

Chapter 10

Women's Professional Sport and COVID-19 Pandemic Effects: Mitigating, Manoeuvring, and Reimagining?

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Introduction

In the last decade the reach and commercial growth of women's professional sport has accelerated. Women's sport events, leagues and teams have been harnessed by rights holders, brands, and the media, forming a lucrative commercial landscape. Beyond commercialisation, the sports ecosystem enables enhanced participation of girls and women across all facets of sport. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has in some quarters, slowed this momentum. This chapter addresses how the pandemic is shaping women's sports current operations and future trajectories. Specifically, we examine how professional sport leagues and teams have pivoted and continue to maneuver in ways aimed to mitigate COVID-19 effects. Drawing on the UN women's "Sports for Generation Equality Framework" (2020) we explore the potential for women's sport development pathways, media, management, and participation.

Women's Professional Sport: global reach and enhanced appeal

In the last decade professional sport for women has fundamentally changed. Specifically, Tennis has spearheaded the growth of women's professional sport. The tour has a complex history (Lake, 2011, 2019) and ongoing equity challenges exist across the sport, including pay inequities (Archer & Prange, 2019; Mercer & Edwards, 2020) as well as intersections with gender, class and racial inequities (Lawrence Corbett, 2020; O'Shea, Stronach & Maxwell 2020; Tredway, 2020). Notwithstanding these complex issues the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) remains a global leader in women's professional sport by its sheer size and prize pool. With more than 1,650 players competing for \$180 million in prize money and in 2019 boasting a record-breaking global audience of 700 million viewers opportunities for women's professional tennis remain vast.

Women's professional team sports are similarly attracting attention with sponsors and broadcasters leveraging associations for commercial gain (Antunovic & Linden, 2015;

Morgan 2019). Female professional athletes are keenly aware of their market value and are demanding equity in playing rights and pay (Campbell, 2017). United States (US) basketball players Nneka Ogwumike and Sue Bird have led the fight for equal pay in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). Their advocacy has seen the sports gender pay gap reduced, but not eliminated. Base salary increases were a recent focus, the resulting outcomes is that some top female players will now earn salaries threefold their former contracts. Player association negotiations also focused on performance-based bonuses and provisions relevant to maternity, fertility, and adoption benefits (Delmore, 2020).

The US professional women's football legal push for pay equity has shone the spotlight squarely on the depths of sport and societal inequities. After a pandemic year which saw millions of women shut out of the workforce, Megan Rapinoe and Margaret Purce are using their athlete status and vocal fight for pay equity in professional sport and to push for broader US gender pay reforms (Bieler & Boren, 2021).

In early 2021 the US women's national soccer team reached an agreement with the US Soccer Federation over equal work conditions with their male counterparts. By extension women's involvement in the sports governance and administration continues to improve. While the appointment of the US Soccer Federation's first General Manager of Women's Programming, former player Kate Markgraf has been met with positive sentiment, her pay packet underscores persistent inequities. Her male counterpart with a smaller portfolio of responsibilities is reportedly paid decidedly more (Murray, 2021). Similar disparities exist in the organisations coaching ranks. Referencing these inequities Margaret Purce compared paying female athletes less than males to expecting "a flower to bloom without water." She describes having "watched and joined a league of women who are remarkable at their craft" and yet despite their ability, they battle for legitimacy and financial investment: "together, we have asked for the same grace that was extended to men in the formative years of their

leagues, true investment” (Rogers, 2021). (Are there any page numbers or paragraph numbers available with these direct quotes?)

Growth despite neglect: women’s sport forging an upward trajectory

Despite resourcing and investment inequities, women’s sport continues to make inroads shaking off aspersions it is less entertaining and commercially viable (Keisler, 2019). In Australia, sports such as the Australian Football League Women’s (AFLW) competition, continues to develop an upward trajectory. Despite COVID-19 disruptions and the leagues relative infancy (it only commenced in 2016), record-breaking growth and increased partner investment has occurred. The AFLW leagues 2021 season attracted a total television audience in excess of five million people (in the home and away season), with this figure eclipsing the previous record by 35% in 2020 and representing a 49% increase from the 2019 season (AFL, 2021).

