First Last Name

English I

Mrs. Aman

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Interview: Cheer

1. Do you think competitive cheer is a sport? Why or Why not?

I do think competitive cheer is a sport. By definition, it fits into the sport category under the ‘an activity involving physical exertion and skill in competition against another.’ Competitive cheerleading is physical activity or skill scored on a points system against other teams or individuals. I think people often confuse competitive cheerleading with sideline cheerleading, which may be a physical activity, but it is not a sport.

2. If cheers a sport, what makes it a sport?

Based on scoring and tournaments alone competitive cheer is a sport, but I also think how any individual, team or coach treats their program also ‘makes it a sport.’ With any sport the level of intensity or dedication by the athletes for me makes it a sport.

3. Is cheer equally as hard as all other sports? If so, how?

I personally feel like there are so many different levels of difficulty for sports and what would define them as hard. For some people a sport may come easily or they are naturally talented at that skill, but it is physically a demanding or intense sport. For instance, an hour of golf may not be as physically draining as playing an hour of football, but golf may take more focus or be harder for someone who isn’t naturally good at it. For me, I think competitive cheer is as hard as a most contact sports, but where it falls in that spectrum is definitely a matter of opinion.

4. Is sideline cheer a sport? Why or Why not?

Sideline cheer is not a sport. The purpose of sideline cheer is to support other sports. It may be physical activity and people can be really good at it, but by definition it is not a sport as it is not a contest that is measureable or based on a set skill.

5. What is the difference between sideline cheer and competitive cheer?

Sideline cheer is an activity to support other sports. Competitive cheer is a team or individual who compete skills based on technique and difficulty against other teams or individuals.

6. Why do you think people think cheer isn’t a sport?

I think there are a lot of factors that contribute to why people think cheer isn’t a sport. A couple are: 1. Lack of knowledge between sideline cheer and competitive. Most people immediately think of sideline cheer when they think of cheerleading. 2. Lack of experience with the sport. I think for any sport it is easy to judge based on outside perceptions but it is very different when you actually try the skill. I know for myself, there have been times when I thought something looked easy before I actually tried doing it and experienced that it was not as easy as I thought. Also, anyone who is good at their sport makes a skill look easy, therefore increasing the perception that it is. There have been many times I have had someone new step into a stunt and been surprised how difficult and painful it can be. Typically anyone who tries a new sport will change their opinion on just how difficult it may be. 3. Media perception of cheerleading. It is extremely rare to see a cheerleader on television or movies that isn’t the dumb mean girl. It is rare to see them actually working on a skill or training, mainly just walking around with pompons and making stupid comments. If they were portrayed as athletes or showed what they really do people’s view may be changed. I honestly think competitive cheerleading needs a different name. If sideline is ‘cheerleading’ then competitive should be called something else. You can take a look at Baylor’s Acro and Tumbling team for reference.

7. Do cheerleaders put in just as much time to practice as any other sports?

I think that is relative to the program and the level the coach and athletes require of themselves. I know there are programs in the state that have intense practices and I also know there are programs that I would consider an activity instead of a sport. For my team, yes I think we put in as much practice time as other sports. I also know that the exceptional athletes spend a large amount of time training outside of their high school gym. If you look at just the tumbling portion of our sport, to keep up with the level needed they should spend at minimum four additional hours a week just on conditioning, flexibility and strength. With any sport there will always be the athletes who put in the extra time outside of practice and those who don’t.

8. Do you think you have a higher risk of getting injured in cheer or football?

Again I feel this depends on the program and the position on the team. I also feel it has a lot to do with the coach’s education and commitment to training and conditioning. Tumblers have some of the highest rates of ACL and MCL injuries so a good program should spend time on conditioning those muscles to prevent injury. Bases who do not have correct technique often lead to back and shoulder problems and are the most likely to get a concussion. Flyers have the highest risk of broken bones or tearing of ligaments and dislocated joints. I would assume for football it would be similar that certain positions have greater risks than others. Statistically, it would depend on what study you read. Cheerleading has one of the highest risks for concussions nationally and is listed as first in catastrophic sport injuries, but based on high school sports it often is not listed as the majority of states don’t list it as a sport.

9. Is it harder to tackle someone or lift someone do you think?

I don’t think I’ve ever tackled anyone besides my little brother so I’m not sure. I think I sent you a study about inertia and gravities effect on the body and the comparison between tackling and catching a body. For the record lifting someone is hard – but catching someone is way harder. Most people’s instinct is to run or move away from danger, and with the added force behind a throw, catching is where most injuries occur. Usually to the catchers nose and mouth.

10. What do you think football players do that make people think it’s a sport and what are cheerleaders not dong that people think it’s not a sport?

This is a really good question. I think one point to be made is there is a massive history of negative public opinion that cheerleaders have to fight against that doesn’t help the situation. But beyond that, I think something football players do that cheerleaders don’t is just BE. A football player will never have to defend the fact that football is a sport. It just is. It’s a fact that isn’t questioned. I think often cheerleaders are hypersensitive to what everyone thinks about their sport that they engage in conversations that are unnecessary. Why argue about what someone else (who has no experience or knowledge of the sport) thinks about your sport? Every year I have to have the conversation with my athletes about not engaging in this argument and every year it does not change. I think argument is mainly just teenage boys wanting to argue with teenage girls and vice-versa. There are definitely sports I enjoy more than others, but I wouldn’t think to put down another sport or it’s difficulty just because it wasn’t for me.

11. Is it fair that cheerleaders get three minutes to show their talents and football players get 48 minutes to show theirs?

Yes I think it is fair. It’s like comparing a sprinter to a long distance runner. With competitive cheerleading we have to pack as many skills into 2.5 minutes as possible. The combination is similar to sprinting, gymnastics, and powerlifting nonstop for 2.5 minutes. Physically I don’t think people could go a lot longer without a time out or break.

12. Is it harder to learn a football play or a cheer routine?

I’m not sure you can compare the two. There are many football plays that vary in difficulty level and many skills and components of a cheer routine that also vary in difficulty level. Actually maybe it’s a great comparison. A football play and a skill in cheerleading is going to vary based on difficulty, how well it’s executed, how many people are involved and their combined skill level. Some are harder than others, which is why with both football and cheerleading you start with basics and work your way up to more difficult levels. Once a skill is mastered in cheerleading athletes often rely on muscle memory to complete skills based on body awareness, technique and conditioned muscles. I would assume it is very similar for every sport!