

# “Quinn, Who Goes by One Name”: Examining the Media Coverage of the First Openly Trans Nonbinary Athlete to Win an Olympic Medal

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A year after publicly coming out as trans, Canadian soccer player Quinn became the first openly transgender athlete to win an Olympic medal when they won gold at Tokyo 2020 in the women’s tournament. They then participated in the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup, another first for a trans person. These accomplishments created an important media coverage that this paper sought to examine. Inspired by a queer methodology and the concept of “trans joy,” the project proposed a creative way of documenting trans stories that were either accurate and positive or less trans-inclusive. The findings were discussed in light of the existing literature on the media coverage of trans athletes, as well as that of women’s soccer. Recommendations for the media are also included.

Quinn, a soccer player for Canada’s Women’s National Team and Seattle Reign FC in the National Women’s Soccer League who now uses they/them pronouns, publicly came out as trans in a social media post on September 8, 2020. The post featured a nonsoccer-related picture<sup>1</sup> of Quinn, smiling, with the following caption:

Coming out is HARD (and kinda bs). I know for me it’s something I’ll be doing over again for the rest of my life. As I’ve lived as an openly trans person with the people I love most for many years, I did always wonder when I’d come out publicly.

Instagram is a weird space. I wanted to encapsulate the feelings I had toward my trans identity in one post but that’s really not why anyone is on here, including myself.

So, INSTEAD I want to be visible to queer folks who don’t see people like them on their feed. I know it saved my life years ago. I want to challenge cis folks (if you don’t know what cis means, that’s probably you!!!) to be better allies.

It’s a process, and I know it won’t be perfect, but if I can encourage you to start then it’s something.

1. put your pronouns in your bio
2. follow/listen to other trans/nb voices (@janetmock, @ashleemarieston, @alokvmenon to name a few :))
3. practice using gender neutral pronouns with friends/ in a mirror
4. vote
5. start to catch yourself making assumptions about people in public/bathrooms/any space

The news immediately spread, and Quinn became the topic of a multitude of sport and nonsport-related publications all over the world (e.g., BBC, Outsports, People, Radio Canada, and Têtu). Among them, there was a video interview of Quinn about “coming out, pronouns, and how the sports world can become more

inclusive” (CBC Sports, 2020). In the video, Quinn notably spoke about the importance of accurate and positive representations of trans lives in the media, as well as the necessity of being educated and using appropriate language when reporting trans stories. The video was ironically linked in a CBC Sports article about Quinn that deadnamed them in the third paragraph and later reproduced a statement from FIFA, the world’s soccer governing body, that also deadnamed them (Davidson, 2020). While the article was overall positive, employing Quinn’s correct pronouns and containing several quotes from the video interview, it perfectly illustrated the necessity of Quinn’s call to the media to better educate themselves in order to “depict trans lives accurately and in a positive light.”

The following year, Quinn would once again be in the news after they became the first openly transgender, nonbinary athlete to win an Olympic medal when Canada earned gold in the women’s soccer tournament at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.<sup>2</sup> They then participated in the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup, another first for a trans person. These accomplishments, much like their coming out, attracted the media’s attention from around the world and produced a media coverage that varied in its degree of celebration, respect, and inclusion for Quinn in particular, and for trans people in general. The purpose of this article is to seize the unique opportunity to study the media coverage of a trans athlete that competed in a team sport and reached the pinnacle of success on the soccer pitch. It is therefore at the confluence of scholarship on the media coverage of trans athletes and scholarship on the media coverage of women’s soccer.

## Media Coverage of Trans Athletes

Though absence or invisibility was argued to be the most notable characteristic about trans athletes in the media (Lucas & Newhall, 2019), negative and transphobic coverage has been documented by multiple studies (e.g., Fischer & McClearen, 2020; Love, 2019; Scovel et al., 2023). In that regard, Billings et al. (2019) talked about an often “problematic media coverage” (p. 382) concerning LGBTQ athletes and asked for increased media literacy in order to get a more inclusive coverage. More specifically, Love who investigated the coverage of Fallon Fox, a trans woman and

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mixed-martial arts (MMA) fighter, claimed that “[o]ne traditionally prominent framing in media coverage of trans people has involved pathologizing, marginalizing, and disciplining transgender identity and gender nonconformity” (p. 212). In a similar vein, Baeth and Goorevich (2023) examined various media sources related to the access of trans people to sport and demonstrated how trans individuals were represented negatively therefore furthering a conservative political agenda. The authors explained how trans athletes were particularly framed as a threat to women’s sport, suggesting that trans women were perceived to have “malevolent psychological intentions to compete against cisgender girls” (p. 140).

