

DEEP SPACE GENDER EQUITY SESSION 2019

Session Outline

2.30-3:00pm: Arrival, check-in, introduction

3:00-3:30pm: Warmup

3:30-4:00pm: Split into teams and drill

4:00-5:00pm: Games

2.30pm: Arrival, check-in, introduction

Here's how we explained the session in the introduction:

We think Mixed Ultimate offers a great opportunity to test out gender equity practices in sports, and that's the aim of today. We asked ourselves: what would it look like if we were to create a session where women and non-binary players felt like they were fully valued and could take up more space on the pitch? We recognise that there are historical and current inequalities in sports, and Ultimate, according to gender. Female and non-binary players have fewer opportunities, receive less support, and are less likely to play than male players. Equitable practices are those that seek to address inequalities by offering more space and opportunities to those who don't typically get them. In this instance, gender equitable practices at this session mean that there will be more space and opportunities for female and non-binary players, and that the session will be specifically focusing on how we can best support them. This doesn't mean that are devaluing men, or asking them to do less. In fact, we think that parts of this session will push men to think more and differently than usual, so we'll be asking a lot from male players.

What are we asking from you?

- Positivity: celebrate all successes, encourage each other, have fun, and don't worry about turnovers or mistakes*
- Focus: help us keep to schedule! Listen carefully and follow quickly, and save questions and comments for leaders after instructions*
- Intensity: bring your A-game and play 100%, but please be aware of your body and the others on the pitch, and call all fouls and Spirit infractions*

3:00pm: Warmup

We did a variation on the [FIFA 11+ warmup](#), which was designed to prevent knee injuries those with higher hip-to-knee angles.

What people said:

- “The nordic curls in the warm up was a bit too heavy an exercise to mix with sprinting”
- “The warm up was advertised as very thorough and intense but this turned out just to mean lots of running which isn't effective to prepare the body and tires people out needlessly.”

3:30pm: Split into teams

We split into teams of even gender matches, using the [VUL policy](#). We asked people to signal their preferred gender match (the gender they would like to mark up against) using WFDF hand signals, then finding someone else of the same gender match. Each pair then paired up with two people of the other gender match, and then that four paired up with another four, and so on, to make evenly split teams. We had 40 people at the session, so made four teams of 10.

What people said:

- “I also liked that we stayed in our teams throughout the session.”
- “I stumbled upon gender calling when was calling for extra players. Normally in this situation you would call 'we need one more lady/guy on the line', but since we were trying to avoid gender labelling, I struggled on a few occasions. Only after the games I realised that I could say 'we need someone to match against a lady/guy', something like that, and that should sound in line with the 'match against' principle.”

3:35pm: Drill: The Box of Success

This drill was aimed at three issues identified in the articles:

1. Looking off a player because of our conscious or unconscious judgements about their speed, skill, or value
2. Unwillingness or lack of knowledge to adjust playing style from non-Mixed divisions
3. Lack of trust

In this drill, each player is asked to throw an open under throw to every other player on their team, which they must be able to catch in a box of cones without slowing down or changing direction. The aim is to make each player recognise and adjust to each of their teammates' individual catching window. You can download the full drill explanation separately from www.deepspaceultimate.com.

What we saw:

Throwing success in this drill is a really low percentage - we don't usually push ourselves to be this exact and often consider our throws successful if they are caught rather than perfect. In all four drills, men volunteered to throw more often than non-men, so when women or non-binary players were throwing their receivers were more tired as we were further along in the drill.

What people said:

- "I enjoyed that we started with the throwing exercise, it got me thinking about individual speed etc and was a great basis for playing games later."
- "I felt like I learned a lot in the throwing to different people bit. Genuinely felt like I used it in the games, and would take some of that learning into playing mixed in the future."
- "The drill did take a while, maybe making groups smaller to add a few more drills would be better"
- "The repetition in the drills was really useful. E.g. being able to throw 5+ disks in a row before going to the back of the queue"

4:00pm: Games

We ran three different 15-minute games with specific rules, with a water break in between each game. We played two games of 5-on-5 due to numbers and pitch size.

Our rules were inspired by statistics on gendered touches from Kathy Franz' article. We asked all teams to play vertical stack and match defense, and enforced a four-turnover-restart rule (if there are four turns in a point, or two per team, the point ends). We also asked everyone to actively try to catch every pull, and said that dropped attempted pull catches weren't turnovers.

➤ *Stat 1: Women have many fewer touches on the disc than men in Mixed games (approximately 26% compared to 74%).*

Rule 1: Throws must alternate between those who have indicated female gender-match and those who have indicated male gender-match. This requires an even number of touches per gender match, and will force us to think about the specific players we're on the pitch with and who we tend to look for and look off.

