

Elegant and on the Offense - Women's Football in Europe

Yvonne Weigelt* and Kisato Kanoh**

*Institut fuer Sportwissenschaft und Sport, University of Erlangen-Nuernberg/Germany
Gebbertstr.123b 91058 Erlangen Germany
yvweigel@sport.uni-erlangen.de

**Institute of Health and Sports Science, Chuo University
742-1 Higashinakano Hachioji-shi, Tokyo 192-0393 Japan
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The present situation of women football (Soccer) in Europe is analyzed here with reference of statistics. Although women football has been widely accepted by many European nations, there still exist great differences in performance-level among the regions. After the remarkable success in the European Women Championship in England many sport scientists have become interested in the field of women football. Scientific analyses and related problems are also briefly discussed in this paper.

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FIFA president Sepp Blatter predicted in 1995: "Women will be the future of football, because women play football just the way we would like to see it played, elegant, technical, high level and offensive." This prediction was made 10 years ago. The following report will discuss whether Joseph Blatter's statement really remained a desirable vision or if his prediction was correct. The question thus concerns how far women's football has developed in Europe, and how successful women's football has been, especially in a men's dominate sport.

First of all, we'd like to describe the present situation of European women football, German women football in particular. Then it will be discussed, what barriers the women players face nowadays, and following chances will be indicated how they will participate in football, according to their request. Finally, suggestion and strategy are discussed in order to obtain more girls and women, who integrate and get involved in football.

1. Starting-point

Women's football is booming. With over 20 million players (source: www.fifa.com 17.06.2004) women's football has become the most popular women's team sport worldwide.

Above all, women's football games in Europe

are played on the highest level. This can be proven for example from the fact that 2 European teams remained in the finals of the FIFA Women's World Cup 2003, which was assumingly achieved from talent promotion, education of both men and women trainers of high quality. Not surprisingly, there is an enormous increase in areas such as sponsoring, mass media, and spectators.

The leap in women's football is observed not just in Germany, the winner of the European championship for six times and officiated world champion, having approx.900,000 girls and women kickers (www.dfb.de), but also in Scandinavia (especially Sweden and Norway). Speaking about Great Britain women's football belongs to one of the fastest growing women's sports (**Figure 1, Table 1**). The European championship in 2005 held in England has proven that countries such as Finland and France are catching up in ability and can compete with the hitherto existing great women's football teams, by all means. As for Austria and Switzerland, the number of women football players isn't very large, and reports indicate that the central interest thinks that football is still a male domain (Marschik/Eder 1996, Diketmüller 2002). However, publications on women's football are noticeable. Marianna Meier for example was the first, writing about women's football in Switzerland (Meier, 2004). Rosa Dieketm

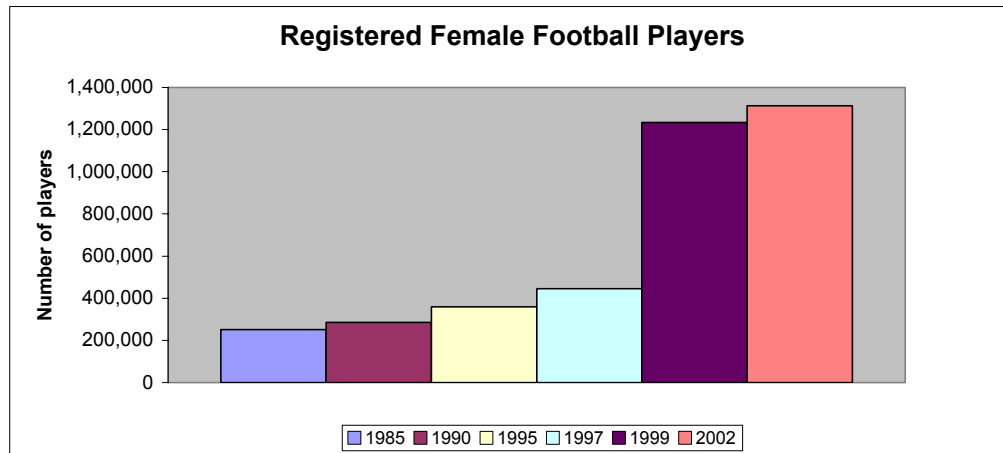


Figure 1 Reistered Female Football Players in Europe (Cf. Table 1)

üller (Dieketmüller 2002) analyzed the development of women's football in Austria. She made a comparison between the nations and researched the chances and risks on women's football in the time of globalization. Dieketmüller refers to Marschik/Eder (1996) where it is mentioned that women's football will be accepted differently, supposedly in the next generation at the earliest.