In contrast, Brody (2023) analyzed a Nike campaign that specifically targeted LGBTQ+ communities. In this context, the visibility of Chris Mosier, a transgender man competing in duathlon, came with its own set of issues. Brody asserted that “[the] interrogation of the efficacy of a politics of visibility is supported by scholars who note that the relationship between media and viewers is complex” (p. 424), therefore challenging the alleged notion that increased visibility meant increased inclusion. Connected to the issue of visibility is the importance of coming out found in some stories about trans athletes (e.g., Billings et al., 2019; Lucas & Newhall, 2019), though Stott (2019) contended that these stories were “often overshadowed by discussions on whether it is fair for them to compete in the competition they have chosen” (p. 91).

The question of “fairness” was indeed never far from the media coverage involving trans athletes (e.g., Love, 2019; Scovel et al., 2023; Semerjian, 2019) since it was directly related to the inclusion/exclusion debate. The explanation of the relation between the two was presented by Lucas and Newhall (2019) in the following manner:

Fairness also operates to shape definitions of inclusion as well as shifting the discourse from inclusion of an individual to one of equality for all competitors. It is the rationale for most policies in sports and can serve as a rejoinder to claims of paternalism, for example, in the creation of banned substance lists and doping tests. As applied to trans athletes, this fairness discourse operates to maintain an illusion of physiological fairness in sex-segregated sports. (p. 110)

The media coverage of aforementioned transgender MMA fighter Fallon Fox certainly included discussions around fairness (Fischer & McClearn, 2020; Love, 2019). Fischer and McClearn (2020) described how Fox was simultaneously deemed to be a threat to other women in the MMA arena because she was a transgender woman and yet eventually accepted as a woman when she lost a fight against a cisgender woman. According to the authors, the notion of “threat” relied on the circulation of “pseudoscientific arguments” about sex and race that “not only reflect dominant, essentialist understandings of sex and gender, but they are also explicitly entangled with the racialization of Black and Brown bodies” (p. 153).

Debates about fairness and inclusion were also found in the media coverage of Laurel Hubbard, a transgender woman who competed in weightlifting at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics (e.g., Nelson et al., 2023; Xu, 2023). In Hubbard’s case, the media coverage continuously questioned her presence in a women’s event. Scovel et al. (2023) who analyzed the media coverage of Hubbard before, during, and after the Olympic Games elaborated on the “legitimate controversy” that was regularly part of the narratives about the weightlifter. According to the authors, different ways of framing Hubbard’s participation “contribute[d] to the (de)legitimization of transgender persons” (p. 839). Among them,

Scovel, Nelson, and Thorpe identified “sourcing,” which was the fact that certain individuals (or sources) who were nontransgender so-called experts were privileged and allowed to comment on trans issues. Another way that was observed concerned the tendency to use science in a biased manner in order to advance an ideological agenda in opposition to the participation of Hubbard and other trans women in sport (Scovel et al., 2023). In another paper, the same authors argued that most stories about Hubbard desperately lacked her own voice, as a result missing her “humanity” in the process (Nelson et al., 2023, p. 151). In addition, Hubbard’s trans identity was frequently delegitimized in the media by misgendering and/or deadnaming her (Nelson et al., 2023).

## Media Coverage of Women’s Sport and Women’s Soccer

Scholars have long documented the media coverage of women’s sport, notably highlighting its striking underrepresentation (e.g., Coche, 2015; Cooky et al., 2021) and the marginalization of its athletes (e.g., Bruce, 2016; Kane, 2013). Of note, Bruce (2016), who examined a multitude of media studies from across the globe, proposed a list of “rules” that encompass the various ways that female athletes have been, and continue to be, portrayed (e.g., gender marking, sexualization, and serious athletes). Focusing on U.S. media, Cooky et al. conducted several longitudinal studies that document the evolution of the coverage of women’s sports over time, both quantitatively and qualitatively (e.g., Cooky et al., 2015, 2021). They notably coined the expression “gender-bland sexism” to illustrate “the matter-of-fact, monotonous, lackluster delivery style of women’s sports coverage” (Musto et al., 2017, p. 581) that starkly contrasted with the immense success encountered by female athletes and teams that it was supposed to highlight. Here is how they explained it:

Rather than marginalizing women through overt denigration or ambivalent depictions, gender-bland sexism disguises sexism against women athletes as reactions to individual merit and performance, thus normalizing a hierarchy between men’s and women’s sports in a way that is both subtle and difficult to detect. (Musto et al., 2017, p. 581)

Conducting a similar study in Great Britain, Biscomb and Matheson (2019) investigated the media coverage of women’s sports over the same summer 2-week period for four decades. While their study corroborated the underrepresentations of women’s sports in the media landscape, the authors also noticed that the same sports continued to be present in the news; however, soccer eventually became dominant. They argued that the qualitative coverage also changed as it progressively became less on appearance and more on skill and performance. Pope et al. (2023) who conducted a longitudinal study on women’s soccer in the United Kingdom indeed found that the coverage now tended to present the players as legitimate athletes with articles on their performances, either individual or collective, to be the new norm. The findings of other soccer-centric studies across the globe suggested a coverage oscillating between the emphasis on the traditionally feminine attributes of its athletes and the focus on sport (e.g., Ho, 2014; Peeters & Elling, 2015; Ravel & Gareau, 2016). The U.S. Women’s National Team has arguably attracted the most media and scholarly attention, largely due to their incomparable four World Cups and four Olympic gold medals (e.g., Christopherson et al., 2002; Coche, 2015; Shugart, 2003).

McConnell et al. (2022) compared the media coverage of two editions of World Cup winning teams, the 1999 one and the 2019 one. In their own words:

Our analysis shows important shifts in the coverage over time. The 1999 team was popular because of their contradictory femininity in which they were “strong-yet-soft.” By 2019, the team’s popularity was rooted in their talent, hard work, success, and refusal to be silent about persisting gender-based disparities in sport and the larger society. (McConnell et al., 2022, p. 88)

In her study on the Japanese Women’s National Team following their 2011 World Cup win, Ho (2014) showed that success at the highest level did not prevent femininity to be central to the media’s coverage, the players being nonetheless celebrated for their athletic achievements. Elsewhere, Da Costa (2014) who analyzed the different ways that women’s soccer was represented in Brazil entitled her essay “Beauty, effort and talent: a brief history of Brazilian women’s soccer in press discourse” (p. 81) to illustrate the evolution of the coverage of women’s teams in general and of one player in particular, Marta, whose individual accolades are among the best internationally. Common to many studies was the importance of success in lessening the impact of gender in these media representations, what Wensing and Bruce (2003) had summarized as “bending the rules” (p. 387). In other words, women’s sports would be almost covered as “regular” sports (i.e., men’s sports) as long as their athletes or teams were winning but traditionally sexist representations immediately coming back after a loss. Ravel and Gareau’s (2016) study on France’s media coverage of *Les Bleues* for the 2011 World Cup and 2012 Olympic Games is particularly telling in that respect.

Quinn had the unique particularity of being a publicly trans professional soccer player who became an Olympic champion and participated in a Women’s World Cup. This study first sought to empirically contribute to the field of media studies on trans athletes and to add to the corpus of research on the media coverage of women’s soccer and women’s sport in general. In the process, the project evolved thanks to multiple theoretical, methodological, and ethical considerations and became innovative, by presenting the study’s findings in a creative way.

## Theoretical, Methodological, and Ethical Considerations

The theoretical framework employed for this study was inspired by poststructuralism and queer theory (e.g., Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1977; Weedon, 1987). Along with poststructuralism, I recognized the importance of discourses and language in the construction of one’s subjectivity (Waldron, 2019; Weedon, 1987). Applied to this work specifically, it meant that sex, gender, and sexuality were understood to be socially constructed and fluid in nature (Waldron, 2019) and that “the self or one’s identity [was] formed through use of daily language and discourses” (McGannon & Mauws, 2002, as cited in Waldron, 2019, p. 23). Queer theory is connected to poststructuralism and is especially relevant to the project as it questions the essential nature of sex, gender, and sexuality, and offers to disrupt the binary categories traditionally associated with these concepts (i.e., male/female, man/woman, and heterosexuality/homosexuality), as well as the hierarchies between those binaries (King, 2008; Travers, 2006; Waldron, 2019; Weedon, 1999). In the words of Weedon (1999), these binaries must be

deconstructed and replaced by “a proliferation of differences which queer theory and politics refuse to hierarchize” (p. 73). I adopted queer theory and poststructuralism as a theoretical framework because it challenges cissexism and heteronormativity and therefore refuses to consider being cisgender or heterosexual as more “normal” than being trans, nonbinary, or queer.

