

## My personal story

**R:** (...) You know, a lot of it comes down to, I suppose, you can start, like: I overanalysed it to death: I completed a thesis on 'gender and sport' - just completed it last year - and all I could come up with, is that you know, men are meant to do sport and women aren't. You know that's what society seems to kind of say and it kind of, while you're never stopped in sports, it kind of permeates through in everything you're doing. In that if you win a race and there is only 10 people in the race, you know, you can train your ass off to do it, you don't get the same respect as if you were a man doing something similar but beating 50 people. It's just not seen as the same, you know the respect is just not given for that and without that, when it comes down to kind of in the recognition, if you look at newspapers, if you look at the media, there is very little coverage of female sports unless you are at the very, very top of your game. And once you're at the top of your game, you do get an equal look in, but it is the road that I would see a lot of difficulty with.

(...)

**R:** You know, a lot of studies have looked into at the kind of matching up commerce or money in sponsorship in sports and it is very much dictated by who the companies want to support and the companies want to support who is going to be in the media and the media is... you know, it all goes down to tradition which is usually male sports and the female context kind of lose out through that.

(...)

**I:** One of the things that I wanted to ask is: you can show respect by media coverage as you said, but also, for example, by the money that people earn. And you know that is still a part of the sponsorship of the material and clubs, etc. I can imagine that there are many more men who can make a living out of professional sports?

**R:** Yeah, that's true, it is at the top level. Like we have one rider who is on a professional team, one female rider - and she basically gets her race entrees paid for and sometimes gets a bike, the male riders who are on professional teams get about a hundred grant a year.

**I:** Hundred grant: that is about 100.000 Euros?

**R:** Yes, so there is huge difference in terms of that.

**I:** How do they motivate the difference?

**R:** How they motivate it? Where it comes from? It comes from the sponsorship of the teams. I'm using that as an example, I don't know exact numbers for professional female teams, but for the - I'm just using a couple of examples that I know of - but I actually think it actually is pretty reflective across the board. Where it comes from: I'm not sure, have you actually ever seen a women's race on television? No! And there's the equivalent to the Tour de France, there's equivalent to the Giro, there occasionally... you usually don't get to see the full women's world championships, but you see part of it. You see the full men's race! The Olympics you see both, but the Olympics is all about equality but it is also money driven, but it is all about having the right show, so you know you'll see it there. But you'll never see it now. Where we're making some advances in Ireland in terms of media like that, you know, we get kind of... if there is a big race out there, we put a women's race on as well. But it's called 'a support race', so, you know, but in terms of professional teams there is a huge difference in terms of the amounts they make. But, you know, that's argued down people, you know, if you have a team and everyone knows, big names, because you see them in the races and you see them on TV, you follow them but you wouldn't be so followed with the female teams so, you know. So, that's kind of that.

**I:** What do you think should be done to change the situation?

**R:** I think it's hard to know because it is talking about changing a whole attitude and it is talking about changing a whole history. I think it is the media, I think it is the media who came on board with it. And there was equal. I think people are happy to watch whatever is on so in terms of sports I think if there was as much of a deal made about the female races and the same coverage, you know, maybe reduce one coverage to show some more. People would be happy to do a bit more; you know, let people know the names and road there in a lot of sports. You see, athletics is very good for that. But, you know, athletics and tennis would be the two that I would think of, but in a lot of other sports you kind of, you don't see it so much, you know.

**I:** Yes, and those things can be important, because myself coming from Belgium we've got Kim Clijsters and Justine Henin which were the top two players of the world in tennis, female players, and indeed you see the number of girls in Belgium who play tennis really rises. So that those female role models which are in the media are very positive.

**R:** Absolutely and you find in Britain, they had a bit of research for a while when they had some top cyclists and rowers as well and they do get a bit of a surge with it but it can die down again if there is no follow up. Because, you know, yeah, we have one of our top athletes at the moment is Katy Taylor, she's a boxer and you find that a lot of girls now will say: 'I wanna do boxing', you know which is, you know, to be a typically men's game, like. So it's great to see that, you know, kind of that is breaking boundaries but it's where you see these stereotypes being broken down, a lot of effort and a lot of time has gone into that and you see it a bit and it's encouraging and it's all changing and there is long fights and long battles behind every little inch that you move forward so.

**I:** Okay, thank you.

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## Metadata

**OTHER TOPIC CATEGORIES:** [CHILDHOOD](#) / [FAMILY LIFE](#) / [RELATIONSHIPS](#), [EDUCATION](#), [IDENTITY](#), [LEISURE](#)

**TAGS:** support, different treatment, prejudice, role model, sports, discrimination, media, sexism

**Female, 34** Ireland

Gender did matter