
Gender Pay Gap

Gender pay gap in sport is one of the most prevalent issues in society today. It is an issue that most women are going through including me. Not only am I facing this issue as a rising AFLW player but athletes as high as Serena Williams are facing this issue too. When Serena was asked what she thinks about remarks that she should “stop fighting for equality and just focus on the tennis,” she answered; ‘The day I stop fighting for equality and for people that look like you and me will be the day I'm in my grave.’

Ever since I was a child, I have been forced to play with boys in not only football leagues but all traditional male sports teams as I have always had a passion for sport. Due to these sports always been known as ‘boys sport,’ girls were not encouraged to get involved and were almost discouraged as there were no female teams available. But as Megan Schutt an Australia cricket player identified, “there is no girls and boys sport, it’s for everyone”. No doubt gender equality has advanced throughout recent years, and there is definitely more awareness and major improvements for the support of girls to participate in all sports which were once known only as “male dominated” sports. Nevertheless, there are still obvious key issues still to be resolved for sport payment to become equal. Firstly, women’s sport has always been undervalued monetarily in comparison to men’s sport therefore resulting in gender pay gap. Women are also judged on the outfit they are wearing and not the actual skill of the athlete performed showing the disrespect for those women aiming to be professional athletes. Nikhilia a blogger on twitter posted “Elina Svitolina’s #Wimbledon outfit is so basic I feel Nike put in minimum effort for it. But at least it doesn’t look bad,” immediately Libby Lyons criticized Nikhilia’s statement saying “this is ridiculous. Can we focus on the game of the athlete please?” These are highlighting issues within the sporting community that all female athletes face that are restricting women to be taken seriously in sporting scenarios, it is not only a problem in Australia but also globally.

Due to the gender pay gap in sport this also forces athletes, especially women, who want to pursue their dream of being a professional athlete to also work another job to pay for life expenses. Women and even some men shouldn’t have to choose between pursuing a professional sporting career and having to pay for their family or themselves by working multiple jobs. How many times have you heard of a professional AFL star working a second job? I definitely know the answer to that ... none. Why should women have to face that challenge then for pursuing the same career? Currently I am facing this issue and I am being forced to work two jobs, one as a rising AFLW star and another as a part time retail worker during the week in a local store around the corner of my house. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the median annual income for sportsman who play full-time sport of all levels is \$67,652. Women in the same category only earn around \$42,900. This means there is a gap of \$24,752. However, the pay gap is much wider when you look at the top-tier athletes. For example, in the soccer World Cup, if the Matildas had won the entire competition, they would have received \$4 million in prize money. That figure is just half of what the Socceroos earned for simply qualifying to play in the World Cup. Another example is at a Bells beach U/18’s surfing competition where both female and male athletes won the same titles however the female athlete received \$4,000 whereas the male athlete received \$8,000 for winning the same event. On the other hand pay gap for men and women are not only prevalent in sporting scenarios but in other careers such as modeling, Miranda Kerr would earn a lot more money than an average male model therefore

would force those male models to also work another job, showing that not only women are faced with this problem and it is an issue for both sexes. These examples are just highlighting the inconsistencies in pay within gender. So, by equally paying men and women in sport this can be one step forward for the world to see the benefits in which we gain from treating men and women with equal rights.

Advances however have been made in sports such as tennis with equal pay in most major grand slams for both men and female athletes since 2007, 'We've demonstrated through equal prize money and exposure that women's tennis has massive appeal and can more than hold its own,' Tennis Australia chief executive Craig Tiley said. 'This is driven by the belief that the best player of a grand slam event — both male and female — should be rewarded equally for their ability to achieve at the highest level.' In 2017, Cricket Australia also initiated pay equity for both men and women including gender-neutral contracts, policies and conditions. Not only will equal pay eliminate any discredit to women playing sport but as Kate Palmer (Special Advisor) – Chief Executive, Australian Sports Commission stated that “the benefits to our economy, our community and our athletes will be exponential” if we were to pay all athletes equally.

Now yes, I do know that there are definitely some factors that cause women's pay to be less than men. Such as, women's sporting games are not as successful with bringing in revenue than men's sport therefore limiting the income available for athletes to be paid. However, this is not helped by the limited air time on tv for other women's sport in comparison to men, not to mention not being able to view games at prime time or sometimes even on free to air tv at all. In some sporting cases such as AFL women's seasons are also a lot shorter than men by around 4 times with only 8 rounds whereas men have 27 including finals, this will obviously impact the amount of revenue brought in by the athletes. Women's advertisement for sport is very limited as not as much publicity goes into the advertisement of sport. Due to these factors I do believe it is difficult for those athletes to gain equal pay. Although some sports don't get as much air time as men's sport and there are many factors that affect the payment of women some sports such as wrestling and tennis already are becoming more equal to men. Leading athletes including female athletes to “think [that] how much you get paid should have something to do with how much money you bring in,” said female UFC fighter Ronda Rousey, as she is a popular wrestler that “brings in the highest numbers’.”

Ultimately, I believe that women and men should have equal base rate payment in all sports across the world. Yes, there will be factors that cause some athletes to be paid more than others, but it is not expected for the most famous athlete to be paid the same amount a rookie one-year player of a team as it is not expected for those partners in a work firm to be paid equally to an assistant or intern. Advancing equal pay will not only eliminate any bias seen for men but is one step in the right direction to allow men and women to be treated equally not only on the sporting field but across the globe.