With regard to data collection, similar to other sport media scholarship (e.g., Cassilo & Kluch, 2023; McGannon et al., 2023), I collected data under the form of stories in Google News, using the search terms “Quinn soccer” for the three aforementioned key moments in Quinn’s journey (i.e., coming out, Olympic Games, and World Cup). The time frame for the data collection concerning the Olympic Games and the World Cup followed the same pattern with data being collected so that it included the competition in itself and one month before and one month after: June 23, 2021 to September 8, 2021 for the Olympic Games, and June 20, 2023 to September 20, 2023 for the World Cup. As for Quinn’s coming out, the data collected lasted one month post coming out (i.e., September 8, 2020 to October 8, 2020). The search was confined to stories in English and French and generated a total of 224 stories<sup>3</sup> with 31 articles for Quinn’s coming out, 123 for the Olympic Games, and 70 for the World Cup. In terms of languages, the sample consisted of 75% of stories in English and 25% in French.

Instead of proceeding with the explanations of the data analysis and then presenting the findings in a conventional way, I felt the ethical responsibility as a queer academic exploring how trans identity was viewed through a media lens to add trans joy to the project and that meant major alterations to the traditional structure of an academic paper (I am a cisgender woman using she/her pronouns). Several scholars have indeed called for the incorporation of trans joy in research and practice involving trans and nonbinary communities (e.g., Holloway, 2023; Westbrook & Shuster, 2023). Shuster and Westbrook’s (2022) study on trans joy highlighted “a vital need to address the joy deficit that exists in the sociological scholarship on transgender people specifically, and marginalized groups more generally” (p. 1). They justified their conclusions by claiming that “when scholarship focuses exclusively on negative experiences and outcomes, the facets related to misery and oppression become erroneously magnified, while the aspects that make lives livable become obscured” (p. 15). In another paper, the same authors explained why celebrating trans joy, which they simply defined as “the joy of being transgender” (Westbrook & Shuster, 2023, p. 17), is important:

This movement [increasingly expressing and highlighting *trans joy*] is in tandem with a number of other efforts focusing on the joy of being a member of marginalized groups, including those celebrating *Black joy*, *queer joy*, and *disabled joy*. Together, these movements show us how joy is a powerful way to temper the onslaught of oppression and discrimination. (p. 17)

Performing a feminist content analysis and critical discourse analysis for instance, like Nelson et al. (2023) did, would have led to results reinforcing how “problematic” the media coverage of trans athletes could be, to borrow the term used by Billings et al (2019, p. 382). I found that documenting a “problematic media coverage,” whether quantitatively or qualitatively, was incompatible with the idea of “trans joy.” Also encouraged by works using a “queer methodology” such as Waite’s (2015) and Fischer and McClearn’s (2020) who all credited Halberstam (1998) for the

inspiration, I felt compelled to “push against notions of conventional scholarship” (Waite, 2015, p. 54). According to Waite (2015), a queer methodology requires to “[take] into account both *what* we write and *how* we write (and teach others to write) in our field” (p. 55). The necessity of incorporating trans joy into this research project combined with my understanding of what a queer methodology could entail led me to “think outside the box” and present the findings under the form of a match report.

