

Offside: The Development of Women's Football in Austria

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Abstract

This article examines the development of women's football (soccer) in Austria. While football is the most popular sport in Austria, women's football has been slower to develop than in many other European countries. An analysis of the history of football in Austria, women's football internationally and the specific case of women's football in Austria is undertaken with comparisons made between Austria and other societies. The article seeks to place women within the history of football in Austria and to uncover reasons for the comparatively slow development of women's football in Austria.

Football (soccer), Austria's most popular sport, arrived from England around 1890. It was first played in the cities of Vienna and Graz amongst members of the bourgeois and aristocratic classes. Young people from all social backgrounds soon began to learn the sport and played unorganised or 'wild football'. In addition, the military gradually played football as a recreational sport. The working class was thus familiar with football by the beginning of the 'First Republic' in 1918 when Austria became a democracy, and within a few years football developed into a widespread mass movement (Marschik, 1997, p. 143).

Hundreds of thousands of people began to play football, clubs were founded all over the country, football fields and stadia were built and tens of thousands of spectators watched matches played by the main clubs and the national team (Horak & Maderthaler, 1997). Apart from England and Scotland, Vienna, Prague and Budapest became early centres of European football, and the '*Calcio Danubiano*', the technical and tactical system played by central European teams, became one of the most important international representations of Austria. After the Nazis took control of Austria, little stayed the same, yet football continued to be played as if nothing much had happened (Marschik, 1996; 1998a). While the new regime initially attempted to alter local football culture and practice, locals resisted. As a result, the former system remained largely unchanged.

The second half of the 1940s and the 1950s heralded another football boom as Austrians invaded football fields as never before due to a dearth of other leisure time activities at reasonable prices and the fact that football was a perfect symbol for the renewal of Austria's national sovereignty and economic development (Horak & Marschik, 1995, p. 58). Since the 1970s public interest in going to the stadium has gradually faded (Horak & Marschik, 1997, p. 65ff.), but

football still takes up the major part of media sports reports (John, 1997, p. 89) and remains a crucial part of everyday male discourse (Skocek & Weisgram 1996, p. 182).

Football is thus Austria's most popular sport, yet half of the population is rarely mentioned in the history of, and in the countless stories about, football. During the early years women only appeared as a 'circle of beautiful women' among bourgeois spectators (John, 1992, p. 22; Marschik, 1997, p. 34) and later as worried mothers of boys who came home with injured knees from playing football in the streets. The mass culture of football in the 1920s also confined the role of a woman to that of the 'footballer bride' or mother-in-law, who was 'driven insane' by her husband's late return from matches (*ISB*, 1 Oct. 1927).

After the Second World War, few women were spectators, although some also participated as secretaries or cafeteria workers in smaller clubs. By the 1970s, women's participation in football fan cultures had increased to a point where they threatened the dominant masculinity of traditional supporters (Becker & Pilz, 1988, p. 82ff.), while remaining firmly a minority within this cultural group (Taylor, 1992). The girls no longer sat dispersed and hushed between a crowd of screaming men, but actively demonstrated their interest in football and their right to be there and participate. In the 1980s, Austrian studies on football reception and the consumption of media sports took gender into account for the first time. In 1987, a study showed that 24 per cent of women (compared with 61 per cent of men) had a 'basic interest' in football (Horak & Marschik, 1995). In 1994, another study showed that twelve per cent of the spectators at matches were female (Horak & Marschik, 1997). The average television audience for football programs was six per cent for women and fifteen per cent for men in 1990 (Horak & Marschik, 1995).

