

# Women in sport audit

Backing a winner: unlocking the potential in women's sport

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## Backing a winner: unlocking the potential in women's sport

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# Backing a winner: unlocking the potential in women's sport

Never has sport enjoyed such opportunity. As part of a long term solution to the UK's health crisis, growing commercial opportunities, and the run up to 2012 – it's a sector that has a winning part to play across an array of political, commercial and social agendas. Yet, despite the far reaching opportunities, sport is at risk of failing to achieve its full potential. One far-reaching institutional and market failure remains a significant hurdle: women.

Just **four of the 35** English and British NGBs surveyed have a female chief executive.

Men are the biggest winners when it comes to the public and private purse.

Just 2% of articles and 1% of images in the sports pages of national newspapers are devoted to female athletes and women's sport.

These statistics represent the wider findings from the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation's (WSFF) Women in Sport Audit. Based on a survey of governing bodies, an investigation into funding and a media review, this Audit looks across the three core areas of Leadership, Investment and Profile to provide an overview of the sector and uncover where sport is missing out when it comes to women.

As 51% of the population, women offer a huge space for sport to grow. Yet, the low representation of women at a senior level, and the low share of investment and media profile that women's sport enjoys, puts that possible future growth at risk. This is not just an opportunity cost in terms of possible new participants, consumers and sporting success stories. With the media spotlight on sport, this is also a damaging reputational own goal. The sport sector's male bias, and still too frequent sexist comments from high profile figures, makes it look out of touch.

In order to progress some of these long-standing challenges, the WSFF is delighted to announce the launch of the Commission on the Future of Women's Sport.

Being launched by Andy Burnham, Secretary of State at DCMS, and with representatives from sport and beyond, the Commission will convene to drive progress in the three core areas that need to be addressed:

- The lack of female leaders at the top level of sport
- The inequality of investment – both private and public funds
- The poor promotion of women's sport – both by the media and sport itself

*"We believe there is huge potential for women's sport – and great opportunities for the sector as a whole to enhance its reputation as a progressive, inclusive sector, and also to grow its market and opportunity. We know there are plenty of people – women and men – who are passionate about sport. We hope this Commission can provide the leadership and direction to take women's sport forward on behalf of us all."*

#### Sue Tibballs

Chief Executive, Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation



## Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE

"Having risen through the structures of British sport, and performed at the highest level, I have seen for myself many of the **inequalities** that women and girls have to put up with in this country.

Whether it is the extra mile that women have to go to get sponsorship, or the lack of media coverage they get when they **achieve success**,

it's clear that men and women don't play on a level playing field.

I believe that by bringing together a group of experts from relevant sectors, we can **provide solutions** that will help to change sport and make it as appealing to women and girls as it is to men and boys."

## The bosses

### Leading by example

Although there are some leading ladies in sport, more needs to be done to take women on an upward journey in the sector.

Not until there are more women in key decision-making positions can the sector be sure it has policies that deliver for women, and that women have role models to inspire them. Incorporating women in leadership positions can positively affect the culture within an organisation as well as ensure the different needs and motivations faced by women are represented.

Just four of the 35 English and British NGBs surveyed have a female chief executive.<sup>(a)</sup>

### Coaches

Female coaches, like women in leadership positions, can influence the culture of sport just by being in the post and acting as role-models for the upcoming generation. But how can we make coaching more of an attractive and real proposition to women?

Just **one in four** coaches employed by the NGBs to work and support elite athletes or work in development programmes, are women.

The WSFF's scheme Women into Coaching (London) helps to answer this question. Launched in 2006 the programme successfully guided over 80 women through the training process to become practicing and qualified (up to UKCC level 3) coaches across London. By the end of August 2008 it is expected that up to 40 more women will have successfully completed their qualification.

Through the provision of a flexible programme and peer mentoring, Women into Coaching serves as a great example of how, taking into account the individual needs of women, successful pathways into sport can be created. This understanding of women's distinct motivations and needs could be usefully incorporated into wider coaching programmes.

Five of the NGBs that represent both men's and women's sport do not have a single female board member.

### Volunteers

Traditionally it's women that offer more time to volunteering, which suggests it's the barrier of (male dominated) sport behind these figures.

In helping to understand why, it's important to note that most sport related volunteering takes place within a club environment where many more men than women participate in organised sport.

In its huge variety of roles and flexible nature, volunteering does however offer a great deal of potential in getting women more active within the field of sport. For example, at a youth level, there is the opportunity to capitalise on the fact it's most often women that accompany children to matches; this engagement can be taken further.