My match report will come with a complete analysis of what happened during the game (e.g., media representations of Quinn being “the first” and the media’s fixation on the fact that Quinn now “goes by one name”), and, if we’re a fan of a particular team or player, what we wished could have happened (e.g., what’s missing from the media coverage and what could be covered in greater depth). Like any good soccer game’s match report, the players’ (e.g., CBC Sports and Outsports) performance on the field will be scrutinized, brilliant plays highlighted (e.g., respecting trans people’s humanity), and technical or tactical errors dissected (e.g., deadnaming). The report will obviously discuss the match’s result in comparison with past performances (i.e., connection with the existing literature) and present the challenges facing the team in the short and long term (e.g., recommendations for a just and positive media coverage of trans athletes). Finally, the match report will be joyful (because nobody wants to read a boring match report and soccer is a *game*, so it’s supposed to be fun!) and sometimes come with tongue-in-cheek humor, as illustrated by the titles of the next three sections: A historical kickoff: “Quinn as the first openly trans athlete to win an Olympic medal,” Yellow card for lack of creativity: “Quinn, who goes by one name,” and Added time: Still time to play soccer!

### **A Historical Kickoff: “Quinn as the First Openly Trans Athlete to Win an Olympic Medal”**

The historical kickoff first involved Canada Women’s National Team, also known under the abbreviated forms CANWNT/CANXNT. While the former is a direct adaptation of the team’s southern neighbor, the U.S. Women’s National Team, the latter is a more recent addition designed to better include Quinn who is not only trans but also nonbinary. The CANWNT/CANXNT combo is also frequently used on social media by official soccer accounts and fans alike under the equivalent hashtags #CANWNT and #CANXNT. The other team in this fictional game is Seattle Reign FC, formerly OL Reign, Quinn’s professional team.

With Canada beating the U.S. Women’s National Team in the tournament semifinals, Quinn’s visibility as “the first” trans athlete to win an Olympic medal became highly newsworthy. When they won gold, the attention increased (i.e., 123 articles for the Olympic Games in total). In comparison, their shortened World Cup journey attracted less media attention (i.e., 70 articles), though more than their initial coming out (i.e., 31 articles). Quinn’s trailblazer status in the sports world was always mentioned, and rightfully so because it *is* historical, but one can only regret that this “first” wasn’t celebrated more, beside the sensational headlines. Where was our drag show? Our trans VIPs in the stadium’s executive suites? Our rainbow fireworks? We would even have settled for pink and blue scarves to raise in Quinn’s honor during the rendition of the pride anthem, *Dancing Queen*<sup>4</sup> by ABBA, exceptionally changed to “Dancing Quinn” that day! So much potential... Instead, we were sadly under the impression that it was a regular

game, not a groundbreaking one, and that could explain the team’s slow start.

On the one hand, we can see the media’s failure to present Quinn’s historical accomplishments with great enthusiasm as echoing the notion of “gender-bland sexism” that Musto et al. (2017) have documented. Winning an Olympic medal is exceptional, and becoming an Olympic champion is a chance to be part of thousands of years of History. Combining this feat with being an openly trans athlete, we find ourselves with something that is highly improbable, and yet happened. Quinn’s “first” deserved more than what it got and Musto et al. would suggest that it was because Quinn competed in a women’s event. On the other hand, one can be surprised by the fact that winning an Olympic gold medal didn’t warrant Quinn a special treatment based on the “bending of the rules” occurring when, for example, a women’s team is particularly successful and brings national pride to their country (Wensing & Bruce, 2003, p. 387). Quinn being trans probably played a part in the “less than deserved” media coverage; however, the ample coverage of Quinn as “the first” directly challenged the silence or invisibility surrounding trans athletes that was reportedly found frequently in the media by Lucas and Newhall (2019). Is it sexism? Or transphobia? Or perhaps confusion as to how journalists are supposed to report on such a unique case? It is hard to tell the exact reason why the media coverage surrounding Quinn’s “first” fell a little short but what matters is that it did.

