



‘Out’ LGBTQI+ Players in Elite Soccer in England: exploring the disparity between PL/EFL and WSL

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ABSTRACT

Despite the welcome rise in the number of LGBTQI+ athletes at recent Olympic Games, whilst there are many openly LGBTQI+ female soccer players in England, there is only one openly gay male player at the 92 professional clubs. This presentation will examine that disparity, with a particular focus on the role of the sport’s national governing body, the English Football Association (FA). Reasons why male players conceal their sexual orientation are explored, as well as the comparative willingness of female players to be open about their LGBTQI+ identity. It will be argued that whilst there are organisations doing valuable work in soccer around LGBTQI+ issues, a more comprehensive and proactive approach needs to be taken by the FA. Early intervention at grassroots level is necessary to create a more inclusive environment, generating a pathway of inclusivity. In addition, sanctions need to be outlined and implemented by the FA to act both as a deterrent and to signal to the LGBTQI+ community that the organisation is sincere and committed to addressing homophobia.

Keywords: LGBTQI+, Soccer, England, Football Association

