

STRESSING DIFFERENCES

New research identifies how and where women differ from men and what the athletic implications are



Original Research
Gajdosik, R., et al.
Dynamic elastic and static viscoelastic stress-relaxation properties of the calf muscle-tendon unit of men and women. *Isokinetics and Exercise Science* 14:33-44, 2006.

WOMEN CAN BE VERY, VERY POWERFUL. BUT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO INTERPRET THAT TO MEAN WOMEN ARE PHYSIOLOGICALLY EQUAL TO MEN

Power Key: calf strength, men vs. women

The United States Code, Title 20, Chapter 38, Section 1681(a), states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." These words were the beginning of equality for women in sport and nobody can deny that they have enriched women's experiences in sport and elsewhere. But another, mostly overlooked benefit of this act of Congress was to open the door to research as it relates to women *and* gender differences. This is very important because although there should not be discrimination based on sex, in sport or elsewhere, that political and social equality needs to be balanced with the knowledge that men and women are *not* equal in many physiological respects. This understanding is particularly important in sport, where maximal performance can be achieved only with an intelligent and science-based approach. Recognizing this truth, researchers from the Clinical Kinesiology Research Laboratory at the University of Montana sought to investigate what the gender differences may be for the muscle-tendon unit of the calf muscle. Since this structure's effect on ankle joint strength, power, flexibility, and overall ability to perform your sport well is critical, knowing what gender differences may exist is crucial to success in sport. What these scientists discovered is that women lack strength in this area compared to men, a finding that can indeed have important performance and rehabilitation implications.