In countries with long football histories, it is not only sport in which patriarchal structures have a particularly strong tradition; where football is the leading national sport, a specific male gender identity for the society is created and secured by this sport. The male orientation of codes of football (such as rugby, Nauright & Chandler, 1996; Maguire & Tuck, 1997) has a long tradition, and soccer is no different. From Florentine Calcio (Bredekamp, 1993) to modern English 'soccer' culture (Giulianotti & Williams, 1994; Holt, 1989), the establishment of football in Continental Europe (Eisenberg, 1994; John, 1997) and to the recent 'post-fandom' of a highly mediated football-industry (Redhead, 1997; Horak & Marschik, 1997), it has become evident, that football still plays a powerful role in the maintenance of male identities (Curtis, 1993, p. 90ff.; King, 1996) male power (Blake, 1996; Haynes, 1995) and dominance of heterosexuality (Simpson, 1991). The situation in Austria is no different, where football has remained a man-against-man and body-against-body fight, a staging of masculinity (Horak & Maderthaner, 1997, p. 21) and a public show of male attitudes and

values (Horak, 1992; 1994), which is reinforced by the media (Kane & Green-dorfer, 1994; Lenskyj, 1998; McKay & Huber, 1992).

It is in this context of masculinity performed through football and football culture that women's football has appeared in Austria. In the rest of the article, I explore the largely hidden history of women's football in Austria, take a closer look at its contemporary status by reporting on results of a survey on women's football and hypothesise on the future of women's football in Austria.

The History of Women's Football in Austria

After a few predecessors, such as football in Scotland in the eighteenth century (Williamson, 1991), women's football prospered briefly (Williams & Woodhouse, 1991) within the general boom of women's sports after 1918 (Hargreaves, 1994). As early as 1894 the first women's football clubs appeared in England. During World War I women's football received some support due to the absence of men and the resulting dilution of the classic distribution of gendered roles (Duke & Crolley, 1996). The immediate post-war years in England may be called the golden years of women's football. Companies sponsored the football activities of female workers and more than 50,000 spectators watched the game of 'Dick Kerr's Ladies' against 'St. Helen's Ladies' in Everton in 1920 (Fechtig, 1995).

The success of women's football in England was not without resonance in Central Europe. Of course, there were only few reports on the games themselves, and the reports had a disparaging undertone. In Austrian newspapers women's football was presented mainly in the form of jokes and cartoons, which were often taken from the English media. In 1914 the *Illustriertes Sportblatt* published a photo of a scene of a match in England. but the subtitle was 'Women's football: a carnival joke' (*ISB*, 14 March 1914). Even though women's football received negative coverage in the press, at least it became known in Austria that women played football in England.

As early as 1918, the initial activities of women's football in Vienna appeared. An article in the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* referred to a trial game of women's football, where technical and tactical insufficiencies and weak physical performances were reported. The event was cited as proof that women were not suited for certain types of sports, such as boxing, marathon or football, and it was recommended that women should concentrate instead on their 'most noble job, motherhood' (*NWT*, 23 July 1919).

In 1923, there was more evidence of women's football in Vienna. The weekly *Der Montag* started an initiative for the introduction of women's football, and the paper even promised to provide venues and coaches (17 Dec. 1923). Several 'flaming appeals' to women were published for them to register for the event (*Montag*, 24 Dec. 1923). The following April the first training was

announced; it was to consist of a theoretical introduction, in which the women would participate in 'street clothes' (*Montag*, 7 April 1924). Three weeks later, the first open-air training of the First Viennese Ladies Football Club Diana took place, which was naturally 'closed to the public' (*Montag*, 22 April 1924). In May another training session was held, in which sixty women reportedly participated and which was directed by the Austrian team player Ferdinand Swatosch. Skipping, exercises with the ball and an 800-metre run were part of the program (*Montag*, 5 May 1924).

In the same year, the foundation of a second women's team within the frame of the Ostmark Football Club was again met with scoffing comments by the press (*ISB*, 9 August 1924). The first official game was held in August 1924. Ostmark played against another team and *Der Montag*, whose team DFC Diana did not participate, hastened to distance itself from the game. Only twelve of the 22 players showed up, so that it became necessary to borrow ten volunteers from the audience (*Montag*, 11 August 1924). The terse report in the *Illustriertes Sportblatt* read as follows: 'First women's football Same. Venue of the crime: Ostmark field. Everybody growls, even the relatives of the evil doers. Boring, not in the slightest interesting, briefly: a great disappointment. A deficit in every way' (*ISB*, 5 Sept. 1925). In the face of such strident criticism, the first stage of women's football in Vienna did not last long. While some men promoted early women's teams, most condemned them. Women did not yet play a leading role in promoting teams. Women's football in 1920s Austria (Schmidt, 1985), similar to women's football during the Weimar Republic (Fechtig, 1995; Pfister, 1997) did not advance past a few isolated activities.

