19. Media coverage and pay in women's basketball and netball in Australia

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19.1 INTRODUCTION

Women's sport in Australia does not receive the same amount of media coverage or the same sponsorship levels as men's sport. The low coverage stems from what Jobling calls 'the circular problem' of sponsorship and popularity. Because potential sponsors see low turnout and little reward, they have little reason to support women's sports. The lack of sponsorship, in turn, limits the media coverage of the sport and depresses attendance and viewership (Jobling, 1994: 169). As a result, despite achievements on the international stage that often outshine those of Australian men, Australian women frequently toil in relative obscurity and receive pay that is a small fraction of that earned by men in the same sport.

Unlike most countries, Australia has two counterparts to men's basketball: women's basketball and netball. Today, women's basketball is essentially identical to the men's version of the game. The most noticeable difference is that women use a slightly smaller ball to facilitate ball handling and shooting. For most of its history, however, women's basketball bore little resemblance to men's basketball. This version of the game quickly died in most countries – particularly in the United States – after men's rules became the norm in the early 1970s. In the Commonwealth of Nations (formerly the British Commonwealth), however, the distinctly female version of the sport, known as 'netball', has continued to thrive.

Australia is perhaps the only nation to enjoy international success in both women's basketball and netball. Australian women are well represented in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) and won the bronze medal in women's basketball at the 2012 Summer Olympics. At the same time, Australia has dominated international play in netball, having won five of the last six world championships.¹

Women's basketball and netball have also enjoyed considerable commercial success in Australia, particularly when compared with other women's sports. Australia supports professional leagues in both sports. Each of the leagues has experienced, for women's sports, significant televi-

sion coverage, though disparities continue to exist in both media coverage and pay when compared to men's sports in Australia.

This chapter examines the development of women's basketball and netball in Australia and compares the media coverage and pay in both sports. In addition, it compares the coverage and pay of men's and women's basketball, soccer, and field hockey in Australia. Section 19.2 provides an overview of media coverage of women's sports in Australia. Section 19.3 examines media coverage and salaries in basketball. Because Australian women have been much more successful in this sport internationally than Australian men have been, one might expect gender pay differentials in basketball to be much lower than in other sports. However, good media coverage in Australia has not translated into good salaries, so the best women's basketball players play professionally overseas. This section also briefly discusses other Olympic sports in Australia. Section 19.4 describes the historical development of women's basketball and netball, the latter of which has become the most popular women's sport in Australia. Section 19.5 turns to media coverage and pay in netball, which has become a semi-professional league in Australia and New Zealand. We show that both coverage and pay is considerably higher for netball than for women's basketball. Section 19.6 concludes.

19.2 AN OVERVIEW OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S SPORT IN AUSTRALIA

The 2006 Senate Estimates Committee inquiry into women in sport and recreation in Australia reported that the Committee was disappointed at the continuing poor coverage of women's sport by all media, and it recommended that the government fund the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) to replicate in 2008–09 the surveys and analysis that the ASC performed in its 1996 report, *An Illusory Image* (the report was published in 1997; see Phillips, 1997). In response, the Australian government has identified the promotion of women in sport as a key focus area, and the ASC, through its Women and Sport unit, is working toward improving leadership opportunities as well as achieving greater recognition of women's sport and female athletes in the media.

The ASC commissioned research into how much coverage there is of women's sport and female athletes in radio, television, and print media relative to the coverage of male sport, male athletes, and mixed sport. The research, conducted between January 2009 and July 2009, also focused on how the media portray women's sport and female athletes. It examined whether female athletes are routinely stereotyped, sexualized or trivialized

in the media, and how they are depicted relative to male athletes² (Lumby et al., 2010: v).

The ASC report reached three main conclusions. First, it found that men's sports received vastly disproportional coverage compared to women's sports. In particular, women's sports received only 9 percent of all sports coverage, while men's sports received 81 percent (Lumby et al., 2010: v).

