

BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES

When picturing your average cheerleader, a man in long pants holding a plastic megaphone does not always come to mind. However, for juniors Jiawei Zhang and John Callanan, going against the stereotypes of sports teams is second nature.

"I would've never thought I was going to be a cheerleader," Callanan said. "I've gotten some ridicule for being a cheerleader just because I am a male, and it's a mostly female team, but I think I break [stereotypes] because I participate in cheerleading."

Callanan originally joined the varsity cheerleading team after participating in powder puff and realizing how much he loved the thrill of cheering.

"To me, it's all about school spirit. I mean, I'm 5 feet, 5 inches, 125 pounds; I'm probably not going to play on the football team, and I don't dance. So, the closest thing is cheer," Callanan said.

Both cheerleaders agree that their work is inviting others to open the door to cheer and other opportunities they otherwise would not consider.

GOING FOR IT:

"I would hate to look back and see pictures of different friends who experienced different things that I didn't experience because I did not want to put myself out there. I'm just trying to experience all that I can in these four years because once that happens then you can never go back to high school," John Callanan said. (Photo/Bella Ramirez)



FAIR PLAY: "Now, I think men and women have a lot of opportunity and freedom to do what you actually want to do. Maybe 10 or 20 years ago, I wouldn't be allowed to play hockey for my school and now I can and I think that's great," Grace Perkins said. (Photo/Weston Photography)

"I know a few people who have wanted to cheer in the past but have been too scared to make that step. I hope us doing this will help them go beyond that so they can experience what they want to experience in high school," Callanan said.

Still, societal pressures are high. In the NFL, only two out of 36 teams have male cheerleaders. The inclusion of male cheerleaders only began last year with the Los Angeles Rams and New Orleans Saints.

"I still find it's kind of hard because you can't just change everybody's mind overnight; it's going to take some time and more people joining," Zhang said. "[Cheer] helps me be more open minded and brave to try new things. I've always been adventurous but it helps me be even more adventurous."

Callanan and Zhang are not the only ones going against the grain in their choice of sport.

THESE THREE PATRIOTS ARE SETTING NEW STANDARDS IN SPORTS

Bella Ramirez | Co-Asst. Editor
pl237961@ahschool.com

Sophomore Grace Perkins, one of three girls on the inaugural Ice Hockey team, notes how her work on the ice is shaping her newfound perspective on the sport. After training as a competitive figure skater for nine years, Perkins found her love for hockey last year and ran with the sport, describing it as a "good change."

"Figure skating is composed of primarily women and hockey isn't, so there was a little bit of a deviation there. Since I wasn't part of the majority anymore, I had to kind of adapt to that," Perkins said.

Even in today's NHL, the first woman to try out for a hockey team, Manon Rhéaume, tried out in 1992. This only took place 17 years ago.

"I think me playing ice hockey is definitely helping me break down those barriers, especially with the high school league. They're really trying to push lots of young girls to try hockey, and I think it's really great, and it's definitely helping to show and promote it because it's not just for the men anymore," Perkins said.

Each of these hardworking athletes are pushing past the norms to create a new mantra for the modern day: you can do any sport, no matter your gender.

JUMPING FOR JOKES:

Junior Jiawei Zhang originally joined cheer as a joke. Complementing with his background in dance however, cheer is now an integral part of his school life. "I came from a different country so we didn't even have football there, but I did see girls on TV do this," Jiawei Zhang said. "It changed my perspective." (Photo/Bella Ramirez)

