

Transcribed Interview with Ashley Docking Former Host on Sportsnet 590
Starting Lineup

00:00

Q1: Please tell me your name, how long you've been working in sports radio, and what your current position is.

00:04

AD: So my name is Ashley Docking. I've been working in sports radio for three and a half years. Or I had been, and currently I'm a Toronto based national broadcaster freelancing.

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Interviewer: And are you freelancing in sports radio?

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AD: No, not particularly. Right now I'm working for the NLL, specifically the National Lacrosse League on Bleacher Report, which is a digital platform. But everything's paused. So, kind of at a standstill at the moment (Laughs) it's a reflective period, if you will.

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Interviewer: Yes, It really is. Maybe this, this interview will also be a point of reflection as well.

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AD: Yeah, I hope so.

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Q2: So we looked at all of the on air host on sports radio in major markets in Canada, and found 13 women or 4.5% of on air host (Update: 12 women, 5%). Why do you think there are so few women on air in sports radio?

0:54

AD: I think it's a bit of a convoluted answer. So I think first and foremost, that there is no representation, as you said, and you have to kind of... see something, um, to understand that it's something that you can be. And I think we've learned that a lot over the last 5 to 10 years in... really any profession, that visibility is so important. Whether it's minorities, whether it's women, um, I think that you want to be able to be inspired by people that look and sound like you. So that's probably one of the first problems. Secondly, it goes a little bit deeper than that, in my opinion, because of the way that we're raised given stereotypical gender roles. Um, I think that--like I was a little bit different, my parents raised my brother and I both on sports, but I think boys, young boys are given baseballs, footballs and trucks and young girls are given tutus and paint sets and, you know, maybe a microphone to do some karaoke (chuckles) Like, it's very split up right? In terms of the activities that we're introduced to at a young age. And so I think that the deep love of sports that you need to be a sports broadcaster, is stunted in a lot of

women, because it's not something that they're presented with from the get go. So they're already operating at a disadvantage.

2:14

Q3: Absolutely. And doesn't matter if there are women in on-air roles in sports radio? Why or why not?

2:21

AD: It does matter. I think it's very important. And I actually don't think I realized the importance of it until I started doing radio. Um...because there are so--- many instances now, where the real life seeps into sports, right,? whether it's a socio economical issue, whether it's a domestic abuse issue, whether it's trying to break down the psychology of a player why or why or not, they would have done something. And so that female perspective is imperative. Because if the platform is about entertainment and education, how can you get educated when you hear someone with the same perspective as you all day every day? you're not expanding, you're not broadening your horizons and it really doesn't make you think, um, the same way. As it would, um-- even if it's like a white man and radio who's 45 versus the white man on radio who's 30, very different perspective. Versus a woman who's in her 30s or 50s, um, so you just need that. And I think that women are...not afraid to go there sometimes. I think it doesn't make them as uncomfortable as it might make men. And so to bring those conversations to the forefront, especially in the time that we're in now, in 2020, when there's protests for racial equality, and justice going on all across the entire world! like you need people to represent different voices. And I think there's a big difference between a female voice as a minority and black and indigenous person of color voice, whether it be male or female, but the representation just becomes imperative at this stage.

4:08

Q4: Did you ever experience-- with that, sexism in your job?

4:11

AD: (Scoffs) you know, for a long time I...didn't, or I like to think that I had hadn't. And maybe it's just because... I wasn't in a high profile position. So I potentially wasn't seen as threatening. Um, and I know that some women are maybe opposed to saying that because it kind of goes against the fabric of what we've been taught to, you know, "be humble and be Meeker" And just kind of, you know, be gracious and happy to be here and take the high road, all that stuff that we've heard our entire lives, right? It's the difference between being bitchy and being bossy versus, you know, being assertive and authoritative, like those aren't adjectives that are used to describe women often. So as I kind of, um, accelerated in my career, I did see it a little bit more and more and it was in subtle ways. It was me voicing an opinion in a meeting and being challenged on it, and being quizzed on it. Not like "okay" jumping into a dialogue as to why or why not they disagree, or why or why not? They agree Excuse me, but Oh, really? Well, do you know, like, do you know how many goals he had in this year? And it's just like, "No, I don't, Paul, because I'm not 75." But, I can tell you based on my research, (laughs) that I'm not bringing

you this uneducated opinion just because I want to be heard. And so that's a micro kind of aggressive way to challenge me and discredit me. But, um, I knew that early that could be an option. And so, sometimes when people have the old adage, "fake it till you make it" like that's not an option for women, it really is. It's not an option. I can't, I can't fake it in those spaces because there are people that are very smart. There are people that have been involved in sports Specifically, as we mentioned before, since their infancy and so they're, they want to call you on it, a lot of them are waiting. They're just waiting for you to stumble, even though they make mistakes all the time. But the difference is they say it with their chests. And people are like, "Oh! he's so smart!" It's like, No, he's just loud! Just loud, there's a difference.

