

**Mexican Women Shouting for a Goal: Female Sports Narrators and Commentators, New References in Specialized Journalism in Mexico**

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**Mexicanas al grito de gol Narradoras y comentaristas deportivas, nuevos referentes del periodismo especializado en México**

**Mexicanas gritando por um gol: Narradoras e comentaristas esportivas, novas referências no jornalismo especializado no México**

Xochitl Andrea Sen Santos  
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México  
México  
[xass07@comunidad.unam.mx](mailto:xass07@comunidad.unam.mx)

**Abstract:** Thanks to professional women's football development in Mexico, a new generation has entered sports journalism as commentators and television narrators. These activities had been denied or restricted to them. Through discourse analysis, in profile journalistic interviews carried out by different media outlets with nine Mexican journalists, it is shown how they assume the identity of references or protectors for Mexican girls and young women who wish to venture into this journalistic specialization.

**Keywords:**

Mexican women's football, Mexican women journalists', sports journalism, gender identity, discourse analysis

**Resumen:** Gracias al desarrollo del fútbol femenino profesional en México, una nueva generación de mujeres se ha adentrado en el periodismo deportivo ahora como comentaristas y/o narradoras televisivas, actividades que les habían sido negadas o restringidas. A través del análisis de discurso, en entrevistas periodísticas de semblanza realizadas por distintos medios de comunicación a nueve periodistas mexicanas, se muestra cómo es que ellas mismas asumen la identidad de referentes o protectoras para las niñas y jóvenes mexicanas que deseen incursionar en esta especialización periodística.

**Palabras Clave:**

Fútbol femenino mexicano, periodistas deportivas mexicanas, periodismo deportivo, identidad de género, análisis del discurso

**Resumo:** Graças ao desenvolvimento do futebol feminino profissional no México, uma nova geração de mulheres ingressou no jornalismo esportivo agora como comentaristas e/ou narradoras de televisão, atividades que lhes eram negadas ou restritas. Através da análise do discurso, em entrevistas jornalísticas de perfil realizadas por diferentes meios de comunicação com nove jornalistas mexicanas, mostra-se como elas próprias assumem a identidade de referências ou protetoras das meninas e jovens mexicanas que desejam se aventurar nesta especialização jornalística.

**Palavras-Chaves:**

Futebol feminino mexicano, jornalistas esportivas mexicanas, jornalismo esportivo, identidade de gênero, análise do discurso

**1. Introduction**

The identity we assume is how, generally, those around us perceive us; it is how we project our way of seeing and understanding what happens in our environment; in the case of those who serve as a reference in any sense for other people, that identity can be an example to follow, in search of a change in the way society is structured.

Women in sports journalism in Mexico have lived a complicated path and have gradually made their way into the different media and journalism methods. Both sport and journalistic activity were considered masculine spaces for a long time, and women were kept on the sidelines; today, the panorama is very different and their presence and participation can inspire new generations of women seeking to build a more equitable world.

Through discourse analysis, we can perceive the identity assumed by television journalists in Mexico and how they project themselves through it. Let us understand discourse as everything we use to transmit a message, consciously or unconsciously. Referring to authors such as Van Dijk and Gee, Eva Salgado sets the tone for a definition of discourse:

[...]we would be faced with any message, conscious or not, with which something is communicated to someone; in the second case, we would be faced with a concept that necessarily leads us to think that what is said is part of a larger social dimension, that is, by analyzing it we will be able to discover something more concerning the socio-historical conditions in which it was enunciated. (Salgado, 2019, p. 16)

Journalistic interviews conducted with active Mexican television journalists who mainly covered football were analyzed since it is possible to consider the development of women's football in Mexico as one of the factors that drove their incursion and inclusion. It will begin with a context of the development of this discipline; later, the same will be done with the activity of Mexican women in sports journalism until landing on television. The profiles and selected statements of nine journalists will be shown, and, finally, in conclusion, the analysis of these speeches will be presented.

## **2. Women's football, the pretext**

In Mexico, narrating a sports competition on air in electronic media, particularly a football match, is an activity that is considered not possible for just anyone: it requires preparation, rhythm, intonation, specialized knowledge, and a very particular voice. For a long time, there has been a false idea that a female voice is the least suitable for doing it; however, developing professional women's football has opened up new options for journalists.

Women's football in Mexico is a sport that is constantly growing in popularity, although there is still a long way to go. Historically, there was a moment of glory when the first international competitions were organized for this discipline in Italy in 1970 and Mexico in 1971<sup>1</sup>. Without the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) recognition, the Mexican women obtained third and second place, respectively. However, despite the great stir they caused, the possibility of creating a professional league in the country was lost over time.

