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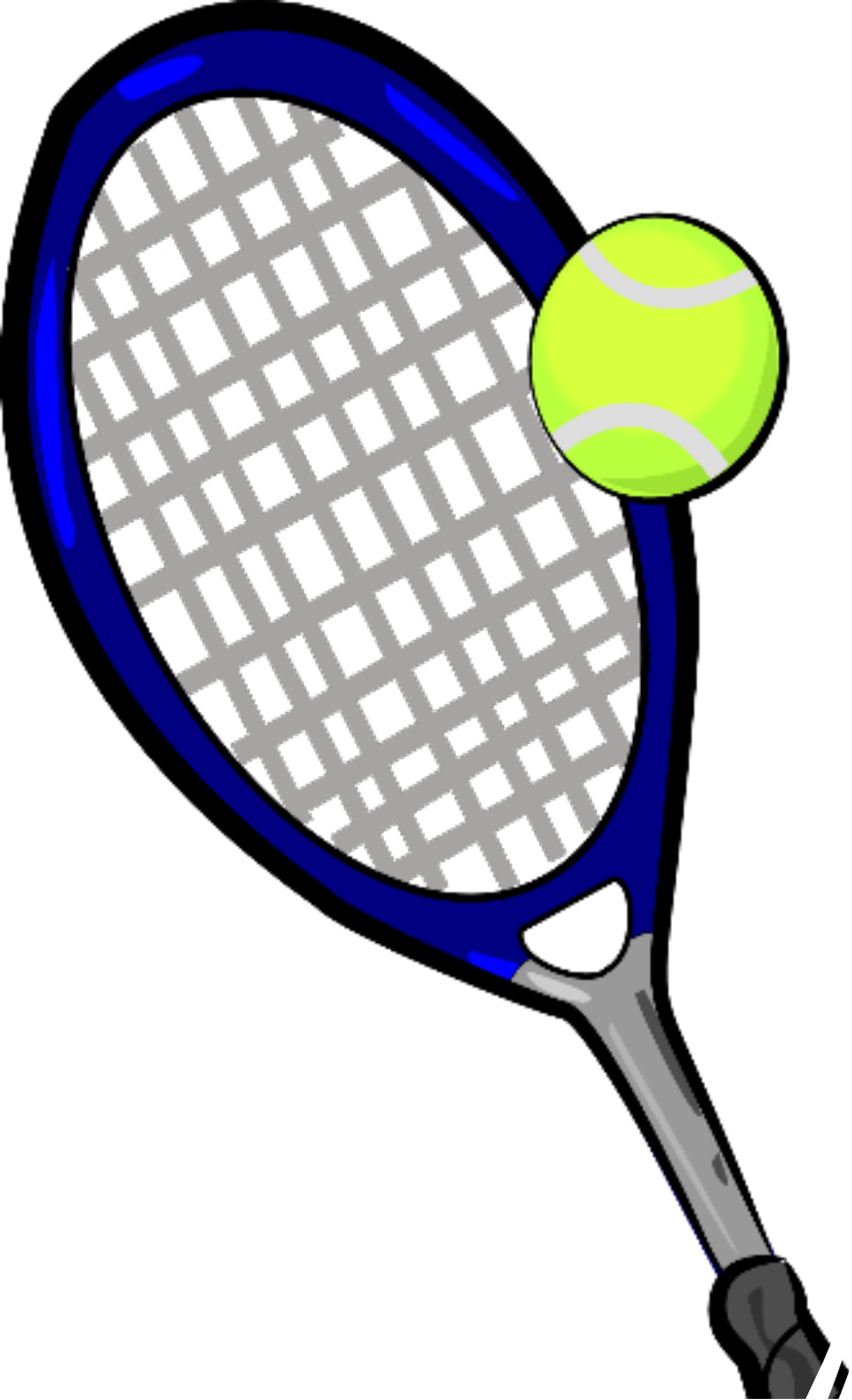
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Gender Inequalities and Sport: The Experiences of Female Tennis Coaches