The ASC report also noted that the media do not just report less on women's sports, they also report on fewer women's sports. The news coverage of women's sports primarily extended from the individual sports of tennis (where women were discussed almost as frequently as men – 182 mentions of men versus 163 mentions of women), surfing, cycling and golf to the team-based sport of netball. In non-news programming, tennis had the most equal gender split in terms of both participants and audiences. The report saw the focus on individual women's sports as unsurprising for two reasons. First, team sports require greater infrastructure, which is more of a barrier for women's sports than for men's. Second, the presence of a few exceptional individuals might be enough to attract sponsors and other funding to individual sports (ibid., 2010: vi).

Second, despite the extreme disparity in attention paid to men's and women's sport across all media surveyed, the report found that the tone and content of reports on female athletes and female sport have greatly improved compared to previous studies. In the print and television commentary and reporting, analyzed in depth in this research, the stereotyping of female athletes was remarkably absent.

Third, the report found the coverage of female sport to be more favorable than that of male sport, both in year-round and Olympic reporting. This can largely be attributed to unfavorable coverage of the behavior of some male athletes and to the media's presentation of female Olympians as more successful (or at least, less unsuccessful) than their male counterparts.

The report noted that there was no bias in Australia's coverage of the Olympics in part because women have been successful on the international stage. Australian women have won more medals than Australian men at three of the last four Summer Olympics. In the 2012 London Games, Australian women won 20 medals (three of them gold) while Australian men won only 15 medals (four gold). While Australia won fewer medals overall, the gender breakdown in 2012 is very similar to that of the 2008 Beijing Games, where Australian women won 24 medals (eight gold) and Australian men won 21 (six gold) ('Australia – Medals', 2012; IOC, 2012). The same pattern held at the 2010 New Delhi Commonwealth Games. In New Delhi, despite fielding a team comprising fewer women than men

(149 as against 182), Australian women won more gold (39 versus 33 for men and one mixed), silver (28 versus 27 for men) and bronze (26 versus 22 for men). At the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games women won more gold and silver medals (men won more bronze medals), even though once more there were fewer women than men on the team (Australian Womensport & Recreation Association, 2010a).

The report also points to television news coverage of the Beijing Olympic Games as an example of how equal year-round sporting coverage could be, quantitatively and qualitatively. In Beijing, women received the same quantity of television coverage, and 'were more likely to be discussed in contexts beyond simply results (such as training and preparation, and in a sporting industry context)' (Lumby et al., 2010: vi). The report indicated that the coverage in Beijing was much more favorable than the coverage of both the 1992 and 1996 Olympic Games. These earlier games had featured women in traditionally female sports, such as gymnastics, but ignored their participation in sports traditionally associated with men, such as judo (ibid.: 7).³

To summarize, the report provided a mixed review of current coverage of women's sports in Australia. It cited significant improvement in coverage since the 1990s, particularly in the media's growing emphasis on women's athleticism and their declining gender stereotyping. It found that women now receive more favorable TV coverage than men, though they receive far less coverage overall. The lack of coverage is particularly lamentable, given the disproportionate success of Australian women on the international stage and the high representation of Australian women as both participants and spectators of sport (ibid.: vii).⁴

While the report addressed the state of women's sports in general, one sport has stood out. Thanks to a set of fortuitous circumstances, women's soccer has received more media coverage than other women's sports in Australia. Unlike other women's sports, women soccer teams benefit from their affiliation with men's teams and from the social obligations of the Australian Broadcasting Company (ABC). Australian clubs in the men's A-League field and help fund affiliated women's teams in the W-League. The W-League is also backed by the property group Westfield, which is owned by Frank Lowy, the chairman of the Football Federation Australia (FFA). Unlike many sports leagues in Australia (including the A-League and national men's team, the Socceroos), women's soccer clubs get free-to-air television coverage on the ABC, the national broadcaster. According to Lynch (2011), the ABC makes this free coverage available because of the network's social responsibility charter and its commitment to women's sport. Although women's soccer receives considerable media attention, the Australian Womensport &

Recreation Association notes (2010b) that its coverage by the ABC is limited to only one game a week.

Nevertheless, the coverage soccer receives appears to have affected the sport's popularity. While there are little or no rights fees paid by the ABC, Lynch (2011) believes that the exposure on free-to-air television is very important for the future of the sport. Lynch quotes FFA statistics, which show that there are 396,000 female players in Australia. Participation in girls and women's soccer grew by 8.4 percent in the eight years between 2000 and 2009, making it the fastest-growing female participation sport in the country. In contrast, netball (which has a larger player base) grew by only 0.9 per cent in the same period.