➤ *Stat 2: Women are particularly underrepresented in these stats (i.e. mean static pickups: 10%).*

Rule 2: Female-match players must pull, field the pull, make the first cut, and pick up any static turnover discs

➤ *Stat 3: From Kathy Franz' article, mean female assists = 19%.*

Rule 3: As above, but female-match players must also throw all assists. Any goals thrown by male-match players must be walked out to the endzone line and played from there.

What we saw:

We weren't expecting some of the side effects of the alternating-gender-match game. When a male-match player had the disc, other male-match defenders realised they could poach because the next throw had to go to a female-match player. This meant that the players they were marking had to try to actively keep them occupied (even though they couldn't receive the next throw) and set up a threatening continuation cut. The third game rules turned out to be not very different from the second, as there was only one instance of an assist from a male-match player in either game.

What people said:

- “The main reason I generally prefer women's is because I get the disk more, so to have that factor of mixed removed made it super fun.”
- “It was eye-opening playing mixed with the gender rules, such a different dynamic.”
- “During the games, I really liked the 'you have to throw to someone from the opposite gender' exercise - i think it was equally useful for both genders!”
- “Maybe the 3rd game might have been a little bit more different from the 2nd one (I have no specific ideas, though..)”
- “It was touched upon with letting women have the first cuts, but I think during the game women were still being cut off by their less free male teammates”

Overall Feedback

People liked the grounding in stats, but would have liked more on experience:

- "It was very helpful to hear the specific statistics that the session/drills were aiming to rectify."
- "I liked how you explained why we were doing each one by relating it back to the stats"
- "Would be cool to give the opportunity for women on the day to discuss experiences of playing mixed and getting looked off, or not getting to pick-up the dead disk etc. Just think this direct insight might make the message hit home a bit more, or offer a different perspective, as opposed to just listening to ultimate stats which are easier to dismiss."

People enjoyed themselves:

- "I enjoyed the positivity, the drills and the rules during the game as it encouraged everyone to think more- either with analysing the pitch and options or just their own cuts."
- "The atmosphere was very, very positive and everyone was open to giving more pitch-time/discs etc to the women and generally very supportive of each other, which I loved and would love to see much more in actual game situations across teams. I myself learned to step up more and put myself out there, eg as handler or as the one performing the pull, which are two things I thoroughly enjoy, but mostly step down, because of fear of failure in past situations and respective reactions from teammates."
- "The vibe was so positive and friendly. Also, it was eye-opening playing mixed with the gender rules, such a different dynamic."

There were a lot of other topics people wanted to test out and learn:

- "Zones and switchy defences."
- "Keeping your man busy so they don't go and poach. It affects both genders but men tend to poach more in Mixed. Not being in the way of cuts. Important in all Ultimate. Even more so in Mixed."
- "The only time I was frustrated was when I threw long to a woman but then some guys were quite near so they caught up and it was a D. Like obviously I should have seen them and considered, but that is quite a mixed specific skill because you have to think about not just where players are but how fast they are? Also perhaps there is something to learn regarding keeping your defender occupied to give your teammates space?"

- “Keeping your man busy so they don't go and poach. It affects both genders but men tend to poach more in Mixed. Not being in the way of cuts. Important in all Ultimate. Even more so in Mixed.”
- “Guys I have spoken to often say that they can't tell when women are free or not because the defender is generally closer to them than in mens (cos physics). So maybe an extension of the first drill we did but with defence? Or possibly a deep throw version, as I think overthrowing women happens quite a lot?”
- “I'd be interested to hear about how people feel about contact and whether that drives people away from playing mixed”
- “Any exercise building and strengthening confidence is very welcome! Any suggestions to take off the edge at times to just enjoy the games would be great. I think that is what a lot of women experience and why instead of blossoming, they choose to stay silent and in the shadows.”

People had useful feedback about where we could have done better:

- “Was the goal to increase in game participation of female match ups in mixed due to gender imbalances in this area being some kind of injustice. Or was the goal to show that we can be better mixed teams by utilising our women more strongly (imagine the mixed columbian team isolating the cardenes twins). I think the later was the intended purpose and is hard to argue against, but i felt like intentions were sometimes clouded by the first approach coming through. Some of the stats that were given throughout for example don't really imply that fundamental frisbee mistakes are being made rather ones of justice due to sexism.”
- “If people coming to these sessions are able to transfer the content to their respective teams, then that is wonderful! But my fear (at least that is how I experienced it in a few teams I played for in the past) is that some individuals in teams, usually the ones with the loudest voice and not too fond of giving too much pitch time to women and even more likely to take it away, should the women not perform, would not show up to such sessions.”
- “Use of less binary gender language. e.g. 'non male identifying' instead of 'female' (I appreciate this is a struggle in a sport that sill classifies people using binary genders).”
- “Maybe encouraging people to be really vocal in the equality training sessions (e.g. during the short games at the end) of trying out and really getting to the swing of using non-gendered language under pressure.”