

A girl says her short hair got her soccer team disqualified — so her teammates grabbed scissors



Mili Hernandez, front, second from left, and her teammates take a picture after cutting their hair short at Norris Middle School. The young girls cut their hair to support their short-haired teammate Mili Hernandez, who drew attention after her team was disqualified from a weekend soccer tournament. (Matt Dixon/The World-Herald)

Mili Hernandez has short but poignant answers for the myriad questions she's been receiving this week about her hair.

Why does the 8-year-old from Nebraska keep her locks trimmed to a not-quite pixie cut? It stays out of her face during a match, she [told the Omaha World-Herald](#).

And why did her teammates line up after a recent practice to get their locks snipped, one-by-one?

“They care.”

The 8-year-old soccer standout’s hair has rocketed her to stardom — and to the center of the debate about gender and sports. Her father and the president of her soccer club said someone accused her team of admitting a boy to an all-girl squad because Mili ‘looks like a boy.’

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Girl disqualified from soccer tournament for 'looking like a boy'

An 8-year-old girl, Milagros "Mili" Hernandez, and her team are fighting to be reinstated after being disqualified from a soccer tournament by officials who thought Hernandez was a boy. (Reuters)

[*\[A girl with short hair was kicked out of a soccer tournament because she 'looks like a boy'\]*](#)

She’s not — she just keeps her hair cut short — but the complaint cost her team the game. Tournament officials stuck to their decision, even though Mili’s father showed up to the tournament with proof that she is, in fact, a girl.

Her team, the Azurri Achurros, was disqualified from the final game. There would be no trophies that day.

What Mili got instead was support and encouragement from some of the biggest [soccer stars](#) on the planet.

And, with a few snips from a pair of scissors, she received a show of solidarity from her teammates.

“Mili is like family to me. She’s part of my team.” Erika Ortez, a 10-year-old who cut off more than six inches of hair Thursday, told the World-Herald. “So I really felt like it was necessary to support her.”

Girls on Omaha youth soccer team cut their hair in solidarity with teammate who was mistaken for a boy <https://t.co/YI5ce12YCLpic.twitter.com/RjbABLXe19>

— Omaha World-Herald (@OWHnews) [June 9, 2017](#)

So did Mia Hamm, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and the co-owner of the Los Angeles Football Club, who [invited Mili to a Team First Soccer Academy camp](#). And Abby Wambach, who also has two gold medals, showed off her own close-cropped hair in an Instagram video dedicated to Mili.

“Mili,” [she tweeted](#), “don’t EVER let anyone tell you that you aren’t perfect just as you are. i won championships with short hair.”

Hey Mili! My friends at [@PUMA](#) want to send you and your teammates new cleats. Keep doing you! [#MiliHernandez](#) [#DoYou](#) <pic.twitter.com/wSxYydNTdO>

— Samantha Mewis (@sammymewy) [June 9, 2017](#)

Meanwhile, the Nebraska State Soccer Association announced that it is investigating the Ray Heimes Springfield Soccer Invitational and is [conducting a detailed review of what happened](#).

“While Nebraska State Soccer did not oversee the Springfield Tournament, we recognize that our core values were simply not present this past weekend at this tournament and we apologize to this young girl, her family and her soccer club for this unfortunate misunderstanding,” the association said in a

lengthy statement on Twitter.

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While NSS did not oversee the Springfield tournament, we recognize that our core values were simply not present this past weekend.

pic.twitter.com/Y3kay3tzha

— NEB STATE SOCCER (@NEBStateSoccer) [June 6, 2017](#)

In an email to The Post, tournament director Lanyard Burgett said while there were complaints that a boy was playing on an all-girls team, the three teams that played for the Azzurri soccer clubs were being investigated for swapping players between teams. A separate complaint was made about a boy playing on the girl's team.

But the reason Mili's team was disqualified was because of the swapping issue, he said, not Mili's looks.

“At no time was a child prohibited from playing because of their looks,” Burgett's statement said. “No tournament staff ever said a child was not allowed to play because they looked like a boy... The male player on a female roster was discovered in the middle of working through the player swapping issue and has been incorrectly identified as the reason for dismissal.”

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