

The Early History of Women's Football in South-Western Germany: Marketing, Media and Publicity Origins

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Towards the end of the 1960s an increasing number of women's football clubs emerged in the Palatinate and the neighbouring regions. The 1. FC Kaiserslautern (FCK) made a big step forward in the history of women's football in the German South-West. A driving force in this development was Willi Müller, the wealthy owner of a shoe factory from Waldfischbach, who had been elected as president by the members' council on 20 March 1970 (cf Herzog, 2004, 200). Already retired from business, Müller stayed in office as president up to 1977. Only a few weeks after his election the FCK dared to found a women's football section.

1. "football enthusiasm ordered and regulated"

On the one hand this was a courageous step for the ban on women's football adopted by the German Football Association (*Deutscher Fußball-Bund*, DFB) in 1955 was still in force. It would take until 30 October 1970 for the DFB to abolish the ban, collapsing under the pressure exerted by female football fans on the already fragile bastions of this typically male dominated football sport. On the other hand the DFB had no choice. For like many other national clubs, not forgetting FIFA, the DFB wished to maintain the unity and power of its sport's organisation and to prevent the foundation of competing leagues and federations. If the DFB had not given in at the time, there would have been no alternative but the foundation of a federation to organize women's football. Nonetheless, the FCK was the path-finding pioneer of women's football within the *Bundesliga*.

A report about the origins of women's football in the FCK focuses on the interests of the DFB: The FCK apparently wished to see "the football enthusiasm of girls and young women – even some married women were keen to put on their football boots – ordered and regulated" (Anon., 5.6.1970). The DFB and its clubs wanted to make sure that women's football would not fall prey to incalculable societal forces and, therefore, lose power and influence. The same arguments dictated the behaviour of the DFB in relation to professional football. It would take until the early 1930s and the rise of a separate league of professional football clubs for the DFB to back down finally after years of entrenched resistance (cf Eggert, 2004, 107–110; Havemann, 2005, 98–101). This is not the place to discuss why the DFB did not allow official, at first tightly regulated, professional teams until 1963 (cf Havemann, 2013, 53–68). The DFB only agreed to organise and steer professional and women's football when it saw its own power over football and over its unity on the wane. It also had to fear for the loss of control over newly emerging markets. Jean Williams coined the appropriate label to describe the underlying line of argument as "negative integration" (Williams, 2007, 17, 185; cf Havemann, 2013, 352–362).

There were several reasons why women's football ended up on the agenda of a *Bundesliga* team in Kaiserslautern.¹ Far from solely having their origins in the personal preferences of the new president who was in favour of women's football, such ambitions were seconded by Willi "Piff" Pfeiffer, the sports physician of the FCK,

¹ Fig 1: the women's football team of the FCK in 1970.

who had proven in 1949 in his doctoral dissertation (cf Herzog, 2009, 225–227), that competitive sport was by no means deleterious to women's health and fertility. He publicised his conviction not only in scholarly circles but also in the mass media (cf Anon., 5.6.1970). Add to this the economic interests and a skilful marketing strategy of the FCK. Moreover, the mass media were an important vehicle for this revolution. Reports about a charity match between two women's teams, organised at Kaiserslautern, made an important contribution to increase the motivation among the city's girls and young women. Thus far they had only been able to exercise their sport in public parks, on the street and in the backyards of Kaiserslautern but from now on they were going to lobby the most important football club of the region towards the foundation of a women's football section.

The paper will now present and discuss the particular contribution by the media to the emancipation of football from male hegemonic domination, so alien to what sport should be all about; thereafter, it will explore the organisational difficulties related to public relations as well as to the development of a specific iconography of women's football as regards advertising and promotional material; finally, conclusions.

2. Entertainment – Marketing – Public Relations – Television

The first public match between female teams took place in Kaiserslautern on 25 April 1970, four weeks after the election of Müller as president. On this day the 1. FC Köln played the final home match of the season 1969/70 in the Betzenberg stadium. Given that this match was of no competitive importance whatsoever and that, therefore, only a small crowd was to be expected, the FCK was looking for ways to increase the attractiveness of this event and to draw it to the attention of a paying audience. For this reason, two female football teams were invited to play a match as part of the opening programme. The guests were the female eleven of the ASV Landau and a team from Augsburg bearing the name of "Datschiburger Kickers" ("Datschi" is the name of a cake that is a speciality from Augsburg).

