

Sport

Fury's views might stop more athletes coming out

Nicola Adams



OLYMPIC BOXING CHAMPION

I would hate anyone to think that they can't go to a boxing gym for fear of being discriminated against. We have taken the sport, and women's boxing in particular, so far and I'd like to think that when I retire there will be another girl waiting to step into my shoes.

It has annoyed me that some people have reacted to Tyson Fury's words by saying he is a boxer and what should we expect? You cannot put us all into one bracket. We're not the same. I'm not the same as him in any way, shape or form. I don't like being put in a box. We're all different. After my Olympic gold medal in 2012 the number of women taking up boxing grew by 50 per cent in six months. The sport is far more open and inclusive than the recent debate would make anyone think.

What Fury did in the ring to beat an 11-year reigning world champion was unbelievable. A lot of British fighters have tried and come unstuck, so it was great that he was able to do that. It's just sad that everything he has said about homosexuality and where women belong has overshadowed his achievements. People might think what he says has no bearing on what he does, but it is very hard to differentiate between the two. When you are the heavyweight champion, people want to hear you and find out what you are like. He probably needs to think a bit more before he speaks.

It is very hard for athletes to come out in sport, particularly guys in football. It's really sad to think many athletes will hear this view is representative of sport or society and that they can't be themselves. A footballer might look at what has happened and think, "This is why I'll never come out."

I came out quite young. I was only 15. Beforehand I was anxious and nervous because you never know what people

will think. You always expect people to react in a bad way. It was a very stressful time. I was lucky that my mum didn't care and loved me for who I am; the same with my friends. I had their support so I didn't care what anybody else thought. I was a boxer so nobody said anything to me at school. Maybe they did behind my back.

Now I get letters from both boys and girls wanting to come out, or from those who have come out because of me. It's nice to be able to inspire someone in such a positive way, but my sexuality does not define me, it's just a part of me.

Throughout my career, nobody has cared and that's how it should be. I think it will take one or two footballers to take that first step and come out and the floodgates will open. Once gay players see that a person has that confidence, they will think, "I can do it too." I used to think that if I was out

Spoty contenders

Andy Murray	4-6
Jessica Ennis-Hill	2-1
Kevin Sinfield	7-1
Tyson Fury	14-1
Lewis Hamilton	25-1
Chris Froome	66-1
Mo Farah	100-1
Greg Rutherford	150-1
Lizzie Armitstead	250-1
Lucy Bronze	250-1
Adam Peaty	250-1
Max Whitlock	250-1

people would not think I was as good an athlete, but it won't affect how you play. We have made progress but social media has made it harder. There'll always be someone sitting behind a keyboard with nasty comments, but think about the real-life people, your friends, family and team-mates. They're the people you should care about.

You'd hope that Fury would know better at his age. I am sure he has thought about what he said now. At least I hope he has. I hope that he goes on to live up to the expectations people still have of a heavyweight champion of the world.

HARRY CHIZELS/GETTY IMAGES



Adams goes on the attack at the Baku European Games in Azerbaijan where she won gold. She was also a gold medal-winner at the London 2012 Olympics