



## Abundance mindset could mean an end to false competition created for women

BY JANELLE WELLS

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**I** imagine yourself sitting in your office, knowing it's time for your promotion ...  
Knowing that you are one of two women on the leadership team. ...  
Knowing that they have already pitted you two against one another for the only open executive seat.

Forced, manufactured competition between women stems from decades of the oppressing patriarchy of sport. This institution was not designed by women or created for women, and its current structure continues to divide us due to a fear of the power of a unified front.

Now, imagine what it would look like to promote both women.

An open mind leads to possibility. Instead of a scarcity mentality — maintaining that only a finite pie exists — we need a paradigm shift to an abundance mindset, where there is ample opportunity to make, bake, or eat all the pies you'd like. Yes, thank you Stephen Covey for coining these terms in “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.” The majority of people, particularly in the workplace, have been conditioned to exist in environments that breed the scarcity mentality because when promotions and raises are scarce, information is hoarded, resources are limited and short-term thinking is the norm.

If we shifted to an abundance mindset — knowing there are opportunities out there for all of us to succeed — where could we be? Where could women be in sport? There'd be more than one seat at the table; there'd be full tables of opportunities.

In summer 2021, leaked conversation revealed the competition at ESPN pushing Maria Taylor

and Rachel Nichols into a zero-sum game for the same job position. In competition, tension and scarcity prevail, and opportunities seem lost. Contrary to the ESPN outcome, shine theory holds that when women celebrate and support the success of other women, we all shine — proven in business and public policy alike.

Little in life is more abundant than sport, a roughly \$500 billion global industry, so we must eliminate the fictional scarcity of opportunity, particularly for women. And your actions will make all the difference.

## **From Winner to Winners**

For decades, media has generally pitted women against one another, asking society “Who wore it best?” We must shift the scarcity mindset from “Only one winner can do it best” to “Damn, they are both changing the game!” In sport, it has been a “Battle of the Sexes” comparing female athletes, teams and leagues to men, yet how quickly we forget that for one of those sexes, the runway of opportunity was just paved in 1972 with the enactment of Title IX. Instead of using one measuring stick, let’s celebrate both men and women. Case in point: Commemorate 75 years of the NBA and 25 years of the WNBA, while respectively honoring the 50-year difference between the two.

## **From Limited Inventory to Self-Fulfilling Investment**

From the NCAA’s 1989 humble beginning of the widely known March Madness trademark, the asset was fiercely protected and provided over 85% of the yearly budget from the three-week men’s basketball tournament. Yet, the myth that caused the scarcity was that there wasn’t enough money, sponsorship, or fandom to support both men and women’s March Madness. According to Nielsen Sports, an active shift in purpose-driven sponsorship and advertising messaging is occurring, so combine that with 84% of sports fans being interested in women’s sports, and we’re primed for a transformative valuation.

## **From Relative Comparison to Objective Success**

Where is the parallel for the box office movie “Mean Girls”? To think that dimming someone else’s light lets yours shine more is a scarcity mentality, and shared misery is darn exhausting. Relishing criticism of others could be shifted to an abundance behavior by promoting, supporting, and amplifying another’s success. That means stop regurgitating the shortfalls of women’s sport and start celebrating the short-term successes.

## From Zero sum to practiced empathy

Ah, the flawed, classic idea that for one to win, one must lose. I like the antithesis to that dated maxim, seen when Serena Williams uplifted Naomi Osaka. Serena demonstrated empathy in the wake of the 2018 U.S. Open: “Not only was a game taken from me but a defining, triumphant moment was taken from another player, something she should remember as one of the happiest memories in her long and successful career.” The corrective behavior is to find the very real joy in sharing. Your same pains and frustrations are faced by your grandmother, your mother, your sister, your auntie, your daughter, and maybe even your granddaughter — without that practiced empathy, how can we truly relish the shared success?

More than ever, we need to listen without judgment, and fully understand what a collaborative win entails for all, together. Oprah Winfrey has said, “If you look at what you have in life, you’ll always have more. If you look at what you don’t have in life, you’ll never have enough.” I encourage sport professionals to dream, think, and plan with an abundance perspective for limitless possibility — pick up your phone and call, text, and tweet a win for women in sport, because celebrating every win for a woman is a win for all of us.

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