The revenue from the charity match was to be donated to the *Kuratorium Deutsche Altenhilfe*, an organisation assisting the elderly. The Datschiburger Kickers (cf Huber, 1998, 342) were an eleven made up of celebrities which had been founded by Max Gutmann, a Jewish patron of the sports from Augsburg who was also the owner of a fashion shop. Gutmann had been able to integrate sport into his advertising campaigns to his own best advantage during the world championship of 1954 (cf Herzog, 2010, 111). He invested the financial gain of his economic success in social projects and in sports events (cf Deininger/Grünstedel, 1998, 460). The celebrities eleven, which he had founded, together with the Augsburg sports journalist and sports manager Horst Eckert, back in 1965, performed with a range of stars and starlets in a variety of changing line-ups and brought in considerable profit.

The Kaiserslautern football legend Albert Dusch (1912–2002), former goalie of the FCK and FIFA referee (cf Herzog, 2001, 446–447; Herzog, 2009, 94), volunteered as referee at this first women's football match at the Betzenberg stadium. Heiner Geißler, then secretary for social issues, youth, health and sports of the Bundesland Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland-Palatinate), represented political celebrities in the grandstands (cf Blick ins Land, 701367, BR). The match caused a sensation. Journalists from all over Germany had been accredited "to attend this top match of women's football". The reason for the attraction of media interest and for the influx of people lay not so much with the players of the *Bundesliga* teams but with "the kicking girls from the Palatinate and Bavaria". Not to forget that "the 'Gerd Mueller' of

German women's football was there as well, Landau's female goal scorer and right winger Doris Rieder, who said in an interview with an important representative of the tabloid press: I shall burn my football boots if we lose against Augsburg; this led to expectations of a suspenseful and belligerent match" (previous citations: Anon., 25.4.1970).

The daily "Die Rheinpfalz" hardly reported the events of the match, but mentioned the result of 2:1 (1:0) for the team from Swabia rather en passant and by solely naming one of the goal scorers. Similar to the press, the public was less interested in the sporting event than in the female players and in their physical attractions: "Almost 20,000 spectators cheered and screamed with enjoyment and enthusiasm for the kicking girls from Landau and Augsburg. Special applause was called forth by many a fall into the mud, by some of the more graceful but not always successful actions" (Anon., 27.4.1970). The audience certainly enjoyed "watching two teams of more or less pleasantly filled jerseys giving each other a hard time" (Kauer, 27.4.1970). Jürgen Friedrich, then captain of the *Bundesliga* team and later president of the FCK, who was going to succeed Willi Müller in 1977 (cf Herzog, 2003, 187 fn 61), considered the match "in typical male arrogance as merely 'amusing'", while the rest of the audience watched the event "with unchaste eyes", not least since the players, thanks to the pouring rain, "soon looked like a group of drowned cats" (previous citations: Kauer, 27.4.1970).

The match was very well attended, therefore the calculations of the FCK added up. What really gave the match considerable publicity was the Bayerische Rundfunk (Bavarian Broadcast Company), who had sent a camera team to the Betzenberg stadium. Fanned by the TV broadcast service on ARD (first state TV station) (cf Blick ins Land, 701367, BR) the sensation spread like wildfire. As a result female football enthusiasts of all ages contacted the governing board of the FCK and bombarded the headquarters with enquiries. President Müller acknowledged the signs of the times and overcame the DFB ban with aplomb. The women's football section of the FCK became popular far beyond the German borders. Even before the first training session on 5 June 1970 matches were offered far and near, one offer arrived from Turkey (cf Anon., 23.5.1970).

3. Organisational Problems: the Press and Public Relations

During the first months of this new era the women's eleven of the FCK played friendly matches against female teams from neighbouring cities and communities. Organising their own competitions was a different matter and hampered by setbacks all the way. Advertisements, collaboration with the press and PR work were also beset by a range of smaller and bigger problems. Those responsible for PR for example were lacking the necessary experience and often omitted to pass on all necessary detail to the press in good time. As for publicising women's football in other media such as posters and advertisements in newspapers, it took time to develop a special visual culture which was precisely attuned to the demands of women's football.