No further women's football games in Austria were mentioned in the media until 1936. At this time a Ladies' Football Union was founded, which carried out a championship with nine clubs in Vienna (*Montag*, 4 May 1936). In 1936 the *Sport-Tagblatt* regularly featured reports on the founding of new clubs as well as dates of women's competitions, however, it did not publish results. Although men held leading positions in the management of the Ladies' Football Union, this second phase of women's football in Vienna had a broader effect on women participants.

The Austrian Football Federation denied female players any kind of support and based this on the widely held arguments that women's football was 'unaesthetic' and furthermore an 'unhealthy fad' (*Montag*, 20 Dec. 1937). In March 1936, the Federation, as the English Football Association had already done, banned all clubs from making their football fields available for women's competitions and also refused to supply referees (*ST*, 21 March 1936). In autumn this policy was reconfirmed, when the *Turn- und Sportfront*, Austria's highest sports body, announced that women's football was not an independent sport (*ST*, 30 Oct. 1936).

There are a few games on record from 1937. In March 1937 the DFC Vindobona played against a women's team of the Czech workers' gymnastic club in Brno, a game they won 5-2 (*ST*, 30 March 1937). In November the *Montag* published a last 'cry for help by the female football players', as they could not find a football field for their training (*Montag*, 20 Dec. 1937). At this time, they had not succeeded in establishing an independent organisation of women's football either, and within the framework of existing clubs they had no chance. With Austria's annexation by Germany in 1938, the question of women's football was solved by the new rulers and clubs – the women's football union was dissolved by the authorities (Marschik, 1998a).

There may have been some unorganised or localised attempts to get women's football off the ground in the post-war years, but it was not until 1967 that women in Vienna who wanted to play football were able to form another club (OeFB, 1992; Hutterowa, 1997). They were recognised by Vienna's football federation in 1968 (Pösinger, 1997). Since the 1982-83 season, there has been an official women's league and since 1990 a national team (OeFB, 1992), which had played around thirty official international matches by 1998. For the last few years there has been a women's official and a Women's Football Commission within the Austrian Football Federation and the provincial federations also have women's functionaries. These posts are largely filled by men, as are the posts on the national association and most club trainers. This fact, however, is rarely mentioned by women engaged in football (Hutterova, 1997).

Since 1992, women's football has experienced a boom, at least in terms of numbers, as female players have increased from approximately 2500 to almost 6000. The number of clubs participating in an official championship has also risen from 58 to 77. In some counties youth teams and student leagues have also been established and the number of recreational teams has increased from 250 to 350 (Pösinger, 1997). Yet, we cannot speak of an independent development of women's football. Rather, it is still a tolerated appendage of men's football and is hardly noticed by the public. In addition, there is rigid organisational control over women's football. Until recently women were allowed only within existing men's clubs, and women's football remains integrated in the male provincial federations. The executive board of the Carinthian Federation (Carinthia is one of the nine counties of Austria) had long forbidden the formation of women's teams, allegedly for reasons of competition. Further, women have usually been allocated the worst training times and sites. The Austrian Football Federation has contributed as little as US\$8,000 per year for the organisation of women's football and the 'ladies national team'.

