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## Interview for the SheCOACH project

# “Authority is built by knowledge”: North Macedonian-Serbian Coach Jelena Antic on challenges, opportunities, and leadership

### Jelena Antic

*Jelena Antic is a North Macedonian-Serbian basketball professional with a rich background as both a coach and former international player.*

*Born in Skopje in 1991, she holds degrees in Graphic Design and Sports Management from the American University of Europe – FON 9 (Skopje, North Macedonia) and Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia USA. Fluent in English and Serbian/Croatian, with intermediate Spanish proficiency, Jelena has developed a robust coaching career at both senior and youth levels.*

*Most recently, she served as an assistant coach for the Serbian National Team at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games and the Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Brazil. She also contributed to Rutronik Stars Keltern’s success in the German DBBL, where the team became national champions and Eurocup quarterfinalists. Her youth coaching experience spans various European championships, including leading the Macedonian U18 and U20 national teams and coaching in the UK with the Nottingham Wildcats Academy.*

*Jelena has also participated in numerous international basketball coaching seminars, learning from top-level NBA and European professionals.*

*As a player, she competed across Europe and the U.S. with notable success, including stints in Euroleague and Eurocup clubs, and multiple national championships, individual awards, and a standout collegiate career at Liberty University.*



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

The biggest challenge is being given equal opportunities without any assumptions or prejudice. Even though there have been some significant improvements in the past years for women in sports, it can be discouraging seeing the majority of head coaching positions still being given to men assuming they are more qualified than women.

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

I think there is always a little skepticism in the beginning when working with (especially) men athletes but also women. It takes time to build respect and trust, but at the end authority is built by knowledge, and once they start trusting your work all doubts disappear.

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

Encouraging women to become basketball coaches requires visible career pathways, and strong support networks. Federations and clubs must have the courage to give more opportunities and support female coaches, provide mentorship and invest in their development.

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

Having been a professional basketball player myself, I understand the commitment, discipline, and mindset it takes to succeed in this sport. By becoming a coach, I wanted to use that experience to guide and mentor others. Coaching gives me the opportunity to share what I've learned, support players in reaching their full potential, and help them develop and build character.



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