Research conducted by Nielsen Sports (2018) provides a further encouraging snapshot of the current state of play and the drivers fuelling women’s professional sport development across countries. Drawing on data across eight of the most commercially active sports markets (US, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia and New Zealand) 84% of general sports fans expressed an interest in women’s sport. Of those interested in women’s sport 51% were men, discrediting the myth that men are not interested in women’s sports and confirming how women’s sports represent a key opportunity to engage male fans.

The commercial growth of women’s sport events further speaks to the commercial heights women’s sport continues to scale. Despite women’s football being ‘invisibilized and sidelined’ by the media its popularity is unquestionable (Dunn, 2018, p.788). The 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup, hosted in Canada, drew unprecedented interest with more than 750 million fans watching on television screens across the globe. This upward trajectory has

continued, with a combined 1.12 billion viewers tuned into the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup held in France (Glass, 2019).

Prior to COVID-19 throwing the world of sport into a state of chaos, the ICC Women's T20 World Cup (the biennial international championship for women's Twenty20 International cricket) *almost* broke Australian women's sport spectatorship records. The event fell short of toppling the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup final watched by a record breaking 90,185 spectators with the 2020 ICC Women's T20 World Cup final attracting an inspiring 86,174 stadium spectators.

Despite the buoyancy of women's professional leagues and teams' sports COVID-19 induced shutdowns has amplified societal norms and practices (re)producing women's sports secondary status (O'Shea, Maxwell, & Duffy, 2021). Against the backdrop of the pandemic's increasingly protracted effects the uneven distribution of capital, resources, and facilities together with disparities in the level and type of media coverage men's and women's professional sport garners have been laid bare (Symonds et al., 2021). We next present two case studies that show how these inequities have revealed themselves in the Australian context before returning to a globally focused analysis of women's sporting futures.

A poor look for gender equity: the gender play gap?

In Australia on the eve of the 2020 AFLW finals series the competition was abruptly called off with the premiership trophy left unawarded. A decidedly poor look for gender equality from Australian Football League (AFL) administrators who postponed the women's fixtures while simultaneously going to great operational and financial lengths to ensure the men's domestic competition continued with minimal disruption (O'Halloran, 2020). National Rugby League administrators similarly forged ahead with their men's competition packing stadiums just hours before a formal government announcement preventing non-essential

gatherings of 500 people (O'Shea & Duffy, 2020; O'Shea, Taylor & Richards, 2020) took effect. Indeed, the Australian men's NRL competition was one of the first sports globally to recommence their season fixtures. Referencing the games enforced stoppage two rounds into the season because of COVID-19 community transmission and accelerated spread in several Australian states the codes chair remarked how he "would have thought twice about stopping the game" (Holmes, 2020).

The NRL women's competition scheduling meant that their season fixtures were not impacted like their AFLW counterparts. NRLW season fixtures were to occur fortuitously as community transmission of the virus was largely contained in Australia. While outwardly championing the NRLW competition, the competitions touted expansion was put on the backburner despite significant growth in spectatorship, commercial interest, and participation. Female leaders of the game including league founder Katie Page have addressed COVID-19 induced resource scarcity while simultaneously advocating for continued strategic investment, "when you're running a business it doesn't happen overnight, so you're doing building blocks for the future ... take this moment to be doing your strategy for when the world returns ... what does it look like" she said (Hart, 2020).

COVID-19 bubbles a further window to gender inequities

The recommencement of sport fixtures made possible by biosecurity bubbles and hubs provided a further window into the disparities between men's and women's professional sport. Unlike their male counterparts, the Super Netball biosecurity bubble showed the challenges female professional athletes face balancing their athletic careers, part time employment and in many instances' child and elder care (Pavlidis & Rowe, 2021).

Most Super Netball players have another source of income, despite their professional status and having entered into an updated Collective Player Agreement for the 2020 and 2021 seasons (Netball Australia, 2020). While player contracts have continued to rise (Gearin, 2016), they pale in comparison with those of professional male athletes. Many netballers were required to leave their employment or to work remotely adding to the stresses of the COVID-19 sporting bubble life.

