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English 101
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11/19/2021

Equal Pay For Women Athletes

The U.S. Women's National Soccer Team started their FIFA World Cup journey crushing Thailand 13-0 in the first round. They then defeated the strong English team 2-1, and now faced the ultimate challenge the Dutch in the final, with immense pressure they faced the Netherlands who were seeking their first world cup. While staying calm, cool, and collected, two goals from Megan Rapinoe and Rose Lavelle jumped the US to a 2-0 lead clinching their fourth world cup and establishing their position firmly upon the throne. Despite this crowning achievement, the team was fighting a larger challenge. The article on NBC's website written in December of 2020, states that 28 members of the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team filed a lawsuit against the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) in March of 2019 alleging "purposeful gender discrimination by denying them the same working conditions and professional development as their male counterparts." Team captain Alex Morgan stated in regards to the lawsuit "We decided to do this for all of the little girls across the country and around the world who deserve to have a voice, and if we don't leverage the voice we have, we are letting them down."

Despite the advances made since the passage of Title IX in 1972, equal pay in sports has been an ongoing challenge. Even though it is an issue that is often ignored, equal pay in sports offers an abundance of benefits. It would eliminate gender and racial discrimination, build trust between the athletes and their organizations, and allow athletes to feel valued and heard. Today, by looking at the pay gap in sports, what's causing it, and the ways we can solve this problem, we will see why this disparity must come to an end.

To better understand how to tackle the problem, let's gain a better understanding of what the pay gap is. Female athletes are receiving less money compared to their male counterparts and this must be fixed. The U.S National Park Service's site states that the Equal Pay Act signed by JFK in 1963 made it illegal to pay men and women working in the same place different salaries for similar work, so why is this not relevant in sports? A Wall Street Journal article in September of 2019 states that the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team won the FIFA world cup and received \$4 million dollars- a fraction of the \$38 million that the men's team took home a year earlier. Soccer isn't the only instance where the pay gap is a problem. According to an article on World Sports Network written in July of 2019, the average salary of an NBA player is around \$6.4 million dollars, whereas WNBA players average is only \$71, 635. Even the best players in the WNBA don't compare to the average joe benchwarmers of the NBA. An article on Spotrac in 2020 showed that Diana Taurasi (three time WNBA champion, holds 2 MVP titles, a four time Olympic gold medalist, and holds the all-time leading scorer record) has an earned salary of \$116,500 per/year. In comparison, a Forbes article written on August 8th of 2019, stated that former Nebraska forward Isaiah Roby has landed a salary of \$1.5 million dollars in only his second year with the Dallas Mavericks.

Outside of pay, women's experiences are also vastly different. The article on Sportscasting in August of 2020 has shown various posts from Kayla Johnson and other WNBA players showing atrocious living conditions at their bubble like setting in Bradenton, Florida. These posts show bed bugs, dead worms on their floors, and even mouse traps located in their laundry room. On the other hand, you see NBA player LeBron James posting pictures of his gourmet sushi while in the NBA bubble. The league is responsible for ensuring the players' safety while

in the bubble. Obviously these issues should be fixed, as these women shouldn't have to worry about their living conditions while working as professional athletes.

After exploring what the pay gap is, let's take a look at some causes of the pay gap that exist. There are two major reasons for the pay gap in sports, revenue and marketing opportunities. Now, many counter-arguments state that men's teams bring in more revenue, so therefore they should receive more money. The article on World Sports Network in 2019 shows that the NBA brings in \$7.4 billion compared to the \$60 million the WNBA brings in.

Unfortunately, the WNBA doesn't get the same opportunities to bring in revenue that the NBA does. The article also states that the "WNBA can only broadcast to 24 countries, whereas the NBA can broadcast to 96". As some of you may not know, the more viewers teams have, the higher percentage of revenue teams bring in. But in some cases, men don't bring in as much revenue as women. According to an article posted on Politifact in July of 2019, the United States Women's National Soccer Team brought in \$50.8 million from 2016-2018, whereas the men's team brought in \$900,000 less- \$49.9 million in the same time period.

Now that you know some causes of the pay gap in sports, I'm going to tell you some ways that we can eliminate the difference in revenue and marketing opportunities for both sexes. According to Deloitte Insights, revenue comes from tv rights, event-day attendance, and sponsorships. Allowing the WNBA to broadcast to 96 countries like the NBA can make a huge difference in the money that they would be receiving from TV rights. Also allowing women's sports access to Prime Time TV slots and equal air time can increase the likelihood of people watching. Women's sports are currently shoved to Sundays which interferes with a lot of fans' family time or women's games are trying to compete with another man's sporting event. An article on Fee.org in July of 2019 explains how skill and training becomes irrelevant to the

comparison of the viewers watching. Broadcasters and companies are willing to pay more to advertise or sponsor sports teams. In January of 2020 WNBA.com introduced the WNBA Changemakers Platform, this platform will provide support to the WNBA with its transformation across sport sponsorships, marketing, and branding.

After learning about the pay gap in sports, some major causes of the pay gap, and lastly the ways we can solve this issue, it is clear that the moment has come to treat men and women the same in the realm of sports. Now is the time to use the voice we have to get behind our platforms for equality, just as the U.S Women's National Soccer team is doing currently. We need to remember the words from Alex Morgan “We decided to do this for all of the little girls across the country and around the world who deserve to have a voice, and if we don’t leverage the voice we have, we are letting them down.” I encourage you to join me in the support of female athletes.

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