Dr Urszula Wolski

Emerging issues and alternative futures for gender and sport

**14th Annual Meeting of the Transnational Scholars for the Study
of Gender and Sport**

Nord University, Bodø, Norway, 16 – 18th November, 2022

Introduction

- Background – Academic & LTA (Lawn Tennis Association, UK) L2 qualified tennis coach
 - Experiences in a ‘male-dominated environment’
- Sporting opportunities for females continue to grow & more females participating in male sports (cricket, rugby)
 - Due to increase in equal rights legislation but also increase in positive media coverage (Petty and Pope, 2019)
 - E.g. 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup; recent Rugby World Cup (removed the gender differentiation between the men’s and women’s game)
 - Initiatives – e.g. ‘This Girl Campaign’ launched by Sport England in 2015 aim to get women and girls moving regardless of shape, size and ability; <https://www.sportengland.org/funds-and-campaigns/this-girl-can>
- Sport remains gendered & stereotyped
 - more females in gymnastics, dance and synchronised swimming
 - Male sports – seen as ‘masculine’, ‘tomboys’ or ‘lesbians’
 - Females seen as ‘spectators and cheerleaders’, males as ‘players and warriors’ (Craig and Beedie, 2010)
- Gender differences apparent in coaching
 - Coaching opportunities limited in women’s sports, absent in men’s sports (Walker & Bopp, 2011)
 - Women coaches face a multi-level complex set of barriers (LaVoi, 2016)
 - Women coaches continue to be marginalised, trivialised & undervalued (Norman & Rankin-Wright, 2018)
- Tennis coaching
 - 24% female coaches (LTA, 2022)
 - Initiatives - She Rallies (2017) between the LTA & Judy Murray to encourage more girls and women into playing and coaching tennis - <https://www.lta.org.uk/what-we-do/participation/she-rallies/>

Famous female tennis coaches

- Mary Joe Fernández (coached the U.S. Fed Cup team 2008 – 2016), woman's coach for the 2012 US Olympic Tennis team)
- Conchita Martinez (coaches both women and men with the Spanish Fed Cup and Davis Cup teams; Garbine Muguruza winning Wimbledon 2017)
- Judy Murray (former Fed Captain, coach to her sons)
 - She Rallies Initiative
- Andy Murray & Amélie Mauresmo partnership
 - Created much discussion & debate on her sexuality, not coaching ability

- Others include:
 - Chris Evert
 - Martina Navratilova
 - Martina Hingis
 - Lindsay Davenport
 - Kim Clijsters
 - Zina Garrison



Mary Joe Fernández



Lindsay Davenport



Judy Murray



Amélie Mauresmo



Andy Murray

But, in comparison with male coaches, this is only a handful:

Methodology

- Aim: to explore the role of female tennis coaches (coaching both men and women), the barriers that may exist and the inequalities and discrimination that women may experience and how they deal with these
 - Is this a changing landscape in the 21st century, or still a ‘battleground where gender stereotypes are shaped and contested’ (Craig and Beedie, 2010, p126) and sport is a ‘bastion of hegemonic masculinity, heterosexism and homophobia’ (Anderson, 2002, p862)
 - Does sport continue to reproduce ‘hegemonic masculinities’ and ‘emphasised femininities’? (Connell, 1987, 1995)
- Mixed methods approach
 - Questionnaires ($N = 293$) – 74% male, 94% white
 - Sample – **UK only**
 - Currently coaching
 - National sample (drawn from LTA ‘find a coach’ tool, tennis coaching venues)
 - Left coaching
 - Snowball sample (social media)
 - Semi-structured interviews ($N = 14$) - 8M & 6F
 - Sample drawn from questionnaires
 - To obtain a more in-depth account of personal experiences
- Thematic analysis using MAXQda v20

