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The Business Of Being A WNBA Player



Paulana Lamonier ①

I highlight women trailblazing through male-dominated industries.



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WNBA Entrepreneurs WNBA ENTREPRENEURS

Six-figure deals aren't uncommon in the world of basketball - unless you're a woman.  Unlike NBA superstars, Stephen Curry, LeBron James, and James Harden, the ballers of the WNBA work harder for less than half the pay. 

According to [CNBC](#), WNBA players earn 20 percent of an NBA player's minimum salary. WNBA salaries cap out at \$110,000, a far cry from the highest paid NBA player.  Out of 157 WNBA players, [89 of them](#), like Minnesota Lynx's [Maya Moore](#), Los Angeles Sparks [Nneka Ogumike](#) and Chicago Sky's [Cheyenne Parker](#),

play overseas for one reason: more pay for play. Although they are paid well and given more recognition than in the states there's a downside to playing overseas: playing for both leagues year round, which means no time to rest.

[Median salaries](#) in the WNBA are around \$71,635, and starting salaries are \$50,000, while players in the Euro League start at \$100,000.

To put everything in context, the minimum salary of a professional NBA player is [\\$582,180](#), a \$10,000 raise from last seasons minimum which was \$562,493. As for NBA referees, salaries are \$150,000 which goes to show that even refs — who aren't athletes — make more than a WNBA champ [🐦](#) or matter of fact the entire roster, per [Yahoo!](#).

To show the pay disparities in sports on a broader scale, in our 2018 world's highest-paid athletes roundup, a list that consists of today's highest paid athletes from 23 countries — there were no women featured on the list. [🐦](#) Last year, Serena Williams was the only woman who made the [list](#) with \$27 million.

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The WNBA isn't the only league that hasn't been paying women equal to their male counterparts. [🐦](#) After years of unequal pay in [2017](#), the US women's soccer team came to an agreement with US Soccer Federation where the women will get better hotel and travel accommodations, and two years of back pay when their per diems were less than men.

President of the WNBA Lisa Borders believes one of the reasons women aren't being paid enough is because of sexism.

"Let's be clear, there is a lot of sexism that still goes on," Borders said. " People do not believe that women can be superb professional athletes. That frankly is an ignorant perspective, [🐦](#) but if you haven't had the opportunity to see a game, a

player or experienced the game, then perhaps you have an uninformed perspective. We invite folks into the area to actually see a game."

Despite lady ballers being paid significantly less compared to the other major leagues, the WNBA has more players with college degrees than any other league to date 🐦 . They're the only league that requires four years of education post-high school to be eligible for the draft.

Education playing a vital role for entry in the WNBA, there are four avenues players can take within the NBA/WNBA during and post their basketball career: NBA Basketball Operations Association Program, NBA Job Shadow Program, Assistant Coaches Program, and their most recent partnership, [Harvard Business School and the NBA: Crossover into Business](#).

"When you look at professional athleticism, it doesn't have an evergreen shelf life. The average time a woman plays professional basketball is five years. These programs are to ensure that our women are fully armed to be successful not only as professional athletes, but in life," Borders said. " Our women are very prudent when it comes to planning for the future. 🐦 There are many of them who are doing things beyond the court, which will make the transition smooth into a traditional corporate environment or entrepreneurial work."

In this four-part series, we'll be introducing four WNBA powerhouses: [Angel McCoughtry](#), [Marissa Coleman](#), [Cappie Pondexter](#), and [Tamika Catchings](#).

These four women have not only made strides on the court, but took their earnings turned them into investments 🐦 and multiple streams of income. These women have taken business classes at Harvard, worked at the front office in the NBA and taking over the fashion world. Here, they give their game plan on how they did it, advice to rookies and their thoughts on the pay disparities between NBA and WNBA.

Paulana Lamonier is a multimedia journalist and on-air personality who loves telling compelling stories. She has written for Fast Company, Shondaland, LearnVest, Blavity, Her Agenda, and more where her mission is amplifying stories that traditional media won't tell. She love... MORE