
Reinstate Men's Indoor Track at U of MN

1 message

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To: tom.brennan@senate.mn

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Dear Senator Rarick and Tom Brennan,

I grew up in Owatonna, MN, son of a father who was a President of the U of MN Alumni Assc in the 1960's. We would journey up to Memorial Stadium to watch the Gopher football team, I was steeped in Maroon and Gold from an early age.

During high school I enjoyed athletic success in Track and Cross Country and was recruited by many schools in Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. I always wanted to be a Golden Gopher, so the other schools didn't stand a chance. I earned 4 letters under the tutelage of a world class coach, Roy Griak, and learned life lessons that have been invaluable. I ran with fellows from Braham, Twig, Brainard, Ely, Austin, Rochester, Glen Ellyn, Il and many other small towns throughout Minnesota and surrounding states who had the desire and skill to compete in Division 1 athletics. Upon graduation I continued to help officiate at Track meets, gather donated prizes for Griak's many running events, and ultimately established an Endowed Scholarship for Track through the Golden Gopher Fund along with my wife. Maroon blood runs through my veins.

Now we have a situation at the University of Minnesota where 3 Olympic sports have been eliminated. Justification for this action was cited as a financial deficit, primarily the by-product of not having attendance revenues from football games due to the Covid pandemic, and Title IX non compliance. This radical approach of permanently eliminating Men's Indoor Track, Men's Gymnastics, and Men's Tennis in order to impact a "temporary" budget shortfall was and is short sighted.

Neither justifications, fiscal or gender, stands up to the light of day. Recently, the contracts of the football coach (and some assistant coaches), the hockey coach, the President of the University, and the Athletic director have been extended and financially increased to the tune of millions of dollars. I do not begrudge nor oppose these pay increases since they help retain qualified personal. I do, however, shout at the top of my lungs that if there is enough money in these times for these contract enhancements, there is most likely enough money to reinstate the three eliminated sports.

Next, the issue of Title IX compliance. University records show a significant decline in women's sports participation at Minnesota since 2016, thus "creating" the Title IX issues. A study of the most participated sports in the country shows Football as the leading male sport. Second among men and first for women is Track and Field combined with Cross Country. There is considerable enthusiasm, participation, and pool of athletes ready and willing to provide an answer to the Title IX problem. In the past, at Minnesota, female athletes were invited to walk on with great success. Many All Americans were developed from these athletes at the cost of a singlet and transportation to meets. In addition, childhood dreams and life lessons were met in the locker rooms and fields of participation. As a footnote, a single female Cross Country runner actually counts a 3 participants - CC, Indoor and Outdoor Track - in the greater scheme of Title IX.

So what do we do now? There does not seem to be a financial basis NOT to reinstate Men's Indoor Track and the Title IX issues might be addressed prudently by revisiting adding walk ons, as done in the past. I urge you to reinstate Indoor Track and the other eliminated Olympic sports at the University of Minnesota.

Kindest regards,
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