

Sexism in Sport: Things Need To Change

By Indigo Rodger

Did you know the professional Brazilian soccer player Neymar Jr's pay last year was roughly equal to the combined pay of all women in the top seven female footballing leagues in the world?

Females have been ignored in sport for a long time. We still have a long way until female athletes can have the same playing field as male athletes. Women in sport deserve to be valued, respected, and treated equally as the men. Things need to change.

I'm tired of umpires coming up to our team and saying they have never umpired a girls' game before and that this game is going to be "interesting"

I'm tired of having really bad calls by parent referees because the professional referees were used for the boys.

I'm tired of getting told off and getting fined for wearing cricket whites because apparently it makes us look too much like "boys" This happens to me way too often.

People treat female athletes like they play a completely different sport to men.

Social media is a big part of people not respecting and treating women athletes the same as men athletes. Taylor Harris. She posted her amazing kick on social media, and it should have been a celebration but instead she got trolled and objectified. This amazing footy player not being respected and viewed as a talented athlete. Every time I see a post celebrating something about women's sport majority of the comments are negative compared to when I see a post celebrating men's sport majority of the comments are positive. The other day a Tiktok came on my FYP, and it was this amazing goal by a female soccer player. All the comments were "how is this professional level" "this isn't even that good of a shot I could do this easily" It's like they all don't know how hard it is for female sport to be at the same level as men when women in sport have been discriminated against for decades.

As a teenage girl who sees all this unfriendly behaviour towards women sport, do you really think I would want to make a future out of it?

This is one of the reasons why, by the age of 14, girls are dropping out of sports at twice the rate of boys. And by age 17, more than half of girls – 51% – will have quit sports according to the Women's Sports Foundation. We only see a future full of negativity.

Another problem in sport for teenage girls is body image. In a survey done by ESPN, asking young girls in sport question about their body image. Results show over 30% said that they had lied about their weight before, over 20% said that they had been called fat by at least one of their coaches and 68% said that they felt the pressure of looking pretty even when they are competing. Another study showed that 1 in 7 female athletes showed signs of eating disorders. There's so much pressure for young female athletes to have the perfect body especially in most sports which is conventionally played by "thin" girls. It's like body image is a part of competing but we should stop this constant pressure to be slim and skinny and change the body type that everyone thinks a female athlete should have.

To stop teen girls from dropping out of sport there should be way more coverage on TV to show a positive future for women's sport. According to Deakin University in Australia TV coverage barely rises above 10% and globally only 4% is women sport. Also, even though women make up roughly half of Aussie reporters, a measly 10% of sports reporter are female. If we create an environment with more positive coverage of women's sport the next generation of female athletes will see a future they would want to be involved in.

TV coverage is just one of the examples of the lack of funding and support in women's sport. One of the main examples of this is the pay gap. Lots of people who don't agree with equal pay say it's because men have the revenue, which in some cases are true but female athletes should earn the same amount despite that. First, what does equal pay really mean. The argument is that female and male sporting teams, who have the same basic workload, responsibilities, and number of matches, be paid the same basic wage by their sport's governing body. The average pay for a WNBA player is around \$71,000 while an average pay for NBA player is 6.4 million. NBA tries to justify this pay gap by saying that the men bring in more revenues, but the pay rate of revenues differ as well. NBA players receive 50% of league revenue while WNBA players receive an estimated 25% of their league's revenue. Even when women earn more revenue than men, they are paid less. According to a pay equity lawsuit, the U.S. women's soccer team played more games and brought in more revenue in 2017 than the men, yet U.S. Soccer still paid the women a third of the underperforming men pay.

Female athletes have less access to training equipment, medical staff, recovery procedures, dieticians and chefs, grounds and practice pitches, travel arrangements and assistants. Without an even playing field, how can you argue that they should be able to produce the same quality product? And shouldn't performance matter? The Matildas are ranked eighth in the world and the Socceroos 44th. If your colleague created more revenue than you, yet you outperformed them in every key performance criterion, wouldn't you think there was a problem with the way the revenue was allocated? The women's renegeade team home ground has a capacity of 7,000 while the men renegeades team home ground has a capacity of around 53,000.

Women in sport have always been discriminated against. There was never a stage in sport when women and men had an equal playing field, and everyone chose to follow men's sport instead. It will take decades to bring the women's sport up to the elite level if we do nothing. Which is incredibly unfair considering we actively discouraged and prevented women playing professional sport for well over a century. In order to level the playing field, we have to actively encourage it.

We need to respect and value women in sport

We need to create a positive environment for future generation

And we need to give the same opportunities to women and men

Things need to change