

Closing the Pay Gap: Mavericks Surfing Competition to Pay Both Men and Women Equal Prize Money

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It's no secret that there is a major pay gap between men and women in many major, competitive, professional sports.



Image: Bianca Valenti

Just this summer, surfer Bianca Valenti coasted along 20-foot swells to win first place in Mexico's Puerto Escondido Cup, the first major surf competition in Latin America to allow female competitors to enter. Valenti claimed her prize, winning \$1,750. Meanwhile, the

winner of the men's competition walked away with \$7,000 — four times as much money as Valenti.

However, when Valenti dives into the waters of Northern California to compete in the Mavericks surfing competition, she will be competing for an equal amount of prize money as the men.

The government of California is fighting for equal pay among men and women by stating that the event can only be held if the prize money is equally dispersed between genders. This case involving Mavericks could set an important precedent for local governments to demand equal pay in all sporting events that are held on public property.

The World Surf League, the organization that runs the Mavericks competition, announced their plan this week to pay both men and women an equal amount of prize money starting on October 1. This was initiated by a state commission of California who indicated to the league that they would only lease the public beach near Half Moon Bay if the women and men were paid that same amount of prize money.

“We believe there ought to be gender equity with respect to the purposes of any use of our state lands,” said Betty Yee said in an interview with Calmatter.org.

Under the original plan, the winnings for the women would have added up to \$44,400, and the men's prize would be a total of \$160,000. The first place woman would have received \$15,000, while the man would have been given \$25,000. The pay gap between the men and women who would have won second and third place was even larger, with women earning less than half than the men.

Joan Mulloy to Become the First Irish Woman to Compete in the Solitaire URGO Le Figaro

The league has since re-drafted a proposal for the reservation of the land for the competition. In the new plan, men and women will be awarded the same amount of prize money.

Sabrina Brennan of the Commission for Equity in Women's Surfing organized a group of the world's top female surfers (including Valenti) and asked them to send letters to California's Coastal of State Lands commissions insisting that the Mavericks require equal pay during the competition.

The Mavericks competition will be held sometime between October and March, pending ideal surfing conditions, and will be a huge step towards ending the pay gap in professional sports.