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<sup>1</sup> La Federación Internacional Europea de Fútbol (FIEFF), con sede en Italia, organizó ambos certámenes y envió la invitación para México luego de la gran euforia que provocó la Copa Mundial FIFA 1970. Pudo dar la impresión que, en un país tan compenetrado con el balompié, las mujeres eran parte de esa inercia. Ni la FIFA ni la Federación Mexicana de Fútbol (FMF) reconocían la práctica futbolística realizada por mujeres, así que el torneo no contaba con su aval. Tras el tercer lugar obtenido por las mexicanas, no resultó una sorpresa que, en diciembre de 1970, durante el nuevo Congreso de la FIEFF en Torino, Italia, México resultara la sede de la siguiente edición del certamen que estaba pensado realizarse anualmente, pero que terminó por desaparecer tras jugarse en 1971 (Sen, 2021, p. 330).

Since then, the data has not been favorable for Mexican women's football at the national team level; suffice it to say that in the FIFA Ranking, Mexico is very far from the top, averaging 26th position; in fact, the best historical position achieved in that list is 21st place in December 2011 and the worst, 36th in August of both 2022 and 2023 (FIFA, 2024).

It is very far from its rivals in the area of the Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Football (CONCACAF) because, although it is the third-best team in the region, the United States and Canada lead the North American ranking and are usually among the ten best teams worldwide: fourth and ninth, respectively.

In World Cups, the team has participated in three of the eight editions that have been held so far: the United States 1999, Germany 2011, and Canada 2015, in which it finished in 16th place out of 16 teams, 11th out of 16 and 22nd out of 24, in that order.

Meanwhile, in the Olympic Games, it has only taken part in a summer competition on one occasion out of the seven in which the competition has been held in the women's branch within the Olympic program. Its performance was in Athens 2004, where it was eliminated in the quarter-final phase after falling to its counterpart from Brazil.

Regarding professional clubs, the evolution of the Mexican case is developing favorably at a relatively fast pace, both at a sporting level and in terms of popularity among the public and, therefore, commercially, an aspect that has earned it notable growth in six years.

The professional league in Mexico was a project that was in the air for many years; the idea of Mexican women playing professional football was unpleasant and dangerous for many people who did not hesitate to express it. At the federation level, since those times of the boom in the seventies, there was frank resistance; proof of this are the statements of Joaquín Soria Terrazas, vice president of the Mexican Football Federation at that time, who then declared:

Personally, I consider football to be an inappropriate sport for women to play. Although it is said that playing sports is to create a healthy mind and body, football is a sport that does not go with the female sex. Because I would not give it that precise aspect, look, the way football is played around the world can cause very considerable disorders for women. I want to clarify that I do not say this because I oppose women playing it. I think that it is not a sport suitable for the female sex. (Sen, 2021, p. 329)

More than 50 years have passed, and the way of seeing women's football has changed; however, in some aspects, the tendency to see it as one of the most "masculine" sports remains as a conception that relegates women to particular roles far from being the protagonists of a match:

[...] the 'internalized,' almost 'naturalized' idea that football is a man's game. If common sense indicated that players, coaches, and referees should be men, the roles left for women inside the stadium were hostesses, advertising products for a predominantly male clientele, cheerleaders in case a team had them, and female fans who attended the stadiums. (Anorve, 2019, p. 23)

In the 1990s, several countries with a more standardized football system pushed FIFA to organize international competitions; thus, the first Women's World Cup was organized in China in 1991. After the first World Cup for women was held, the governing body of international football decided to support the development of this discipline. It began to pressure its affiliated federations, including Mexico, to play professional women's football in their respective countries:

Claudia Pedraza explains how the constant economic interest took precedence over the sporting interest, which led to several failed attempts to create the long-awaited Women's Professional League. A continuous political struggle in one of the sectors that has proven to be most profitable in Mexico, football, ruined several projects that forced women's football to survive at an amateur level, with hundreds of players who would live for football but not from football.

FIFA's objectives to support women's football are to increase participation, enhance commercial value, and lay the foundations for professional leagues (FIFA, 2016, p. 5). To achieve this, the international organization provided resources to its members and demanded results, so the efforts had to yield an honest, but not ideal, product.

The current Professional Women's Football League began in a test phase in May 2017 with the Copa MX Femenil tournament in which 12 teams participated, all affiliates of the clubs that make up the Liga MX. Months later, 16 teams, only five of them led by a woman, would give life to the Liga MX Femenil: América, Atlas, Cruz Azul, Guadalajara, León, Monterrey, Morelia (DT Verónica Hernández), Necaxa, Pachuca (DT Eva Espejo), Querétaro, Santos, Tigres, Tijuana (DT Andrea Rodebaugh), Toluca, UNAM (DT Ileana Dávila) and Veracruz (DT Melissa Núñez) (Alva, 2024).

