

Mo'ne Davis, b 2001

Mo'ne was first noticed as a little girl with some athletic talent when Steve Bandura first saw her playing football with cousins and siblings. Bandura was program director at the Marian Anderson Recreation Center in South Philadelphia. He noticed that she was throwing perfect spirals and fearlessly tackling bigger tougher players. She was six years old. Bandura invited her to basketball practice and was again struck by her abilities. He felt that she should have a chance to develop her substantial talents and recruited some sponsors to help her go to a private school which could provide those opportunities. When her mother was approached, her initial response was that she had no idea her daughter had any particular athletic talent.

At school, she was playing baseball, basketball, and soccer. She was easily accepted into Little League. A little background about girls and Little League will help to set the context of what happened next. In 1972, a young girl named Maria Pepe was the first girl to start on a Little League team. However, objections from opposing teams led to her removal from the team. The National Organization for Women sued on Maria's behalf and the suit was won in 1973 (too late for Maria who had aged out of Little League). In handing down her decision, the judge said "The institution of Little League is as American as the hot dog and apple pie. There is no reason why that part of Americana should be withheld from girls."

Mo'ne became the 18th girl to play in Little League, the first girl to pitch a shut out in Little League history, the sixth girl to get a hit in Little League World Series, the first African American girl to play in the series. And the first Little League player to appear on the cover of Sports Illustrated. Experts in baseball who have analyzed what she does say that technique and understanding of body mechanics rather than strength are responsible for her superior pitching. She won her Little League World Series shut out with her 71 mile and hour fast ball. There are probably some guys out there thinking they wish they could throw like this girl.

Because of publicity about her, Mo'ne has become a heroine and role model for girls around the globe. She has graciously accepted that responsibility. Her current project is the design of athletic shoes for girls in collaboration with a shoe manufacturer and a project of an organization called PLAN. The project is named Because I Am a Girl and focusing on inequality of girls in developing countries, promoting specific projects to improve opportunities in education, medical care, family planning, and legal rights. A portion of the profits from her shoes will go to support projects of Because I Am a Girl.

For more information: Google *Mo'ne Davis; Sports Illustrated and Mo'ne Davis; Because I Am a Girl*