6:31

Interviewer: You mentioned microaggressions. And I'm assuming from some of your colleagues, have you ever experienced some of those microaggressions based on like, your credibility as a sports radio person from the audience or from fans? Or is it just in the work space?

6:46

AD: I think generally speaking, I've had positive interactions with fans in the digital space, whether it's Twitter, whether it's in my mentions, DMS, etc. I've had some really horrible people and some really crazy people find my phone number and text me horrible things, which is kind of beyond... words, like to go out of your way to do something like that. I feel, I'm more concerned about that person than the things that they're saying about me. (Chuckles) Um, but, I think more so than anything It's-- I like to believe it comes from a good place, and men just don't know they're mansplaining to you. And it's kind of...condescending. But I don't know if they realize that that's what they're doing. Where you say something and then they, they go on to explain it and give the backstory and "you're like, yes, that is how I reached this conclusion, so thank you." (Laughs) or a lot of times I'll have people... I noticed it, like when you're really listening, you can tell a lot because a lot of people are passively listening in this day and age right? We're on our phones while we're watching TV or we're in the car, talking to someone beside us while the radios on or listening at our desk at work on a podcast or something. That I found a lot that some of my male colleagues would just repeat what I said, back to myself and the audience, and then get the credit for it. They would just rephrase it. recycle it in like, right back to back. And people be like, "Oh wow! yeah! so smart." Uh, you're like, "Yeah, I know. I know." But I think that that's kind of a subtle thing, too, that not a lot of people pay attention to because you're not really, really trying to listen.

8:44

Q5: Listening is so important. So important. Do you feel that women have a harder time getting on air jobs in sports radio?

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AD: I...don't know if there's a lot of women who are clamoring to get on our jobs and Sports Radio. Um, and maybe that's because they set their expectations too low, and see themselves

slowly in a sportscaster or sports update role. Which I think-- I was in that position when I first got an interview at Sportsnet, um, just through a common acquaintance that myself in the program director had. Uh, I went into the meeting being like, Okay, I'm gonna do some training. And then maybe I'll do part time, evenings and weekends, updates. Like, hey, it's this time of day and the Blue Jays 5-3, home runs of blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And just like a quick rundown two minutes, and that's..I don't know why that's immediately the position I just put myself in. And then when I got there, I did a quick training shift, I think maybe one or two on it. And then, um, was asked if I wanted to be a host, like the three four hour shows, obviously horrible times when I first started 11pm to 2am type of thing. Um, but it's not even something that was in my mind. So I think one of the biggest things is that women as a whole... don't see themselves there. And so it's hard to get jobs that you're not badgering people for, right? and that's just networking like you're not paying attention to the people that can get you a show on radio. Um, also it's a really small market. Sports Radio is like very, very niche. So there's there's a number of challenges.

10:27

Q6: There is, the next question is have you or other women you know, ever been paid less than a man doing the same or similar work that you know of?

10:38

AD: Yes, (chuckles) I have. But I think that one of the things that's important is...you, you really can't operate from a position of fear. When you're having those monetary compensation conversations, because you know, guys aren't. Guys are going into a job under qualified asking to be overpaid. And women are going into a conversation like "Oh my Gosh, I'm so happy that you offered me something and validated me." That almost is payment in itself. To be like, "Oh, you picked me!" And I wonder like this is I'm not a psychologist, but I wonder if it's something between like a male and female dynamic. Um, where it's like, men are in positions of power in sports broadcasting, where they're giving you this role, this opportunity, saying they believe in you. And part of you is like, "Oh, my gosh, wow!" Like that validation, I don't know, maybe.. it's daddy issues, but, (Laughs) I don't know, right. But I think there's that there's a little bit of something to that. And I think a lot of my friends come to me when they're negotiating contracts, and when they're talking about compensation, and it's just like, whatever the first offer is from them is not the offer. Like it never is, it never will be. It's not how negotiations work. So whatever number you think in your head, add \$10,000 and then go back to them and then see what their response is, um, aare because you're getting low balled, you just are. That's the nature of the business they want to save money, and if they know that you're in a position where you're like, wow, this job in an industry where security is paramount, that you're willing to kind of forget about some of the other things, whereas men, they light a cigar and be like, "Alright, let's talk dollars." (Laughs) Right? Women just don't tend to do that.

12:30

Interviewer: Do you think that, um, women don't have access to those spaces like behind the scenes when it comes to talking to their managers? Or, is it just in like a professional setting that men are more comfortable just having those conversations?

