

Excerpt from Interview with Arlene Mulder

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Mulder: I think Title IX opened doors. I don't think Title IX forced anything. Title IX was simply an opportunity and change in policy. The people who partake in that policy control their own destiny, and any rule change opens the door for something that might be considered flawed from some perspectives but others adore and embrace. No, I think competitiveness is not a bad word. It's like profit in the business world. That's a good word because it drives people to achieve more and not be so laissez-faire that they never accomplish anything. I mean when you think about what woke up this world, this country, to athletics was when we were being outdone by the Russians and we had this big back and forth. I wanted to get rid of political parties because I think being nonpartisan [laughs] is a lot easier. And someone said, Oh no. If we didn't have those Republicans and Democrats out there fighting each other then nobody'd show up and vote. Everybody'd lose interest. So I think competitiveness drives people to new heights and to places that we wouldn't otherwise go. And so no I would disagree because I think it's still within the grasp of each person. And that's where maybe coaching—coaching becomes much more important.

Bartges: Yeah. Well and there's not a right or a wrong answer to that. This is just something that is from a book that's pretty widely used as a history and I was curious about her thesis versus what's applied.

Mulder: Whenever we change the rules—it's just like this whole debate now on the marriage policy and what is marriage. Every time you change things it challenges people. People don't like to be challenged. [laughs]

Bartges: Basically no.

Mulder: They want to do it the way they always did it.

Bartges: [laughs]

Mulder: So you really need to just say—well here's my famous quote—change is inevitable and progress is optional. It changed to allow girls to compete and to experience all these same things. It doesn't mean they're going to do the same things that men do—

Bartges: Right—

Mulder: —but it opens a whole nother world for them. And I do want to share one thing is that I remember sitting around the tennis coaches' tables when we were trying to decide what we wanted to do as leagues, conference meets and draws and things like that. Someone said, and I don't remember who said, Let's learn from the boys' mistakes. Let's look at what boys' athletics has done and where their downfalls are and try not to make the same ones. And so we had an advantage to some extent there was a model out there.

Bartges: Right.

Mulder: And that now our own model is trying to grasp and we're getting much broader with more types of sports. And there's still going to be some tweaking, but people are still people and we're giving people opportunity and choice. And I would argue with anybody that says that's wrong.