

CAN WOMEN WRITE ABOUT SPORT?

by **Ilze VAINOVSKA** (Latvia) / **Regina GOUVEIA** (Portugal)

Summary

Fewer than five percent of sports news and stories are made by female journalists and fewer than five percent of press articles cover cultural and social aspects of sports. In this men's world most part of journalists still go the easiest way and reports on results from the newsroom desks. Would society looks at sports differently and would it even have an impact on sport itself if more women reported on it?

Article

Fewer than five percent of sports news and features are made by women journalists* in a world where half the population is female. Is the Y chromosome needed to be able to write about sport or do other little things make the difference? Fewer than five percent of press articles cover cultural and social aspects of sports*. Would society look differently on sports and would it have an impact on sport itself if more women reported on it?

Celen Oben, chief editor of the Sports department in Star Media Group in Cyprus, thinks if women can do sports, they can write about it as well. „Yes, why not?“, he counters. In his country, where 25 to 30 percent of all journalists are female, only ten percent work on sports issues. Traditionally, they are former sports women. As Celen Oben explains, „you have to know the rules if you want to write about the game“. He agrees that journalists mainly go the easiest way and focus on reporting results, rather than analyzing or researching. Most sports journalists in Cyprus are confined to the newsroom; sitting and reporting about results or asking comments about games by phone.

According to Celen Oben, the choice to write results as opposed to taking a more investigative or analytic approach is the reporter's own. For 90 percent of journalists, that is the second job – during the free weekend go to a football match and later write about it. If women want, they can do the same. „But women aren't so interested in sports therefore they aren't so many in sportive journalism“, he said.

Editors will look at the story – if it seems good, they will publish it. These Celen Oben's words sound hopefully, as the next ones, that more women in sports journalism will carry a profit: „While men look through one window, women look for multiple perspectives“. They have a different look on the same game, use various angles. As result, it increases diversity. Celen Oben is trying to find the way how to wake up his colleagues in order to change the situation, not very succesfully yet.

Leaders on reports, not on salaries

At the same time, in Bulgaria, women are leaders on sports reporting – they are 70 percent, but don't lead editorial teams. As Eleonora Tarandova mentions, they are on the level of reporters with lower salaries. Editors mainly are men. Her position is the editor of Forbes, business magazine in Bulgaria, but Eleonora Tarandova explains it as a



logical exception because she has two degrees of master: the first one in physical culture, the second in journalism. Like her colleague from Cyprus, she believes that more sportive female journalists get a wider look on sport, from more different points of view, touch several topics which are out of mainstream. „Women are more flexible and are able to write about everything. Getting closer to equal gender representation in newsrooms could bring more women to sport, changing cultural trends of gender's roles and sportive agenda criterias”, Eleonora Tarandova says.

Gender doesn't matter, professionalism does

What media consumers think about women as sports journalists? Vaidie, a parisian cook working at Bordeaux, doesn't pay attention at who is the author of articles at all. He is interested in sports, mainly football, „no matter who reports on results”. Monique Leconte doesn't read sportive contents and prefers to be active herself. She is a retired teacher, „not an active feminist”, but she considers that the world of sports could be less aggressive, more delicated, if it was frequently related by women. „Women are really better at writing about sport, because they do it with heart”, Alain Laire declares. This senior athletic walker, stopped during his trainings nearby the Garonne river. He wishes much more women in sportive journalism. Not the only one as today on TV.

Delphine Ruhlow is an events manager and doesn't want to be a journalist, especially a sportive one. This would be her „last choice”. In any case, she doesn't care about reporter's gender. The really important thing, what she expects, is the good, professional, journalism.

- * Play the Game, 2005, MARS.

GOUVEIA Regina was born in Covilhã, Portugal, where she concluded her first degree, a master's degree and a doctorate in Communication Sciences, at the University of Beira Interior. On the 11th February of 1998, she joined the Polytechnic Institute of Guarda, Portugal, as teacher in communication courses (Journalism Ethics). Nowadays, she still is teacher, as researcher, on *Media and Society* field, and director of Multimedia Communication License.



VAINOVSKA Ilze is 42 years old, have studied psychology at Latvian University, work as social, health and criminal reporter for 15 years. At 2007 I was a Latvia national winner in European Journalist Award "For Diversity. Against Discrimination", at 2010 I received a national diploma. I am the second place winner of the Award Excellence in Reporting of Tuberculosis 2008 (Stop TB Partnership). In newspaper "Kursas Laiks" I have organized "Youth page" for 3 years. One of my editorial staff's responsibilities is work with young reporters and trainees – to explain principles, to debunk prejudice etc. I am local



mentor in the ethics, diversity and equality.

Kursas Laiks