973, I experienced the bill's action firsthand. Prior to 1973, any girls high school sports were played and administered through the Girls Athletic Association. The association was an extracurricular club that met after school to play sports.

With the signing of Title IX, it also meant that college athletic scholarships would open up to females.

During the '70s Patricia Roy — or Pat Roy, as we knew her — was our advocate. She was hired in 1972 by the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) to oversee Indiana's implantation of girls sports. She even came and spoke on more than one occasion at our GAA banquets. She was our hero.

MEMBERS OF the Martinsville High School girl's sports program enjoyed a banquet and received awards Wednesday evening. Left to right are Rae Lehr, Denise Scholl, Coach Barbara Sipe, Kim Steinway, and Cindy Neal. Rae was a regional competitor in swimming and was the most improved swimmer while Denise was the most valuable freshman on the basketball team and the track squad. Kim was the most valuable freshman in volleyball and Cindy was the top ninth grader in swimming.

The first group of female athletes at Martinsville High to participate in IHSAA-sanctioned athletics were highlighted in the Daily Reporter in May 1973. (Courtesy photo)



(Courtesy illustration)

She was willing to stand her ground with the mossback men who had run Indiana high school sports since the first whistle blew. Pat brought the Indiana high school programs to a place of prominence in the country. She served as the longest-tenured employee in the history of the IHSAA, so that certainly says something. She retired in 1999.

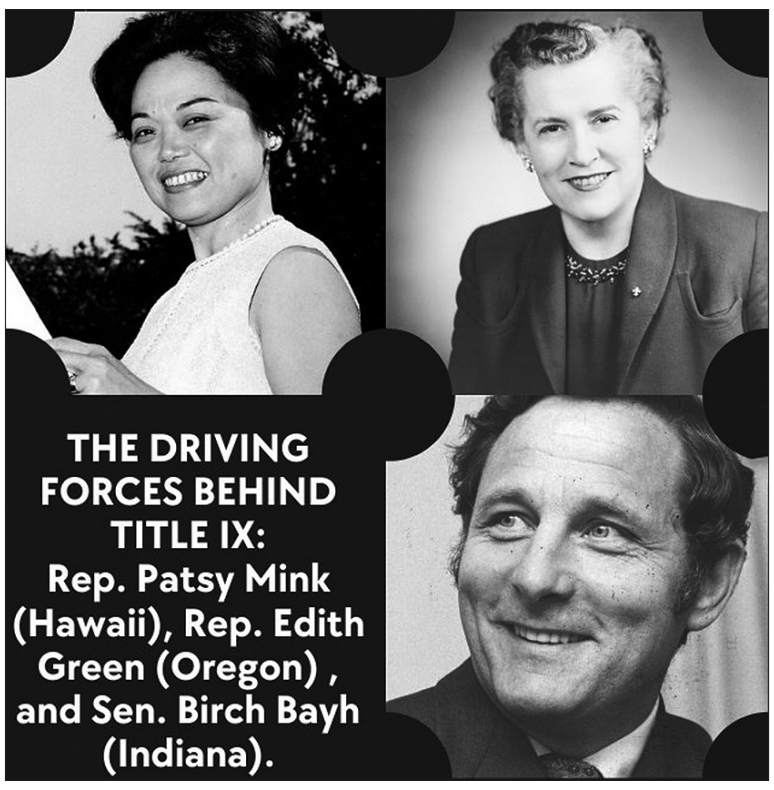
Thanks to Roy's efforts, the IHSAA hosted its first tournaments in 1972-'73 for volleyball and gymnastics. Golf and track and field tournaments followed in 1973-'74, swimming and tennis in 1974-'75, and the first-ever girls basketball tournament in 1975-'76.

I was a good softball player, and I wished that softball had been assimilated into the program before I wore the mortarboard in 1975. During the GAA days, bowling was also a big group sport, and Martinsville hosted more than one bowling tournament at Skyline Bowl.

I like to believe that we were pioneers of a kind back then.

At Martinsville, we were allowed to participate, but the girls programs received no finances whatsoever. We had car washes to help buy uniforms.

There was only one set of sweatsuits, and the swim team and basketball team shared them. Thus, swim meets and basketball games had to be scheduled accordingly.