In countries of the former east zone women's football is still under development. They have slowly started to make teams, to organize national enterprises, and to fill the existing gaps between the advanced countries already playing successful women's football for several years. But also here it's just a question of time before women's football of the former east will be evaluated distinctly. Moreover, most of the European football association, with a few exceptions take part in the qualification for FIFA Women's World Cup in China (**Figure 2**: <http://de.uefa.com/competitions/wowc/teams/index.html>).

Although football is played undoubtedly by girls and women nowadays, this recreation was despised for many years also in Germany. It was only in 1970 when prohibition of women's football was removed by DFB (German Football Association). Since then there has been many positive impulses which owe to the numerous international successes of the women's national team. Thus after successful victories in Europe championships, the number of members in girls' and women's football DFB increased remarkably. In comparison with the previous year 4113 women teams an increase of about 20% applied. According to statistics of DFB, it shows that 236,947 girls up to 16 years are playing now actively, a high number never before (Cf. www.dfb.de)

Structural changes such as the introduction of a unified league for the Federal League 1997/1998 and two-structured leagues for the second Federal League 2004/2005 should guarantee professions in women's football in future. In addition, the 2001/2002 UEFA Cup for women was introduced by the European Football Association (**Table 2**). The German team won this competition in 2003 and 2005. The interest of mass media grew notably and coverage reporting on these achievements increased, which led to rising familiarity and acceptance of women's football in public. Names such as Birgit Prinz, Tine Theune-Meyer, Bettina Wiegmann are now widely known by mass media. The final of the Women's World Cup 2003, where Germany defeated Sweden was televised to 13million TV watchers. This high audience rating managed to broadcast the national games from the afternoon programs to the evening programs. Moreover commercial industry became interested. The increase in marketing of women's football reflects on the financial capability of the player's payment. So, women players received from DFB 15,000 Euros after winning the World Cup in 2003, and 21,000 Euros after winning the European Championship in 2005. In contrast with the "premium" (coffee service) given to the women for the hard-earned title of the European Championship in 1989 by DFB as reward, the financial margin had evidently grown. The economical attractiveness connected with the media for this top sports is increasing. Women's football is more and more recognized in society, and women's football players are gaining respect in Germany. Comparing all these changes from early times to today, we can confirm that women's football has been evidently accepted

Table 1 Registered Female Players - Statistic

	1985	1990	1995	1997	1999	2002
Albania						0
Andorra				32	125	22
Armenia					100	200
Austria				5,557	5,537	5,537
Azerbaijan				150	100	270
Belarus			260	400	310	280
Belgium	8,100	8,200	10,600	11,970	16,000	16,930
Bosnia-Herzegovina				180	68	431
Bulgaria	360	240	100	140	200	168
Croatia			172	126	324	618
Cyprus					169	310
Czechoslovakia	1,500	1,700				
Czech Republic			2,000	3,300	5,757	4,990
Denmark	24,000	31,000	38,000	40,000	44,182	69,082
England		8,000		21,500	34,000	55,000
Estonia			115	141	131	224
Faroe Islands	540	1,296	1,360	1,140	1,336	1,198
Finland	3,472	6,061	11,421	10,327	964	11,625
France	26,558	22,487	28,028	25,178	31,758	63,452
Georgia					100	0
Germany	68,000	58,000	88,000	110,000	876,839	841,816
Greece		623	1,142	1,031	1,009	1,120
Hungary	340	300	400	400	500	957
Iceland	2,600	2,900	3,300	3,600	4,200	4,700
Republic of Ireland	2,000	3,800	6,000	7,000	5,252	5,252
Israel				450	250	250
Italy	7,500	8,300	9,600	11,000	9,667	9,667
Kazakhstan						100
Latvia			120	100	245	246
Liechtenstein				150	20	169
Lithuania			120	120	800	400
Luxemburg	140	20	20	200	403	418
FYR Macedonia						65
Malta	11	11	247	315	400	240
Moldavia			80	120	214	342
Netherlands	38,000	40,000	43,000	62,000	64,610	69,832
Northern Ireland	160	240	320	520	600	720
Norway	25,000	50,000	55,000	60,000	63,000	74,656
Poland	250	680	480	658	550	1,600
Portugal	1,314	745	1,138	1,133	886	929
Romania	80	1,850	1,970	672	176	210
Russia			2,100	2,100	2,250	3,700
UdSSR		1,440				
San Marino						0
Scotland	360	400	2,700	3,500	3,300	3,610
Slovakia			800	885	893	991
Slovenia			142	166	110	373
Spain	1,000	2,000	4,553	7,500	9,283	10,747
Sweden	37,283	32,753	38,174	41,000	38,399	37,915
Switzerland	1,500	2,000	5,000	6,500	6,000	8,700
Turkey	50	110	650	830	1,127	306
Ukraine			1,100	1,200	500	480
Wales	100	400	600	1,000	1,000	1,000
Yugoslavia	1,000	500	1,000	1,200	365	1,060
Total per year (1st chart)	251,218	286,056	359,812	445,491	1,234,009	1,312,908
Growth		34,838	108,594	194,273	982,791	1,061,690
Evolution in percentage		13.87%	43%	77%	391%	423%
Annual growth		34,838	73,756	85,679	788,518	78,899
Annual growth in percentages		13.87%	26%	24%	177%	18%