**6% of men** compared with **3% of women** volunteer within sport for at least one hour a week.<sup>(b)</sup>

Women make up **50% of NGB** staff but just **one in four** board members.

The male to female ratio of coaches.

55=45

# The money

Whether public or private, it's the level of investment in sport which distinguishes whether it's a big hitter or short changed; money drives the provision, promotion and participation levels in sport and at the moment, men are out in front.

With this in mind, it's clear that without more investment, women's sport cannot grow. The final chapter in this report focusing on media coverage should be read with this in mind; whether the money follows the high profile coverage or vice versa, clearly the two exist together. If women's sport is to receive its fair share of commercial cash, then it must find some way to increase its profile.

Before going on to look at levels of investment, it is worth noting just how difficult it was to obtain some of the figures.

Detailed gender disaggregation data is not readily available, even for public investment programmes, indicating the shift that is needed in order to begin painting a true and more equal picture.

Currently the most accurate way to estimate gender budgets (or the proportion of public funding that actually reaches men/women) is to use 2005/06 Active People data to look at the sports that men and women take part in. Using this crude proxy, for every pound invested by Sport England through NGBs, roughly 64p benefits men and 36p benefits women.

## The Equality Duty

Once in force, the recently announced Equality Bill will supersede the existing Gender Equality Duty. The change in legislation will see the unity of the previously separate public sector equality duties of race, disability and gender. As well as bringing these strands together, the new Bill will also see them extended to include age, sexual orientation, religion and gender reassignment.

The new Equality Duty shall:

- Ask authorities to better understand the differences between audiences to offer more tailored and therefore relevant provision.
- Demand that public bodies assess who is using their facilities, therefore benefiting from public money, and take steps to redress any discrimination.
- Include a promise to extend 'positive action'. Employers will be allowed to take into account, when selecting between two equally qualified candidates, under representation of disadvantaged groups, including women.

For sport, an issue remains surrounding equality legislation in that there is a lack of clarity as to the definition of a public authority and which bodies are included; currently there is no definitive list. UK Sport, Local Authorities, Local Education Authorities, schools and colleges and sportsotland are subject to specific duties (including preparing and publishing a gender equality scheme). Beyond that, Sport England and Sports Council for Wales are subject to a general duty, and other bodies who receive public funding (such as National Governing Bodies) are left to decide for themselves.

## The public purse

Sport England is tasked with distributing public money into the sport sector in a number of ways. National governing bodies receive funding through Sport England to achieve a variety of agreed goals, including increasing participation. A big question is making sure that the investment benefits men and women equally.

Aside from those that have a traditionally high female participation (netball, gymnastics, equestrianism), the funding of elite minor or managed sports predominantly have a masculine bias. Public funding allocation needs to better reflect the relationship that women have with sport, something for which Sport England's recently published 2008-2011 strategy provides encouraging guidance.

"For NGBs, developing the girls' and women's game, disability sport, and reaching out to diverse communities, is not an optional extra but a vital part of what they will be required to do. If any sport does not wish to accept this challenge, funding will be switched to those that do."

The launch of Sport England's strategy and the accompanying bids for funding for NGBs is an opportunity that shouldn't be missed. The WSFF is offering expertise and a business case to NGBs, while working with Sport England to ensure that a focus on women and girls will be part of the funding process.

The FA has, in the last few years, started to show the potential of women's sport funding. Sport England's Core Funding for 2005-09 to the FA amounts to £4.14 million, but this is focused on community projects (and specifically the women's game) rather than supporting the elite. This most focused investment in women's community sport has seen major advances in participation – from 2000 women's teams in 2000, there are now over 8000 up and running.

Having to provide equal levels of investment extends to local authorities which are actually responsible for distributing the majority of public funding that benefits sport. Subject to the Equality Duty, it's hoped that local authorities shall become more focused on the equal provision of funding for men and women and pay increasing attention to whether this is reflected in the comparable usage of their facilities and services.

## The private purse

The far reaching benefits of partnering with sport continue to drive big investment from an array of commercial organisations. Through the cocktail of sponsorship, broadcasting rights and gate receipts that they offer, it's the glamour sports such as football, tennis, rugby which continue to be the biggest financial winners.

