

## Football in Heels: Laura Esposto

Running in Heels [Features](#) » by [Laura Gutierrez](#) June 27, 2010

Formerly a volleyball player and model, [Laura Esposto](#) made a life changing decision in 2005 when she moved into a very different sphere: the Italian football scene. Laura began working for Milan Channel, AC Milan's official network, and for Sky Italia. In 2007 she moved to England to co-present *Football Italiano* alongside Mark Chapman on Five. Laura continues to work with Milan Channel and was also involved with the Italian candidacy to host UEFA Euro 2016.

We caught up with Laura to talk about football, sexism, the World Cup and the rise of the WAGs.

### When did you fall in love with football?

I was four years old when I started to watch football; Spain 1982 was the first World Cup that I watched. My parents have told me that I was constantly climbing onto the sofa to watch the games with them although I can't say I remember first hand! I was born in Bologna so my parents both support Bologna FC and I used to go to the stadium with them. Of course, at the beginning, I didn't get it and I would just wait for and enjoy the goals. I was too small to understand tactics or appreciate players' movements and the different styles of play. I think that, when you are a child, you enjoy it because you know that it brings joy to those around you and eventually, as you grow up, you realise you are very passionate about it too. I enjoy football so much and when I watch a match, I give it my full attention; everything stops for 90 minutes.



Laura with footballing legend Paolo Maldini

### Which team do you support?

As a kid, being from Bologna and having a family of Bologna FC supporters, I supported them but then, in 2001, I moved to Milano and went to see AC Milan at San Siro and it was incredible! I absolutely fell in love with AC Milan. Bologna is still in my heart, as my second team, but I support and work for AC Milan.

### How did you become a football journalist?

I fell into it by accident. I was a model and lived in LA for a couple of years, and in 2005 I was at a magazine launch party and met a TV personality who asked me if I would like to work in football. As I love football, I said yes straight away; why not? I'm really lucky because I enjoy the studio work and all the presenting that I get to do, just like I used to do in England for Five's *Football Italiano*. I am actually quite a quiet person, and I prefer to let others do the off-site work and interviews and instead

stay behind working on the show's content and getting everything ready. In fact, I prefer not to do interviews at all. I haven't done any interviews for a long time, for years. I don't like asking questions people don't want to answer and I don't like to pry. I know what I want and what I don't want and, luckily, I can choose what to do at this moment in time. Also, to be a good reporter you have to ask uncomfortable questions and I'm friends with many players, so I talk to them off the record and it is easier that way.

Football Italiano for Five TV was a great experience and it was a real shame that Five didn't buy the rights to Italian football after 2008. I really enjoyed living in England and helping to raise Italian football awareness and understanding. I would like to come back to England some time.

### **You were a model before you switched to football journalism, do you think you have to be beautiful to be a woman in football?**

Looks matter but that's not only the case in football. I would be lying if I said that being good-looking doesn't open doors but looks alone aren't enough. You need to be smart and good at what you do. On TV, when you are presenting a show, you can't just be a pretty face. It'll show, and viewers pick up on these things really quickly. I do a lot of work off camera; a lot of writing and organising, and looks can't help me there.

### **Have you encountered sexism in the game?**

At the beginning I did. Whenever I met someone new, I realised that people, (men especially), would make all the wrong assumptions but, in a way, I think they weren't really being sexist. They just found it odd because it isn't the norm for women to be interested in football. Or it didn't used to be and, actually, I still don't think it is the norm. When men talk to me they realise I like and know a lot about football. I suppose it doesn't help that some of these men come across women who only try to get into football in order to become famous... that probably plays against the rest of us. However, when you manage to make men see that you are good at what you do, then you are okay. Sadly, beautiful women have to work harder to gain recognition, to be taken seriously. I'm not talking about football now; it's not just in football where women have a harder time proving their worth.



An off-duty Laura in London

### **What are the differences between Italian and English football?**

In England football is a more relaxed affair, it's an event and entire families enjoy it. They make a day of it. In Italy it is more stressful and, sometimes, it is also aggressive. There are occasions in Italy in which fans behave very badly and, as they are not properly punished, the problem remains unsolved. People think they can do whatever they want but I think this will change soon. Football has to be a positive event or that's the way I understand it anyway.

### **Which country, Italy or England, gets more women into the stadiums?**

I don't have any stats to back this up but I would say that just about the same. I saw a lot of female match-goers in England and I see a lot here as well.

### **What do you think of the WAG phenomenon? Do women go into football hoping to date a footballer?**

Yes, some women try to get into football, or hang out where footballers dine or socialise, because they want to date them, because they want to be a WAG but I actually think it is very normal. These are powerful, young good-looking men. There's been a shift from actors and musicians to football players. Wherever you look, you see an advertising board with a footballer; you also see them on magazine covers and as high fashion models. Nowadays footballers are superstars; everybody knows Cristiano Ronaldo or Cannavaro. That's why I think this is normal, they are everywhere and they are objects of desire like Take That were for my generation. England, Spain, Italy and now also in America... footballers have massive commercial appeal and girls buy into that too.

### **How do you feel about this? Does it worry you that people think you are just another WAG in waiting?**

Well, that's the price you have to pay when you are in this business. Even if you have never been with one player, nobody ever believes you. I guess they don't realise that we know them, that this is also our bread and butter, so for me a football player is no different from some other person. Perhaps it is because the mystique is gone so it is down to the person in the sense that being a footballer isn't a plus when you work in football. You are not what you do; your profession isn't enough to make you attractive. There has to be more.

### **Let's talk about South Africa. What has been the biggest surprise of the competition to date?**

Italy going out... As an Italian, I wanted them to do well but also because all the other big European teams (France aside), have managed to overcome their difficulties and go through to the last round of 16 (I'm talking about England, Germany and Spain) and this makes it even more upsetting. But Slovakia played better than us – we only had ten good minutes in the second half and that's just not good enough to get you into the next round.

### **Any predictions? Who do you think will win the World Cup?**

No, it's very, very difficult to predict anything! It has been a very strange tournament so far; a lot of unexpected results but I think Argentina might come out on top.

### **Top scorer of the competition?**

Before the World Cup I would have gone for Messi but now I'm thinking maybe Luis Suarez could be it. He's certainly been impressive.

### **When it comes to looks, which teams should Running in Heels readers be keeping an eye on?**

Looks and talent! My team, AC Milan, the Italian national team and also Spain. They have Sergio Ramos, Fernando Torres, Pique, Casillas ... so yeah, Italy and Spain! Mediterranean players are the best looking, I think.

### **And last but not least, can you run in heels?**

I prefer to run in sneakers, never in heels!

Find out more about Laura on [her website](#); you can also become a fan on [Facebook](#) or follow Laura on Twitter [@LauraEsposito](#).