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Film tells human story behind Title IX's words; Showing at 'U' reveals a forgotten history.

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If you are a boy or man, and think Title IX was unnecessary, check out this film. If you are a girl or woman, and believe enforcing Title IX was a polite tea party, see this movie. If you are a sports fan, and have not yet heard of Chris Ernst, consider scooting down to the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Center on Tuesday to catch the local premiere of "A Hero for Daisy."

It's a quirky, cinematic slice of hidden U.S. sports history that tells a tale too often forgotten: 25 years ago girls and women didn't have a prayer in school sports, even at places such as Yale University.

"I made it for my daughter," director Mary Mazzio said. "It's turned out to be a film for a lot of other people's daughters." And sons.

This 41-minute documentary isn't a dry Title IX diatribe. It's a breezy treatment of righteous anger, thoughtful revolt and deserved victory.

Yale's 1976 women's rowing team – seven years after school went co-ed – still had no training facilities. While the men's teams showered after a workout, the women, drenched in sweat, sat on the team bus, waiting until they got back to campus to warm-up and shower.

Literally sick and tired of being marginalized, Ernst and her teammates did the only thing they could do: confront the Yale administration. In a well-planned demonstration, they walked into the office of the top women's sports administrator on campus, took off their shirts and read a moving protest statement.

"These are the bodies Yale is exploiting," Ernst read then. "On a day like today the ice freezes on this skin..."

There, half-naked, she and 18 other rowers had written "Title IX" on their chests and backs. Wisely, they invited a New York Times reporter to accompany them.

The embarrassment quickly forced Yale powers to move. The first Times story, on March 4, was only 8 inches long, on the bottom of the "B" section cover: "Yale Women Strip To Protest a Lack of Crew's Showers," the headline read.

But wire services picked up the story and, by March 11, in a smaller story still, the Times reported Yale arranged for a trailer for women's showers and changing, with permanent facilities to follow.

The event, the film suggests, was a turning point for Title IX across the country. The law giving females equal educational and athletic rights at institutions that receive federal funds was four years old then, but barely enforced.

Politics aside, “A Hero For Daisy” is about Ernst, 5-5 in a sport of often towering and beefy women, who makes two Olympic teams, 10 national teams and wins a world rowing title on all grit.

Film maker Mazzio, an Olympic rower herself, met Ernst while training, but didn’t learn about the Yale protest until years later. The story stuck with her. Meanwhile, Mazzio became pregnant with her daughter.

The little girl’s name is Daisy. And, thus, the title.

“The film is a message about commitment, overcoming obstacles and the courage that it takes,” said Mazzio, who will talk about her work at the film’s showing, sponsored by the university’s Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport.