Disability, Inclusion & Rewriting the Inspiration Narrative

with Nico Calabria

5/17/23
Overview

- My story (abbreviated…)
- Amputee Soccer
- Media Case Studies
- Inspiration Porn
- Rewriting the Narrative

Essential Question:
How do we remodel narratives around disability sports to bring positive intentions to meaningful change?
Nico Calabria (M.Ed.)
Teacher
Coach
Athlete
Advocate
Pronouns: he/him/his
Nico as Nugget
(2001)

World Cup Qualifiers, San Juan de Los Lagos, Mexico (2022)
Amputee Soccer

“The Fastest Game on One Leg”

- 7v7 on a ¾ size soccer pitch
- Two 25 minute halves
- Field players have one leg and play on forearm crutches
- Goalies have one arm and cannot leave goalie box
- No offsides
- No slide tackling
- Unlimited Substitutions

60+ countries

Thousands of players

The fastest growing disability sport in the world
Organizational Goals:

- Regional Programs
  - New England, NYC, Mid-Atlantic, Columbus, Chicago, Texas, Colorado, LA
- Women’s National Team
- Youth Program
- National Championships
- Sustainable Funding
New England Revolution Amputee Soccer Team
How does our society speak about disability and disability sports?

Pity or Inspiration

How can we improve the narrative?

ACCESS + INCLUSION
Inspiration Porn
“While disabled people don’t always agree on what exactly makes a disability depiction helpful, most have experienced a certain discomfort with what are supposed to be ‘positive’ stories about disabled people. They know these stories and images are meant well, but to most actual disabled people, they feel embarrassing and demoralizing.” - Andrew Pulrang
Your excuse is invalid.
“The only disability in life is a bad attitude.”

Scott Hamilton
“The reason that the quote ‘the only disability in life is a bad attitude’ is bullshit is that it's just not true. No amount of smiling at a ramp has ever made it turn into stairs. Never.”
ABC News [2012]
New England Revolution
[April, 2023]

“Amputee soccer athletes providing inspiration! #amputee #soccer #competitors”
Interview with FOX 5 NY [March, 2023]
How do we remodel narratives around disability sports to bring positive intentions to meaningful change?

1. Define success for your team/organization in media coverage
2. Focus on ACCESS + INCLUSION
3. Review news media prior to publication
4. Send media teams information on how to avoid inspiration porn