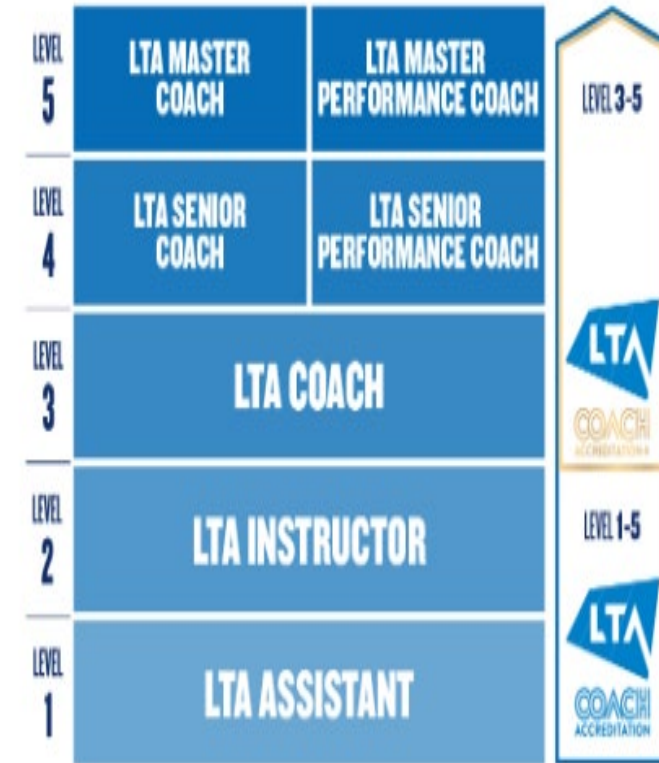
Number of LTA accredited tennis coaches

Table 1: % LTA Accredited⁸ Female and Male coaches 2019 - 2021

Level	2019			2020			2021		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
1	79 (35%)	144 (65%)	223	79 (36%)	139 (64%)	218	89 (32%)	193 (68%)	282
2	417 (34%)	803 (66%)	1220	378 (33%)	755 (67%)	1133	431 (33%)	871 (67%)	1302
3	525 (22%)	1826 (78%)	2351	511 (23%)	1726 (77%)	2237	534 (22%)	1864 (78%)	2398
4	268 (18%)	1245 (82%)	1513	262 (18%)	1206 (82%)	1468	247 (17%)	1165 (83%)	1412
5	59 (17%)	282 (83%)	341	56 (17%)	277 (83%)	333	59 (18%)	275 (82%)	334
Total	1348 (24%)	4300 (76%)	5648	1286 (24%)	4103 (76%)	5389	1360 (24%)	4368 (76%)	5728

Source: LTA (personal correspondence, Dec, 2021)

**5,648 LTA Accredited Coaches in the UK,
of which 24% are female (2019)
No change in 2021 this was still 24%**



Tennis Qualification Pathway

Theme	Subthemes
Reasons for becoming a tennis coach	Coaching experience/background
	Passion for tennis and teaching
Obstacles and barriers – all coaches	Poor facilities
	Physical and mental demands
	Self-employment
	Politics
<i>Obstacles and barriers - female coaches</i>	Career choice
	Barriers to career development and lack of opportunities
	Recruitment and promotion
	<i>Stereotypes and lack of role models</i>
	<i>Discrimination and sexism</i>
<i>A changing landscape?</i>	<i>The girls' club/network</i>
	<i>She Rallies Programme</i>
	<i>Club initiatives</i>
	<i>LTA Coaching Development Programme</i>

Stereotypes & Lack of role models

- **Stereotypes**
 - *Culture of the public is that male coaches are more experienced, can hit harder and many male and female players gravitate towards a masculine male coach (Female, level 4)*
 - *I have spoken to some good female coaches who have all the knowledge and experience to coach very good male players, but they're not physically strong enough to stand there and wallop balls backwards and forwards. Coaching female players, absolutely fine. But what happens in reality is they'll get someone in who is an equal match for the player and the coaching. You've got to be able to return somebody's 120 mile and hour serve out wide and put them under pressure. (P3, male, level 3)*
- **Lack of role models**
 - *Very few women play tennis. Fewer still play serious competitive tennis. Then, only a very small minority will consider a career in coaching. It's all to do with the female psyche, gender stereotyping and perceptions about professional sports. (Male, level 5)*
- Having gender diversity in role models helps to challenge gender stereotypes and if more females see other females in coaching roles, they will consider coaching as a career (LaVoi, 2016)

Discrimination & Sexism

- Walker (2016): Two types of discrimination
 1. Access discrimination
 - Women unable to gain access to networks, mentoring, interviews and jobs
 2. Treatment discrimination
 - Women treated differently based on their gender
- LaVoi (2016)– ‘double standards’
 - Unequal treatment in employment (promotion, pay, benefits & privileges)
 - Expectations due to attitudes based on gender
- Coaches ‘surviving’ rather than ‘thriving’ in their roles, trying ‘to fit’ into the perceived characteristics of a coach, at times tolerating sexist behaviour (Norman and Rankin-Wright, 2018, p436)
 - *It’s usually an older man and they come in and see and think ‘oh great, I’ve got some middle-aged woman here’ and you can just see it in their eyes and then they start talking to you in a really patronising way. (P4, female, level 3)*
 - *The things I have heard time and time again. To give you an example, one coach was coaching this lady and she missed a couple of shots and he said to her ‘what’s up, the time of the month?’ As a female coach standing there next to that person, what do I say to them? What do you say in that situation? I said ‘I can’t believe you just said that and he just laughed because he thought it was funny. Another time I’ve heard the same coach say a female player ‘are you menopausal today?’ and that’s some of the milder stuff I have heard, lots of people say really sexist things. It’s almost like Benny Hill, titillation. I’ve heard so many comments like that, not from the younger guys actually and I would like that recorded. It’s from the middle-aged and older coaches. It’s like PC has not hit them. The younger guys will make different comments, but not inappropriate comments like that. I have not heard that from anyone under the age of 35 and they think it’s okay to say that. (P7, female, level 2)*