by the public and has gained recognition by the increasing media.

Nevertheless it is still necessary to fight against the enormous barriers, especially in lower levels. Following it will be discussed what obstacle women football faces.

2. Barriers to girls' and women's football

Although women's football has become a signboard in DFB, there still are enormous barriers which have to be fought with. These obstacles exist in social, organizational, interactive and individual level.

As for the social level, obstacles exist for example

2005/07 European Qualifying Competition
for the 5th FIFA Women's World Cup

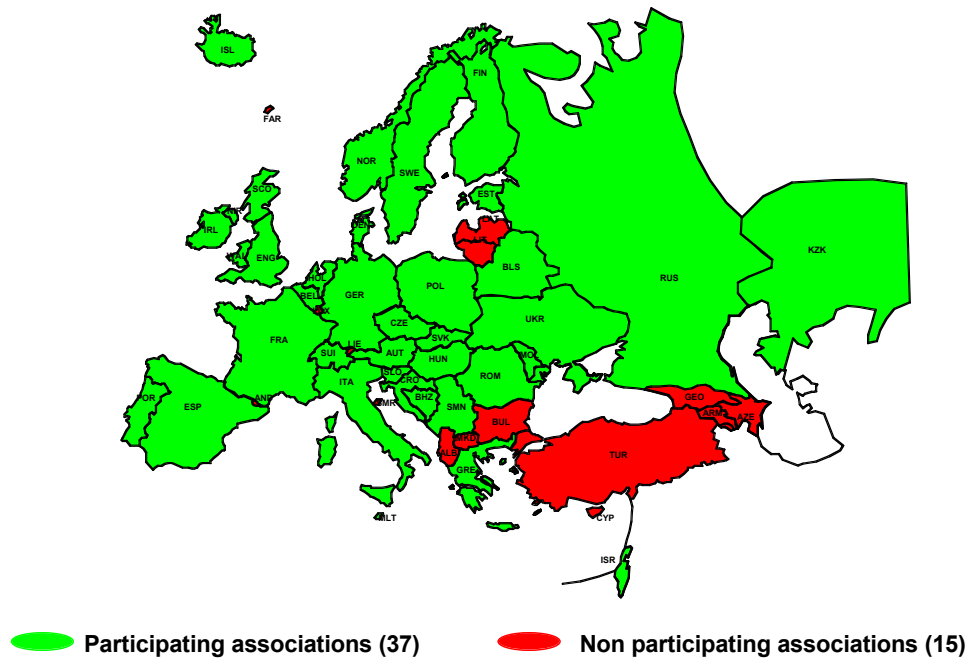


Figure 2 Associations participating in FIFA Women's WC

in the sports editorials, where mostly topics of men's football are handled. In a country where women's football is played successfully, games are televised supra-regionally for years. On the other hand, reports on games of women's league Bundesliga (Division 1) are just like a memorandum and are taken seriously only by the local media. In addition, we have to fight with the prejudice and stereotype concerning women football.