We can identify three phases of women's football in Austria. The first stage, covering the inter-war years, was characterised by warnings regarding exaggerated physical exercise for women, usually based on medical arguments

(Westmann, 1930) and football was used frequently as an example of activities that were not recommended for women. In 1919, the *Montag* (27 March 1919) declared that football was beneficial to the lungs, but harmful to women's inner organs and ankles; it also stated that football caused distortion of the facial features, wrinkles and 'ugly lines'. In the mid-1930s the strategy changed as organisational obstacles were added to individual ones. This was supported by the International Football Federation (FIFA) as well as by the Workers' Sports International, which did not allow women's football (Marschik, 1994). The communist Red Sports International held a similar point of view and exerted very little influence in Austrian sport (Krammer, 1981; 1985).

These positions clearly express dominant male views on women's sports that remained prevalent through the 1950s (Marschik, 1998c) as male pronouncements came from a mixture of medical arguments and negative effects on the beauty, grace and elegance of women (Polley, 1998). Therefore, only those sports that exercised body and mind equally but would endanger neither motherhood nor change the 'delicate' female figure (Pfister, 1992), let alone revise the idea that women were naturally inferior, were considered appropriate for women (Theberge, 1989; Zakus, 1995). It was therefore positive that football 'fortunately did not gain supporters among women, who are not suited for this game' (*ISB* 11 Dec. 1926). In addition, the prevailing social opinion was that women did not have to be forbidden to play football since its roughness went against female sensitivity anyway (Vertinsky, 1994; Massey, 1994; Blue, 1987; Messner & Sabo, 1994).

The second period of women's football in Austria, starting in the 1960s, was characterised by a new paradigm in sport. Women's participation in traditional men's sports or in those sports that required a high degree of physicality was no longer actively suppressed, but rather women's activities were minimised and 'ghettoised' through a system of male control (Dunning & Maguire, 1996; Volkwein, 1997) that dominates all gazes at women's sport. Women's sport was clearly linked to the certainty of their comparative frailty. Women's football thus no longer represented the other side of 'real football', but rather was considered to be a 'small scale' version of the 'real game'. Its 'invisibility' was 'almost total and is attributed similar status to [men's] minority sports such as rowing or fencing' (Duke & Crolley, 1996, p. 144). This second period was also characterised by a 'politisation' of Austrian sports, so that every club had to become a member of one of the two great (conservative or social-democratic) sports organisations, which led to an enormous traditionalism within sport itself and stability and conservatism with little possibility for development. There were, therefore, few opportunities to change 'gendered exclusionism' and to mobilise 'against male control of sporting institutions, practices and representations' (Rowe, 1995, p. 141).

The third period, which may lead to major changes in Austrian women's football, has just begun. But globalisation and further mediation of sports (Rowe, 1996) will provide few chances to change the position of men's football as the 'real game'. Rather, it will strengthen the view that women should play the same game as men within the same structures instead of having the 'choice and control to attain what men have, or to fashion alternatives' (Theberge, 1997, p. 102). We must be aware that the practice of the (male and female) game will be more significantly influenced by social, cultural and economic conditions than ever and that these are neither defined and controlled by women nor operate in women's interests.

The mediation and commercialisation of a globalised sports scene will accelerate this development, because it is 'through the mass media that sports stars function as celebrity advertisements for masculinity' (Rowe, 1995, p. 153). This will lead to a new era of sports activity and sport reception (Redhead, 1997) where women often will be reduced to an erotic component of sports (Guttman, 1991; 1996), except in some exceptions, where they can be used as figures of cultural imperialism. Commercialisation, however, also opens up possibilities, because the 'requirement to fashion and sustain a marketable image does problematise the projection of masculinity because, in spite of sporting appearances to the contrary, hegemonic masculinity is by no means stable or unified' (Rowe, 1995). So maybe the extreme masculinity of Austria's football culture is also an index of its vulnerability and has the potential to change.

