
Law in Sport Diversity and Inclusion Working Group
Race and Ethnicity in Sport Oral History Project

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Transcript: X X

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1. What is your conception or idea of diversity? To what extent do you consider sport and/or law to be diverse?

I guess my conception of diversity is having a mixture of backgrounds, be it faith. You know, religion, country of origin. How people identify as a race that kind of thing, all different types of I guess protected characteristics almost, a mixture of those type of things for me diversity means things don't feel the same, and monotonous. It is the idea of being that you have a range of things or elements that make you know a team. The context is different. I guess the idea being that if you have too much of the same thing there's no change there's no diversity on Outlook outcomes you know the way of doing things. It's I would say diversities having a range of elements to make your work better. You know you touched on inclusion, I would say you know diversity and inclusion means you're not at a detriment if you're a particular background or possibly a bit more different to other people. That is what my view has been of inclusionary. My view is that diversity is like a necessity. But I would say at the moment is seen as like a nice to have rather than been viewed as having the benefits it does actually have and so you lose touch on how diverse sport and law could be.

Generally, I think the legal sector is getting better. I would say it probably just depends on where you work, and what type of law you are in as well but generally from what I've seen the sector is getting better. In terms of more diversity and being a bit more switched on to the benefits of diversity, diverse workforce sport, I would say is, I've not seen any change I think is really far behind. As one of the things that kind of struck me moving into the sport sector from private practice is the sheer lack of diversity if I'm honest even in life 2021. I find shocking. I think the problem with sports law so if you combine the two together is because, you know, you'll know

this as well, I guess, being a lawyer is quite a niche profession, but sports law is even more niche it's like you know, 1% or probably less than 1% of lawyers. I think, for that reason it's not as diverse as it should be or could be because it's maybe a bit further behind, you know, the legal sector as a whole. So, yeah, in general, I would say, legal is getting better, but I'm disappointed by the lack of diversity in sport and sports law.

(response to the follow up question, do you think, potentially because the sport industry seems so far behind in diversity, etc. that might have a knock-on impact into the type of people or the people who do enter the legal profession in that area)

You are mostly right governed by what they see and what they, you know are exposed to, and certainly I can resonate with this but if you felt a certain type of lawyer is always a certain type of person. Perhaps you feel you don't fit in or you wouldn't fit in, and even if it's something that you would want to pursue you have to work with those other people perhaps you might not feel comfortable. I would definitely say from the outside looking in, is presumably a barrier to the types of people it attracts because I would feel uncomfortable. You know, looking at it from that perspective.

(Response to follow up question: What do you think of diversity schemes?)

I think they should be mandatory. I appreciate those like elements of law which I don't understand the employment law position to, too much but I understand that you know there is only so far as, you can go before making something mandatory. You know in law so things like quotas, that kind of thing I understand they can only be kind of guidance and you know targets rather than mandatory. That aside I do still feel they should be mandatory because it forces it to be on the

agenda it forces people to think about, you know, if we have a scheme in place it also means that encourage people to think about how they can diversify their workforce and what they're doing, and they can give back. I do feel when things like unconscious bias. And you know, possibly practices around, you know, hiring, your contacts or that kind of thing. Diversity schemes need to sit alongside recruitment processes, because of you know things are unconscious bias and have the potential to undo that the hard work of diversity schemes so I feel they definitely do have a place, and I think they are needed because it's been proven that, you know, rightly or wrongly unconsciously or consciously decisions are made based on other factors.

2. *What motivated you to choose a career in the realms of sport and law?*

My strengths in school were subjects such as English, history, languages, you know, those sort of I guess more essay and word-based subjects. And I think someone might have just like sent me at school you know your subjects link to law. Probably family as well we're like oh why don't you think about law as well. When I was like 12 or something. Then I just started doing a reading around it work experience that kind of thing. I just enjoy the kind of analytical and problem-solving side of it, so something that's not necessarily problems in the sense of like maths or science but I still guess I liked the challenge element. I went through school picking my subjects, you know on the, on the basis of like that I would probably study law at uni, and then over time just do more work experience more research, and eventually got to my undergrad. I think there was a bit of luck involved in that I enjoyed it.