19.3 MEDIA COVERAGE AND PAY IN WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Australian women have been highly successful both individually and as a team – much more successful than Australian men. The 'Opals' – a nickname based on a gem found in Australia – won Olympic silver medals in 2000, 2004, and 2008 and an Olympic bronze in 2012. In 2006, the Opals won the International Basketball Federation (known by the acronym of its French name, FIBA) World Championship for Women. Australian women are also successful individually. In the 2011–12 season, seven of them played in the WNBA. Since the inception of WNBA, Australia has been the most heavily represented 'foreign' nation, with 21 women having played in the league, more than twice as many as any nation other than the US. In contrast, only 10 Australian men have ever played in the National Basketball Association (NBA) (two of whom were native-born Americans who became naturalized Australian citizens after playing in Australia), and, during the 2011–12 season, only two Australian men played in the NBA. Women's relative success, however, has translated into neither extensive media coverage nor high salaries, as women's professional basketball lags far behind men's basketball in Australia in both areas.

Until relatively recently, women's basketball was mostly a local affair, with club teams playing intrastate competition. In 1981, two years after the successful launch of the men's National Basketball League (NBL), eight women's teams paid A\$25 apiece to create the Women's Interstate Basketball Conference. The resulting central fund of A\$200 indicates that financing was a major constraint facing the new league. With financial considerations in mind, the league turned away several potential teams from New South Wales because it felt that they were too far away from the other teams to justify the cost of travel. Over the next few years, the league

slowly expanded, and, in 1986, it was renamed the Women's National Basketball League (WNBL). The WNBL currently consists of 10 teams, nine in Australia and one – the Christchurch Sirens – located in New Zealand (WNBL, 2011).

In 1989 the WNBL gained its first major sponsorship, a A\$258,000 deal with the Pony sports apparel company. In addition, the ABC agreed to broadcast the league's championship series. In 1993, the WNBL teams decided to contribute enough money to have the game televised on a weekly basis by the ABC. However, there were anxious times during 2001 when the ABC contemplated changing its televising of sport and dropping its coverage of the WNBL, as well as netball. (A more complete treatment appears in the next section.) A successful lobbying effort resulted in both sports being retained by the ABC. In 2006–07, the ABC increased its coverage by broadcasting WNBL games live on Friday nights as part of its digital television sports coverage as well as replaying a game in the regular Saturday afternoon slot. Over the years, both the NBL and the WNBL have struggled to attract and retain major sponsors as a way to maintain free-to-air coverage. In 2010, the NBL returned to live, free-to-air television for the first time in nine years when the new Australian network One HD started broadcasting 2–3 games a week, while the ABC continued its coverage of the WNBL.

The lure of higher salaries overseas has made it difficult for both men's and women's basketball teams to retain their best players. The NBL salary cap for the 2009–10 season was A\$1,000,000 for a roster of 10. In 2009, the average salary in the NBL was about A\$74,000 (Basketball Australia, 2009; NBL, 2011). There is no salary cap in the WNBL, though one is currently being discussed (Cameron, 2012). While some WNBL players can now earn between A\$50,000 and A\$150,000 per year, the average annual salary in 2009 was between A\$5,000 and A\$10,000. As a result, only a handful of players can afford to make playing in the WNBL their full-time job (Basketball Australia, 2009; Sully, 2011).

In addition to salaries for league play, payment for representing Australia on its national team is reported as low, but similar for men and women. Matt Nielson, the captain of the Australian men's basketball team (the Boomers) also plays in Europe. His playing contract pays him about A\$250 per game for Australia and about half that for every day at a training camp. Lauren Jackson, captain of the Australian women's national basketball team (the Opals), is reported to have the same contract as Nielson. Jackson also plays in the WNBA in the United States. The equality for these two star players is somewhat surprising, given the general inequality for other players and other sports.

