



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 23, 2016

Tennis Director Forced to Resign for Questioning Women Players' Value

There has been somewhat less love in the tennis world recently, although it has become plain that the sport does have some big zeroes. The question is, is the biggest zero tournament director Raymond Moore, or one of the people who wanted his scalp for implying that the women players don't deserve equal prize money?



The brouhaha began when Moore, formerly chief executive of the Indian Wells Tennis Garden in California and director of its recently concluded tournament, the BNP Paribas Open, was fielding questions at a press conference just prior the event's women's final on Sunday. In response to one reporter query, he made the [following comments](#):

In my next life, when I come back, I want to be someone in the WTA [Women's Tennis Association], because they ride on the coattails of the men. They don't make any decisions, and they are lucky. They are very, very lucky. If I was a lady player, I'd go down every night on my knees and thank God that Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal were born, because they have carried this sport. They really have.

But instead of dropping on knees to give thanks, the response was to try to bring Moore to his knees. His remarks were roundly condemned as "sexist," although, typical of politically correct responses, relatively few critics actually said he was wrong. And the attacks worked: The beleaguered official first apologized, then [resigned his post](#) on Monday.

Now, Moore is an ex-tennis pro (as am I, by the way), which means he actually knows more about the game than most of his critics. But for some background, know that tennis is unusual in that certain events — such as the four Grand Slam tournaments and the BNP — host both men and women at the same site. So if you bought a ticket for the past week's BNP, you'd find both men's and women's matches on the card even if you desired to watch only one sex or the other. It's as if you wanted to attend an NBA game, but found that buying a ticket meant subsidizing a WNBA contest to be played just before or just afterwards.

At such events, women now get equal prize money. But should they? Moore found a defender in British columnist Katie Hopkins; in a piece entitled "Sorry, Serena [Williams], it's not the grunting women who are being underpaid in tennis — it's the men!" she [reports](#) that while last "year's Men's Wimbledon Final took three hours to play and was watched by 9.2 million people," less than half that number tuned in to watch the women's final. She later wrote that Moore's "basic premise is correct. Female tennis players do not deserve to get the same prize money as the men. They don't earn it. So they shouldn't be



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paid it.” She continued, “Pay parity in sport is not equal treatment, it is inequitable by any commercial measure. The men are subsidising the women’s game.”

This was echoed by the world’s number one player, Novak Djokovic, who said that the ATP (the men’s tour) “should fight for more” prize money because statistics show it draws more spectators. Such economic realities eluded *Think Progress*’ Lindsay Gibbs, however. She not only took umbrage at Moore’s and Djokovic’s comments but [complained](#), “Women don’t get equal time on main courts, they don’t get equal prize money across the board, and they often don’t even get the marquee scheduling.” This is true. Yet consider: The same could be said of lightweight boxers relative to the heavyweights. Now, what if some lightweights started lobbying for “equality,” saying they were tired of being “undercard” bouts and wanted the same purse as the big boys? After all, they’re in the same sport and train just as hard. Equality!

It would be a lightweight argument. Everyone knows that heavyweights command more money and attention because spectators are far more interested in watching their bouts. The market has spoken. The lightweights’ argument would also be silly because they’d be lobbying for equality within the context of advocating — and benefiting from — an inherently unequal system. That is to say, they have their own exclusive category, for men no more than 135 pounds, shielded from the best competition (the heavyweights). And the simple answer to these complainers would be, “If you want the heavyweights’ money, fight in the heavyweight class!”

Flipping it around, though, the same could be said about the women relative to the men. You want the men’s money? Try to qualify for, and succeed on, the men’s tour. In fact, any woman pulling that off (the intersex performance gap in tennis is huge, actually) would become the biggest thing in sports and command endorsement contracts dwarfing the men’s.

Putting this in perspective, imagine a basketball league was created for only white players, shielding them from the best competition, most of which comprises black players (the NBA is almost 75 percent black). Could you imagine the outrage if, in addition, the white league demanded the same salaries as NBA players in the name of “fairness” or “equality”?

What is fair and equal, anyway? And is equal always fair? Since market-ascribed value is the yardstick we use to determine virtually everyone’s pay, is it fair to suspend that standard *only* in situations where political correctness kicks in? Then, Hopkins makes the common argument that while male tennis pros sometimes play matches that can last five sets (in the Grand Slam events), the women’s maximum is only three sets. As she puts it, the “women have managed to pull off something inexplicable. They get paid more for doing less. They asked for equal treatment and got special treatment in return.”

Yet even this misses the point. After all, I and many other aspiring athletes worked as hard as anyone, yet most of us ultimately received little or no monetary compensation. And what of ability? Good male college tennis players are better than the WTA players; moreover, excellent teen boys are generally better than the professional women in their sport (the mile record for 15-year-old lads is faster than the women’s world record). So to use the language of activists, is it fair that better performers who work just as hard receive nothing — merely because of their age or chromosome configuration — while the women can make millions?

Yet even if the best 16-and-under boy tennis players shed their amateur status, they couldn’t command the money the women do. This is only justifiable by way of the fact that the women pros have an infinitely bigger market — just as the men pros have a bigger one still.



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And if we're going to ignore the market, is it "fair" that rappers and people hitting fuzzy balls around can make millions while teachers, policemen, firemen, soldiers, and nurses (and that rare excellent journalist!) make a relative pittance? It's certainly not equal.

In truth, fairness and equality not only don't govern market determinations, they don't even govern pay activists' activism. Just consider that female fashion models earn markedly more on average than male models, and the top 10 women in the business [earned 10 times as much](#) as their male counterparts in 2013. Yet not only don't the Equality Police complain about this disparity, they don't even notice it.

So the reality is that as good as Serena Williams and Novak Djokovic are, they can only dream of spinning the ball as well as pay activists spin the truth.



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