



South Australian Debating Association Inc

Junior A, Quarter Finals

“That we would prefer large sporting leagues not establish women’s competitions at all than run competitions in which women athletes are paid less than men”

1. Type of Topic

This is an empirical, or counterfactual debate. In this type of debate, neither team has “fiat”, which is the right to define the exact policy being debated, and the general assumption that whatever policy they propose is feasible. Instead, this topic asks teams to compare the world as it is against what it could be without the policy.

The best interpretation of this topic is *“That a world in which large sporting leagues don’t establish women’s competitions if the female athletes would be paid less than men is a better world to live in than the current world in which large sporting leagues do establish women’s competitions even if the women athletes are paid less than men”*. Rather than using a model or countermodel, both teams need to use a *clearly reasoned argument* to illustrate what the world would look like if large sporting leagues had not established women’s competitions unless the athletes were paid as much as men. This description is called the “counterfactual” and is essential to the debate. The two teams might disagree on what this counterfactual might look like and should use logical reasoning to establish why their counterfactual is more likely to occur. Then depending on their respective sides, teams would need to argue that this counterfactual is better or worse than the status quo.

2. Background / Context

The gender pay gap between men and women exists across almost every industry, and professional sports is no exception. A contemporary American study of the salaries of professional players in the sports basketball, golf, soccer, baseball and tennis revealed that male athletes are earning anywhere from 15% to nearly 100% more than female athletes. While this has improved over the past decade, a significant gap still exists.

Historically, professional sports were only played by males, and it was only in the 1900s that women’s professional sport teams began to achieve prominence. Since then, female athletes have generally been paid less than male athletes. The justification usually offered for this is that women’s sport competitions attract a smaller audience than male sports competitions. This means that the sporting league makes less money from women’s sports competitions because there are less ticket sales, and also advertisers are less interested in sponsoring women’s

competitions as they reach a smaller audience. Sporting leagues then use this reduced revenue to justify paying female athletes less than their male counterparts.

3. Specific Questions for consideration

- What are the benefits of having women's sporting competitions? What are the drawbacks?
- Who watches women's sporting competitions and what insights do they gain?
- Does it matter if women athletes are paid less than men?
- What do large sporting leagues gain or lose from women's competitions?
- What impact would this have on women athletes? How about male athletes?
- What message would not running women's sporting competitions send to society? Is this better or worse than women athletes being paid less than men?
- What are the responsibilities or purpose of large sporting leagues? Would they be fulfilling their purpose here?
- Should women athletes be paid the same as men? What are the differences in their sporting competitions?
- Why do men's competitions have more viewers than women's? Is this likely to change?
 - If not, is it in the best interests of the sporting leagues to keep women's competitions?
- What impact could not establishing women's competitions at all have on the gender pay gap generally?
- What impact is women being paid less than men having on the gender pay gap in other industries currently?

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