The inequality that we see in the pay of male and female basketball

players exists in other sports as well. Nader (2011) examines pay inequality between individual Australian male and female athletes who play the same sports.⁵ First, Nader compares the salary of Melissa Barbieri, captain of the Australian women's soccer team (the Matildas), who also plays for Melbourne Victory's women's team, with that of Lucas Neill, captain of the Australian men's soccer team (the Socceroos). Again, the Matildas' performance outshone that of the Socceroos. In late 2010, the Matildas won the women's Asian Cup tournament, while the Socceroos lost the men's Asian Cup tournament final in January 2011.

Under the collective bargaining agreement, Barbieri's playing contract pays her about A\$32,000 plus a share of prize money awarded to the Matildas. Barbieri is also captain of the Melbourne Victory, whose players receive A\$150 per match. In contrast, Neill received about A\$200,000 for appearing in the 2010 World Cup. He also received about A\$80,000 for playing in the Asia Cup final. In 2012, Neill made US\$1.5 million playing for Al Jazira in the United Arab Emirates. However, Al Jazira released him at the end of the season, and he has yet to join a new club (Fox Staff Writers, 2012).

In the case of field hockey, Nader notes that Madonna Blyth, the captain of Australia's women's field hockey team (the Hockeyroos) receives only about A\$22,000 a year. Blyth recognizes that women's hockey suffers from the circular problem, as the Hockeyroos have no major sponsor. Mark Knowles, Jamie Dwyer, and Liam de Young, the co-captains of the Australian men's field hockey team (the Kookaburras), do not receive much more than Blyth, as they are paid only about A\$39,000 a year, though Knowles also plays professionally for Australia's Queensland Blades and Dwyer plays for Bloemendaal, H.C. in the Netherlands.

19.4 THE ORIGINS OF NETBALL

Netball is a direct descendant of basketball, and, like basketball, has a more directly traceable lineage than most other modern sports. In this section, I explain the origins of netball. Because most American readers are unfamiliar with netball, I also provide a brief overview of the game and its place in Australian sport.

James Naismith created basketball by writing down 13 rules for a new game at the Springfield (Massachusetts) YMCA Training Institute in 1891. Within weeks, Senda Berenson, a 24-year-old Jewish immigrant from Lithuania who had recently become the director of 'physical culture' at nearby Smith College, had adapted the game for women.

Berenson divided the court into three sections, with each team desig-

nating two players to its offensive section of the court, two players to its defensive section, and one player to the middle section. The stationing reflects the names of the positions, as the forwards played in the forward, offensive section; the guards protected the goal in the defensive section; and the center played in the middle. The court design and positioning stayed unchanged in the US until 1934, when the court was divided into two sections, with three women stationed in each half. As with the men's game, neither physical contact nor movement while holding the ball was permitted. These limitations are present in some form in the modern game, as physical contact results in a 'foul' charged to the player who initiated the contact, and players are permitted to move only one step with the ball unless they dribble (bounce) it (see Taylor, 2001; Grundy and Shackleford, 2005).

Some of the differences between the women's and the men's game developed over time as the rules slowly became codified. For example, both the men's and the women's game initially disallowed all movement with the ball. While the men's game soon allowed unlimited movement with the ball as long as the player continuously dribbled it, the women's was slower to adapt. At first, women were allowed only three dribbles with the ball before they had to stop moving. Unlimited dribbling was not permitted in the women's game until 1966 (Hult and Trekel, 1991).

Differences in the rules governing men's and women's basketball reflected the underlying conditions, beliefs, and prejudices of the time. For many college-age women – the initial focus of the women's basketball – basketball was the first team sport they had ever played. To attract women to participate and to placate college administrators who often opposed any physical activity for women, Berenson limited aggressive play and other 'unladylike' behavior. Even this was not enough for those who believed women to be fragile creatures whose reproductive functions could be damaged by physical exertion. Such notions led Stanford University to ban all women's intercollegiate athletic competition from 1899 to 1904. It also led to the creation of a short-lived rival game, known as 'Basquette', which placed even greater limits on the movements of players⁶ (Taylor, 2001; Grundy Shackleford, 2005; Treagus, 2005).