### **Yellow Card for Lack of Creativity: “Quinn, Who Goes by One Name”**

In our fictional game, many players on the field today, and even some on the bench, received a yellow card for lack of creativity. When Quinn publicly came out as trans, they, as numerous other trans people, decided to change their name in order to eliminate the first name that were given to them at birth and that, just like their sex assigned at birth, most likely didn’t reflect their identity. Quinn chose to get rid of the first name that their parents had picked for them when they were born and to just go “by one name.” It seemed like a simple strategy on Quinn’s part, but it really confused the opposition. In other words, the media didn’t know what to do with that information and showed their flagrant lack of creativity by all, and I mean *all*, repeating the same “Quinn, who goes by one name” at some point in their stories. This avalanche of yellow cards to show the infraction could have been avoided by a stronger effort from their rival. GLAAD’s Media Reference Guide (n.d.) is very clear in this instance. It suggests to “always use a transgender person’s chosen name” and specifies that “when writing about a transgender person’s chosen name, do not say ‘she wants to be called,’ ‘she calls herself,’ ‘she goes by Marisol,’ or other phrases that cast doubt on a transgender person’s gender.” The media could have also used Quinn’s strategy to their advantage. Anyone with a solid knowledge of soccer is familiar with the names Pelé, Zico, and Marta. All are legendary Brazilian players, famous for their numerous trophies, flair on the football field, and the fact that they are better known as “Pelé,” “Zico,” or “Marta,” either a nickname in the cases of Pelé and Zico, or an abbreviated name for Marta. I was honestly counting on at least one player, potentially one of the substitute players sometimes called “game changers” by certain teams, to establish a parallel between Quinn (“who goes by one name”) and one of the Brazilian greats. What a missed chance to score a beautiful goal!

Besides the multitude of yellow cards, several red cards were also distributed, all as direct red cards, because the infraction was extremely severe. In those cases, deadnaming was the culprit and, just like racist language, transphobic language should never be tolerated. In one particular instance a story included an “Editor’s note” at the end: “An earlier version of this report deadnamed Quinn in the headline, story, and URL. We’ve removed those references and offer our sincere regrets to Quinn for this error” (Schultz, 2020). Ironically, the story in question was published on Outsports, “a sports news website concerned with LGBT issues and personalities in amateur and professional sports,” according to Google. These persistent name issues suggest, like other studies before (Love, 2019; Xu, 2023), that Quinn’s trans identity was delegitimized and misrepresented. Xu (2023) stated that “[by] refusing to refer to trans people with their preferred names or pronouns but highlighting their biological sexes, media serve to deny, marginalize, and discipline transgender identity” (p. 857). The league’s disciplinary commission is aware of Team Outsports’ attempt at correcting their mistake and encourage other teams to do the same as soon as possible.

Considerably less major in terms of consequences for Quinn, a star player, and, on the contrary, rather to their advantage, was the media team’s inability to keep the ball in play by sending it out of bounds therefore provoking numerous throw-ins. In soccer, a throw-in “is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball when the whole of the ball passes over the touchline, on the ground or in the air” (The FA, n.d.). In this (maybe inelegant) analogy, it means that a topic is surprisingly absent from the narratives around Quinn (it is literally outside) and it concerns the topic of fairness. It is unclear why the topic was completely omitted. Though Laurel Hubbard’s participation was often mentioned, in passing, in stories about Quinn during the Olympics (and we know that her legitimacy was questioned [e.g., Scovel et al., 2023; Xu, 2023]), Quinn’s presence in a women’s event was never challenged, not even implicitly. Was it because Quinn, as a soccer player, is necessarily part of a team, and a team’s success is dependent on many factors, individual and collective, contrary to a weightlifter like Hubbard who competes alone? Was it because Quinn was never seen as “too dominant” or a “threat” on the field, whether physically or technically/tactically? Was it because Quinn continued to compete in the same women’s category after their coming out therefore not challenging conventional gender norms as dramatically as Hubbard? Quinn’s race might have also played a role in this case. Fischer and McClearn (2020) had claimed that trans women, and trans women of color in particular like Fallon Fox, presented a threat to white women in the MMA arena. This type of transphobic and racist rhetoric evidently doesn’t really apply to Quinn who is white and not a trans woman, but I argue that Quinn’s whiteness certainly contributed to their being represented as “nonthreatening.”

### Added Time: Still Time to Play Soccer!

Media studies are about what’s written and how, about what’s *not* written, and about what *could* be written and how. We are now at the end of this fictional game of soccer, in “added time,” and our favorite team is losing by a goal, which means that they need to score twice in order to become victorious. But, dear readers, and especially fans of Team Trans, there was no need to lose hope. Head Coach Chris Mosier quickly adjusted his game plan and Team Trans was able to implement two specific tactical changes that led to two improbable goals.

