

How women's sport is impacting the boardroom

Zoe Watkiss, cofounder of SunGod, delves into the dynamic world of sustainable eyewear, a domain where fashion meets environmental responsibility. Drawing on her passion for both style and ecological consciousness, she shares her perspective on how SunGod is revolutionising eyewear with a commitment to sustainability and diversity.

Temps de lecture : minute

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As a performance eyewear brand, we rely on athletes to help shape our business. Team SunGod athletes like Geraint Thomas, the iconic Welsh Tour de France winner, and world number 1 trail runner Courtney Dauwalter, help design and/or test our eyewear, then go on to prove the performance of our products on the global stage. They're absolutely integral to our business model, and since we started out in 2013, we've always tried to achieve a good balance of male and female athletes in our roster. However, in the last few years the momentum of our female athletes has skyrocketed.

Last year was a huge year for women's sport, and the inaugural Tour de France Femmes was a real standout moment. We'd been supporting the Internationelles, a cycling team and campaign group who advocate for women's cycling, for years. They would take on impressive cycling challenges to challenge the status quo and push for a more equal landscape for women's cycling, in particular for a women's Tour de France - which just didn't exist at the time.

So, when the first Tour de France Femmes took place last summer, it was

a bit of a pinch-me moment, and an unmissable opportunity to make an impact. Our *MOMENTUM film* and the campaign surrounding it was trying to do just that - to capture the momentum that was going into these landmark sporting moments, harness it, and use it to build a better, more equal world for women's sport.

Trail runner Courtney Dauwalter *recently winning the UTMB* was the ultimate testament to just how far women's sport has come. Courtney has done the unimaginable in trail running, winning three 100-mile races in the space of a few months. This is completely unprecedented and has never been done by anyone - of any gender. The Tour de France-esque crowds cheering Courtney on in Chamonix were a sight to behold, and really drove home the reality of how much women's sport has progressed. We're still a long way from equality, but progress is progress, and the fact that female athletes can perform on a similar level - and garner equal, if not greater, support and followings thanks to social media - is incredible.



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But we're still nowhere near done. Now, for SunGod, it's all about building depth in our roster. We've got the crème de la crème of female athletes - some of whom, like Courtney, achieve unimaginable feats of nature - but we know the grassroots support is just as important. To get closer to a level playing field, we need bigger pools of female athletes and greater depth of talent. So, we're building relationships with amateur clubs and teams to help nurture that growth and, in turn, raise the bar in women's sport.

The impact of these sporting successes reach far beyond the stadium. By inspiring more young girls to get into sports, we're not just keeping them fit and giving them a hobby; we're giving opportunities to their future selves. An EY report found that 19 out of 20 C-suite women were "athletic teenagers", and 1 in 8 even played sport at a professional level previously. The teamwork, confidence and leadership skills that girls learn on the playing field clearly translate into highly desirable skills in the workplace.

A few months ago, I had the privilege of being invited to Buckingham Palace to collect the King's Award for Sustainability, on behalf of the SunGod team. Having the opportunity to meet with King Charles and talk to him about our sustainability initiatives was an absolute honour; something I could never have dreamt of when we started out 10 years ago. But as I circulated the room full of award-winning business leaders, I couldn't help but notice and feel disappointed that as a young female, I was in a tiny minority.

But I'm hopeful. Seeing incredible female sporting successes - from the

Lionesses winning the Euros to women racing the Tour de France - and knowing the positive impact that sport has on leadership skills, I can safely say that all is not lost. By inspiring the next generation of girls to play and love sport, I know that in 10, 20, or 50 years' time, the room I was standing in this summer will look very different.

Zoe Watkiss is the cofounder of *SunGod*.

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