Berenson's version of women's basketball moved to England in 1895, when an American educator visited Marina Bergman-Osterberg's Physical Training College. The number of players in the English version increased from five to seven or nine (the number varied). The English version of the game used more players because of the different attire worn by its players. American women wore 'bloomers', an early version of women's gym clothes, to play basketball, while English women initially played the game in long skirts and thus were much less mobile. Partly for this reason, all dribbling

Notes

1. Team A's shooting circle (Team A moves from right to left).
2. Team A's attacking third.
3. The centre third.
4. Team B's attacking third (Team B moves from left to right).
5. Team B's shooting circle.

Figure 19.1 The netball court

was prohibited in the English game. Another key addition was borrowed from field hockey: all shots in the English variant of women's basketball had to come from within a 'shooting circle'. This circle was actually a semi-circle set along each endline, with the net along the diameter (see Figure 19.1). The English game was codified and given the name 'netball' in 1901, as the English added a net to what had been a plain hoop in order to clarify when a ball had gone through the hoop (Taylor, 2001; Treagus, 2005).

English educators brought netball to Australia in 1897, before the English rules had been formally codified, so the rules continued to evolve in Australia even after the game had been codified in England. As a result, the Australian game varied from place to place. For example, some areas used nine players per side instead of the normal seven. Even the name of the sport was different in Australia, as the All-Australia Women's Basket Ball Association (AAWBBA) was formed in 1927, in part to codify the uniquely Australian rules for the game. The AAWBBA rules were reconciled with those in New Zealand and England in 1939, but full international standardization did not occur until the first world championship in 1963. The AAWBBA finally changed its name to All-Australia Netball Association in 1970 and is now known as Netball Australia (Jobling, 1994; Taylor, 2001; Treagus, 2005).

Netball spread rapidly in Australia for two reasons: it was cheap, and it did not conflict with traditional notions of womanly behavior. All one needed were hoops and a flat surface, which could range from urban asphalt to rural fields. In addition to encouraging participation by women, the low cost reduced opposition by male members of sports associations, who frequently viewed themselves as involved in a zero-sum game with women. Moreover, netball did not directly challenge any of the stereotypes of the day, which greatly reduced any opposition by sports authorities. Men and many women were happy to see that netball's restrictive rules and ladylike attire reflected traditional notions of femininity (Taylor, 2001; Grundy and Shackleford, 2005; Treagus, 2005).

Today, netball is the most popular women's sport in both Australia and New Zealand. According to the ABS (2009), about 5 per cent of Australian women participate in netball, roughly the same percentage as play tennis. It is by far the most popular team sport, as only half as many women play soccer, the next-most popular sport. Despite its popularity in Australia and the rest of the Commonwealth, netball is little known throughout the rest of the world.

Netball is played on a court that is 30.5 metres long and 15.25 metres wide, divided into three zones, as in Figure 19.1. The ball looks like more like a volleyball than a basketball, as it is smaller than a standard women's basketball and is white. Each team now has seven players, and – unlike basketball, in which the positions flow into one another – each netball player has a distinct position, which limits where she may go on the court. A player who strays outside of the area designated for the position is deemed 'offside' and the opposing team is given a 'free pass', which is a pass taken from the spot of the infraction.

To help the umpires identify who can play where, each player wears letters on her jersey that identify her position (for example, 'C' for centre or 'WD' for wing defence). A goal shooter must move anywhere in the attacking third of the court illustrated in Figure 19.1, but she must stay in that third. A goal attack must play in the attacking third or centre third of the court. A wing attack can move in the attacking or centre third, but she may not go into the shooting circle, which is a subsection of the attacking third of the court. The centre can play anywhere except in either shooting circle. The wing defence can move within the centre and defensive thirds of the court, with the exception of the shooting circle. The goal defence can move anywhere within the defensive and centre thirds of the court. Finally, the goal keeper must play in the defensive third of the court.