As for the organizational level, barriers exist on one hand on informal level, that is for example to the communication between the person concerned with women's football and the club, the association, in club activities, at competitions, and to ignorance of the association, where most of the decision making is done by men. On the other hand, there are structural problems that keep mostly girls away from playing a rather long period in football clubs. For instance, the team size, the time when juniors have to transfer to women teams etc. are stipulated in the regulation. Actually, there aren't enough girl members to make up a team to participate in League games. The girls thus don't have many opportunities to match with teams. For this reason many girls play in boys teams. This is however limited to a certain age (differs from the association). Girls may be too old for the boy's teams and too young for the women's teams,

so that in worst cases they cannot play in football competitions for a few years. There are many infrastructural problems in many clubs. For instance, there are no locker rooms, shower facilities for girls and women.

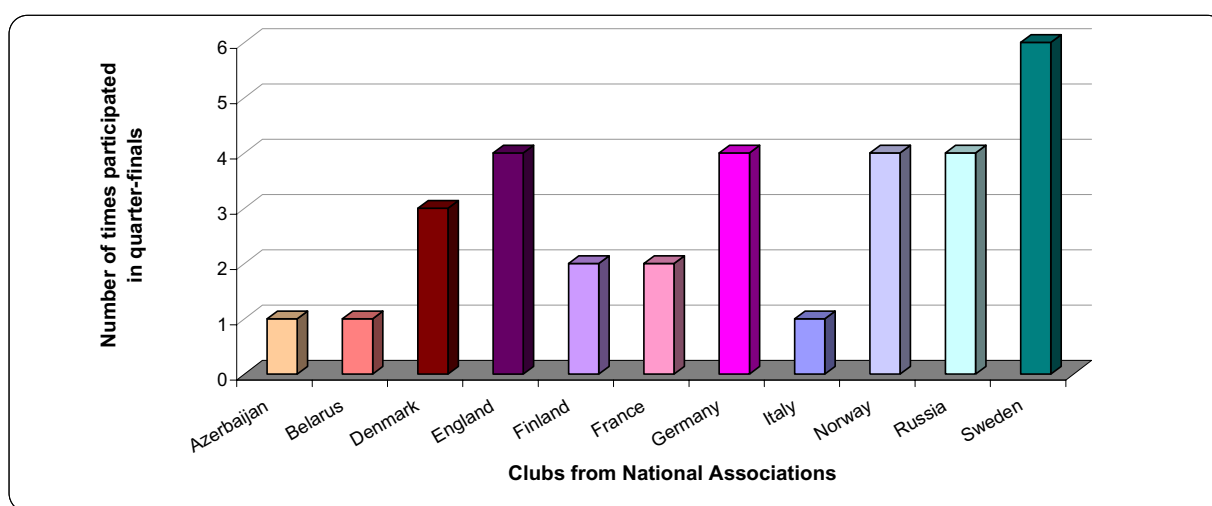
As for interaction and the individual level, problems are found which interrupt integration of the girls (6 to 10 year olds) in connection with family and school environment. The girl players are usually encouraged by their fathers or brothers, however mothers are often against. It's the mothers who usually warn against this sport, the brutality, masculinity, lesbian activity and too big muscles (Kugelmann 2005). From results of a study about the program of the spreading of DFB girls football, it became apparent that lack of interest in school, insufficient knowledge, lack of experience and the missing qualification of the teachers are related, and that only few Physical education classes adopt girl football. Only in cases of younger teachers, girl's football is extensively established, due to the modern sports teacher training system where preparation for the development in this field already exists. The older teachers on the contrary regard football as a men's or boy's sports and thus don't provide girls the chance. In such cases the preparation for the development hardly exists (Kugelmann, C. & Mö

Table 2 Clubs participating in quarter-finals of UEFA Women's Cup



UEFA Women's Cup
Clubs participating in quarter-finals

Association	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	Total
1 FFC Frankfurt (GER)	x	x	x		3
1 FFC Turbine Postdam (GER)				x	1
Arsenal LFC (ENG)	x	x		x	3
Brøndby IF (DEN)			x		1
CSK VVS Samara (RUS)		x			1
Djurgården / Alvsjö (SWE)				x	1
FC Bobruichanka (BLR)				x	1
FC Energy Voronezh (RUS)			x	x	2
Fortuna Hjørring (DEN)		x			1
Fulham (ENG)			x		1
Gömrükçü Baku (AZE)			x		1
HJK Helsinki (FIN)	x	x			2
Kolbotn IL (NOR)			x		1
Malmö FF (SWE)			x		1
Odense BK (DEN)	x				1
SK Trondheims-Ørn (NOR)	x	x		x	3
TNK Ryazan (RUS)	x				1
Torres Terra Sarda (ITA)				x	1
Toulouse FC (FRA)	x	x			2
Umeå IK (SWE)	x	x	x	x	4



hwald, M 2006).