Currently, in the Clausura 2024 tournament, 18 teams participate, of which seven have a woman at the head of the Sports Directorate of the women's branch, visibly without any interference in the men's team: América (Claudia Carrión); Guadalajara (Nelly Simón); Pachuca (Tamara Romero); Atlas (María Fernanda Delmar); Juárez (Balbina Treviño); Monterrey (Eva

Espejo) and San Luis (Adriana Águila). Meanwhile, at the field level, only four have a technical director: Puebla (María José López), Monterrey (Amelia Valverde from Costa Rica), Tigres (Milagros Martínez from Spain) and Santos (Karla Maya). The only team owner is Alejandra de la Vega, from Bravos de Juárez, both women's and men's teams (Beltrán, 2024).

Although few women manage on the field, the fact that there is a management branch for the women's version of the clubs, coupled with the fact that the FMF put a woman at the head of the League, Mariana Gutiérrez, who serves as its executive president; tells us about the possible intention of having an independent infrastructure for the benefit of the women or a better organization.

Somehow, the eyes of the world are turning to see women's club football in Mexico, considering its development. The International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS), in its ranking of the most important National League 2023, published in January 2024, considered the Mexican Women's League 11th position, even above the United States League (17th place)<sup>2</sup> (IFFHS, 2024a).

Likewise, three Mexicans are recognized (as of February 29, 2024) by this same organization as the best scorers in a national tournament: "Katty Martínez and Alicia Cervantes lead the IFFHS category of best national scorers in the world after February. They have already scored 11 goals in the Mexican Liga MX, one more than Stephany Mayor, another Mexican forward" (IFFHS, 2024c).

In the same article, the international organization reports on the "fantastic development" that women's professional football has shown in Mexico, which, it says, is reflected in the historic result obtained in the Group Stage of the first Women's Gold Cup in 2024, where what was only the second victory over its counterpart from the United States was achieved.

Initially, the games were not even broadcast on television. The follow-up of the games was done through internet platforms; little by little, that panorama changed, and although it is on pay television, with little commercial time and even simultaneous broadcasts, today, the League assures that 85 percent of the games are broadcast (Grimaldo, 2021b) and the audience numbers are constantly increasing.

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<sup>2</sup> Guardando las debidas proporciones, llama la atención que la Liga MX se ubicó en la posición 36 del equivalente de la misma clasificación en su rama varonil (IFFHS, 2024b).

Phrases from directors, such as: "Nobody cares about women's football," said in 2009 by Justino Compeán, then president of the FMF, are left behind (Grimaldo, 2021a). The Liga's audience figures confirm that during 2020, an average of 4.5 million views were obtained during the season, 9% more than in 2019.

End by end, the ratings are growing; at the time, the second leg of the 2022 Apertura Tournament, between América and Tigres, on November 14, became the most watched women's match in the history of North America. Open television on Canal Nueve broke a record by registering a national reach of 2.88 million people, according to data from Nielsen IBOPE México (Press, 2022).

A year later, the Liga MX Femenil reported, at the end of the 2023 Apertura tournament, that it was the most followed tournament in its six-year history, with a record audience in the second leg final between Tigres and América of 1.8 million viewers and a reach of 3.9 million. (LigaBBVAFemenil, 2023) Given the growing television audience, the networks that broadcast the games have opened the door to female narrators and commentators. Some of them even narrate duels played by men.

### **3. Conquering the newsrooms and sports studios**

Claudia Pedraza (2015), in her doctoral thesis, shares an account of the women who, little by little, were gaining ground in the different sports sections of both general and specialized newspapers; at the same time, radio was also losing ground, and television was no exception. Although initially, the female presence in front of the cameras responded more to the objective of "dressing up" the scene, giving the "feminine" touch to the information, showing the other side of the sports field, leaving aside the "virility" of the disciplines, showing the sensitivity of the human being who stars in them.

According to Pedraza's research (2015, p. 92), it was in the 1950s when articles signed by a woman appeared in newspapers for the first time in Mexico; it was in the newspaper *Excelsior* that Isabel Silva began this participation in the newsrooms. Jorge Ventura (1940-2017), a sports journalist for *La Afición* at that time and also known for his long career as a narrator and football commentator on Televisa, remembered her in the following way:

[...] The first woman who broke into sports journalism was Isabel Ramírez. We called her Chabelita. She was a basketball player and wrote for *Excelsior*, which at that time had a lot of strength in general information and sports pages, thanks to Manuel Zeyde, a very

acidic, focused critic. In Isabelita's case, she was a woman who did not deny her homosexuality. She was a very macho basketball player, involved with the players, a friend of the referees and managers, and a woman with a lot of strength and passion. (Sen, 2011, p. 104)

In the exact text, Pedraza (2015, p. 92) talks about Alicia Pineda, the following sports journalist now in the sixties, in the newspaper *Ovaciones*.

Ventura also remembers Alicia Pineda, who was related to football players and wanted to play football and everyone told her:

forget about football for a woman; you can swim, you can play tennis, but football? for which Licha must be very grateful because she went around the world because they sent her to I don't know how many Roland Garros and Wimbledon (tennis) tournaments and I don't know how many Olympic Games through swimming and she is a great journalist. (Sen, 2011, p. 104)

It was already in the nineties when female voices burst into radio spaces. Sisters Graciela and Mac Reséndiz (ESPN), on Radio Chapultepec, were the leading voices of the weekly program "Cambio de Juego" (Game Change), a program product of their creativity in which Mónica Fernández Nuño (El Herald de México) and Selene Vázquez (El Nacional) also collaborated. After this, at the beginning of the new millennium, both were invited to collaborate with the ESPN channel and website (where they remain). It was the first program exclusively hosted by women (Pedraza, 2015, p. 113).

Meanwhile, Silvana Galván was the first woman to appear on camera to give a feminine touch to the sports world; this was in the program *Los Protagonistas* on Imevisión in the coverage of the 1986 World Cup, with color reports and interviews about the private lives of different players (Pedraza, 2015, p. 109). In the broadcasts in which she participated, her colleagues on camera perceived a hostile environment towards her work, headed by the famous journalist José Ramón Fernández.

For her part, Mara Montero on Televisa, with a different profile, was in charge of giving the sports section in the news program of Lolita Ayala and participated in the coverage of some sporting events. Although the support of the program's host, one of the most representative figures of those years for the television station, was evident, the journalist remembers the limitations she faced in her performance as a reporter:



She points out that during her stay at Televisa, the bosses never handled clear criteria about who could occupy a space in front of the cameras: "There was an executive who removed my notes from the screen with the sole argument that I was a woman and he did not like a woman covering football" (Pedraza, 2015, p. 13).

Some barriers were more challenging to overcome than others; just as at the time, female reporters had to conquer general information, leaving behind the tendency that forced them to work in the Social or Culture sections in the seventies (Sen, 1998), female journalists in Sports were assigned to particular disciplines, mainly Olympic or in which the participation of female athletes was considered more natural.

Baseball, boxing, wrestling, American football, and especially football, not in vain wrongly called "the man's game," were kept jealously guarded from female reporters, which also represented a fundamental limitation on their performance. Particularly on television, as Beatriz Vázquez, who started in radio (1998) with Francisco Javier González and later joined Televisa, explains: "Usually, women were sent to Olympic sports, and those are disciplines that are only relevant for television stations when there are Central American, Pan American or Olympic Games. Those who talked about football, which there are all year round, were the ones who could appear on camera" (Pedraza, 2015, p. 114).

Georgina Ruiz Sandoval experienced something similar when trying to fulfill her dream of narrating American football. She always worked hard and focused her work to achieve that goal. First, Ruiz Sandoval worked in Mexico for Channel 11 of the National Polytechnic Institute. Then she worked at MVS Multivisión covering Olympic sports and national and international cycling races until she achieved her dream. She was the first female American Football reporter for ESPN in Latin America, narrating games for the ONEFA, the Mexican University League (Pedraza, 2015, p. 106).

There were limitations within limitations. Reporting on certain sports was already one thing, but appearing on camera to comment or narrate was one more. Thinking about hearing a female voice report on the actions of a game seemed totally out of place for media executives and the public. Seeing or hearing them talk about "color" or interviewing sports figures was one thing; Listening to their comments or analysis of what happened in a match or competition was still questionable, except in cases where the knowledge and experience of the commentator or

analyst were evident, such as Estela de la Torre<sup>3</sup> on TV Azteca or Claudia Esteva<sup>4</sup> for Televisa in diving and gymnastics.

The participation of the women's football team in the 1999 FIFA World Cup and the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, whose television rights were exclusive to Televisa, allowed female voices to begin to be heard in reports from the field and as commentators; however, the pretext was apparent: women's football had to have female voices for the broadcasts. Later, female reports from the field or the team bench in the Professional Men's Football League broadcasts became commonplace, revealing a slight possibility for narration.

#### 4. "A goal is a goal."

"Because in essence, whether it comes from the boots of Maribel Domínguez or Cuauhtémoc Blanco, in the back of the net, in the throats of the announcers, in the hearts of the fans, a goal is a goal" (Pedraza, 2008, p. 207).

The reality is like that, and it has to happen over time. Gabriela Fernández de Lara was the first Mexican woman to narrate a match of the Professional Men's League of Mexico on April 18, Puebla vs. Cruz Azul of the 2004 Clausura (Reséndiz, 2004), for Televisa. Since then, women who have taken the microphone to report on the actions of a football match on television have been harshly criticized for their style and pace, a situation that has constantly been related to the idea that "only they can do it."