12:41

AD: I think men are just more comfortable and I also think that because of the old boys club fraternity that they're actually more inclined to ask their peers, about their compensation and potentially be told. They have those relationships. They have those friendships like, "Hey, man, this guy's offering me \$60,000 for A B and C role." and the guy's gonna be like, "Oh man, when I got here at my first job that came in 78,000." And that job, that simple interaction, that maybe wouldn't happen between a female and a male, um, makes a huge difference, a \$10,000 difference.

13:19

Interviewer: Which is a big difference. (chuckles)

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AD: It's a huge, it's a massive difference. Um, so I just don't think that those conversations are happening. And I think obviously, this is a tale as old as time, management has obviously discouraged employees from communicating what their salaries are. Um, so I think that, for me, it's becoming more common practice not to ask someone point blank what they make, because that's really none of my business. And you know, people get weird about money, which I completely understand. But being like, I just don't want to... do any damage to myself. And it's more about your future, right? It's not necessarily about the first job that you get, okay, you get an entry level job, they pay you \$50,000. But when you get your promotion, your raise is based on \$50,000 as opposed to 65. And so that impacts you, 10 years down the road and something that you're thinking about now. Um, But I think I just go to people--and you didn't ask a question, but um, going to someone and being like, "Hey, listen" from a place of earnest be like, "I just want to make sure that I'm not shortchanging myself, would you feel comfortable giving me a range." A range from whatever to whatever, of what you either got paid for this role? Or sometimes people like to talk in hypotheticals. What you think, this role should be worth? And then sometimes they'll be like, "are you making six figures? And you're like, "No" and they'll be like, "We got to get you there." And boom, that's, that's what you need to know. Now you're like, "Oh, wow. Okay. So I need to be asking for much more." Or they'll be like, "Okay, I got somewhere between 60 and 75." And you're like, "Okay, cool. Now I'm gonna go back based on my experience, where I value myself and put my counter."

15:10

Interviewer: It's about like breaking down that, that conversation about money or finances in a way that's not as stigmatized as it's, like classically been.

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AD: Yeah.

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Q7: Do you feel that the Sports Radio industry is a fair and equitable place for women today? Why or why not?

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AD: Um, I don't really know how to answer that question. Um, I think... overall, it's not just because there isn't equal voices, there aren't equal numbers. There aren't there isn't equal representation. Um, the last job I had, I think there were four women in three and a half years that I worked with. None of them on-air. So it can't be an equitable workspace when you're not getting...to hear from half of the population. (Laughs) That would probably be my best answer for that. (Laughs) Right now.

16:13

Q8: And what advice do you have for radio owners and managers with respect to women working in sports radio?

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AD: Um, I think that it's encouraged to-- or, important to encourage talent when you see it and foster that talent. Um...I think that if you see someone that-- hi Lori-- I think that if you see someone that you, um, like or someone that you hear or someone that you think has potential, that making those, those spaces for them and fostering that mentorship, um, becomes really imperative. And kind of just grow that person's confidence because a lot of this is about the validation that we're all seeking.

17:03

Q9: Right? Um, what advice do you have for women seeking to build a career in sports-- in the sports radio industry?

17:09

AD: Um, be fearless. You're not going to get a position because you are sounding like the men that you hear, that's not what they want. If they wanted another white man, trust me, (Laughs) there's a plethora of opportunities for them to go find someone, um, that sounds like someone that they already have or has a similar life experience to someone that they already have. Um, one of the most important things of radio is to give a piece of yourself, kind of every show you have to it can be draining and taxing, and it can be frustrating at times. But I think that that's what differentiates you from other people is just being candid, responsibly. Ah, you don't want to just shoot your image in the foot (Laughs) before you get started. But, you know, having that level of candor and having that level of... openness, um, really makes the difference between being a radio personality and a sportscaster. And I think that in 2020 as we have literally everybody and there mother and cousin with a YouTube channel or an Instagram page or Tik Tok now or Twitter personality, like there is space and there's room to breathe and not just, sit

there and present scores, stats and quotes, to be vocal about how you feel any why. Even though it might seem, um, a little bit daunting at first.

18:34

Interviewer: Um with that, because you mentioned at first, do you feel over time being in the sports radio industry that you gained, um, that awareness and that confidence in yourself and who you are as a personality? or did you come in, you know, blazing with it?