The rules of netball continue to reflect the restrictions of early women's basketball. Only the goal shooter and the goal attack are allowed to shoot the ball, and they can do so only inside the shooting circle. Unlike

contemporary women's basketball players, netball players may still not dribble the ball. Similar to basketball players, netball players may advance the ball only 1.5 steps before passing. Even when not moving, netball players may not hold the ball indefinitely. They may hold the ball for no more than three seconds before passing or shooting it. Basketball has a similar but more complicated rule in which the player must pass or shoot within five seconds, but only when she is pressured by a defensive player.⁷ 'Pressure' occurs when a defensive player is within three feet of the player with the ball. This kind of pressure cannot occur in netball, as defenders are not allowed to move within three feet of the player with the ball. In netball, players can advance the ball by passing, with each pass being at least a body-width long, so a player may not simply hand the ball off to a teammate. No such restriction on passing exists in basketball (Teach PE, 2012). Even the attire of netball players is distinctly more 'feminine' than those of basketball players, as netball players continue to wear skirts rather than shorts. As the numerous knee and ankle injuries to netball players suggest, however, netball play is an intense, physical sport (Treagus, 2005).

In the United States, as well as in much of the rest of the world, the adoption of men's rules effectively killed the distinctly female version of basketball, though it persisted in a few areas, most notably in Iowa, for several years. A likely reason for the failure of women's basketball to evolve into the parallel sport of netball can be found in the degree of commitment to the sport in the early 1970s. Title IX, which changed the face of women's sports in the United States by requiring that they receive as much funding as men's sports,⁸ came one year after women's basketball adopted men's rules. Prior to Title IX, women's basketball had received so little attention that many states did not have a uniform set of rules by which schools played (Grundy and Shackelford, 2005). The lack of commitment resulted in the relatively poor performance of the US in international play prior to that time. American women did not win a medal in the FIBA Women's World Championships after they had won the first two championships in 1953 and 1957 (and would not win a medal again until 1979). This contrasts sharply with American women's strong performance in Olympic sports in general and may be explained by the fact that women's basketball was not an Olympic sport until 1976, and so there was relatively little incentive to create strong teams. Thus, the adoption of men's rules occurred at roughly the same time that sports authorities in the United States began to take women's sports seriously.

In contrast, netball had been firmly established in Australia long before the United States and the IOC began to emphasize the new version of women's basketball. Partly because of their long history with netball,

Australia and New Zealand have dominated international play and have won every World Championship in netball since 1963. On the club level, Australia has fully integrated play with New Zealand. The Trans-Tasman Netball League Ltd (TTNL), a joint venture of Netball Australia and Netball New Zealand, began play in 2008. Like the WNBL, the TTNL has 10 teams. Unlike the WNBL, the TTNL is an international league, with five teams located in Australia and five in New Zealand. The TTNL is the first semi-professional netball competition in Australasia, having succeeded two national leagues: Australia's Commonwealth Bank Trophy (1997–2007), and New Zealand's National Bank Cup (1998–2007).

19.5 MEDIA COVERAGE AND PAY IN NETBALL

Netball receives substantial television coverage in Australia, much more than the limited time allotted to the WNBL. Channel ONE HD screens all games live or near-live, subject to programming commitments, while Network Ten screens every Sunday afternoon game live wherever possible. In addition Telstra, a leading provider of internet broadband and mobile devices, has become TTNL's major sponsor. Telstra now streams all matches through its Big Pond Sport News TV Channel on a slightly delayed schedule throughout Australia (ANZ Championship, 2011).

Sully (2011) argues that digital free-to-air television has provided the platform for sponsors and the television networks to invest in women's sport. In a national first, netball is now shown live 10 hours a week over a 19-week season, compared with the one-hour highlights shown on ABC television once a week prior to introduction of the TTNL. As netball is the top participation sport for women, games are sold out, and the television networks are beginning to benefit from the sport's broad popularity. David White, former general manager of sport at Network Ten says:

The rise in netball's popularity, its commercial appeal and general professionalism of the top level domestically and internationally has been massive in the last three years. And while the girls aren't earning as much as AFL [Australian Football League] players, certainly in time their salaries and sponsorship appeal will grow substantially and I think they'll blaze a trail.

Indeed, television ratings have been very strong. The TV audience for the 2010 Commonwealth Games final between archrivals Australia and New Zealand peaked at 1.67 million viewers in five major cities, and with another 30 per cent to account for viewers in the rest of Australia, the peak audience was around 2.2 million. According to White, this figure 'puts

it right up there in terms of one of the most watched sports of the year' (Sully, 2011).

