

Q&A Marnie Vinnall

“Normalizing women’s voices within the media and slightly in sports media”

Marnie Vinnall, one of two female sports journalists at The Age is an outstanding journalist who strives for women’s voices within the media and tells all about the struggles and highlights of being a professional journalist.

Q1. How did you become a journalist?

I very much took up a lot of opportunities. I was a freelancer for a year before I had my full-time role. “Women’s sports really took off at the right time for me, as there were so many opportunities.” I started in the opinion space which then led to an opportunity to work for The Guardian writing columns on AFLW. It led to an opportunity for me to jump on channel seven for the Olympics as a researcher. I worked my way up, that’s how I got the gig at The Age full-time.

Q2. What made you want to be a “sports journalist”?

“I want more voices like mine”. Just normalising women's voices within the media. It’s always the same-looking person, the typical blonde woman. If I don't help point that out. Even in work meetings with 40 people, I'm the only female in that room, and there's not a single person of colour. It’s normal and no one even realizes the fact it shouldn't be like that. “I just want more women to exist in this space”. We saw that with the Matilda's, right, a lot of women were like, “Oh, I feel a part of this.”

Q3. What is your favourite interview/story that you have written?

Interviewing Sam Kerr. It was surreal, having spoken to her after the recent semi-final loss. I was one meter apart from her and the quotes she said that I posted on social media were everywhere the next day. The following day, I saw those words plastered, everywhere. “She said those words like to my face, and now they're everywhere”. Kristie Mewis, Kerr’s partner posted and said, it was the “only thing that's keeping me smiling right now”. Even, Megan Rapinoe put my words and story on her story. I was like, “That’s my name and face and Megan Rapinoe's story”.

Q4. What challenges do you face?

Subtle sexism, it's the sexism that people don't even think they're doing. If you bring it up, they say you’re creating problems. “It is even the way I'm spoken to, as opposed to my male colleagues is different”. Within a male-dominated space, it's subtle stuff that you can't point out especially when it's your own colleagues. Online abusers are another challenge, Sometimes I will give them a response but usually, it's just not worth it. Within the AFL media, you don’t always feel comfortable or included, it is each to their own. Unlike the Women’s World Cup where I was fine to just rock up and someone would show me where to go. In the AFL media, “I'm happy to put on record that isn't always the case”. Male sports are not always super supportive.

Q5. What are some of your favourite highlights?

Getting women's sports on the front page. A key highlight that comes to mind, is interviewing Ash Brazil, getting to know her personally and on a deeper level, and understanding her ups and downs of playing in the World Cup for Netball Australia and AFLW. "I don't think any of my male colleagues could connect and have the trust of a female athlete on a deeper and meaningful level". One another highlight includes when a male came up to me in a pub and told me that I helped him get into the Women's World Cup.

Q6. What tips would you give a young aspiring journalist?

Pitch. Just put yourself out there and embrace the changing landscape of media because print media, we all know is on the decline. "A lot of these like traditional places don't really know they're grappling with how to deal with new media, and they want young people to come in and like help them". If you know exactly how to harness TikTok, use that to your advantage. In press conferences, it's better to ask different questions not just the same ones for example, what did you see in the last quarter, instead ask better questions like, "How did you manage to turn the game around?".

Q7. What are the stresses/deadlines that you face?

How do I deal with deadlines? Just be honest about it, but you also just get used to it. If you are writing a match report, you are normally at the game. You are writing as the game is playing and once the siren goes, you have 1 minute before you must release your match report. Straight after you are sent down to ask questions for the press conference. Technically speaking, every day is very different.



Image taken by Malaya Rodezno