Super Netball became the first sport to deliver a full season against the backdrop of COVID-19, “the first elite female sport back on free-to-air TV, almost 200 players, team staff and family plus more than 50 umpires, officials, league staff and broadcast team members relocated to a single Queensland hub. Zero COVID breaches, 350 hotel nights and more than 90 days away from home for many players and staff” (Super Netball, 2020). April Brandley exemplified the family and financial sacrifices required to enable her professional netball career. Her husband left his employment to enter the playing bubble to care for their young son, who she was still breastfeeding (Woods, 2020).

Further disparities are demonstrated with multiple players and staff from the men’s leagues repeatedly breaking the strict governmental and league protocols they were required to abide by (Cockburn, 2020; McClure & Ryan, 2020; Phillips & Nicolussi, 2020; Rogers, 2020). While administrators and coaches were bitterly disappointed by these breaches, no doubt their female counterparts looked on in disbelief, especially those AFLW athletes who continue to make considerable sacrifices juggling careers and their elite sporting commitment (Kleyn, 2020) and were robbed of their season’s end.

The Sports for Generation Equality Framework

COVID-19 has illuminated the deep gender inequities in sport and other institutions. We here position the second part of the chapter by discussing the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). Labelled as one of the most visionary agendas for the empowerment of women and girls and during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic the platform celebrated its 25th anniversary. The Generation Equality campaign launched in 2020 and led by UN Women, is an invitation to bring in new partners and younger generations to embrace and revitalize the Beijing Platform for Action and to make gender equality a lived reality (UN Women, 2020).

The Sports for Generation Equality (SGE) framework drives the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action through the power of the sport ecosystem in five ways which we discuss.

Table 1: Sports for Generation Equality Framework

| | Sports for Generation Equality Framework |
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| 1. | Promote women's leadership and gender equality in governance models |
| 2. | Prevent and respond to gender-based violence |
| 3. | Undertake to close the gap in investment in women's sport and promote equal economic opportunities for women and girls |
| 4. | Promote women's equal participation and bias free representation in media |
| 5. | Provide equal opportunities for girls in sports, physical activity and physical education |

1. Promote women's leadership and gender equality in governance models

Affirming their commitment to gender balance on and off the field of play the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) 2020 Commissions announcement publicised year on year progression towards gender equality. Compelled through its Olympic Charter to

encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels women's representation across the IOC's 30 commissions has positively risen to just under 48% (IOC, 2020). Achieving gender parity remains a priority with the IOC Gender Equality Review Project (2018) instituting strategic mechanisms to increase the pipeline of female candidates for governance roles and connects with the SGE framework.

In Australia, similar gender equity goals and gains are being made. Labelled by commentators as a break through decade for the rise of women's sport and a rousing "boom time" (McLachlan, 2019) for female professional athletes, "it would seem there has never been a better time to be a woman in Australian sport" (Toffoletti & Palmer, 2019, p. 1). Against this backdrop, women's presence in the management and leadership of Australian sport is fervently espoused and regularly publicised. Increasing numbers of female CEO's, Chairs and Commissioners has been empirically investigated (Adriaanse & Schofield, 2013), positively marked and widely celebrated.

While equity principles and the appointment of increased numbers of women to sport governance and administrative roles continue to garner significant attention, we contend that progress narratives of this kind are dangerous. That is, against a growing popular sentiment that the increased and visible appointment of women to sport leadership roles signifies gender equity, an exploration of the gendered power relations shaping women's and men's sport managerial careers is rendered further problematic (O'Shea, 2017). Indeed, despite the Olympic movements recent gender equality achievements and their ongoing stated policy commitment to valuing and enabling a pathway for female sport administrators recent issues provide a window into the tensions and gaps between espoused policy commitments and the gendered discourses and practices shaping sport organisational cultures.

Yoshiro Mori, the ex-head of the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics organising committee's sexist remarks (McCurry, 2021) demonstrate the dangers of progress narratives. While Mori apologised for his comments and was stood down from his leadership role there lies a stark contrast between policy and practice.

Attempts to enable women's involvement in sports management have typically focused on mentorship opportunities and quota systems. Programs of this kind have in some instances increased women's numerical representation on boards and managerial teams. Miller & Rose (2008) suggest that focusing on increasing women's numerical presence in organisations can highlight the dominance of "calculative regime[s]" (p. 41) and liberal-oriented change agendas can overlook and indeed conceal gender power relations. The limitations and challenges of using numbers to measure inequality are further highlighted by Thornton's (2013) claim that rather than "numerosity providing a solution to gender inequality" (p. 128), it sheds light on how and why women continue to experience challenges in accessing and developing what they conceive of as meaningful and satisfying careers.