Three U.S. Representatives, including Indiana's Birch Bayh, were instrumental in passing Title IX legislation in 1972. (Courtesy photo)

Prior to Title IX's passage, any girls high school sports were played and administered through the Girls Athletic Association. The association was an extracurricular club that met after school to play sports. (Courtesy photo)

The basketball team had to pay for our own transportation to away games. We picked up all the trash on the field after football games to get gas money for the bus.

Buck Frye was our bus driver and our biggest fan. He would voluntarily use his school bus and drive us, but we had to buy the gas. There would be a major riot if the teams of today had to do this.

I am so grateful to all those teachers and coaches who worked all those hours with the program and never received any monetary compensation.

In my high school years, local teachers Jean Masterson, Lee Carter, Barbara Sipe and Marla Scherle were devoted to trying to provide the girl athletes with the same opportunities that the male students received as a matter of course. My fellow team members and I did not take these opportunities for granted.

We think of IHSAA and female sports as just part of the extracurricular programs, but not so long ago, the female athletes were on the outside looking in the window of the candy store.

Title IX did not only involve high school athletics but college sports as well. Title IX of the Civil Rights Act prohibits sex discrimination in any education program or activity receiving federal funding.

I know controversy exists today about gender reassignment as related to sports participation, but I will not comment in that regard.

We simply want to celebrate one more step to equal rights in this country.

March 1944 – World War II at 80

By Ronald P. May
MCC Contributor

March 1944 brought encouraging news from all the war fronts.

Pacific Theater

In the southwest Pacific, U.S. forces landed on the Admiralty Islands on Leap Day (Feb. 29). The island chain was located a short distance northeast of New Guinea and offered an excellent anchorage for ships.

The mission, code named Operation Brewer, involved the U.S. Army's 1st Calvary Division.

After landing on Los Negros, the third largest of the islands, U.S. soldiers engaged in heavy combat with Japanese forces.

There was significant progress throughout the month.

By March 14, the United Press Service reported that two more islands in the Admiralty chain had been seized by U.S. forces.

Three days later, on March 17, it was reported that U.S. forces had landed on the main island of Manus, and on March 20, that Americans had come close to completing the sweep of the island chain.

Combat operations would last until May, but by March the handwriting seemed to be on the wall for a U.S. victory.

China-Burma-India Theater

Good news also came out of the China-Burma-India theater. Japanese forces were in retreat by the end of March.

Japan had occupied Burma since 1942.

At the beginning of March 1944, the Japanese Army attempted to invade northeastern India. They were turned back by Allied Forces (mostly British forces and Gurkhas) at the Battle of Imphal where they experienced heavy losses.

Japan's defeat and subsequent retreat marked the turning point of the Burma Campaign and the start to a receding boundary for Japanese-held territory in southwest Asia.

European Theater

Meanwhile, the campaign for Italy raged on throughout March.

The fighting at Monte Cassino continued with the commencement of the third battle on March 15.

The monastery on the mountaintop had been destroyed by Allied bombers in February. The town of Cassino was the victim of aerial bombardment in March.

The German holdout in the region was progressively weakening under continued Allied pressure.

Hometown Losses

Although there were victories in all the war theaters, March was also a month of significant losses for several families in Morgan County.

The losses were all accidents.

Sgt. Paul Prather, who grew up east of Martinsville, succumbed to death from a fractured skull following a fatal accident in England on March 19.

Less than a week later, SSgt. Paul Eugene Prescott tragically died in a March 25 plane crash in Dakar, Africa. The 1941 graduate of Mooresville High School was a radioman-gunner on a B-17 bomber that crashed enroute to England.

These deaths by accident followed two others that occurred a month earlier. This time, the accidents happened stateside.

Aviation Cadet Eddie Magenheimer, of Mooresville, died on Feb. 1 in a training plane crash in the southwest U.S.

The 22-year-old trainee graduated from Mooresville High School in 1939 and was stationed at Marana Field in Tucson, Ariz. He was due to receive his wings shortly before his accident.

Grief came to another Mooresville family two weeks later following a Feb. 14 plane crash in Kansas.

Flight Officer Harry Wilson, Jr., a 1942 Mooresville High School graduate, was killed in a mid-air collision with another training plane near Strother Field in Winfield, Kansas.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur decorates the first man ashore on the Admiralty Islands, 2nd Lt. Marvin J. Henshaw, with the Distinguished Service Cross. (Public Domain photo)
RM3 – The first wave hits the shoreline at Los Negros of the Admiralty Islands in 1944. (Public Domain photo)

Wilson had been home visiting his family in Mooresville just days prior to his untimely death.