The first match of the FCK women's eleven on 28 July 1970 was a big hit, in as much as it took place as part of the opening programme before a friendly match between the male eleven of the FCK against the Rangers FC (Glasgow). The adversary of the FCK women was an eleven of the VfL Neustadt, who was beaten by the FCK 1-0. Astonishingly the organisers had forgotten to inform the press about the line-up of the team as can be gathered from the following report: "The decisive goal was scored after the restart when the Neustadt goalkeeper was unable to ward off a vigorous

attack (we hope to be excused for not naming the scorer but we have not been given the line-up for the match). Another ‘goal’ was dismissed for being offside. The most prominent player was the girl with the number eight on her back. We shall publish her name later” (Anon., 28.7.1970).

After many such friendly matches which took place in the western Palatinate between summer of 1970 and the spring of 1971 the South-West German Football Association (*Südwestdeutscher Fußballverband*, SVBV), one of the regional federations of the DFB, started to organise a first round of championships for “Damenfußball” (ladies football). In 1976 cup competitions were added. As early as on the second day of matches of the first regional competition, scheduled for 22 June 1971, it became clear that not every club had become accustomed to the new situation. The daily press seems to have been quite happy to report about this first championship in the history of women’s football. Nonetheless, they complained about the lack of information which made it difficult to report about every match: “Regarding the match between Miesau and Siegelbach no result could be ascertained. It would be good if the clubs’ boards of governors would be so kind as to make sure that we receive the results together with short reports about the matches played between female teams” (Anon., 22.5.1971). These problems seem to have been solved quite quickly though, so that complaints of this kind about the lack of cooperation between clubs and the media soon came to an end.

4. The Iconography of Posters in the Early History of Women’s Football

Another difficulty arose, obvious for everyone, in the case of posters announcing women’s football matches. For in the early history of women’s football the clubs often used poster templates which had been produced for matches between male teams. Therefore, the posters showed images not depicting women but frequently of male players. In order to visualise that matches between female teams were being announced, the relevant information had to be added by hand using a felt marker.

Several of these posters were framed by commercial advertisements. Occasionally, these consisted of a group of companies who had financed the production of the posters and were accordingly acknowledged as sponsors on the promotional material.² In other cases just one sponsor was won for the production of posters.³

The use of posters designed for matches between male teams as minimally adapted advertisements for women’s football matches was soon regarded as unsatisfactory. Whenever the organisers wanted to avoid the depiction of male players, they generally chose between the following alternatives:

a) Occasionally the clubs printed cheaply made, simple posters which stated in large letters the essential information about the match to be announced, completely refraining from the use of images and the inclusion of advertisements.⁴ The lack of advertisements makes one suspect that, at the time, the women’s sections of numerous football clubs were only rarely successful in attracting sponsors willing to help publicise their sport (cf interview Horst Ruelius, 13.1.2011).

² Fig 2: poster for a women’s football match with group of advertisements, photo 1970.

³ Fig 3: poster advertising a women’s football match with only one sponsor, photo 1971.

⁴ Fig 4: simple poster without images or advertisements, photo 1970.

b) Another possibility was chosen by the more creative organisers who produced hand-made posters in small copy runs, using images of female players who could easily be recognised as girls and young women, for example by their hairstyles.⁵

c) Very early, from 1971 onwards, printed posters can be documented for the Western Palatinate. These were especially produced for women's football matches and might be decorated with the photo of a relatively robust female player whose looks would be quite different from today's ideal of feminine beauty, at least not that often favoured by men of a Fatmire "Lira" Bajramaj.⁶ This kind of motif corresponded to the prejudicial concept of "viragos" brought on by playing competitive sports. At the time such ideas dominated (male) public opinion, concerned about these girls' chances on the marriage market.

d) A special case was constituted by the posters tailor-made for specific tournaments. For such occasions the organisers did not adapt the traditional publicising material reserved for matches between male teams but printed special posters whose layout was directly inspired by the event to be announced.⁷

e) Even professionally designed promotional material was treated like posters and might be displayed in shop windows. This material was produced more often than not for international friendly matches, for whose sponsorship not only factories and shops but also political parties, in particular the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), could be won.⁸ Apparently it was relatively easy to obtain financial support for this kind of match.