In general, the presence of women in sports programs continued to be as presenters or news readers and generators of "color" and "heart notes" content; however, little by little, female voices began to be heard in other roles; a few were recognized for their knowledge and style to allow them to give analysis and commentary, in this case Geo González with Televisa and TUDN and Marion Raimers in her beginnings at Fox Sports stand out. On March 10, 2018, most likely in the wake of the celebration of International Women's Day, Iris Cisneros became the first woman to narrate a Liga MX Men's match (América vs. León) for the American audience

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<sup>3</sup> Former Olympic gymnast, Individual All Around finalist at the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games, being the only Mexican gymnast to participate in these Olympic Games, at the age of 15. Pan American Team Bronze Medalist in Puerto Rico 1979. Former World Diver, 4th Place Pan American and Central American Medalist. (SpecialOlympics <https://specialolympics.org.mx/embajadores/estela-de-la-torre/>)

<sup>4</sup> Claudia Esteva was a gymnast for seven years, has been a gymnastics coach since 1984 to date, with several members in the National Team, and has been an international Judge since 1989.

through Univisión in a broadcast in which 11 women would participate in different roles (Dilan, 2018).

The stage was almost set. The Liga MX Femenil matches were already broadcast almost entirely, always on pay television or online, but already with an audience that follows them regularly. For the Guardianes 2020 tournament, the different networks broadcast games from the various clubs with this scheme: TUDN (América, Pumas, Tigres, Cruz Azul, FC Juárez and Toluca); TVC Deportes (Atlas, Puebla and Querétaro); TV Azteca Digital (Mazatlán FC); Fox Sports (Chivas, Santos, Pachuca, Monterrey, Tijuana and León); Marca Claro (Necaxa) and Youtube (Atlético San Luis) (Rojas, 2020).

Currently, for the 2024 Closing Tournament, the broadcasts continue on restricted television, but with some changes: Fox Sports broadcasts Atlas, Guadalajara, León, Juárez, Mazatlán, Rayadas, Pachuca, Querétaro, Santos, and Tijuana, while Vix carries América, Cruz Azul, Necaxa, Toluca and Pumas; ESPN has the matches of Atlético San Luis and Puebla on its screens; and Tigres remains on Afizzionados.

## **5. Ready to sing the goal**

A new generation of Mexican women raises their hand in the face of growing possibilities and joins Geo Gozález and Marion Reimers: Ana Caty Hernández and María Fernanda Mora on TUDN; Julia Headley on ESPN; Mónica Arredondo on Fox Sports and Majo González on TNT Sports, are the female faces and voices of football. Two other women deserve special mention, although they specialize in another sport, American football. Still, they respond to this generation and have similar profiles: Valeria Marín on TUDN and Rebeca Landa on ESPN. Fortunately, they are not the only ones, but they are the most visible.

This article analyzes, through discourse analysis, the identity that they assume in journalistic profile interviews that these journalists gave at some point to different media:

Identities are the names that we give to the different ways in which we are positioned, within which we position ourselves, or in which other members of society position us through our discourses. In other words, identities could be captured by asking ourselves questions such as Who do I think I am? What do others think I am? What do I think others are like? What do others think they are like? Formulating or answering these questions would be impossible without resorting to discourses. (Salgado, 2019, p. 28)

In these interviews, they talked about what their careers as commentators or narrators have been like, the difficulties they have experienced during this time and how they see the future, their expectations and those of women journalists in the future in the face of new conditions and challenges different from those experienced by their predecessors. Below are the statements considered to encompass these ideas and reflect the identity that each one assumes.

**5.1 Mónica Arredondo.-** Fox Sports.- Originally from Ensenada, Mexico.- Graduated in Journalism from the Universidad del Valle de Atemajac, in Jalisco, Mexico.- Reports and host of Agenda Fox Sports and Fox Gol Femenil.

A fervent promoter, from her space, of women's football in Mexico, she recognizes the importance that it has had.

The growth that the League has had, but even more so the growth I have had with the League. Before the League, I did not comment on football matches; now, it is not that I do it spectacularly, but I defend myself; that is, professional growth and personal growth. Taking advantage of the opportunities that you have according to the circumstances, the circumstances that there was a League and that Fox Sports had the rights to the League, and they told me: "Go, Monica," and I was happy; these last finals I had already commentated in the stadium when I usually did the field. (Arredondo, as interview en Mi manera de ver el fútbol, 2022)

Liga MX Femenil arrives, and they tell me it is my turn to commentate. That gave my life a professional change because it was what kept me with that emotion and with that adrenaline of wanting to be there; it is something that I had never done, that I did not even think about or expect for my career because I like being in action, being on the field, more. Being a field reporter is something I've always loved, but suddenly, being in the booth commentating? Well, it's strange because I've watched football all my life; from watching it and understanding it to now turning it into words, trying to explain it, and deciphering stops and systems, it is very different. Five years ago, I couldn't imagine everything that could have happened (Arredondo, as interview in Fútbol Total, 2022).