This influences again to individual levels. Thus girls and women put less effort to play football or to join club-activities compared to boys. It can be said that girls and women are self-excluded already in the forefield.

Naturally not all girls and women want to play football. Though for those who want to play chances should be offered on the mentioned levels, so that they can be part of the football culture. Research work and lecture carried out in past and present concerning women's football have made it obvious again and again that football is " a male sports" in all levels (Sinning 2006).

3. Chances and Prospects

In the last 2 years science also puts emphasis on the subject of women's football, whereby research projects are initiated and conventions and meetings are organized. The unstoppable dynamic with the preceding development of girls' and women's football, the still existing barrier in all levels need to be discussed intensively in respect of science and practice. So, 3 international conventions to discuss the scientific aspects already took place in 2005 (Germany, England), where the tendency, the challenge and the new strategy of women's football were intensively discussed (**Figure 3**). The central interest of these conventions was the gathering



Figure 3 A leaflet of International Symposium

and sharing of opinions from entirely different viewpoints. The scientific theoretical evaluation combined with the outer view of the actual state could be very useful, as far as it concerns with how to define the task, the concept for the future of girl's and women's football.

As for the individual and interactive level, a different type of chance is offered to girl and women players. By playing football, self-consciousness is strengthened, and girls and women feel to be part of a definite social group. They are tied to the club life, not only to football playing, but also for example to tournament organization or to cases such as sponsor searching. This also accompanies necessarily certain appreciation, which they would otherwise not experience. Women's and girls' connection with football have quite different requirements from those of men. Especially aspects of social cooperation play a much bigger role than in the case of men. It is considered, that also personal life plan, attractive experience corresponds with this sport (Kugelmann, Möhwald 2006).

As for the organizational and social level, they have the possibility to utilize all infrastructure and financial resources of the clubs, association under equal right. They may take part in the socially significant football culture of their state respectively

as long as they are members under contract carrying full responsibility.

This can however only succeed, when the associations of each European country walk towards to girls' and women's football, that is when they not only give them the chance to participate, but also appoint them to positions, giving them the responsibility in the organizations, as trainers, as executives.

For such transformation the following concrete propositions could be made.

- Conformity with the playing forms, requested from the girls and women (Numbers of girls' and women's football players of the respective areas should also be regarded.)
- Offering football classes already in early ages at sports clubs, also give football lessons to girls in school.
- Incorporate the parents into the club.
- Collaboration with the schools, extension of the whole day schools (e.g. working groups "girls' football in the afternoon")
- Reinforcement of continued and further education of the trainers, teachers
- Improvement of infrastructural conditions of each club. (e.g. to build more locker rooms etc. for girls and women)
- Modification of the board personnel of the clubs, association, so that women can have better positions as trainers and executives.

These possibilities for a better integration of girls and women into football are surely different from each country and thus should be planned and modified on structural presumption. In perspective of the women's football in Europe, it has made an enormous progress especially in the past 10 years. This is not estimated just from the increasing number of the members of the associations, but also from the increasing social and economical interest in women's football. From this viewpoint we could answer to Sepp Blatter's vision that the future of football belongs to the women, we could answer that we are on the way to form football womanly. In fact there can be observed too big differences in Europe depending on the characteristics of the countries. In order to establish European-wide everlasting women's football, it requires extensive effort and very precise detail work in several areas.

Yet our optimistic prognosis says: The future of football will be womanly!

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<http://www.uefa.com>



Name:
Yvonne Weigelt-Schlesinger

Affiliation:
University of Erlangen-Nuernberg/
Germany

Address:

Gebbertstr.123b 91058 Erlangen Germany

Brief Biographical History:

Date of birth: 21.04.1977

Work experience: research assistant (Institute of Sport Science and Sport at the university Erlangen-Nuernberg) and research assistant at the "girls soccer research group"

Main Works:

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Membership in Learned Societies:

- Deutsche Vereinigung für Sportwissenschaft member and founders of the network: "women in soccer" soccer coach (UEFA-B-Licence)
- Japanese Society of Nursing Art and Science