Put plainly, the appointment of more women to leadership roles in sport does not adequately redress the gendered practices and norms inequitably shaping women's sport management careers. Indeed, it is the case that quota systems can reinforce rather than redress gender inequities. Claims of reverse discrimination and claims that women are appointed to leadership roles because of their gender can stilt meaningful change. To evoke meaningful change scholarship and policy should look to how gendered power relations are constructed and strengthened through informal everyday sport workplace practices (O'Shea, 2017; O'Shea & Fullagar, 2019; O'Shea & Toohey, 2014). By illuminating and disrupting gendered practices and normative ideals their legitimacy can be dislodged and perhaps more meaningfully challenged.

2. Prevent and respond to gender-based violence

The documentary *Athlete A* provides a window into the significance of this principles call for the development and implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures, including reporting mechanisms, appropriate remediation, and support for effected women and girls (Cervin, 2020; Mangan, 2020). Released during the early throws of COVID-19 the documentary details how Larry Nassar, the US women's gymnastics team doctor, was finally brought to justice after sexually abusing hundreds of gymnasts across his near 30-year involvement in the sport. The victim impact statements numbering more than 200 read during Nassar's sentencing lay bare the violating acts these girls and women endured (Lutz, 2018; Rahal & Kozlowski, 2018). A culture that perpetuates silence and consequently enables physical and emotional violence against vulnerable gymnasts was finally unmasked (Lindquist, 2020; Mangan, 2020). The documentary was a catalyst for the telling of other similar stories around the world. Following the release of the documentary there has been a profound ripple effect with English, Australian and New Zealand gymnasts among others sharing stories of abuse, bullying and neglect.

A global advocacy group #GymnastAlliance has called for change. Indeed, the documentary and emerging powerful athlete led alliance has seen the English, Australian and New Zealand gymnastics governing bodies commission and hand down independent reviews which paint a picture of a deeply concerning culture (Cervin, 2020; Kavanagh, Adams, & Adams, 2020). Importantly the reviews have cast light on violence and abuse and a path for legal and policy protections, redress and safeguarding into the future both within and beyond the sport of gymnastics. Australian Human Rights Commissioner Kate Jenkins commented that "There is a spotlight on the human rights of athletes around the world and many of the lessons of this Review are critical to all sports in Australia ... this is an opportunity for

gymnastics in Australia to lead the way on child safety and gender equality” (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2021).

3. Undertake to close the gap in investment in women’s sport and promote equal economic opportunities for women and girls

Commercial investments into women’s sport prior to COVID-19 illustrate the enormous divide between the deals that have been done for women versus men in sport. The disparity between the playing conditions for the men and women athletes was illustrated via social media at the recent Division 1 College basketball national finals tournament, one of the biggest US Collegiate sporting events in 2021. By comparing female athletes’ social media footage of the food served, weight rooms, logos and playing floors to the men’s the differences were laid bare. The sportswomen were given one single stack of weights and the sportsmen were provided an entire floor of weight training equipment. The meals served to the female athletes consisted of a pre-prepared food tray, whereas the male athletes were provided a self-serving buffet that allowed them to select their own food preferences and the quantity they required at mealtimes (Williams, 2021).

This highlighted difference in conditions provided fuel to question long established attitudes and investment in women’s sport, especially when female college sports participation is at an all-time high. The NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Database represents data from the 1981-82 academic year to December 2020. While women’s teams have outnumbered men’s teams since 1996-97, and in 2018 women’s NCAA sports teams made up 54% of NCAA teams, compared with 46% for the men, women maintain a second-rate status (Wimmer Schwarb, 2018).

Investment inequities can not only be seen in the professional sport context. In Australia, they extend to infrastructure decision making. Against the backdrop of increasing

junior sport participation among young girls and women community sport facilities are playing catch up. Characteristically sportsground changing rooms are set up for boys and men, complete with urinals, rather than those designed with any female usage in mind (Urban, 2021).

