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Interview for the SheCOACH project

“It shouldn’t be about gender — it should be about quality”: Slovakian basketball coach Tatiana Gallová on challenges, leadership and breaking barriers

Tatiana Gallová

Tatiana Gallová, PhD, is a Slovakian FIBA licensed basketball coach and lecturer with the highest level of European coaching education and more than twenty years of international experience. Her career began in 1999 as a volunteer assistant with a junior women’s team in Bratislava, Slovakia. In 2002, she was appointed head coach of a youth team, marking the beginning of an extensive and diverse coaching journey that has included work across Slovakia, Denmark, Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, and Romania. She has coached both women’s and men’s teams across various age groups, combining deep technical knowledge with the ability to develop talent and deliver results at both the club and national team levels.

Tatiana is a graduate of two of Europe’s most prestigious coaching programs. She completed the FIBA Europe Coaching Certificate (FECC) from 2013 to 2015, finishing as the top student in her class. She also participated in the International Coaching Apprenticeship in Basketball (ICAB) at the University of Delaware in 2016,



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again graduating at the top. In 2015, she was selected to coach at the FIBA U18 All-Star Game, highlighting her recognition at the continental level. Her club career includes leading the BK Duchess Klosterneuburg in Austria to second place in both the national league and cup during the 2012–2013 season. She went on to coach the Flying Foxes SVS Post, guiding them to Austrian championship and cup victories in 2016, and securing a place in the CEWL finals. As assistant coach and scout with the Kapfenberg Bulls men's team, she contributed to multiple titles—winning the Austrian Championship and Cup in both 2017 and 2018, as well as the Supercup in 2018. During her time with Kapfenberg, the team also competed in the group stages of the Basketball Champions League and FIBA Europe Cup. In Germany, she led TK Hannover women's team to the German Cup Final Four in 2020, with the team ultimately finishing third.

On the international stage, Tatiana has worked with several national teams. She coached the Romanian Women's 3x3 National Team to a seventh-place finish at the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020. She has also worked with Slovakia's youth 5on5 teams, including the U14 and U16 national squads in 2013 and 2024, as well as Austria's U18 women's national team between 2016 and 2018. Her experience in 3x3 basketball extends to Austria's and Romania's women's teams, coaching in multiple editions of the European Cup, EuroCup, World Cup, and the U23 Nations League Finals.

Beyond coaching, Tatiana is a respected lecturer and mentor in the international basketball community. She has led coaching clinics and workshops across Austria, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia. In 2019, she was the main FIBA instructor at the 13th FIBA European Women's Basketball Summit held in Postojna, Slovenia. In 2023, she was invited to lecture at the FIBA Women's EuroBasket Coaching Clinic in Ljubljana and Domžale. Her most recent achievement includes leading the emerging team of Constanța women to the Romanian league finals in the 2022–2023 season.

Tatiana holds a PhD in Sports Educology with a focus on basketball, and she is also the author of several academic and professional articles related to basketball coaching and development. She communicates fluently in Slovak, Czech, and English, is proficient in German and Croatian, and has a basic understanding of French.

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

In my opinion, gender-based discrimination really started getting more attention in Western countries in the 1970s. A good example of efforts to address this is Title IX in the U.S., which focused on unequal opportunities in sports and education. So, this is definitely not a new issue.

While there have been some slow but steady improvements over the past 50+ years, women still face many of the same challenges: being judged based on gender assumptions, dealing with prejudice and skepticism, and having their abilities and knowledge questioned. And on top of that, women still deal with fewer job opportunities and lower wages.

If you look at the coaches in top senior leagues or youth national teams across Europe—how many female coaches can you actually name? ...It shouldn't be about gender; it should be about quality.



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

Yes, I've faced it almost every season, especially when working with men's teams. It's often situational, but over the years, I've learned to handle it better with experience. And I was fortunate to meet people like Aysim Altay, a mental coach who has been incredibly helpful along the way.

How I dealt with these situations has varied, and often I learned through my mistakes ... But one thing I've learned is to always remember my value and worth, no matter what others may assume or say.

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

We're talking about a very complex issue here: the barriers often exist only in our minds. The main difference between men and women in basketball, for example, is the amount of time each person can actually put into the game. As author Malcolm Gladwell points out, many people don't realize how similar the worlds of sports and music are —especially when it comes to orchestras. In his book *Blink*, Gladwell talks about "blind" auditions, where musicians perform behind a curtain so the judges cannot see them. This way, the decision is based purely on what's heard, not on things like appearance, gender, race, or age, making sure the most qualified person gets picked.

This concept, which was once missing, has had a profound impact on equal opportunities in music. If something similar could be applied to basketball, it could lead to noticeable change. While the issue is deeply rooted, supporting women in sports, creating equal opportunities, and promoting more women in leadership roles who can mentor and share their experiences would be a big step forward.

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

My love and passion for basketball were the main driving forces. I had many great coaches growing up, especially during my youth, and they became my role models. After I got injured early in my playing career, coaching felt like the natural next step to stay connected to the game I love.

Back then, there were hardly any female coaches, so the idea of becoming one—and proving that I could be someone who could help develop players, lead them, and inspire them to be the best they could be—was a huge motivator.



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