The Current Status of Women's Football in Austria

Women's football in Austria is following a development that began forty years ago in the USA, northern Europe and Germany (Ratzeburg, 1986; Stark & Farin, 1990). In the USA more than seven million women play football (Markovits, 1994) in Germany more than 600,000 play (Stark & Farin, 1990). In Norway there are now more female than male football players (Fasting, 1995; Skogvang, 1997). In Austria, however, only about 6,000 women are registered with clubs, and another 6,000 play in casual teams, though the rate is increasing among young women. While currently one third of the women in Austria work in what were once considered 'male jobs' (Natter & Reinprecht, 1992, p. 91), football has managed to remain an overwhelmingly male domain: only 0.2 per cent of Austrian women play football compared to 7.5 per cent of men. Thus only 2.3 per cent of Austria's football players are women.

These are a few of the conditions that confront women's football in Austria. They formed the basis of a survey carried out in the season of 1993/94 with sixty female football players aged from fifteen to 38, who played in Vienna or its surroundings at different performance levels, but who were in the first team of their club (Marschik & Eder, 1996). The survey consisted of a verbal

questionnaire and with some open questions. Data of a similar survey with seventy male players on amateur level served as a comparison (Zwieb, 1994).

The social significance of women's football is shown clearly in biographical data: girls start playing football, and also join clubs, much later than boys correlating with results of other studies (Tschap-Bock, 1983; Zöchling, 1992). It seems that boys are encouraged more by their parents to play football, while girls tend to make such a decision themselves and often despite of wider social pressures working against their participation. To play football is a part of male socialisation globally (Messner, 1991), while for women in many countries, including Austria, it usually remains a rebellion against prevailing norms. In those countries where women's football is an established sport (Norway, Sweden, USA) it can be observed that women begin to play football at an earlier age (Fasting, 1995) as they play in the streets, on lawns or fields, or because girls' football is integrated into the school system (Scraton, Fasting & Pfister, 1997). The assumption that women themselves make the decision to play football is also supported by the fact that most women who play football come from the upper middle class. Although the largest group of active players of both sexes consists of salaried employees (women 39 per cent, men 41 per cent), there is another large group among women consisting of high school and university students (25 per cent), where playing football as a break from typical role socialisation is more widely accepted (Marschik & Eder, 1996).

This assumption is also confirmed by answers to the question about incentives to play football actively: motivation by friends plays an essential part for both sexes, but among boys the parents' motivation ranks second, while girls tend to be encouraged to play football by their brothers and sisters. (Older) brothers and sisters thus take on the encouraging function. Gender-specific differences are also found in the motives for playing football: recognition, success and distraction play a very minor role among both men and women, but there are great differences in terms of physical activity and experiencing community. It goes against common stereotypes that more than half of the women (but only a quarter of men) consider physical exercise as a main factor in their football career, but that the community factor is more important to men (Marschik & Eder, 1996). For most of the men in our survey physical training was an obvious part of sports and they tended to look for community and solidarity in football, while the women who play football are after the male ideal of strength and stamina. Women who mainly want to experience community in sports tend to turn to 'women's team sports' more established in Austria like handball or basketball.

In the question on physical training and community, clear connections between sports and jobs appear. not only regarding fitness issues, since 'men seem to be more effective team players, and it seems as if this almost universal

childhood experience with team sports is responsible for [their] success' (Stechert, 1991, p. 107; cf. Connell, 1983, p. 18). Actions of male bonding and gender-specific protection are the catchwords of male professional solidarity, while team spirit and a common striving for success are the congruent analogs in sports. In Austria, female football players have obviously taken the first step in this aspect as they strive more for the male ideal of physical ability than that of solidarity, so they say. However, in those countries where women's football is well established, community is much more important (Fasting, 1995).

Another example illustrating that women's football is going through developmental stages similar to those experienced in the earlier development of men's football is the high degree of loyalty to the club and team mates. These qualities were attributed to men's football until the 1950s and are usually only found at the lowest levels today (Marschik, 1995). A comparison of active male and female players at the provincial league level shows that female players are much more loyal than male players to the club where their career started (Zwieb, 1994). More than half of all female players have never or only once changed clubs, while almost half of all men have changed clubs three or four times.