Event programming characteristically favours men's and boy's competitive fixtures. For example, the Australian junior basketball championships have historically allocated the boys Grand Final, a standalone prime position on the program, just before the Closing Ceremony, whilst the girls Grand Final is scheduled at an earlier time. At the April 2021 Australian Under-20s Basketball Championships in Mackay, the girls Gold Medal game was scheduled at the same time as the boys Bronze Medal game, yet the boys Gold Medal game was a standalone event, immediately preceding the overall Medal presentation. Encouragingly the sports July 2021 Australian Under-16s Basketball Championships in Perth will see the Girls and Boys Grand Final games as standalone fixtures.

Addressing pay inequity remains a global sport issue. Pre Covid-19, the World Surf League (WSL) (the organizer of the annual tour of professional surfing competitions) announced that it will offer equal prize money to men and women beginning in 2019 (World Surf League, 2019). At the 2019 US Open, the winner of both events (male and female) took home equal prize money amounting to \$3.85 million, each. Furthermore, the equivalent prize money that men and women receive at Grand Slam events puts tennis ahead of other sports when it comes to gender equity.

Tennis legends, Venus and Serena Williams have continued their advocacy work beyond tennis joining the advisory board of the Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative (BJKLI) to address the wage disparity not only in sports, but in all industries, from the ground up. A timely reminder occurred with the announcement of the 2021 theme for

International Women's Day 'Choose to Challenge' (International Women's Day, 2021), just as many "women's sports" were resuming post-pandemic, the 2021 theme encouraged everyone to continue to call out gender bias and inequality to help create a more inclusive world both within and external to the sport ecosystem.

4. Promote women's equal participation and bias free representation in media

Women's equal participation and bias free representation in the media is a complex issue that is in part perpetuated by the lack of women working in sports media (O'Shea, Litchfield, & Maxwell, 2020). Sports media is a macho citadel where "men hire men to talk about men" (Dodman, 2021). This tendency thwarts gender equity in sport initiatives as it limits the focus and resources women's sport is likely to receive. Research from the Australian Sports Commission confirms there is a correlation between media coverage (for women's sport 7%) and a sport's ability to attract commercial sponsorship (a close 8%). Many women are working to change this perception, however there are significant obstacles, including a lack of women in gatekeeping roles within the media such as editors and journalists.

The lack of female representation working in the sports media is a particular problem in France. At present women account for 13% of sports journalists and they have recently banded together to sign a petition calling for an end to the sexism and harassment they face on daily basis (Dodman, 2021). This petition coincides with the release of a documentary titled "I'm not a slut, I'm a journalist" by sports journalist Marie Portolano who tells the stories of the disrespect, abuse, and denigration many women face in the field and on social media.

The below tweet shows a short video of a Kethevane Gorjestani, a French sports journalist delivering a live cross from the World Cup in Russia, whilst a man touches her and

kisses her. Ms Gorjestani has used the hashtag #DeixaElaTrabalhar (“Let her do her job”) echoing calls from female sports journalists in Brazil to combat the sexism and harassment they similarly face (Long, 2018).



Image: Sports journalist Kethevine Gorjestani experiencing workplace sexual harassment

Source: Twitter

The under representation of women in sports media is not only a problem for female sports journalists, but it also influences how we value and perceive women's sports. Female athletes are typically portrayed as women first, often sexualised or are shown in relation to their race, age or family life. The portrayal of Serena Williams in a racist cartoon as part of the 2018 US Open coverage is an example of the double blow that can be delivered at the intersection of gender and race. Williams is represented as a Jim Crow style angry, hysterical black woman, in stark contrast to the depictions of male tennis players who regularly lost temper like John McEnroe or Andre Agassi who were labelled "passionate and determined" (Iqbal, 2018).

Female athletes in many sports, including gymnastics struggle with costumes or uniforms that emphasize their appearance, serve to sexualise them or are inappropriate

because of their religious and/or cultural beliefs (Fairchild & Gregg, 2021; Maddocks, 2021; Maxwell 2012; O'Shea, Duffy, & van Esch, 2021). However, Sarah Voss, a German Gymnast flouted convention and wore a more comfortable and practical bodysuit, receiving praise and enabling other athletes to follow suit (BBC, 2021).

