Gender Inequality in college/Professional Basketball

In the past generations, sports have been changing dramatically throughout the years. The athletes have gotten stronger, faster, and smarter with their profession, and we definitely can see the progress nowhere near coming to an end. The only thing that still seems to remain the same is, gender inequality. As many of you might know, March is considered the biggest month when it comes to college basketball, hence the nickname “March Madness”. As many families and friends watch their favorite teams compete for a championship game. Now the one big issue with this, is how so many T.V. broadcasters focus on the male side of the athletics, and not the female side.

Before we get deep into this, I want to discuss with you on how it’s not just the T.V. broadcasters that show some type of gender difference, but that it’s the Universities as well. From one of my sources, “businessofcollegesports.com”, we see some financial records from multiple Universities. This information was gathered by Kristi Dosh, she is the founder of the page. The financial records show what/how much a university spends on the athletics, and right off the back you notice a huge difference in the sports department. From the University of Michigan State, their records are dated from 2009-2010 school year, and from what the records show, football is one of the biggest/favored sport at the university and usually generates a great
amount of revenue from the season. Now, by focusing on the revenue on what the football program makes, cutting out expenses, they make roughly about “$4.7 million dollars” (Dosh 1). Just like every other university, the football program shares some of the money they make to other sports in the school. In Michigan's situation, they are low on some money and have to find a way to share it. So what did they do? The men’s basketball got more than the female team. Having only a $600,000 difference, it does give a clear show on how much the school cares so little about the women’s team.

Not only that, but from my experienced, whenever students receive a email from the University, it’s either deals for an event coming up or promoting the male athletics. An example of this would be this spring semester. Both genders play the same sport, in the same season, and for the same school. It just doesn’t make any sense on why one side is favored than the other. Another thing to add on, I thought this was quite interesting, “The number of scholarships offered to men and women college basketball players are very similar. Women have access to the same training facilities and play on the same court as the men's teams, too.” (Shmoop 1). It doesn’t seem like they’re different, but my only question is, why aren’t the women receiving the same type of promotion as the men’s team? Everyone on campus has probably seen the men’s season ticket deals more than once, I know I have, but what I didn’t see was the same treatment for the women’s team. It just seems unfair, especially since they’re both Division 1 sports at the University. For my own interest, I went to both games in the same week for both teams, and right off the bat I saw a difference. There was a huge crowd difference, and energy level at the games. Almost seemed like nobody even cared for the female ballers but me. Also, I didn’t even see the band perform any songs at the women’s game, because they weren’t there. I just don’t
understand it, because if the University did promote the women’s team more often, then I’m sure there wouldn’t be that much of a difference. Perhaps maybe you’ll get the same number of tickets sold for the games in the season. It’s practically up to the university if things were to start changing.

From one of my sources, it states that, “the profile of consumers for a professional women’s basketball team and found that females made up 70% of those attending games,”(James 15). So maybe it might just be a fan preferred thing for certain genders. According to my source, “It has been proposed that women’s sport have a different appeal than men’s sports, that women’s sports are appealing because they reflect a “purer” form of a game...and promote fitness and teamwork.” (James & Lynn 17). I guess that might make some sense, but then again men could say the same thing about the male athletes. It just doesn’t fit, but there’s definitely more to this idea on why the female athletes aren’t treated the same, and given the same attention.

Adding on to that, the female athletes don’t get that much attention when it comes to television. Sports T.V programs are dominated by males, and are usually the main topic 24/7 either on Fox News or ESPN(Entertainment and Sports Programming Networks). Others would definitely agree on this, “Look, the main difference between men's and women's college basketball is the attention the programs and players get. The guys get most of the TV time and unless you go to one of the biggest programs in the country (think UConn or Tennessee), they'll often draw bigger crowds at games as well.”(Shmoop). The problem with that, not everyone can play for the big sport programs, and are only left with the option of playing for either a low rank team. Which just leaves every other female athlete the struggle of getting her attention from
others in the league, leading her to fame, or most importantly, getting her the respect she deserves.