The same is true, and manifests itself to an even greater extent, for the positions within the team. Two-thirds of the female players keep the position within the team that they had at the beginning of their career. More than fifty per cent of men, however, change their position four or more times during an average career of ten to fifteen years and therefore play in almost all positions (defense, mid-field, forward line) at some stage. One of the reasons for this may be the limited choice in women's football, similar to the issue of changing clubs, as there are only seventy clubs in all of Austria. On the other hand, in the early history of Austrian male football, similar characteristics were present (Marschik, 1997). Thus, ties to a club and playing position within the team appear stronger in the early years of a sport's development and cannot be reduced to contemporary gendered differences.

Women's identification with 'their' sport is higher than that of young men at the provincial league level, which was also a surprising result. Despite a lower training frequency and a smaller number of competitive games, female football players spend more time training, at matches and consuming football on television than their male counterparts (Eder, 1994). Male players do, however, spend more time at club meetings. Despite their involvement and the time women spend with football, there is no money to be made in women's football, not even in the national team while it is quite usual for men to make money in football, even in the lower leagues, though the amounts there are rather small.

Although women gain no financial benefit from their sport, they do expect some external recognition. The main external support should come from spectators and the media, but in this respect there are few differences between Austria

and those countries where women's football is an established sport: the media overlook women's football almost completely with the exception of major events, such as the European Championships or the World Cup (Fasting, 1995), or they present matches as curiosities or 'beauty contests' (Stark & Farin, 1990, p. 186). Most women accept this situation to a certain degree and try to gain acceptance both as women and as athletes. They are, like in countries where female football is stronger, simply 'engaged in looking feminine' and try to work out 'an acceptable balance between feminine and masculine characteristics' (Kolnes, 1995, p. 66).

With the exception of major events, the audience on the pitch consists mainly of (male) friends and relatives, and a few men who are often there to 'look at girls' (Williams & Woodhouse, 1991, p. 99). Male football determines the standard that is considered neutral and from which women's football deviates: 'real football is men's football' (Fasting, 1995, p. 7). Another effect of male football is that the spectators at women's games are almost all men. This is also reflected in the assessment of active female players: women generally have a far more negative attitude towards women's football than do most men.

Thus, women are particularly dependent on the support of their families and partners. This manifests itself in that many Austrian women not only start their career later but finish earlier than men. In our sample the average age of women was 23.9 years, that of men 26.8 (Eder, 1994). A steady relationship, a job, or the need to raise a family often ends a woman's football career, while these factors do not seem to be an obstacle for men. In other words, those women who find support from their partners do not give up football to raise a family. Female players are largely accompanied by their partners when they have a game. Many women, in turn, accompany their football player husbands to club evenings, which is hardly the case vice versa (the data on homosexual couples and sport is sparse, because heterosexuality is an 'organising principle' in sport, cf. Kolnes, 1995).

Female players also see differences between male and female football, especially in terms of speed and toughness, which they usually trace back to biological differences. Another result of the study is symptomatic of this position: of the sixty female players interviewed, thirty were of the opinion that women's football should copy the men's way of playing as well as their toughness, while the other half thought that women should place greater value on playing a different kind of football, which focuses more on other factors, such as strategy, technique and an attractive game. This could be seen as a clear indication of the fact that women's football in Austria has no clear view of its place or style and partly answers the question of why Austria is one of the 'backyards' of women's football. But it is by no means the whole answer.

Conclusions

Women are now beginning to conquer football in Austria, marking another step towards conquering public spaces (Scheffel & Sobiech, 1991, p. 31) and of the process of moving out of traditional female domains. When women start to master such extremely male cultural areas as football, though, this often prompts initial rejection by men that often leads to even stronger stigmatisation and a re-ghettoisation, because women not only live and show their new self-confidence more openly and pose a challenge to the men's world in a more public and more obvious way: 'The stronger women get, the more men love football' (Nelson, 1996). This is a general statement about the American context, but it is valid in Europe as well.