Wilson, age 20, and his aviation student were on a night flying test when their plane was hit by another aircraft midair. Their wing was knocked off causing their plane to plummet to the ground. Both instructor and student were killed.

They were two of the 13,000 killed in aviation training accidents in the U.S. during World War II.

Appeals for support

Progress and losses were not the only local war headlines for Morgan County in March. There was also an appeal to the Homefront for their continued support through the purchase of war bonds.

PFC Richard Pearson, of Martinsville, writing from England, sent a letter to Stanley Byram, the chairman of the War Bond committee for Morgan County, affirming the importance of buying war bonds.

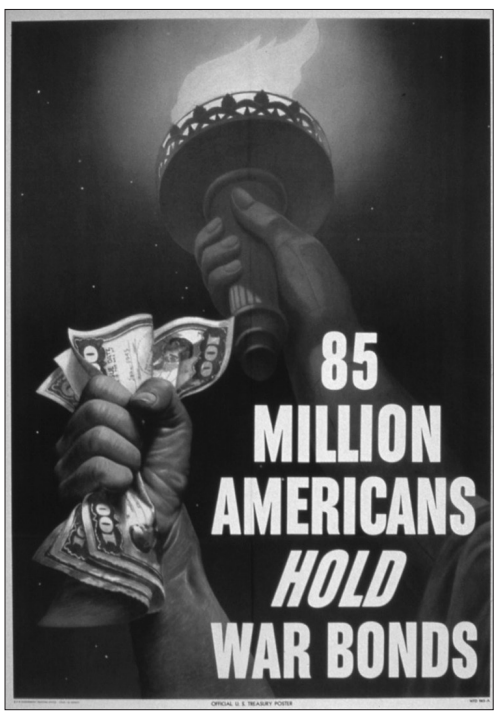
In the article printed March 27, 1944, he wrote: "I know you folks back home want to help us win this war. I don't think there's any better way in the world to contribute to the war effort than buying war bonds. It is really a big help toward ending the war. I think if the people at home knew the percentage of the men and women in the services who are buying bonds themselves that there would be a lot of people who aren't already buying bonds who would start buying them."

Pearson, whether by request or on his own initiative, was apparently addressing the earlier reported shortage of Morgan County's assigned goal for purchasing bonds during the 4th War Loan Campaign.

In an article printed in *The Daily Reporter* on Feb. 10, 1944, it was reported that Morgan County was at only 71 percent ($365,000) of its goal ($497,000) for the drive, which ended on February 15.

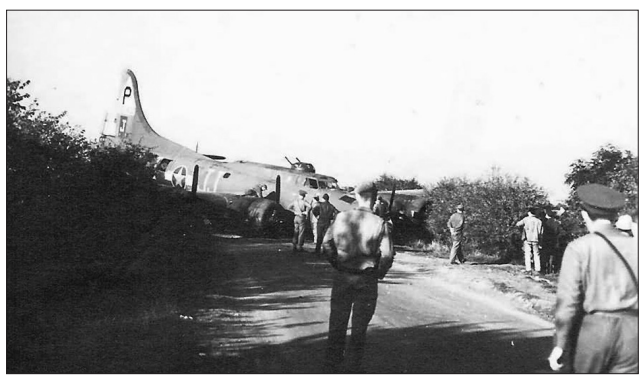
Morgan County residents responded to the challenge to reach the goal well before reading Pearson's printed appeal on March 27.

On February 24, *The Daily Reporter* announced that the county had exceeded its goal in purchasing war bonds.



LEFT: A large national campaign took place across the country during World War II, urging folks back at the homefront to purchase war bonds. (National Archives illustration)

BELOW: The first wave hits the shoreline at Los Negros of the Admiralty Islands in 1944. (Public Domain photo)



U.S. forces saw nearly 13,000 deaths in aviation training accidents, including two from Morgan County who died stateside. Here, a B-17 Bomber, part of the 384th Bomb Group, is shown crashed in a field. (Public Domain photo)

Both on the war front and the home front, Americans were meeting the challenges in 1944 to defeat the enemy.

Next time: April 1944.

Learn more about Ronald P. May and his books at https://ronaldpmay.com or contact him at ron@ronaldpmay.com. View his videos on his YouTube channel: World War II History & Stories with Ron May.