If I am honest because I know sometimes the concept of what it could be and what it is, not the same. I had those friends who were hell bent on being lawyers and as soon as we started uni, they

didn't really like it. So, in that sense I did get lucky in that it did suit me and I did quite like it. And then again more with more work experience more exposure I kind of felt I was more suited to sort of the business side of law, rather than you know things you were saying about sort of individual workloads, divorce work, or property matters wills, that kind of thing. I think just, possibly suit my personality a bit more on my interests, like, I was just a bit more interested in the business side. I wouldn't say I was very good with kind of emotion, emotive topics like childcare child separation and things like that. So, I think that's how I would say I fell into kind of commercial law, in terms of amalgamating it was for sport has just been like a side interest of mine, you know, anyway. And I guess everyone's aim is to do something that they enjoy at work so you know if I'm honest, I would say sports law was something that I kind of aspired to but I kind of just pursued it as like a hobby. So, I would kind of read around articles and follow cases to some spare time anyway. My old firm did a bit of sports law and I can kind of touch on this in a bit but again it sort of felt to me like only certain types of people would get involved in those matters and perhaps they're a bit out of my reach. So, like I say I still pursued it kind of on a personal level, rather than it being embedded in my role.

And then the job at the Premier League just came up really and I just don't actually have an interest in it, why don't I go for it. You know, I'll be honest, I did have to be given a bit of a personal push by my family, possibly entirely I thought you know I'm not a sport so I or sports law is not meant to be for people like me maybe, I think I probably didn't think that at the time, but that's basically how I fell into our current role really is just, you know, step by step, each time narrowing down to get to like a point of interest.

What are the notable barriers you can identify or have faced/continue to face individually, along the way?

(I had asked if there was a reason why you felt that sports law was not for a person like you)

you know me like one event or occasion, I don't think anyone ever said to me but possible that is also the reason why I think I felt you know I don't travel in the right circles I don't have the contacts or the exposure. You know, because like I mentioned before sports are so niche. So, you know, it's very small circle very set number of people, you know has to be I felt breaking that barrier was not in my reach just because of my background and not like I don't know you know any premier League footballers and agents and you know I don't really even play that much sport. The sphere of influence I think is like a phrase and one talks about I don't really know, and I think sports or is painted as this very big lucrative hard to get into like sector, and I think it is true that it is hard to get into but possibly, you know, maybe I felt there were extra barriers, you know, for the reasons I just mentioned, really.

You know, saying I didn't have the right contacts or the right, or even know how to build the contacts to be honest, I didn't really know what happened I don't know there was just like a switch in my brain one day but I basically just thought, everyone has to start somewhere, even if you know people that I know may have more of a leg up than me, they still need to start from their equivalent of zero. I think it was basically that I just decided, and I kind of just thought if you don't ask you don't get, and so I basically just asked the people at my firm, you know, can I get involved in the cases or, what would you recommend for someone who's like starting out. I obviously mentioned already that I kind of follow stuff on the site you know sports legal cases anyway. Once I kind of said that it was a bit like, well now you have to get involved because you already like it. So, you know, I kind of got involved with a bit of reading an article writing going to events that kind of thing at my old firm. That's also how I got involved with Law and sport as well. I think it

was just that initial, you know, follow something on the side, why don't I just try and see if there's a way to expand it, really. I do often think, you know, asking is the hardest part most people won't say no. They'll try and help you in the way they can. But posts would be, you know, internal barriers or perception whatever maybe makes you feel you can't ask, or you ask later than other people. A barrier was definitely my personal confidence as well.

How have you sought to respond to these barriers?

Yes, I one step is recognising that there are barriers in the first place. They fill a substandard or low lower starting point, but you can't really work out why. I would say that's the first thing is recognising that there's a barrier, if any, and then I think my second step was like I just said before was just accepting that there's a barrier and what is within my control. So, you know, like I said, is within my control to try and make contacts. It's not in my control that I don't have any, but it is within my control to try and start that process. I think it's just looking at what's within your control and trying to use your skills to the best you can and move forward.

3- If you could do just one thing in this realm in order to play sports more inclusive and more diverse, what would that be?

change needs to come from the top to the bottom, because if you have changed at the top, it will inevitably trickle down to the bottom. So, I think that each sport board or governing body, wherever you know is the highest point needs to have mandatory quotas targets in line with what is feasible around diversity. They need to be actively mixing up and diversifying recruitment. After that decision making will become diverse, and after that inevitably workforces below them will be

diverse, or at least started to think about being diverse so my magic wand would be to make a change from the top that I think would inevitably have better change at the bottom.

So, the top is receptive enough to these types of things. I always think right now it's been so long that possibly it just needs to be forced upon them moving forward. So, the next generation you know I don't think it needs to be forced I think because they have done more stuff around mentoring, and the schemes you mentioned it will be a bit more embedded, but I think it's not embedded at the top level yet.

END

Interview with X X

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