But even if a female athlete did gain some kind of attention and popularity, it’ll still be difficult for her to land a professional basketball career if she ever wanted to pursue that idea, “Honestly, there aren't a lot of opportunities to play sports at the professional level. There are even fewer opportunities for women in professional sports. While there are 30 teams in the NBA, there are only 12 teams in the WNBA (Women’s National Basketball Association). Each team has roughly a dozen roster spots”(Shmoop). There was more teams in the past, but a lot of them got cut off due to budget issues. It doesn’t just stop there, there’s a lot more to it, “If you do manage to land a pro spot on a team, it won't exactly be a cash cow. Women still make way less money than men do on the court in the U.S.”(Shmoop). Now there are 12 teams in the U.S, and each of them start off the season in May, and play about 34 games a season, plus postseason games. That seems very short considering the fact that the NBA plays about 82 a season.

The fact that they play less, and start so late is already problem for them, because in today's world, money is surely everything, and both the WNBA and NBA would agree on that. Considering the fact that both have put in a lot of effort to make it to the pros. The only thing is, by them playing less they won’t build up enough revenue for themselves, “In the WNBA, the annual salary for the team is approximately $900,000 and maximum player salary is approximately $95,000 (1). As for the NBA, in the 2015-16 season, the annual team salary for the Cleveland Cavaliers is $110,273,822,”(Sports Inequality Blog). That is a huge wage gap, and can clearly show how the WNBA doesn’t gain any support at all, and struggles to make revenue.
Just the idea of working towards your dream, only to be told in the end that you won’t make it, or even if you do make it, it won’t be any better, definitely puts you in the emotional sad side just by thinking about it. It’s fair to say that these female athletes have it hard when it comes to their profession.

Just to show how hard it is for these athletes, they can’t even be taken serious, and it’s all in the viewings from T.V. broadcasters. Every year, it’s the same tournament for all the teams and for both genders. Now the only thing that separates all of that, is who gains the most attention on the big screen. Obviously, it is the men that gain the most since they’re promoted more frequently with commercials and merchandise. According to the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association), the views grow in numbers every year by a crazy amount for the men, let it be known that this was from 2015 when Duke won the title, “The 2015 NCAA tournament averaged 11.3 million total viewers, up 8 percent from last year (10.5 million viewers), and is the highest average viewership for the NCAA tournament in 22 years (12.7 million; 1993)...The National Championship game, which saw Duke defeat Wisconsin, averaged 28.3 million total viewers, up 33 percent from last year (21.3 million) and is the most-viewed NCAA title game in 18 years (28.4 million; Arizona/Kentucky in 1997)” (NCAA). Those are crazy numbers and very impressive I won’t lie, and I remember that game as well. Duke won its fifth national title, having a stellar season, but let's not get off topic. It isn’t the same story for the female side when it comes to viewings on the big screen. The average viewing is nowhere near close to what the men average, and that's all because on who’s broadcasting them, “ESPN is claiming that the first and second rounds of the women’s NCAA March Madness tournament averaged 343,000 viewers, which is a 46 percent increase from last year”(Wilder 1). On the male
side, they roughly have about 4 broadcasting stations: TBS, CBS, TNT and TruTV. Top and recognizable T.V. networks. While on the female side, they roughly have about half as that as the mens.

Clearly shows that it’s more than Universities that treat this completely different, but that it’s popular televised stations as well. I mean sure, yes it brings in more revenue on the table, but wouldn’t it double if the broadcasting was equally the same? I sure believe so. You’ll be feeding the fans on what they want to watch, and giving women the same and fair treatment that they’ve wanted for a long time. Now the only thing is, even if they’re broadcasted more often they’ll still have to deal with some of the sexiest comments that you sometimes hear from the public on TV, “Not only is the amount of coverage women receive is surely lacking, but when they do receive exposure, it is usually in a sex-typed manner,”(Cunningham & Sagas 2). I remember watching a video from a social media page about televised broadcasters, and it was exposing some of them that we're talking about how the looks on some of the athletes were (Female Athletes). Not even focusing on the game they play, but constantly treating them like it’s all one big joke for them. These women play the sport they love, and not because they want to look cute and show-off to everybody, but instead to show that they deserve some type of recognition and respect from others for what they do.

Sports shouldn’t just focus on the idea of gender and make one gender seem more important or dominant than the other. Instead it should focus on the idea on how much effort these female athletes put in day in day out, and how important it is for them. They practice hard everyday just to be more than good in their profession, they want to be the best at what they do.
They just want a chance just like everybody else, and to show they’re not so different from your average male baller.

Work Cited:


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