As well as driving income into the field, through a high level of marketing spend, the support of private investors takes sport, and its heroes, to audiences across a variety of communication channels helping to promote awareness, interest and participation: a model which it's hoped shall be successfully replicated for women. This is recognised by the Government which argues that commercial support for elite sport is crucial in creating the cultural context in which wider and deeper participation in sport can flourish.

It is interesting to study three of the big team sports and the contrasting fortunes of their women's and men's elite sides.

## Football

It shouldn't be underestimated how much effort The FA has recently put into its promotion of the England women's team. The FA estimates that the women's elite set-up (from their four youth teams through to the senior squad) costs over £2 million to run each year.

However, these estimates are dwarfed by the total income of the FA (c.£200 million in 04/05). Commercial activities (sponsorship, TV rights) pull in £177 million with gate receipts making up c.£20 million.

## Cricket

Investment in the England Women's International Programme has increased by 25% in the last two years with over £550,000 in the budget for the 2008 Programme. With the ICC World Cup in Australia in March 2009, ICC World Twenty20 in England in June 2009 plus an inaugural England Women's Academy tour to Australia planned for November 2009, that level of investment will increase further next year. Investment into men's cricket is not known, but it is likely that it dwarfs this investment many times.

The ECB has taken a small step to professionalising women's cricket. Starting in April 2008, eight members of the England Women's Cricket Squad were offered contracts via *Chance to shine* as coaches/ambassadors; this scheme amounts to an investment of £500,000.

*Chance to shine* is the initiative of the Cricket Foundation (the charitable arm of the ECB) to address the decline in competitive school cricket. The squad members work up to twenty-five hours a week, eight months a year, in primary and secondary schools, which allows the players to work flexibly around their international playing and training commitments. These contracts are undoubtedly a good first step, but the benefits are small in comparison to the central contracts offered to members of the men's squad.

## Rugby Union

In 2005-2006, the RFU total income was £83 million of which commercial activity brought in around £76 million (ticket sales, TV rights, hospitality etc.). It also received £6.8 million in public monies from Sport England.

The WRFU is the governing body with overall control of women's rugby in England. The WRFU by contrast had an income in 2007 of less than £2 million of which £1.5 million came direct from Sport England. Nearly £1 million is spent on supporting elite women's rugby leaving a small amount for developing women's rugby in the community.

## The rewards of higher investment

In the last 12 months the England women's cricket team retained the Ashes, and the women's football team made it to the quarter finals of the World Cup, both were achieved without real investment. These successes indicate what women's sport could accomplish with greater financial and promotional support.

With the big rewards at play, it makes sense for investment in the women's game to come from beyond the public purse. With the huge amount of money in the sector, sport needs to realise the commercial and CSR wins it can achieve in supporting women.

# The headlines

## Why is media coverage important?

The importance of role models in women's sport cannot be under-estimated. Whilst young boys can look to Wayne Rooney and Steven Gerrard and imagine themselves running out at Old Trafford, most young girls are more likely to look to models, WAGs, pop singers and their mums as their role models. Some sports, and indeed individual sportswomen, have realised the power of a figurehead in creating publicity around their sport.

As our research shows, there is still a huge battle to be fought before parity in coverage and promotion is achieved. Indeed, it is often as a result of sexism that women's sport suddenly achieves national focus - compare the impact that Mike Newell's comments on female referees made, contrasted to the normal struggle of women in sport to make an impact. Often, women sport stars are depicted as 'glamorous' or sexualised inappropriately in order to retain their rightful place on the back pages.

We understand that the entire media industry isn't to blame - indeed there are many advocates in the ranks of journalists. Certainly women's sport is often guilty of poorly promoting itself (or not understanding how best to), but when they get it right the rewards are great. Netball's deal with Sky Sports has proven that women's team sports do have a place in this multi-sports channel landscape.

The women's FA Cup final is now regularly televised, achieving 1.5 million viewers on BBC in 2008. This interest has helped reassure decision makers in television that there is mileage in expanding their coverage and making long-term commitment to the women's game. We hope the new broadcast deal making Setanta and ITV the FA's women's football media partners will mean increased coverage, and further recognition for the players involved.

## Newspaper coverage

Over three days, Sunday 9th March, Saturday 15th March and Friday 29th March, the sports pages across all of the national daily newspapers were reviewed to provide some headline results into the level of women's coverage.

Over the three days, the newspapers dedicated a huge 1482 articles to sport yet only 2% (28 pieces) were dedicated to women's sport.

