

## Episode 2: Challenging stereotypes – Transcript

Speakers: Karine Vasselín, Adrian Riches, & Cemre Ergun

**Karine:** At Capgemini, everyone is in the game. We shape a common passion for sports, and we build inclusive futures for all, on and off the field. In this series, we will be hearing from amazing athletes, and inspiring role models, how they break stereotypes and overcome challenges in sports and in the workplace.

I am Karine Vasselín. I am leading the Group Diversity and Inclusion agenda, I do para triathlon myself, and I will be your host.

Today, I have the pleasure to be with Adrian from Stonewall, and Cemre, a rally car driver from Capgemini.

In this episode, we learn about dealing with bias, and shaping an environment where everyone feels truly welcomed, irrespective of their gender identities and sexual orientations.

Hello Adrian! Thanks so much for being a part of our series. You lead the Rainbow Laces campaign at Stonewall. Could you tell us how you are driving LGBT+ inclusion in sports?

**Adrian:** Stonewall was founded 30 years ago on the back of some harmful legislation, Section 28, which was a piece of legislation which prevented the discussion or prevented people talking about homosexuality as it was then known in schools and colleges, which Stonewall successfully overturned.

But the legacy from something like clause 28 is that many LGBTQ+ people still feel unsafe and unwelcome in sport and fitness. So, for example, across Europe, 82% of LGBTQ+ people who take part in sport have experienced or witnessed homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in the past 12 months.

So, while there's been a sort of significant uptick in visibility in recent years, a lot of queer people still face prejudice across the sporting world.

So, the Rainbow Laces campaign is one of Stonewall's most successful campaigns. It's been running for 10 years, and the purpose of the campaign is to tackle homophobia, biphobia, transphobia in sport.

And we work with sports bodies, sporting bodies, organizations as well as a number of individuals to really work with them, to encourage people to lace up in their rainbow laces, and to drive a conversation that will help us to stamp out homophobia and biphobia in sport.

We work with people at the grassroots level, right through to elite sports people. It's been a hugely successful campaign running for 10 years, but there's still a great deal for us to do.

**Karine:** Surely. Hello, Cemre. Rally car racing sounds like such an adventurous sport to us. And I know that you've also played volleyball professionally. Can you tell us more about this amazing and rich journey in sports?

**Cemre:** Hello, Karine. Hello! Absolutely! My sporting journey has been quite exciting. I started playing volleyball when I was 12-years-old, and where I had to find the chance to play professional level. And then it taught me my teamwork, and then discipline.

And at the same time, I'm coming from the racing family, and I had the chance to race on the rally car, and it's given me the adrenaline rush and technical skill involved. It was incredible.

And to be in the racing and playing volleyball, I choose to embrace myself, the true identity, but it's really hard back in my country. And moving to Australia after 2019, and there's a more accepting environment, and great that I found myself and continue pursuing my passion about both racing driving and volleyball.

**Karine:** Thank you. So important, but sometimes so difficult to be your true self.

Adrian, what kind of stereotypes do athletes from the LGBTQ+ community face, especially within a team, and how can we address this?

**Adrian:** I think we all know the stereotypes that pervade around LGBTQ+ people. You know, this idea that somehow, we might not be great at competitive sports for various reasons. There are perceptions around how they might perform in sports, and really, I mean the best way that we can tackle those, I suppose, is through a conversation. By having those conversations, we can change attitudes.

But those stereotypes exist. They've existed for a long time. Things are changing, but it's still very difficult for LGBTQ+ people to feel able to fill their full potential in competitive sports, or even in the gym, and in other environments, sports and fitness environments.

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**Karine:** Thank you. And what about you, Cemre? As an athlete, what has been your experience racing or even playing volleyball, especially if we compare Turkey versus Australia?

**Cemre:** My experience racing and playing volleyball compared to Australia to Turkey, it's like worlds apart. And in Turkey, I often felt that the stereotype in the sport, it makes me uncomfortable.

While I'm playing volleyball with my teammates, I wasn't really comfortable to take a shower with them. It makes me think that they will find out my sexuality, they will be judging me.

Instead of focusing on the sport, I always second plan, thinking about what they're going to find out – if they're going to talk about me, what they think about me. And then second thing, I'm doing my sport.

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When I moved to Australia, the first thing, first, the people not think about – people loves you who you are. And when I'm doing the play, they don't think that you're gay, you're straight, or non-binary.

They don't think, they just think that you are a person and you're doing the sport. You're fully yourself, focusing on the sport, and putting the best game on the court. And today, I'm playing volleyball with the LGBT+ Sydney Volleyball Club at University of Sydney. And the part of the community was fantastic.

They provide, they fully support, the inclusive environment. That feeling I'm having, especially coming from Turkey, in Australia, it's really fantastic having that.

**Karine:** And Adrian, Cemre just shared with us how the environment around us is so important. How can we all contribute to a broader, societal acceptance of the LGBT+ community, both on and off the field?

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**Adrian:** So, consider how we can all play our part in making sport everyone's game. And one of the ways that you can do that is simply by starting a conversation about why those around you should also support the cause.

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So, it's provoking positive, constructive conversations across your communities about LGBTQ+ inclusion, whether that happens in the workplace, in the locker room, in places that you play sport, on the field.

And remembering that every conversation that you have or take is one step closer to creating a better sporting world for queer people, where they feel comfortable to be themselves and to reach their true potential.

**Karine:** Speaking in the context of sports in our discussion, how important do you think it is to have this conversation on inclusion?

**Adrian:** It's important because discrimination still exists. If we take the conversation back to sport, LGBTQ+ people can't be themselves or they find it difficult to be themselves and participate in an aspect of life that for straight cis people, they don't even need to give a second thought.

And it's a shame that the conversation is still needed, but it is a necessary one. There are things that as queer people, our community can't take for granted. And one of them is feeling safe to participate in sports. So, that's why the conversation is needed.

**Karine:** Cemre, among other things, you are also a leader from OUTfront in Capgemini Australia, OUTfront being our global network. What kind of tip would you like to share with our audience, and especially to someone who would be entering the kind of journey you've been through?

**Cemre:** So, one important tip I would share with them, to be true to yourself, and to find your community, and connect with the others who share the similar experience, right? And can provide invaluable support. When we find this support behind us, we feel more strong. OUTfront Australia actively works to create a safer environment

for LGBT+ individuals. Advocacy, event, and partnership – Australia OutFront is fostering a culture of acceptance and inclusion at all levels.

We have seen a lot of process in the past years bringing the gender information policy and neutral bathroom, inclusive language. And by raising this awareness and fostering understanding, we can create a more inclusive environment and challenge harmful stereotypes.

And in OUTfront, education is the key for meaningful change and promoting acceptance. Change isn't something that happens overnight. We just need ongoing effort and commitment.

The cultural shift is essential, and focusing on the education, open dialogue with the colleagues, foster understanding with the people. And the kind of challenge, kind of change can create a lasting impact within the communities, in workplace and the sport.

**Karine:** So, thanks so much to both of you, Adrian and Cemre. I'm afraid we're already at the end of this episode, but we learned so much from your inspiring stories and recommendations.

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