The Daily Campus
EDITORIAL BOARD:

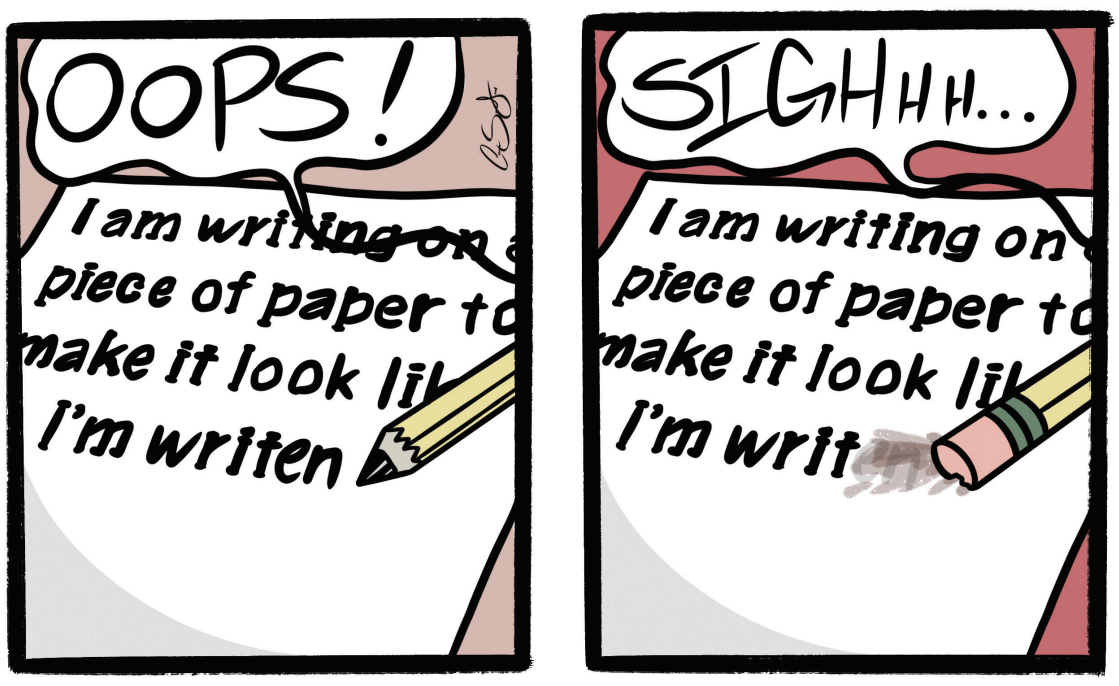
Samantha Brody
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Patrick Minnerly
OPINION EDITOR

Gianna Cassino
ASSOCIATE OPINION EDITOR

Colin Hamilton
WEEKLY COLUMNIST

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed by individual writers in the opinion section do not reflect the views and opinions of The Daily Campus or other staff members. Only articles labeled "Editorial" are the official opinions of The Daily Campus.



COMIC BY CONNOR SZREJNA, STAFF ARTIST/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Daily OPINION

GET MORE NORMAL ABOUT WOMEN LIKING SPORTS

by Maddie Sparta
STAFF WRITER
SHE/HER/HERS
mks23006@uconn.edu

Name three NFL quarterbacks. No, really, do it. Then name every Formula One World Champion in order. Oh, you can do that? Now name the starting five for the 1972-1973 New York Knicks.

This is an experience that many female sports fans will recognize. I was asked to name the Formula One World Champions while winning an argument online, just because I'm a woman (for the record, I can only get up to the early '90s — Senna and Prost just go back and forth and it gets confusing). Women are not allowed to just like sports. They must prove themselves worthy of the male-dominated field or they must like sports in a "girl way"; I can only see so many "explaining sports for the girlies" TikToks before I just delete the app.

Sports media companies are perpetuators of this idea that women want sports in "girl terms." In 2025, the United Kingdom's Sky Sports launched their its new TikTok channel, Halo. Branded as a "lil' sis" to the main Sky Sports account, Halo attempted to create "an inclusive, dedicated platform for women to enjoy and explore content from all sports, while amplifying female voices and perspectives." One example of these "female voices and perspectives" included a TikTok of two male soccer players scoring a goal, captioned "how the matcha + hot girl walk combo hits." Other references made on the short-lived TikTok account included Labubus, Dubai chocolate and "Zohran Mamdani rizzing us up," a personal favorite.

Sky Sports Halo was discontinued after three days. Shockingly, even the pretty pink backgrounds and Zohran Mamdani's rizz couldn't save the Halo launch. Much of its backlash came from female athletes, angry at the patronizing tone of the Halo program. The "lil' sis" branding across the Halo account was especially scrutinized, as it belittles the importance and impact of women's sports and is outright patronizing towards its consumers. Despite being a company that has made strides in the broadcasting and promotion of women's sports across the UK and Ireland, Sky fundamentally misunderstood the women who consume its sports content. Women are not just "little sisters." They are not interested in "girl-coded" sports TikToks. Women who watch sports content are there for exactly that — the sports.

All too often, women's interest in sports is attributed to them being interested in the "attractive" men involved. The NHL recently tried to cash in on this supposed phenomenon; their "Hot for Hockey" campaign targeted women by enlisting romance authors to write 60-90 second audiobook-style pieces. These pieces featured real "storylines" taking place during the 2026-27 NHL season, intended to be released on audiobook platforms throughout the season.

Like Halo, this initiative failed. The audiobooks were removed from Spotify less than a week after their release in late September and no new episodes will be produced going forward, despite the original intention of releases throughout the season. And, like Halo, the initiative failed because of a fundamental misunderstanding of female hockey fans. The release of hockey-themed romance audiobooks featuring real players gives the impression that the NHL does not believe its women fans to be "real fans"; women who like hockey are just a joke.

Sports media needs to learn from its mistakes if it wants to retain the recent uptick in female sports fans — the fastest growing market in sports fandom right now. Marketing differently to women than men stems from misogyny and reductive stereotypes; stereotypes that clearly do not hold, as shown by the failure of Halo and "Hot for Hockey" campaigns. The tone of these media campaigns perpetuates the idea that women are not "real" sports fans, leaking into everyday interactions such as being grilled on sports trivia to prove their worth.

Women do not need to be perfect sports encyclopedias. Women do not need sports explained to them in "pop culture terms" to understand. Women are not watching sports for attractive men. What makes a woman a real sports fan is simply liking sports.



Female fans of the NFL's Cincinnatti Bengals. What makes a woman a real sports fan is simply liking sports.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BENGAL JIM'S "BEFORE THE ROAR" TAILGATE EXPERIENCE ON FACEBOOK