



March 2025

## Interview for the SheCOACH project

*“Now, I focus on what I bring to the table, not how others perceive it”:* Luxembourgish coach Liz Schmitz on societal expectations, personal growth, and women's empowerment

### Liz Schmitz

*Liz Schmitz is a committed basketball coach and coaching educator with over a decade of experience developing youth talent and supporting coaching advancement in Luxembourg and Belgium.*

*Currently working with the Fédération Luxembourgeoise de Basketball (FLBB), she leads coaching education initiatives—designing development programs, organizing clinics and workshops, and mentoring coaches to strengthen the national basketball structure.*

*Her coaching résumé spans boys' and girls' teams from U8 to U19, with a strong emphasis on long-term player development, inclusive training environments, and game intelligence. Liz holds a FIBA Europe Coaching Certificate, a Luxembourg Basketball Coaching A-License, and participated in the 2024 FIBA Player's Mentor Program, deepening her expertise in holistic player support.*

*A former professional athlete and trained business engineer, she blends athletic insight with strategic thinking and multilingual communication to make a lasting impact on players and coaches alike.*



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### **What challenges do women coaches face compared to their male counterparts?**

Women coaches in basketball face limited acceptance and fewer opportunities at senior and elite levels due to systemic bias and gender stereotypes. They're often excluded from influential networks and leadership roles, with fewer mentors to support their growth. Expectations around nurturing and emotional support push them toward youth coaching, where they're more accepted but undervalued. Media underrepresentation and societal pressures further hinder their progress. As a result, their potential impact at the highest levels remains largely untapped.

### **Have you ever faced discrimination or bias as a female coach? How did you handle it?**

Not overtly or actively, but in the beginning, societal expectations did plant some doubts about my potential impact —especially when it came to coaching at the senior level or working with men's teams. Over time, though, experience, personal growth, and support from valuable mentors helped reshape my self-image and confidence. Now, I focus on what I bring to the table, not how others might perceive it.

### **What steps can be taken to encourage more women to pursue coaching careers?**

To encourage more women in coaching, increase media coverage and offer financial support through fair pay. Establish strong mentorship and networking programs led by experienced women coaches. Promote visible role models like Dawn Staley, Rena Wakama, Kim Mulkey to name but a few and celebrate diverse leadership styles. Support work-life balance with flexible policies and family-friendly environments. Drive institutional change through inclusive hiring practices and accountability for gender equity.

### **What inspired you to become a basketball coach, and did gender play a role in your journey?**

My path to coaching came naturally as a transition from being a player. I was fortunate to have incredible coaches who inspired me —not because of their gender, but because of the way they taught, motivated, and supported me. I wanted to give back in the same way and help shape others' journeys, just like mine was shaped. Coaching also allowed me to keep that competitive edge by challenging myself to help players improve their game every day. While gender didn't define my journey, I recognize its significance, and I hope my path inspires young women to pursue the same passion and, ultimately, to turn it into their profession.



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