She takes her personal experience as a basis and, without saying it openly, she recognizes herself as a possible role model and, when asked directly, gives advice to those who want to follow in her footsteps: "Knock on doors now. It's never too late, but since it's already too late, it's taking too long. If you enjoy it, if you're passionate about it and if you don't die of hunger, that's it" (Arredondo, as interview in Pelotazo MX, 2021).

**5.2 Georgina González Toussaint.-** TUDN.- Originally from Mexico City.- I graduated with a degree in graphic design from the Universidad Iberoamericana.- Televisa commentator and TDW Radio host.

She believes an evolution is reflected in the decrease in attacks and criticism, mainly on social networks, towards women who talk about football; however, she perceives an excess of "pampering" from some sectors towards female footballers. Likewise, she assumes the commitment to support those who intend to follow in her professional footsteps:

Every time we spoke, the players and me, they sent us to the kitchen to wash dishes; now the conversation, 80 percent is about women's football and the other, although it annoys me that the language is the opposite, absolutely condescending, the girls, the young ladies, the little devils. Now we are worse off because the referees do it. (González, as interview in Apuntes de Rabano, 2020)

Aware of the challenges she has had to overcome and the difficulties of these challenges in one of the most extended and most consolidated careers in the field, she assumes the responsibility of supporting women who want to enter sports journalism:

Each of the women who manage to do something meaningful in the media in sports, establish themselves, and have a respectable space has to help one at least achieve it because of how difficult it is to get there. (González, as interview in Apuntes de Rabano, 2020)

**5.3 Majo González.-** TNT Sports.- Originally from Mexico City.- I graduated with a degree in marketing from the Universidad Iberoamericana:- Champions League narrator and host of Las Champions.

She recognizes and confronts acts of violence, specifically messages on social media, and decides to use them to strengthen herself professionally:

At the end of the day, there comes a point when I see my messages, many of them very good, that I always, always, always thank people for, and many others that even make you doubt: "I said: Am I that bad? I don't know if I don't do my job well or why such a direct attack.

"Go to the kitchen," "Bad fuck", it is that every day, "Shut up and make me a sandwich," "macho," all of those are just the level of words that they throw at me. I ignore them; they are people who don't want to change, who don't want to realize that you may like my style or not, you may like my voice or not, but the attack is directly to why is a woman narrating football? Why is a woman in my field? Well, it's not your field. It's everyone's field because it's sport.

Comments that I usually leave aside when they are comments of pure hate; [...] better let me narrate football, that's what I do well; if you don't like it, you can let me know, but with some argumentation, not just with: "I hate you," "you annoy me."

They tell me: "You are very good at your job; you narrate very well, but I can't stand to hear a woman's voice playing football," the problem is not mine. It's yours. The fact that I narrate football does not make me an opinion leader or a public figure, nor does it give me the right to insult myself and have to put up with it. (González, as interview in Apuntes de Rabona, 2021)

She recognizes herself in a position of excellent visibility and, therefore, as a possible reference for giving advice:

I knew that I could open more doors. Maybe if it were a World Cup, I would get attention, and they would turn to look at me; maybe many girls do it too, and if they see that I can, they might want to do it.

I don't know what I would tell them. I would tell them to follow a dream with their heads held high and go all out for it if they have a dream. (González, as interview in Apuntes de Rabona, 2021)

**5.4 Julia Headley.**- ESPN.- Originally from Mexico City.- She studied Economics and Finance (without finishing) at the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey and Sports Journalism at the Raúl del Campo Jr. Training Center.- ESPN talent, host of SportsCenter, and narrator.

First of all, she reflects on the lack of any reference that would allow her to see sports journalism as a professional option, which, she believes, has changed for the new generations:

Being at an analysis table on TV or on the radio talking about football, I never thought I could dedicate myself to that. You don't have female references; I grew up watching tables of five men, four narrating and men commenting. (Headley, as interview in Apuntes de Rabona, 2022a)

There are very few women that you grow up watching on television, and you say: "Hey, I can do that too if she's there." Maybe it would have been different for me to see that it was possible to take that path.

There are more and more of us, and there will be more and more of us because those girls of this generation are going to grow up seeing those women breaking with all gender stereotypes and being in those positions, and they are going to say: "I can do it too"; so, that's what's important, that it stops being the exception and becomes something natural. (Headley, as interview in Caliente Sports, 2022b)

She assumes that her condition as a woman put in her way the insecurity about her abilities, and it is a fear that she has overcome thanks to her constant effort and preparation, so her advice to the new generations is aimed precisely at overcoming those insecurities:

Storytelling. The biggest challenge isn't something specific you have to do, but rather overcoming the mental barriers of believing you can't do it. For a long time, we were made to believe we couldn't do it, and if we didn't have role models in sports journalism or storytelling, even less so. I grew up without hearing a game called by a woman; that's only been a few years now. And I think that's been the biggest challenge: to stop believing I can't, to remove that barrier, and to gradually overcome those obstacles, so to speak, and achieve things I thought were impossible.