The average space (including results and fixtures and photos) awarded to women's sport each day was 197cm<sup>2</sup>, just 1.1% of all of the space available.

On the whole, the 'Populars'<sup>1</sup> were the worst for reporting on women's sport. Around 0.2% of their space was dedicated to women's sport, compared with 1.6% of the 'Qualities'<sup>2</sup> and 'Mid-markets'<sup>3</sup> papers.

Just 1.4% of sports photography featured women and despite the fact our research only looked at the sports' pages there were more images of models, footballers' girlfriends, the French President's wife and a nun than of sportswomen.

From the library of papers, The Independent devoted the most visual coverage to women with five images (4.5% of all its photos). The Sun, The News of the World and the People didn't feature one photo of a female athlete.

As noted in the 2006 'Playing Catch-up' report, sports where women compete individually achieve much greater coverage than team sports. This rang true across the 2008 media review which showed that tennis, athletics and cycling were the most frequently mentioned sports featuring women.

# Just 2% of articles and 1% of images in the sports pages of national newspapers are devoted to female athletes and women's sport.

## Television

With four mainstream Sky Sports channels available, Setanta now on the scene, and two 24 hour news channels, one might have expected that this explosion in coverage would result in an increased platform for women's sport. However, a glance through the schedules for these channels shows a very different story.

To coincide with our newspaper review, we also studied the TV sport schedule. On Friday March 14 (beginning at 6am), Sky Sports 1 showed a full 24 hour programming of entirely men's elite sport. Predominantly cricket and football, but boxing and NFL also got a look in. Its sister channel, Sky Sports 2 followed the trend and dedicated none of its schedule to women's sport. Sky Sports 3 offered some coverage of women's sport in its mixed winter sport and magazine shows (Transworld Sport) and a repeat of its Netball superleague coverage meant that Sky had allocated just three hours of its 72 hours available to women's sport. Interestingly, both Setanta and Sky allocated an hour in its schedule for early morning aerobics.

## Profile of fanbase vs TV coverage

Focusing more on the make up of the sports' audience itself, BMRB's Target Group Index in 2007 investigated the gender profile of the fanbase of certain sports.

Team sports featuring only men have, not surprisingly, a male dominated audience. However, the traditional view that women just aren't interested in watching sport doesn't play out. Athletics, skiing and tennis all have a fanbase with almost a 50:50 gender split, whereas swimming, equestrian, gymnastics and ice skating all achieve a fanbase that is predominantly female. None of these sports are specifically women-only, but all are generally individual sports.

## Online

A look at some of the most popular sports news internet sites, continues to shine a light on the pecking order of men and women's sport.

Of the ten sports news internet sites that we reviewed on Wednesday 16th April, there were 367 links from the front page to articles, but just five links went to female sports (1%).

There was not one image of a female athlete on the front page of the top ten websites. Out of 129 images (both photos and film images) - there were four images of women (3%): Sky Sports did have a film of two female sports presenters, a third was of Kate Lawler in her underwear in a marathon photograph shot, and a fourth image was of an advert for women's health.

# Sporting change: the conclusions

The Women in Sport Audit exposes just how uneven the playing field currently is when it comes to men and women. Across leadership, investment and promotion in sport, women are on the back foot.

It's time to take these learnings and drive positive change.

In learning from where women's sport is a success story and capitalising on the current prominence of sport, there's huge potential. In order to inspire real and lasting change it does however need to be a team effort.

Across several years the Commission on the Future of Women's Sport will be spearheading a shift across the sector, inviting all of its colleagues to join forces in tackling the three big issues to give women more of a sporting chance.

We at the WSFF hope that this is the first step towards a big change in women's sport, one that all members of the sport shall champion.

1 vs 53

Across the sports pages on average there is just one article about women's sport vs 53 for men's.<sup>(c)</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 'Populars' include The Sun, The Mirror and the Daily Star.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Qualities' include: The Times, The Sunday Times; The Observer; The Guardian, The Telegraph and the Sunday Telegraph.

<sup>3</sup> 'Mid-market' newspapers include: The Express, The Sunday Express, The Daily Mail, and The Mail on Sunday.

(a) In spring 2008, WSFF contacted all of the 35 Sport England funded governing bodies of sport (NGBs) for data relating to their membership base, leaders and coaches. Not all of the NGBs were able to provide us with figures.

(b) Sport England, Active People Survey, 2005/06.

(c) Findings from WSFF's 'snapshot' review of the main national newspapers on three days in March 2008.