Discrimination & Sexism (cont)

- **Old Boys Club**

- Mentoring and grooming, preparing men for coaching positions, women left on the outside (Walker, 2016)
- Women excluded from the informal 'closed' networks dominated by men (Norman and Rankin-Wright, 2018)

- *As a female coach, I felt outnumbered, I felt I was in a 'boys club' due to the lack of professionalism from male coaches and I felt pigeon holed to work predominantly with small children. (Female, level 3)*

- *It's the LTA, the local authorities, when they get together, it's like the Old Boy's Club, they've known each other for years, they've played tennis together for years. They all give each other Wimbledon tickets, it's just symptomatic of the little network they've got going on. (P4, female, level 3)*

A Changing Landscape?

Support for female coaches

- Female only courses, support for mothers, mentoring
- *Female only courses to increase the number of female players that are in the sport in the hope that this will filter upwards into coaching. (Male, level 3)*
- *More help and support for women coaches and info and support on having children and coaching. (Female, level 3)*

Recruitment and promotion

- *I think there needs to be a big drive on recruiting and upskilling more female coaches and this has started to happen with the She Rallies campaigns. I believe opportunities are the same, and particularly for mini-tennis, female coaches are often favoured by schools or tennis deliverers. I have watched 2 level 1 courses recently and the split of male and female participants has been pretty equal. (Female, level 3)*
- *I think now more Head Coaches would probably be thankful of having female staff. You're happy if you get applicants who are women, because they add something different to the program. I think maybe 10 years ago that wasn't necessarily the case. More Head Coaches would have been nervous about, can they play, are they good enough, how's it going to look? I think that has changed. (P5, male, level 4)*

'Girls Club'

- *I think it is starting to have, I think the women's conference was great. It really made a huge difference and I got to meet lots of women who I was speaking to with ideas and things like this, I thought that was great! (P10, female, level 3)*
- *I'd heard of them [WTCA], but I didn't know about that. I didn't realise it was like a conference, and I think that sounds great. That's another good example of networking, sounds like another really good resource. ((P13, female, level 4)*

A Changing Landscape? (2)

- **Initiatives**

- She Rallies Programme – launched in 2017
 - Judy Murray & LTA
 - Four strands:
 1. Lil Miss Hits (for 5-8 year olds)
 2. Teen girls starter tennis
 3. Girls fun days
 4. Girls Recreational Competition

- **Seen favourably by majority of participants**

- *I think Judy Murray is the only person who I know is successfully pushing more girls into tennis. I run girls' teams and spend most Sundays in the summer refereeing girls 16 & under tournaments. I have no axe to grind. (Male, level 4)*

- **Mixed opinions (reinforcing gender stereotypes)**

- *We're trying not to differentiate between the two genders too early when it comes to colour choice. So what colour is She Rallies? It's all pink. Does that apply to boys? It's reinforcing gender stereotypes. When it was first introduced, they initially said no male coaches would get involved and I thought OK, this may encourage more female coaches to come in. There's nothing bad about it at all, all of the things are great, the little dances, keeping the kids active and making it fun, coordination exercises I think are really good, very well thought out, and the marketing is obviously brilliant. I think the only negative thing I can think of is the stereotype thing, but then it's acceptable, isn't it? All the girls love it. But when it was launched, there was a lot of talk about the stereotypes and obviously there still is and I just think to myself, it doesn't help you. (P8, male, level 3)*

A Changing Landscape? (3)

- New LTA Initiative: Coach Development Plan (2021)
 - Focus on supporting and engaging underrepresented groups – females, ethnically diverse backgrounds and disabled people
 - Changes include:
 - More flexible and accessible qualifications pathway, inclusion blended learning approach, tailor-made
 - Provision of grants
 - Free female only taster courses
 - Female Performance Coach Engagement Programme
 - Specialised mentors, networking and support
 - Online coach communities, e.g. Facebook groups

Future Directions

- Focus on gender
 - Look at other areas: age, disability, ethnicity
- UK based
 - Comparison with other countries
- Females coaching in other ‘male-dominated sports’
 - E.g. Cricket, golf, rugby

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Questions?

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