Dreams are achieved through hard work; that's always the key. Working tirelessly, and I think fear is something many women experience somewhere, at some point in our careers; but for me, there's a phrase I love: "If you're afraid, go and do it with fear." (Headley, as interview in Bibayoff, n.d.)

**5.5 Ana Caty Hernández.-** TUDN and Univisión.- Originally from Jalisco, Mexico.- I graduated with a communications degree from the Monterrey Institute of Technology.- Reporter for the Mexican national team, football commentator, and program host La Jugada.

She recognizes the work of women who started in sports journalism and assumes the responsibility of maintaining and growing the spaces they have achieved:

When I was little, I said: "I want to go on TV to talk about football," I remember that there were one or two, and they were not necessarily sitting at a debate table or an analysis table; generally, they only shared stories that were alternate to the main story; and, as time went by, names and personalities began to emerge. (...) I think that all of them were chipping away and paving the way for the new generations who today have the responsibility to ensure that this path that was opened is maintained and, above all, grows and grows in credibility, commitment, discipline, capacity and in spaces; that is, that today instead of seeing two or three women on each channel, we see five or six or ten, as balanced as the men. (Hernández, as interview in Los Angeles Times En Español, 2021)

Given the lack of credibility that women experience in this field, she recommends preparation and perseverance:

Specifically with women, I think it is crucial that when you create the space for them to communicate, they show a lot of confidence because sometimes you can say the same thing as your partner. Still, you have to say it five times for them to believe you, which is something that, I insist, continues to be worked on and cultivated. (Hernández, as interview in Los Angeles Times En Español, 2021)

She mentions the tasks still pending:

Let's not just see it in a medium-level topic but at the next level, in corporate issues, where they are editorial heads, information heads, and directors of a channel; I think there

is still a space to be created there. (Hernández, as interview in Los Angeles Times En Español, 2021)

She also shares some advice:

Let them know what they are good at. There are many spaces: camerawoman, editor, producer, host, analyst, press. They need to know what they want to do. Once they know what they want to do and what area of communication they wish to dedicate themselves to, they need to work tirelessly and with a lot of patience because it is required to get there. With a lot of patience, commitment, and discipline, at any moment, the door will open for them to have an opportunity. If they prepared themselves beforehand, I am sure that, when the opportunity presents itself, they will receive it excellently. (Hernández, as interview in Los Angeles Times En Español, 2021)

**5.6 Rebeca Landa.- ESPN.-** Originally from Puebla, Mexico. I graduated with a degree in plastic arts from the University of the Americas Puebla.- ESPN journalist and sports narrator, National Flag Football selection and collaborator of the Denver Broncos NFL.

She recognizes the social situation that women face and sees in sports how she can influence change:

"Women do not narrate," that message left its mark on me because I knew the person who sent it. She was a woman, and I knew her because she liked to sit on the bench with the rest of the fans to watch the games. When I was a fan, and I did not narrate and did not analyze, I saw her every weekend. So I said: "How crazy, she loves American football. She is a woman; I mean, why does she think that women cannot narrate American football?" It was a massive contradiction for me, but that's when I said: "There's something here. This is my chance to make a change," because there are no spaces for women in sports journalism, and those who are there, I don't identify with them; I respect a lot what they do and what they did, but I don't identify with someone who is there, who I perceive as decoration, to satisfy the gaze of men and not because you are passionate about it. You don't have to be just that. If you want to be just that, fine, but you don't have to be just that. Beauty, knowledge, and passion are not at odds. (Landa, as interview in Efecto Inspiración | Jessica Garza, 2023)

In this sense, she assumes social responsibility in her work:

What's the point of being the first if you are the only one or the last? There is no value in that; if you are the first and many more come after you, that's good. For me, narrating every Monday Night, with all the challenges that it represents, is also a responsibility for me to know that I am here representing all women, for all those girls and boys who need to break those gender roles to dare to be what they want, from playing with dolls if you are a man, to playing American football if you are a woman. (Landa, as interview in Efecto Inspiración | Jessica Garza, 2023)



**5.7 Valeria Marín.-** TUDN.- Originally from Mexico City.- I graduated with a degree in journalism from the Monterrey Institute of Technology.- Sports presenter of TUDN.

In the first interview, she congratulates herself for not facing gender roles.

The truth is, I don't know if I have been fortunate or if I never emphasized that I was a woman; so, I didn't give importance to those comments, and I didn't give much importance to why they asked me if I liked sports.