The first tactical change involved more in-depth discussions about soccer. Pope et al. (2023) reported encouraging results in their study of the media coverage of women’s soccer in the United Kingdom with a coverage focusing on the players’ athletic performances. In contrast, many studies around the world highlighted the fact that sport was not always the only focus and that many stories favored the players’ gender attributes (e.g., Da Costa, 2014; Ho, 2014), though success seemed to be key in mitigating sexist representations (e.g., Ravel & Gareau, 2016). What was lacking from the media coverage about Quinn was detailed explanations of their individual performances, their contributions to the team’s success, their potential weaknesses as a player, or the costly mistakes that they may have made at a crucial moment in the game. In short, we would have wanted more “soccer talk.” That shift would require longer articles, once again going beyond “Quinn is the first,” and writers that are soccer specialists. Combining the two equals an easy goal for Team Trans. The two teams are now tied at 1.

The second tactical change was perhaps more difficult to execute. It consisted of having intelligent and respectful explanations about trans and nonbinary identities. Most stories were not actually negative about Quinn (if one omits the red cards), but there was a clear opportunity to discuss sex, gender, and sexuality outside of the binaries and celebrate Quinn as a proud and successful trans and nonbinary person even more. Some tried to provide explanations, but their lack of adequate vocabulary and knowledge to discuss trans and nonbinary issues was evident. Nelson et al. (2023) lamented the absence of trans voices in these narratives and urged members of the media to find trans people’s “humanity” (p. 151), which is a sentiment echoed by award winning journalist Katie Barnes when they said “[l]et’s remind folks that they are people. And they have stories, and they have lives” (Gibbs, 2023). One way of making sure that trans voices are included and that Quinn’s “humanity” is protected is by adding trans experts, like Barnes, to newsrooms to combat anti-trans narratives (Scovel et al., 2023; Xu, 2023). In Quinn’s own words, “it’s so crucial, for us [trans people], and for media, to depict trans lives accurately and in a positive light” (CBC Sports, 2020). That quote is our winning goal. It’s the moment that made the fifty thousand fans jump for joy and spontaneously chant “you are the dancing queen/Quinn” because, Quinn (who else?) had scored after precisely controlling the ball with their chest then kicking it in a perfect volley that hit the top left corner of the net. What a dramatic finish!

## Concluding Thoughts

Many articles on Quinn have not completely hit the target when it comes to accurate and positive representations of trans stories. Stories that managed to use Quinn’s correct pronouns, avoid deadnaming them, celebrate their athletic achievements with effusion, and overall present them as a whole human being seemed impossible to find. That constitutes the study’s first important contribution: expanding the field of media studies on trans athletes empirically. The study also added to the scholarship on the media coverage of women’s soccer and women’s sport. Another impact was at the methodological level with the combination of “trans joy” and a “queer methodology” that resulted in a creative presentation of the project’s findings and their discussion in connection with previous works. My intention was to create a more trans-inclusive “vibe” and I hope that I succeeded.

Finally, I would like to suggest a set of recommendations in order to create safe spaces for trans and nonbinary people: prioritizing depth over sensationalism in trans stories; education (e.g., pronouns and vocabulary); and more 2SLGBTQ+ members of the press, in particular trans and nonbinary individuals. As illustrated in this study, sensationalism often took over and Quinn being “the first” was regularly the only information circulated in these articles. More “soccer talk” would have significantly improved these stories, as well as more on who Quinn is as a person, besides being trans and nonbinary. With regard to education, GLAAD’s Media Reference Guide (n.d.) which notably includes sections on transgender terms and transgender people is the perfect place to start learning on such topics. As stated on their website, the Guide “offers education and guidance” and “is intended to be used by journalists reporting for mainstream media outlets and media creators who want to tell the stories of LGBTQ people fairly and accurately” (GLAAD, n.d.). Though anyone can benefit from this guide, 2SLGBTQ+ journalists would certainly have a head start and amplifying their voices would ultimately contribute to richer and more diverse stories in the media landscape.

## Notes

1. Quinn is leaning on a stand-up paddleboard by a lake, their lower body in the water.
2. The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Summer Games were postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and held from July 23, 2021 to August 8, 2021.
3. Despite being mentioned in the introduction of the paper, the video interview with Quinn published shortly after their coming out was not included in the data sample. A brief overview of that video and others found during the targeted time periods seemed to corroborate the study’s findings though.
4. Talking about queens, go check the Seattle Reign FC’s logo. You’ll thank me later!

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