18:47

AD: Ah (Chuckles) I think that I started my broadcasting career a little bit later than some others. Excuse me. It's actually my my second career I took marketing when I was in school, I took fashion business when I was in school. I worked for CIBC World Markets, I worked for Rogers on like the dealer program side and then I went back to school for sports broadcasting. So I think my perspective was a little bit different in the sense that I I've already been in a position and working for companies that I didn't love and places that I didn't want to be. And so, it gave me the confidence to really just lean into it because it was something that I was passionate about. Um, but then also being older, you know who you are a little bit more. You have your voice established, you know, what you stand for, you know, where your moral boundaries lie, you know when to kind of tiptoe over them. Um, so it does just come with time. Um, I really, really think that it does, it's just a matter of making mistakes, learning from them, and hopefully, they're not in too big of a public spotlight when you make them so you don't get canceled (Laughs). Because that's what everyone loves to do, but also everyone loves a redemption story. So...

19:55

Q10: Cancel culture is real, but that redemptive power that you just spoke about is real as well. Are there any other stories or examples that you want to share on this topic?

20:06

AD: Um, I think that it's important for Males... and females in the radio space but largely males, just because that's the large population is like, as you said, what was it 95% males. Um, it's important for them to seek out females in that space and offer to kind of be a mentor to them or act that way. Even if you don't have an official conversation. Um, have their back, make them feel comfortable to come to you if anything's going wrong. Because for me, personally, I feel that I've been sometimes alienated and not purposefully, it's not that people are, you know, going in and having drinks and not inviting me or anything like that. It's just... the pecking order of things. It's male dominated, they often all know each other um, they have like that kind of clicky mentality, and it's not as though they're being overtly mean about it. Um, but that encouragement is just so important. Right? Like, there was one girl who worked with us. She was doing an intern program. I believe her name was Jess, and she asked me to have a coffee and just kind of like chat because she wanted to talk to me about her career direction. And I had never really met her before, and I don't really see myself that way. Right? Like, I don't really see myself as um, a role model or a mentor. Um, but people keep coming to me for advice so I

guess it's like something I should embrace at some point (Laughs) But, the conversation that we had was kind of disheartening because she was a young black woman and she didn't she was kind of asking questions about it, but she was beating around the bush and I think that it's it's uncomfortable for a lot of white people to tackle the race issue, and we're seeing it a lot more as 2020 there's protests all over the United States. We had one here in Toronto, I believe there's two plans for this weekend and non Black people are being called on to be allies. And you see how uncomfortable it is because people are like "Uh, African American, Afro Caribbean Canadian, West Indian." And it's like, you can't even say the word black person, black woman, black man, and so that should tell you kind of where we're at. So, I'm not sitting here being like, I'm some like hero about it. But it was just an interesting conversation to have with her as I approached it to talk about not only being a woman in the radio space of being a black woman in the radio space, because as a female, all the stuff that we talked about before was, you know, you have to find a way to prove yourself you have to find a way to fit in, you have to show them that you're not too sensitive that to a certain extent, you can do like the locker room crass talk, right? That's still all a part of it to a certain degree. That's, that's just sports in general. And I'm not talking about things that are overtly derogatory, that you'd sit there and you're like, Okay, that's enough of that. But to do that, as well as be a woman of color is like you have to do it's two hurdles before you even get a chance to focus on your job. And just hearing her kind of get into what that meant and how difficult that was for her, it really just... kind of hammered home that there's just still so much work to be done. Because Yeah, there's only 5% women in sports radio, but how many of those people were black or indigenous or Asian? Two of those 13?

23:45

Interviewer:

Wow. That's amazing.

23:46

AD: Yeah

23:49

Interviewer: These are real conversations. And, um, you know, I think a big takeaway was mentorship at all levels for all women who are even in sports radio or in the radio industry, um, altogether. From your perception, though, do you feel like the sports radio industry for women and women of color in Canada is becoming more progressive or do you feel that It's we're not headed in the right direction.

24:14

AD: I don't think that it's being more progressive because I also think that the radio's at an impasse where they don't really know where it's gonna go. And I know that this is something that we've talked about though for like decades, right? Like, "Oh, radio won't last it's TV or radio at last, there's digital" And somehow there's still a need for it to be on the airwaves. But the promotion dollars is changing a little bit where companies want to put their money, um, how they actually calculate the ratings is different, because people are podcasting now, so maybe they're

not listening live, but they're getting a chance to listen, um, after the fact. And so that's kind of--they haven't figured out how to put those two worlds together to decide whether a product is being successful. And so as they're focusing on that, I think that there's not a focus on inclusion, because I just don't think that you can have all of your attention somewhere else where the money is really, and then also be truly advocating to have a more diverse workplace. And that's just the business model and that's just staffing and that's numbers and budget and all that stuff comes into play as well. But, I just think that to be more progressive, it takes a real... like laser focus. And I think that a lot of companies say that they want to be more inclusive, but I don't know how proactive they're being-- to make sure that it comes true.

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