The development of women's football in Austria lags behind that of many other European nations both in levels of participation and organisation, but not in terms of the structures in which the praxis is embedded. As women 'have not succeeded in gaining control, power or equality . . . in other spheres of society, neither it is surprising that they are far from achieving this in the football world' (Duke & Crolley, 1996, p. 136). There is little difference between Austria and most other European countries in media coverage, financial backing or the men's gaze at women's play (Jarvie & Maguire, 1991, p. 169). 'Undoubtedly, too, (association) football is more and more the "man's game", despite the number of girls and women taking up the sport as participants' (Redhead, 1997, p. 101).

With this in mind, we must not forget that male football is changing as well. In urban areas football is increasingly losing its position as a male rite of initiation and players are even allowed to freely express their enthusiasm or grief. Tears after losing an important game may not only improve the image of a player, they have also improved the reputation of football among female spectators (Curtis, 1993). However, male dominance of football and the 'masculinity-validating' rituals (Dunning & Maguire, 1996, p. 305) remain untouched, though not only in Austria. Male journalists, operating in a male dominated institution, male trainers and not least a male dominated audience define norms, values and structures which in turn determine football as a sport of, by and for men first and foremost. Conquering sports with a male connotation almost always leads from no attention to contempt to attempts at male control so that women lack autonomy in their national and international sports organisations (Hargreaves, 1994). If women's football cannot prevail within established men's organisations, it will be necessary to establish independent organisational structures, which in turn is only possible at the cost of greater marginalisation.

Running women's sports as women-only practices (Hargreaves, 1994; Birrell & Richter, 1987) provides the possibility for resistance and rebellion, emotional power and 'opportunities for female bonding, empowerment and a sense of control over one's own body' (Pirinen, 1997, p. 241), whereas liberal

discourses that accept trivialisation and marginalisation often go hand in hand with the acceptance of male norms and values and female subordination in hopes of eventual empowerment and development. Trying to work together with men often brings women into passive and oppressed positions that mask discriminatory practices and always include comparisons between male and female athletes and performances and represent women as second-rate athletes.

Regarding the question whether female participation in sport maintains traditional gender roles or questions them (Hargreaves, 1994), the study of women's football in Austria points towards the assumption that male structures are intensified. A change could become visible in the next generation of female players, though only if there is more external support. That would mean the promotion of women's football in schools, granting women's football more liberties within federations and different and positive coverage by the media, along with a related growing interest by sponsors. Above all, however, it would mean creating role models for girls who want to play football. As long as these requirements are not met, women's football will remain ghettoised.

Male dominance may only be reduced by supporting measures such as strengthening women's football within international federations (FIFA and UEFA), the media (Williams & Woodhouse, 1991, p. 100), the school system and among sponsors, but apart from a few statements of intention, little has gone in this direction. Efforts to establish women's football as a competitive Olympic sport, to promote women's football in some national organisations like the English Football Association (Duke & Crolley, 1996, p. 136) or to create opportunities for girls to play in mixed school teams (which is possible in Austria's school league up to the age of twelve) are countered by the media's power in creating sports stars, who are usually male, unless they are sexualised stars in sports with a long accepted female presence such as tennis or swimming (Duke & Crolley, 1996, p. 131). Some changes have taken place in the United States with the recent promotion of women soccer and basketball stars such as Mia Hamm, Rebecca Lobo, Cheryl Swoopes and Lisa Leslie, but this has not happened to the same degree elsewhere.

At the national level, women's football in Austria is still further from direct support than at the international level. It seems that currently the social status and individual attitudes towards football do not undermine but rather strengthen male values. Male football culture, both active and receptive, is still seen as the only standard, which makes the development of specifically female structures and patterns in the game nearly impossible (Fasting, 1995) and at the same time discredits women's football. This seems to be the 'backlash within mass culture' (Faludi, 1991, p. 193) that wants to remove women from the spaces that took great effort and hard work to conquer. In Austria, however, women's football is so male dominated that there is no need for a backlash. Austria is not unique,

however, in that 'soccer culture . . . [is] one of the last bastions of masculinity and the advertising of the game to the "New Woman" is a mere scratching of its surface' (Redhead, 1997, p. 99).