The people I worked with realized that I was passionate about sports, and they began to treat me as such. Because of that, they began to pave the way for me on many occasions, and I never gave in to being belittled for being a woman. (Marín, as interview in El Canal de Javier Alarcón, 2020)

However, years later, she ends up questioning them:

Understand that you don't have to prove anything to anyone because, many times, you are a woman. I agree with the opinions of many colleagues in the media in front of and behind the cameras. Sometimes, I feel like I'm sitting at a table. I feel like I have to say the right words, information, or analysis, and they have to agree to have their acceptance and approval, first from the table and then from the people who are watching you, which are millions of people. Why do I have to have approval? (Marín, as interview in Prieto, 2023)

She invites those who want to follow in her footsteps to be consistent in their goals:

If they close the door on you in one place, there will be 20 more, and if not, create your own door. Today, more than ever, there are miles of access, miles of media; things won't necessarily happen the way you thought they would; life suddenly takes you down other paths. Always be true to yourselves. It's possible. There really are more women in the sports world than we might think, both in front of and behind the camera. (Marín, according to an interview in Prieto, 2023)

**5.8 María Fernanda Mora.-** TUDN.- Originally from Mexico City.- Graduated from Universidad Anáhuac.- Host at TUDN/Univisión

On the one hand, she recognizes the lack of credibility in women journalists and also the lack of knowledge about the preparation and work they must do to be where they are:

What is true is that a little bit the viewer, today that I am on television, is perhaps a little harder on women; maybe if we make mistakes, they criticize us more energetically or doubt why we are where we are; they question that it is only for the image or indeed it is just because they needed a woman to put it as an ornament. They do not know everything that is behind them. Women are here because they can do the work and not for any other reason.

After being the victim of harassment during an on-air broadcast in which, due to the insistence of the same, she ended up reacting in self-defense in front of the cameras. She released a statement in which she narrated and explained what happened. Still, above all, she stated her position regarding the aggression of which she was a victim and regarding the different reactions that were generated and that have re-victimized or violated her in various ways (Mora, 2018). This position has been maintained over the years and has become one of the flags with which she assumes herself as a reference:

I received messages from mothers who wrote to me. Usually, mothers do not write to me at all, who were very proud that I had defended myself because they showed that video to their daughters and told them: Look, if someone goes too far with you, if you don't like something, you defend yourself. So despite all the bad things that happened at that time, receiving those messages, I said: "How nice," I also inspired a little girl to know that you must defend yourself. (Mora, as interview in *The Happening Mx*, 2021)

**5.9 Marion Raimers.-** TNT Sports.- Originally from Mexico City.- I graduated with a degree in communication sciences from the Monterrey Institute of Technology.- Commentator for TNT Sports, president and founder of the NGO *Somos Versus*, and goodwill ambassador for UN Women.

Aware of being the highest representative of a feminist movement in favor of a gender perspective in journalism, she explains the conditions in which women work in this profession:

It is an environment that is not conducive to the development of women. There is harassment, there is bullying, there is invisibility, and, as a woman mainly, there is a lack of credibility: when we talk about these types of issues, apparently no one believes us. The moment we stop being complacent with the hegemonic discourse, we also become dangerous. (Reimers, 2021)

It raises the current conditions and the pending issues that are still to be overcome:

There is indeed more excellent representation. There are indeed more women in front of the camera. We will have to ask ourselves which spaces are spaces of opinion. Are they spaces where events are broadcast live? Are they spaces where power is concentrated? Or are they spaces where power is not concentrated?

But, beyond the advancement of women, it is more important to think about the inclusion of the gender perspective in the newsrooms, in coverage, in the various spaces; it is not only about whether they or we are in those places if they do not have a gender perspective or if they are in that place with a gender perspective, but they find a lot of men who cannot accompany them, who are not capable or willing or with the intention or with the will or resources to be able to do this and they feel that simply that task has been satisfied

with the presence of a woman, it goes beyond that. (Reimers, as interview in AD Noticias, 2024)

It opens the door to other options: "If they don't give us a place at the table, then let's build it ourselves (Reimers, 2021)."

## **6. Final Remarks – "They call the goal to open more doors."**

First of all, it is essential to mention the typical characteristics of the corpus members. They are women, on average, between 30 and 40 years old. They all come from family environments in which sport was part of the family education and training, whether as practitioners, professionals, or amateurs, so at all times, they had the support to achieve their professional goals. They all studied and, for the most part, graduated with a university degree, most in Communication or Journalism, and completed their studies in private institutions.

After analyzing the statements of the Mexican journalists, it is possible to realize that they assume themselves as a reference for women who decide to venture into sports journalism, an element that they recognize they lacked at the time. With this idea, they realize that they have achieved a dream, although they are not satisfied, and confess to continuing to search for greater development and professional growth by breaking more barriers and generating more space.

They all recognize preparation and perseverance, in some cases patience, as the key elements for achieving their goals, and they transmit them so that others can reach them as well.

In one way or another, they denounce the lack of credibility and gender-based violence of which they have been victims at some point in their careers and how they have faced it and used it to achieve greater strength. They lean towards generating spaces for women who want to talk, comment, or narrate football and other sports.

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