



Written by [James Murphy](#) on November 13, 2024

Volleyball Drama: Protest Erupts Over Male Player on Female Team

San Diego State's volleyball victory over San Jose State (SJSU) last Saturday was overshadowed by vocal protests from the crowd. A record crowd was in attendance but the sudden interest in women's volleyball seems to be more about male player Brayden "Blair" Fleming's inclusion on San Jose State's team than the sport itself.

Fleming's Inclusion Unpopular

A large contingent of the crowd was at the match simply to protest. At one point, a large banner was unfurled exhorting SJSU, the Mountain West Conference, and the NCAA to "Save Women's Sports," while protesters chanted, "No men in women's sports."



AP Images
Brayden "Blair" Fleming

During the match, one San Diego player was injured while defending a Fleming spike. The player landed awkwardly after jumping and had to be helped from the court.

Fleming's inclusion on the SJSU team has been highly controversial. Five teams [have chosen](#) to forfeit matches against the school rather than risk playing against him. Thus far, the list of teams to forfeit rather than play against Fleming includes Southern Utah, Boise State, Utah State, Wyoming, and Nevada-Reno. San Jose has won seven matches as a result of forfeits this season.

Fleming's teammate, Brooke Slusser, has joined a [lawsuit](#) against the NCAA headlined by Riley Gaines. Gaines is the former University of Kentucky collegiate swimmer who began speaking out against male inclusion in female sports after being forced to compete against Lia Thomas, a biological male (real name William).

Assistant Coach Suspended

Adding more fuel to the fire, SJSU suspended associate head volleyball coach Melissa Batie-Smoose. The coach filed a Title IX complaint in support of Slusser. She alleged that San Jose State had not warned any of its recruits that it had a transgender athlete on the team, and hid Fleming's gender from them, [saying](#):

Safety is being taken away from women. Fair play is taken away from women. We need more voices in this fight because the future of women's sports, as we know it today, is at risk.

She has been advised not to speak to media further about the issue.

Regarding Batie-Smoose's suspension, SJSU [announced](#) in a statement:



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The associate head coach of the San Jose State University women's volleyball team is not with the team at this time, and we will not provide further information on this matter.

The coach has been prohibited from speaking to the media. However, Slusser [said on X](#):

My assistant coach spoke truth to protect my team. Then... they (suspend) her. They took away the only safe space we had in the program. Because she knew that it was right to stand up for the 18 women on the team. Not one man.

Fleming's inclusion in women's volleyball affects only a tiny portion of the sports world in general. However, the issue has had a huge cultural impact, even to the point of impacting the U.S. presidential election. People don't like the idea of males, transgender or not, competing in sports designated for females. They see it as unfair and unnecessary acquiescence to the transgender community that has already taken so much from females.



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