This becomes understandable if we bear in mind that women's football is an attack on men's football and on the image of the 'straight white man' itself (Collier, 1996). For as soon as women's football experiences publicity and acceptance, the male value system represented by football is undermined. Masculinity in football, which was not questioned for a long time and manifests itself in football by toughness and avoiding defeat, in accepting physical fouls or the importance of physical superiority in terms of speed, fitness and physical effort, but also by the 'heroism' of its stars (Brittan, 1989, p. 77), is undermined by women's football if it develops different styles and values that find acceptance. With this in mind, it becomes clear why men construct women's football as a deviation from the norm and name the game 'women's football' as opposed to 'football' (Duke & Crolley, 1996, p. 137).

Apart from the social dimension of women's football, there is the individual level, namely the individual female player who decides to play a male-dominated sport (Archer & McDonald, 1990). Women who play 'men's sports' must continually negotiate their positions within traditional cultural contests of male power and privilege and in a general ideological framework of patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality (Hargreaves, 1994). Women who play football do not simply play a sport, but rather break through values defined by men and conquer social spaces that are occupied by men (Dewar, 1993). In this way they also contradict the gender order: it is simply seen as 'unwomanly' or 'unfeminine' for a woman to possess those characteristics valued so highly in men that form part of the construction of male solidarity (Duke & Crolley, 1996, p. 130). This 'individual' level seems important especially in the Austrian situation.

Football as a men's sport is not only a cliché, it is an everyday reality when women become active in this 'male' space (Bale, 1980), as either a player or a spectator. It is always women who are joining a men's game. Even female fans suffer a conflict of identities – between that of being a woman and that of being a football fan (Duke & Crolley, 1996; Woodhouse, 1991). This is true to an even larger extent for those female players who permanently experience the contradiction not only with their role as a woman, which they have been brought up with, but also between their gender, sexual and personal identities (Palzkill, 1990), both at the physical level, regarding their behavior and at the psychological level (Dunning, 1986; Griffin, 1992). It is very difficult to find the way between an uncertain female sports identity, which is lived by only a few role models, and taking over male sports patterns (Kolnes, 1995). This does not start with the intensity of training, equipment or the formulation of sports objectives, but in the

area of physicality because the female bodies are 'assessed primarily according to the standards of the sexualized women's market' (Palzkill, 1990, p. 39).

For most women to play football means to reject the female role attributed to them. However, to participate in sports also means to strengthen personal identity. Of course it also means to tolerate the 'negative external attributions', as shown by the widespread image of female players who are not deemed worthy of sexualisation as either androgynous masculine women or as lesbians (Fechtig, 1995, p. 68) or even as men (Kolnes, 1995).

In Austria, of course, women's football has not even reached the point yet where men have to deal with its challenge in any significant way. The reasons for this can be found in men's control and among female players themselves. In 1998, women's football in Austria was still controlled, incorporated and dominated by men. Women's football hardly ever deals with a broader public, but when it does it still faces barriers from trainers, spectators, organisers and the press who applaud the efforts of the 'pretty girls' framing them in ways that prevent competition with 'real [men's] football'. On the other hand, female players themselves often do not have the self-confidence or the social and cultural capital to challenge their position. They may know what they want to achieve on a personal and sportive level, but not on the social, political and economic level. This is perhaps the greatest drawback and handicap in a nation that is built up on its sportive achievements and successful sportive heroes (Marschik, 1998b). In a time where Austria's national status is heavily discussed and is being challenged in debates about access to the European Union, there is a perceived need for greater expression of traditional standards of (sportive) masculinity, because for the Austrian nation sport is not a peripheral topic, but is at the core of its existence. Nevertheless, women's football in Austria will more than likely develop in similar fashion to other European countries. Due to the specificity of the Austrian context, though, the process of football development for women has been both slower and has manifested differences from countries such as Norway where women's football has been far more successful.

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