

After a few back-and-forth emails about Zoom call-related issues, Katie Smith's face appeared on my screen for the first time. Immediately her confidence radiated through the screen and I could already tell it was hardly going to be an interview and instead a fascinating, informative conversation, comparable to one you would have with a friend you haven't seen in a long time.

Katie graduated from the University of Leeds in 2017 after studying for a degree in English. Although not coming out of university with any official journalism qualification, she had been involved with various student radio societies, concentrating mainly on women's sports. This is where her passion for sports journalism was conceived.

It was clear Katie had been a hard worker throughout her academic career, however, she had felt no overbearing pressure from her parents to follow a specific career path. Her father, an IT consultant had attended Cambridge University and therefore there was a sense that education was important. Katie originally had ideas of becoming a civil servant or a teacher and pairing that with a private education there was no question that Katie would attend university.

Yet whilst at university Katie won a national sports writing award and her plans for the future started to transpose and mould into a new vision. After leaving the University of Leeds Katie pursued a full-time career in sports journalism and got a job at the BBC in the winter of 2017. She spent a few years doing various tasks and jobs around the BBC but in the end, returned to her journalistic origins from university and currently is a breakfast sports presenter for BBC Radio 5 Live covering football matches amongst other things.

"Gender in sport is a big thing."

Being a woman in the sporting world, even today clearly has its issues. Katie went on to say that often people would refer to the football teams as "11-man even when women are playing" as well as phrases such as "hi boys" in the workplace. A considerable number of times Katie's colleagues have not even gained the knowledge of where the female facilities are (although there has never not been one).

"My communication style is colloquial" which is such an important attribute of Katie's personality. As soon as we first got talking there was a sense of ease. Katie could clearly hold the attention of an entire room of blokes whilst also having the ability to be everyone's friend. She went on to say, "You have to be confident and not afraid to ask questions."

The BBC is publicly funded, Katie tells me it is "very inclusive" likely more so than independent sports reporting businesses which are dominated by men. As well as this there is a lot of jargon that goes hand in hand with sport, more so in cricket than anything which to someone who doesn't watch cricket would likely understand such as golden duck, maiden and yorker. Although Katie had not found 'sports jargon' a particular issue and found that you get used to it and pick things up along the way.

One thing, perhaps the only downside to getting paid to "bring football to life for people" is the fact that it consumes you. It becomes almost all you do and can think about most days

and quite often it can put someone off because when you have too much of something then quite often one can get bored of it and find it tedious. This is why it is extremely important that you have to be really passionate about sport and really love what you do, so you don't fall out of love with it. Turning a hobby into a job can sometimes take the fun out of it.

The ability to go and do something that will make a difference to so many people really fuels Katie's ambition and drive for her job stating: "Football not life or death, it's more important than that and getting the opportunity to bring that to life for people is such a privilege."

As the interview drew to a close, we reflected on the past forty minutes we had been conversing together and her ability to make people feel so at home had set in and it really did feel like I had known her a long time.