Analysis of over 160 million words from news reporting and social media discussion of the 2016 Olympics shines a light on depths of gender inequities in sport media. This report found that men dominated the reporting, that women's aesthetics rather than athleticism were too often the focus of the discussion and that women's sport and their achievements were infantilised and trivialised (Cambridge University Press, 2016). For example, women were more likely to be described as "clinch[ing]" their title, whereas their male counterparts *claimed* their win. Further gender terms were more often used as qualifiers, for example, female golfers, whereas their male equivalents were largely talk about as golfers (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Progress is frustratingly slow. However, social media has enabled women to call out sexual harassment and inequities in a way that a lack of access to a platform has prevented in the past. Holding perpetrators to account is an important step towards redressing the gender imbalance. Lack of female participation and representation in the media has negative impacts for athletes, journalists, and sports fans. Telling more stories of female athletes as they relate to their grit, skill and athletic prowess will help to change the status quo. These stories are a powerful means to unite people to cheer, support and celebrate these athletes.

5. Provide equal opportunities for girls in sports, physical activity, and physical education

Research highlights the ongoing challenges of access and opportunity facing girls and adolescent women in the development of sport for women and girls (Sherry & Rowe, 2020),

especially among girls from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (Walseth, 2008; Maxwell 2012; Maxwell & Stronach, 2020), Indigenous girls (Stronach et al. 2016; Stronach and Maxwell 2020), girls living with a disability (Hammond & Macdougall, 2020) and girls identifying as lesbian, bisexual, intersects or trans (Storr & Symons, 2020).

Drawing on data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, an Australian “Girls and Sport Roadshow” provides a useful case study about how barriers related to emerging women and particularly those related to marginalised girls can be tackled. The data indicates that during the COVID-19 pandemic, professional women’s sporting competitions/leagues and their female athletes acted as role models to influence girls and adolescent women’s sport at the grassroots participatory level (O’Shea, Maxwell, & Peel, 2020).

In the roadshow female athletes from the New South Wales Swifts (Netball), the Greater Western Sydney Giants (Australian Rules Football), the Sydney Flames (Basketball) and Rugby 7's lead the activity sessions. Deploying female sporting role models in a safe and familiar environment was effective in facilitating the participation of girls in sport. Female athletes shared social, psychological and physical benefits associated with sport. Structured question and answer sessions enabled dialogue between female athletes and the participants and provided opportunities for positive stories to be told, concerns to be raised and allowed time for elite female athletes to answer students general questions concerning professional sport careers for women. Arising from requests from participating schools, athlete presentations also focussed on providing messages relevant to resilience, overcoming adversity and empowerment for girls. Following these discussions female sport mentors guided practical games and skills clinics which challenged barriers to participation particularly in the light of the lack of physical activity during COVID-19 lockdowns.

At a gender policy level a number of international advocacy organisations with a focus on gender equity and positive change in sport (such as the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG), WomenSport International (WSI) and the International Association of Physical Education for Girls and Women (IAPESGW) have continued and even stepped up their work during the pandemic to increase the visibility and voice of girls and women in sport. These organisations are also positioned to educate boys and men about women and sport. Representing an ideal platform on which to address gender norms the “Sportanddevelopment organisation” (2021) and allied research has shown how education programs including those that showcase female referee and coach involvement at tournaments can for male participants and stakeholders have an important ‘eye-opening effect’. When witnessing and learning from female experts in sport gendered discourses and their normalising effects can be challenged.

Conclusion

In closing the chapter, we have demonstrated how women’s professional sport teams and leagues have forged an upward trajectory. Despite under investment and the trivialisation of their expertise both on and off the pitch, female athletes are using their commercial appeal and platforms for economic and social imperatives. It is at this intersection that we have critically explored how COVID-19 induced playing and resource disruptions illuminate gender inequities while also providing an unprecedented context in which to reimagine women’s sport in more equitable and inclusive ways. Notwithstanding the indisputable growth and untapped commercial potential of women’s sport the UN Women led Sports for Generation Equality Framework provided us with a rich context in which to problematise current policy and practice. COVID-19’s disruption is an opportunity for global sport to pause, take stock and recast its trajectory with women’s sport valued as a pivotal and

meaningful player. As we look to recovery let's make sure we grasp this opportunity with both hands.

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