

The Girl Who Broke and Set The Gender Barrier in Baseball

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Margaret Gisolo broke the gender barrier in American Legion Junior Baseball when she became the first girl to play on a team representing that national organization. Yet, her participation in 1928 prompted legislation which prevented further competition by girls on boys' teams.

During the early development of the Junior Legion baseball program in the 1920's, Gisolo became a heroine as she helped her team, Blanford, Indiana, advance to the Mid-East national regional tournament before being eliminated by Chicago in Comiskey Park. The controversy which erupted over her participation was stilled temporarily when Judge Kenesaw Landis, Commissioner of professional baseball, intervened on her behalf, and declared that she was able to participate during 1928, The Legion, however, bypassed the ruling the following year by entering a statement in the by-laws that boys *only* could play on American Legion Junior baseball teams.

The involvement of Margaret Gisolo in high level athletic competition is significant for historical evaluation. In her own right, her performance on the field indicated that she was capable of playing on an equitable basis with her male peers. Her sex may have given her notoriety, but it was her heroics in crucial games which created the sensational interest in her performance.

Yet, in spite of that performance, she and all other girls were barred from participation the following year. Not for another half century would girls be given the opportunity to compete on an equal basis with boys. Temporarily, conservative social forces had screened out the possibility of significant social change on the sport field.



The Bennett clan always makes its presence felt at NASSH conventions.