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April 1, 2012 By [phjoshua](#) • [2 Comments](#)



This has been a hard post to write. Hell, it's been a hard post to think about writing. And it's because I'm scared. Scared that I'm not going to get it right or capture my thoughts with the right words or really convey what I'm thinking or how I'm feeling.

Usually when I'm writing here it's not that hard. But, this time is different.

It goes like this, I'm a straight dude that played a lot of sports when I was younger. I loved it and wouldn't trade away those memories or experiences for anything in the world. In all of my experiences though one thing that I never went through was a teammate coming out.

Now that I'm a little bit older and I'm reading stories about young men who say that the hardest part about coming out was telling their teammates I start wondering what it would have been like to experience. I know that in the mid to late 90's when I was most involved in team sports it was not a locker room environment that looked super enlightened. We were dumb teenage boys and nobody really worried about telling us to be any different. We made fun of each other. We encouraged toughness and manliness and discouraged and made fun of any signs of weakness, failure and anything that wasn't macho and Alpha.

I would like to think that as a group we would have been welcoming and supporting and inviting to a teammate if they had come out and told us that they were gay. But I don't know how it would have gone down.

Soccer player David Testo waited years to come out. And while I feel lucky to have spoken with him and written about it earlier this year, I wish I would have asked him about the environment when he was a kid. Did he ever think about coming out when he was younger? Was it kids like me that made him hold off? He told us that he believes we won't see more athletes coming out until we see a more accepting society.



I would like to believe that the time is coming. That our youth are much more accepting and educated and ready to show the world that being a gay athlete is okay. Just like being a gay accountant or actor or waitress or CEO is okay.

It's not right that it falls on our young people to lead us... but I think that's how it is going to be.

I can only hope that stories being shared by young athletes like [Scott Heggart](#) will show us that things can change. And that campaigns like [You Can Play](#) (spearheaded by the Burke family) will show the mainstream that the time has come for everyone to feel invited and included.

I'm still scared that I haven't said what I wanted to say. Or that my message isn't clear.

When I was 15 I'm not sure I would have been strong enough to stand up for a gay teammate. And because of that I'm not sure it's fair for me to ask every 15 year old out there to be strong and supportive and welcoming... but that's what I'm doing. It's what I'm asking of everyone, of every age.

If your goalie or second baseman or left D or point guard or quarterback is gay it doesn't matter. They are still part of your team. We are all taught that your team is your family. And we all need to support our families.

Whether you are gay, straight, bi, unsure, or not ready to decide: **If you can play, you can play.**