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4-17-2021

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Recommended Citation

Price, Matt, "Disparities in the NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament" (2021). *The Spectator Online*. 272.

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Disparities in the NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament

Matt Price, Staff Reporter

The NCAA may have wrapped up their National Collegiate Basketball Championships this month, but they continue to make headlines after the differential treatment of the men and women went viral on social media apps such as Instagram, Twitter and Tik Tok. The NCAA's preferential treatment of the men's tournament was brought to the nation's attention when University of Oregon forward, Sedona Prince, posted a thread of videos that showed the inequities between the men and womens NCAA tournaments.

The first video posted on Tik Tok showed the difference in fitness training facilities provided. The video shows a single rack of weights in juxtaposition to the elaborate setup of a full weight room that was set up in Indianapolis for the men's tournament. The small amount of effort given by the NCAA to set up similar weight rooms exposes the lack of an equal experience for all collegiate athletes. After outcry among prominent public figures, the NCAA replaced the original rack in San Antonio at the women's tournament with more options.

Makenna Schoenhofer, a senior guard at Seattle University on the women's basketball team shared her reactions to the NCAA's actions.

"This is typical, you know, men versus women, especially when it comes to the NCAA tournament. I would have thought that by now in 2021 we would have been seeing a little bit more progress and making sure that things are more equal amongst the men and women's teams," Shoenhofer said.

The 64 teams that qualified for the Women's National Championship tournament in San Antonio received goodie bags upon their arrival. However, photos shared via social media showed that these goodie bags were once again the bare minimum compared to the gifts the men received. The men received merchandise, gear and brand material while the women received a t-shirt, hat, water bottles and a bag full of personal essential items.

Seattle U's Women's Basketball Head Coach, Suzy Barcomb, spoke on the NCAA's handling of the tournaments.

"Unfortunately, it was a total mishandling by the NCAA. I get that there's probably some logistical errors that occur when you're trying to set up something that massive, but you know the NCAA makes a great deal of money off both the men's and women's NCAA March Madness tournaments, and they just didn't treat the women's teams there very well," Coach Barcomb said. "What they had set up in terms of weight room access, how they were not allowed to order food in the very beginning, so they are just poorly designed by the NCAA to say for sure."

An article published by the Wall Street Journal exposed the NCAA denying women in college basketball the right to use "March Madness" as a promotional slogan to heighten awareness of the tournament. Despite "March Madness" being a gender neutral term, the NCAA opted to use the slogan only for the men's tournament. Yet another example of the NCAA favoring the men's tournament over the womens.

While fans tried to enjoy both national tournaments, it was impossible to ignore the unequal treatment the women received. With social media as a tool, athletes are making it more challenging for the NCAA to hide their discrimination of female athletes.

Until the discriminatory gap between men and women athletes is completely closed, disparities in treatment by the NCAA of men and womens basketball will only be recognized and changed by continuing to expose their preferential treatments.

