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UAE Portrait of a Nation: The woman blazing a trail for others in sports broadcasting

Liliane Tannoury was so keen on sports that she moved to Brazil, where it is ingrained in their culture, before becoming the first Arab female sports reporter on TV.

 Ruba Haza
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Liliane Tannoury is the first Arab women to hold a position in sports broadcasting. Chris Whiteoak for The National

The blog

Profession: Senior sports presenter and producer

Marital status: Single

Favourite book: Al Nabi by Jibrán Khalil Jibrán

Favourite food: Italian and Lebanese food

Favourite football player: Cristiano Ronaldo

Languages: Arabic, French, English, Portuguese and some Spanish

Website: www.liliane-tannoury.com

Liliane Tannoury's passion for sports has helped shape not only her life but her career as well. After studying sports broadcasting, her passion for volleyball, a sport in which she's served as a coach and referee, led her to Brazil, to continue her studies while learning more about sport and how it is ingrained in Brazilian culture.

Later, the Lebanese expatriate became the first Arab women to hold a position in sports broadcasting, as a senior sports presenter and producer at Al Arabiya news channel in a male-dominated industry.

"If you want to talk about something, you should believe in it first. Sports are in my blood and that is what I believed in and wanted to do since my childhood," said Ms Tannoury.

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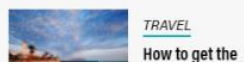
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"The vibes in the sports field can't be compared to anything; covering events that talk about winning and competition is so satisfying to me and to many others.

"I was born into a family that's deeply into sports. It makes your life much different, healthy, alive and active.

"I was a captain in volleyball, I played the game and then became a trainer, referee and a commentator. All my brothers and sisters play volleyball but football is another home to me."

After graduating from Collège Saint Joseph in Lebanon with a degree in sports journalism, she moved to South America and started her career as a reporter at a local Brazilian media institute.

"It was a challenge to convince my family with the move but they understood my desire and passion to fulfil my dreams," she said.

"I finished my higher education in communication in Sao Paulo and started my first career in journalism. During my stay [in Brazil] I learnt a lot from the cultural differences and managed to learn the language."

Ms Ms Tannoury joined Saudi broadcaster Al Arabiya in 2003 as a Dubai-based sports presenter, where she succeeded in proving herself capable among the men.

"Starting my career with Al Arabiya was not easy; it was nice but yet challenging," she said.

"I was the only woman working in the sports department along with 17 other men. It was a big challenge for me to prove myself as men think it's their field.

"Some men till now don't believe in woman working in sports journalism. I created my own path. It required extra effort but I managed to get the support of my colleagues and HOD (head of department) as they believed in me and that gave me a lot of confidence to push to go further."

She said she was the first woman to host sports programmes in the region.

"I have covered most of the sports tournaments and events around the world - two World Cups, Gulf competitions, Asian competitions, English Premier League and La Liga," said Ms Tannoury, who has also interviewed some of the world's biggest footballers, such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Xabi Alonso, Gerard Piqué, Xavi and Iniesta.

"My best interview was with Cristiano Ronaldo. He is a very nice guy, humble, smart and fit. It's challenging to arrange for an interview with the players as they have a very tight schedule between competitions and training.

"Most of the time I wait for five to six hours for them to arrive just to finalise a 10-minute interview. It's never easy but it's all worth it."

Aside from football, Ms Tannoury enjoys scuba diving and has an advance diving licence.

"My daily routine is full of sports. I hit the gym every day, I do Zumba and yoga, I also enjoy scuba, night and wreck diving," she said.

"I believe in creativity in everything we do - nothing should stop us from pursuing our dream."

Bio box:

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