

## **SPEAKER # 1**

### **Introduction**

- President, Member of the Board, and Superintendent
- Good evening.
- My name is Giselle XXXXX
- I am a 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Student at Trimble Technical High School
- I started playing rugby this fall as a member of the Trimble Tech HS Rugby Club
- I'm here with other Fort Worth ISD female students, parents, and supporters that want to see rugby included as a female varsity sport next the fall.

### **Public Comments**

Rugby was introduced to FWISD in 2007 through the Afterschool Program at Paschal High School and Trimble Technical High School. In that initial year, roughly 30 and 40 girls at those respective schools regular participated in practices and games during the fall. Since then girls from a majority of FWISD high schools have expressed interest in playing rugby. Like our male counterparts, female students (like me) are eager to play a full-contact, tackle sport against our own gender. We have found the sport and culture of rugby willing to embrace us where we are and eager to develop our athletic potential. This fall, over 40 females at **Trimble Tech** High School have signed a petition to make rugby a girls' varsity sport there. Twelve of us created a team that played girls teams primarily from Euless Trinity High School, Celina High School, and Keller Timber Creek High School in October and November.

We know from interest meetings held in the past couple years that females in similar numbers want to play the sport at **Benbrook, Northside, Paschal, South Hills,** and **Southwest** High Schools. Over the years, we have also heard from our friends at other FWISD high schools – such as **Dunbar, Eastern Hills, Polytechnic** and **Western Hills** high schools, as well as **World Languages Institute** and

**Young Women's Leadership Academy.** In conversations with these female students, all expressed the need for rugby to be offered as a fall varsity sport, so that it does not conflict with existing large roster female sports like basketball, soccer, softball, and track; as well as other sports such as wrestling, powerlifting, golf, and singles tennis. As you may have noticed, female varsity athletic opportunities are disproportionately scheduled to occur in the SPRING semester. Only a few sports are currently offered in the fall for female participation – volleyball, cross-country, and team tennis.

Thank you.

## **SPEAKER # 2**

### **Introduction**

- President, Member of the Board, and Superintendent
- Good evening.
- My name is Karen XXXXX
- I am a 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Student at Trimble Technical High School
- I started also playing rugby this fall with the Tech Rugby Club

Starting in January 2016 emails were sent by our School Rugby Club Faculty Sponsor to members of the School Board, as well as top District and Athletic Department Leadership notifying them of large female interest in the sport. In May 2017, a handful of determined female students sent a “Demand Letter” to District Leadership detailing the District’s historical and current large “gap” in athletic opportunities – nearly 10% – for female students as well as the unequitable distribution of athletic benefits & services leading to the District’s lack of compliance with Title-IX. In a letter to their attorney, these females were informed that the District would be addressing their concerns.

Nearly a year later all we know is that the School Board approved a 2017-18 Athletic Budget that provided coaching stipends for BOYS and girls powerlifting. We find this disturbing. While the budget was being developed for, submitted to, reviewed and approved by the Board, our Faculty Sponsor was being told by Top Athletic Department Leadership that FWISD only supports UIL activities. The same was also told to the Principal at Trimble Tech High School in the spring of 2016 when he sought guidance on adding girls’ rugby as a varsity sport.

Based on data from the two Texas powerlifting associations, we know that MALE students are disproportionately benefiting (roughly 3-to-1) from Athletic Department and Campus-level support of powerlifting. We also know that District-wide, only 16 girls

participated in powerlifting. Compare that to the over 100 girls that consistently want to play rugby in the District.

It is also worth mentioning that the District continues providing athletic and catastrophic injury insurance for 7on7 football participants. This non-UIL sport is heavily dominated by, if not exclusive to, male students in FWISD. And, unlike the treatment given to the District's female rugby club teams, 7on7 teams are routinely provided preferential field space and time by Campus Administration and Athletic Coordinators.

Thank you.

### SPEAKER # 3

#### Introduction & Message

- President, Member of the Board, and Superintendent
- Good evening.
- My name is Rachel XXXXX
- I am a 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Student at Trimble Technical High School
- I started playing rugby last Spring along with my older sister Danielle, a junior at Tech.
- Our younger sister Michelle joined us in this past summer on a club and looks to continue playing next year as a freshman.
- As a member of the Trimble Tech JV Soccer and Varsity Tennis teams, I am strongly in favor of adding rugby as fall varsity sport – parallel to the football season.
- The field space is there. As illustrated by the recognition of powerlifting this evening, it is a matter of priorities and cooperation. These lifters are provided access to weight training facilities during the most active months of the year when winter and spring sports overlap.
- We are also shocked at the resistance of football, baseball, and softball coaches to share their fields as well as our principals and the Athletic Department in ability to advocate on our behalf.
- *How is it* that our teachers are routinely required to share and float around classrooms but our *baseball & softball outfielders are off limits during the off season*. And, why is it that boys' and girls' soccer can work out equitable practice times on the turf fields but football is given "carte blanche".
- These actions only send a message that female interests are worth less than those of our male counterparts.

Thank You.