The TTNL strictly limits the salaries its players can earn, but the salaries are still well above those paid to WNBL players. TTNL team payrolls are set at A\$262,000, which comes to almost A\$23,000 per player for a roster of 12, plus bonuses and incentives worth A\$50,000. While more established players earn A\$35,000–45,000 a year, rookies can make only A\$12,000 (Wu, 2011). This compares very well with the average salary of less than A\$10,000 in the WNBL.

The Australian Netball Players' Association (ANPA), the players' union, estimates that there are no more than two full-time players per club, though even this small number would not have been possible prior to the TTNL. The ANPA reports that players are divided as to whether netball should become fully professional. Some players like to improve their long-term career prospects through continuing employment. The TTNL aims to increase salaries so that more players can earn a full-time living playing netball, but it fears that rising labor costs could threaten the long-term viability of the league. The captain of the Australian national netball team (known as the Diamonds), Sharelle McMahon, is reported to have a contract of about A\$25,000 to play for the national team and about A\$50,000 to play for the Vixens in the local championship.

While women trail behind men in their earnings as professional athletes, there is evidence that the gap may be closing, especially in netball and basketball. Craig Kelly, CEO of sports marketing and management company Elite Sports Properties, feels that the women's arena is on the verge of experiencing unprecedented growth. He has identified women's basketball and netball as growth areas, saying of the women in these sports, '[F]or us they're just as important as the men on our books. They're starting to earn decent enough money for us to warrant putting the time and effort into it' (Sully, 2011).

19.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented information about media coverage and pay in women's sports in Australia with a focus on basketball and netball. It showed that, according to the 2010 ASC Report, while the quantity of coverage accorded women's sports in Australia is only a small fraction of the coverage of men's sports, the quality of coverage may exceed that of men's sports. Australia's female athletes are no longer presented in stereotypical fashion, and women's sports are portrayed more favorably in part

because women behave more professionally. What women lose in terms of the extent of coverage, they gain in terms of quality.

Media coverage of women's basketball has been improving as well, in part because Australia's national team has been so successful internationally. Women's pay has been increasing since the inception of the semi-professional league, the WNBL, in 1986. While individual players benefit from playing opportunities abroad, the league has been hurt by their departure. On the other hand, the experience abroad has made the Opals a contender in international competition.

While the notion of 'separate but equal' has dubious connotations in the United States because segregation has so often been instrumental in providing unequal treatment, separateness in sports has proved beneficial to female athletes in Australia. Netball, a sport played only by women, developed in Australia more fully than in the rest of the world. It gained such a strong identity that it has continued to thrive despite the growing popularity of women's basketball after the sport adopted men's rules in the 1970s. While virtually unheard of in the United States, netball is the most popular women's sport in Australia both in attendance and in participation. It is so popular that it has its own semi-professional league, has a sponsorship agreement with Telstra and is well represented in the media. The Commonwealth Games championship match is one of the most watched sports events in Australia.

Prospects for future media coverage for women's sports are good in Australia. Soccer has been adopted as a leading women's sport by the ABC and is partially sponsored by the men's league. The ABC has also covered women's basketball since 1993. Finally, the 'circular problem' of many sports (low media coverage, poor popularity, and weak sponsorship) is not present in netball. The sport's popularity has led to a strong league and extensive media coverage, which will help to maintain its popularity.

NOTES

1. Like the World Cup in soccer, the netball championship is played quadrennially, with the latest championships taking place in 2011. Australia took the silver medal in the 2003 championships, which were won by New Zealand.
2. For more on images of women in sports, see Stull, Chapter 3 in this volume.
3. For more on gender stereotypes in sports, see Stull, Chapter 3 in this volume.
4. For more on the participation of Australian women in sport, see Booth and Leeds, Chapter 2 in this volume.
5. These payments do not include sponsorships or what they are paid overseas or for playing in smaller leagues. Nader's (2011) sources were sponsorships, payments from overseas or payment for playing in smaller leagues.
6. Basquette had nine players, each restricted to a particular zone on the court.

7. This rule applies whether the player is holding or dribbling the ball.
8. For more on Title IX, see Chapter 9 in this volume.

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