The types of posters discussed here, used to announce women's football matches, could be found in the Western Palatinate throughout the 1970s. For league and cup matches the organisers continued for a long time to use poster templates containing motifs from the men's division.⁹ Certainly it is true, and not only for the Western Palatinate, that it would take years for a specific visual culture for women's football to be developed and to be firmly established for promotional material and for the print media.

5. Conclusion

In sum: the pioneer of women's football among the *Bundesliga* clubs was the 1. FC Kaiserslautern. A whole range of factors were responsible for the foundation of a section for ladies' football within this club. To start with it was the newly elected president Willi Müller who, in contrast to the conservative club functionaries who accepted women's football only reluctantly ("negative integration"), gave it his full and enthusiastic support. He was not shy to demonstrate this in public, for example,

⁵ Fig 5: hand-made poster with the motif of a girl with a pony-tail, photo 1970.

⁶ Fig 6: poster with a scene from a match with a "butch" looking female player kicking the ball, photo 1972.

⁷ Fig 7: poster for a football match which can easily be recognised as announcing a women's competition: with her curly hair, long legs and prominent breasts, the player looks rather like a Barbie doll, photo 1971.

⁸ Fig 8: promotional material for a friendly between the FCK women's section and the football club Feminin Schwindratzheim (Alsace), photo 1975.

⁹ Fig 9: poster announcing a women's football match with photo from a match between male teams, photo 1976.

when posing with the players for the daily press.¹⁰ Müller, as a former manufacturer of expensive fashionable shoes, was possibly more open to women's concerns than other functionaries. Moreover, it is known that Müller was a friend of the then governor and later chancellor Helmut Kohl, whose help had been instrumental in averting the FCK's bankruptcy at the beginning of the 1970s (cf Herzog, 2004, 200). From a position of critical distance from the DFB, Kohl as well had great sympathies for women's football.

The initial decisive, even though unintentional spark in favour of women's football in Kaiserslautern resulted from the well-planned marketing scoop of organising the match between the Datschiburger Kickers and the ASV Landau on the final day of the 1969/70 season. This event had an unexpectedly enormous impact since the print media and TV reported it in great detail. Therefore, the history of women's football in Kaiserslautern offers an instructive example for the phenomenon of mass media and sport being tightly intertwined. Thus they were able to influence each other through mutual impulse (cf Eisenberg, 1999, 221–224, 369–370; Eggers, 2001, 138–175; Eisenberg, 2004, 73–83; Werron, 2010, 217–221, 260–292).

This development did not appear out of the blue to hit Kaiserslautern like a miracle. For women's football had already acquired a broad social basis during the years before the match. This was going to serve as the sounding board through which the media broadcast of the Datschiburger Kickers match was absorbed enthusiastically. After all, girls and young women had been playing football well before 1970 in public parks and in back yards; they also were well able to assert themselves in the "wild games" of backstreet kick-about against the boys in the neighbourhood. They were not lacking in talent as is attested by the story of Petra Ziller. She wore her hair short, was built athletically and was altogether of rather boyish appearance. A supervisor of the SV Wiesenthalerhof, a suburb of Kaiserslautern, discovered her talent in the 1960s "on the street" (interview Petra Ziller, 14.1.2011). He wanted to recruit her for his club and was as disappointed as she was when Ziller had to admit that she was a girl. From her early years onwards Ziller's dreams were not aimed at the latest Barbie doll or at the current fashions; rather, her ambition was to wear one day the jersey of a proper football club. She was therefore one of the first Kaiserslautern girls who entered the "ladies" football section of the FCK. Even though her mother had always hoped for a more feminine daughter and had also not been happy about broken shoes and torn clothes, she overcame her reluctance and enrolled her 15-year old daughter as a member at the FCK headquarters (cf interview Petra Ziller, 16.1.2011). Thus, for the daughter, a dream came true. And the beautiful game was going to be improved even further, when the highly popular Swedish goalkeeper Ronnie Hellström sponsored the track suits for the women's club section (cf interview Margit Banse, 31.1.2011).

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¹⁰ Fig 10: press photo with the caption: "FCK president Willi Müller can hardly resist the rush of the Kaiserslautern girls and young women who wish to play football. The 50 or more football girls are aged between 14 to 27".

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Illustrations

Private archive Petra Ziller, four folders with press reports, statistics, type-written records, photos © Gerhard Ziller.

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