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# ‘Strong as a Bear, Gracious as a Gazelle’

The Expansion of Female Athleticism in Dutch Sports Magazines and Advertisements for Sports Food and Beverages, 1960-1980

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## *Introduction*

‘Did you ever wish you were a boy?’, a 1992 Nike advertisement asked its female readers. Challenging the gendered nature of athleticism, it encouraged sporting women to ‘stop beating yourself over the head for things that weren’t wrong in the first place’.<sup>1</sup> In *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon* (2003), Leslie Heywood and Shari Dworkin present the ad’s publication as a watershed moment for the unapologetic acceptance of female athleticism.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, representations of sportswomen have remained ambiguous.<sup>3</sup> Social scientists argue that depictions of women often conform to traditional ideas about femininity and sexuality, which conceptualize the female body as slender, yet non-aggressive, firm, yet passive.<sup>4</sup> Sociologist Toni Bruce reflects on the resulting ‘messy multiplicity’: images of stereotypical femininity, she contends, now exist alongside representations combining beauty *and* power. To Bruce, this elucidates women’s agency, and its limits, in the cultural sphere of sports.<sup>5</sup>

Scholars present the realization of this ‘messy multiplicity’ as a recent development.<sup>6</sup> Correspondingly, historical studies on representations of female athleticism often paint a picture of near-total hegemonic masculinity, focusing on the constraints on women’s bodily practices in the past.<sup>7</sup> Historian Joyce Kay signals that such efforts often consist of cherry picking: scholars, ‘as a means of redressing a perceived imbalance, have selected the most telling, sometimes the most extreme, examples of bias against sportswomen’.<sup>8</sup> In actuality, while athleticism remains a gendered concept, its variations, and its association with masculinity and femininity, have never been fixed.<sup>9</sup>

This study aims at critically examining the *historicity* of the aforementioned ‘messy multiplicity’ to show the ambiguous realities of the historical position of female athletes. It will zoom in on a specific aspect of sportswomen’s representations:

their textual and visual association with sports food and beverages. By promising specific and direct bodily effects, these internationally promoted products claimed to afford and delimit the cultivation of various kinds of (female) athleticism. Hence it is especially in the domain of these ergogenic aids – enhancers of physical performance – and their declared transformative powers that female strategies for advancing sporting achievements could potentially originate. Such a focus will both help to understand the complexity of representations of women in sports as well as address properly the scope of female athletes' possibilities in the twentieth century amidst commercial interests, powerful cultural customs, and sports-related practices. Focusing on the 1960s and 1970s in the Netherlands, a period of vital importance to the popularization of sports nutrition, this article hypothesizes that 1) Dutch media increasingly presented athletic bodies as obtainable and desirable to women and that 2) advertisements of sports food and beverages sought to promote various forms of female athleticism.

### *Operationalization*

Contrasting two Dutch sports magazines, *De Atletiekwereld* [The World of Athletics] and *Sport & Sportwereld* [Sports and the World of Sports], this article surveys both editorial content (for the years 1960, 1970 and 1980) and advertisements (1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and 1980). The former periodical was geared toward an active sporting community, while the latter primarily served the passive spectators of mediatised sports. Comparing the two allows for a look at diverging views on gender and athleticism between the somewhat confined world of organized sports and the more expansive sports culture. Because of its multidisciplinary nature, the focus on athletics helps to examine the diverse athletic ideals within the 'mother of all sports'. Furthermore, it offers insight into a sport in which the female athlete stood out long before 1960 (not just in the Netherlands), while facilitating both her celebration – as the sympathetic, 'modest' woman – as well as her exclusion – in the form of sex testing.<sup>10</sup>

The two magazines had diverging target audiences. *De Atletiekwereld* was the magazine of the Royal Dutch Athletics Federation (K.N.A.U.) from 1934 to 2004. While membership of the federation grew rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s, its magazines' readership remained modest.<sup>11</sup> As the official publication of the federation, however, it could undoubtedly be found in every athletics club's clubhouse. It was published fortnightly, meaning 72 issues were analysed for their editorial content, whereas the set of advertisements was taken from 120 issues. *De Atletiekwereld* eventually featured a full-colour cover, whereas its contents were invariably printed in black and white. The magazine's size grew significantly between 1960 and 1980, from on average 15 pages to 45 pages per issue. The male authors of *De Atletiekwereld* transcended their role as journalists: by virtue of their managerial duties at the federation, and their role as speaker at international conferences, they formed a group of expert mediators between sports institutions and athletes.

*Sport & Sportwereld* had a different, and larger, audience than *De Atletiekwereld*. Launched in 1951 as a weekly magazine, on 1 July 1970 it became the sports section of national newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad* while keeping its original editorial board. Through this move, *Sport & Sportwereld*'s readership grew instantly from 45,000 to 365,000.<sup>12</sup> Afterwards, the newspaper branded itself as *the* sports publication.<sup>13</sup> Like *De Atletiekwereld*, and like many present-day sports publications in the Netherlands and elsewhere, the magazine's editorial board consisted solely of men.<sup>14</sup> Though *Sport & Sportwereld* was turned into a daily section once it became part of *Algemeen Dagblad*, for consistency in the dataset only its Monday edition – when the sports section was by far the most extensive – was analysed. The editorial content of 152 issues and the advertisements of 256 issues (all printed in black and white) were studied. *Sport & Sportwereld*'s size remained constant over the years: 7.1 to 7.7 pages per issue. In comparison to *De Atletiekwereld*, it was written in a more popular style geared toward sports spectators. Perhaps unsurprisingly, most of its advertisements were unrelated to sports, promoting things like cigars, baby bottle heaters, life insurance and whisky. One advertisement for King Peppermints poked fun at readers' lack of athletic involvement, promising 'a round of fresh energy [...] for sitting in the stands'.<sup>15</sup>

Surveying the editorial content of these two magazines will help to understand attitudes toward female athleticism in the cultural spheres inhabited by sportswomen, whereas analysing advertisements will bring into view the tangible goods offered to women in pursuit of that same athleticism. The textual and visual content of both have been close-read, focusing on authoritative claims, adjectives, recurring rhetoric, affordances, and metaphors. While the spectacle of sports maintains 'a symbiotic relationship with visual culture', and advertisements tended to circulate more widely than most other (visual) sources used for historical scholarship, they have been largely ignored by sports historians.<sup>16</sup> This is regrettable, since the advertising of sports food or beverages can potentially reveal a complex dialogue between producer and consumers. Herein, the former is both shaping and anticipating the latter's desires, enhancing the commodity's meaning by 'affiliating needs with particular products'.<sup>17</sup> All food and drink advertisements featuring an explicit ergogenic – enhancing physical performance – effect, or deploying a visual cue linking the commodity to athleticism, have been examined.<sup>18</sup> Using a mixed methodology of content analysis and close-reading, their ergogenic promises and representations of gender have been coded, and their various connotative meanings have been studied.<sup>19</sup>

The period of 1960-1980 was of great significance to the topic at hand. Influenced by transnational economic events, the beginning of the 1960s saw the birth of a Dutch consumer society.<sup>20</sup> Sports food and beverages from countries like the United States, West Germany and Switzerland flooded the market, aided by an increasing interest in the material facilitation of athletic achievements. Sports nutrition became part of a broader, transnational move toward empirically tested training methods and match preparation. Citing scientists and coaches from Western and Eastern Germany, the United States and the Soviet Union,<sup>21</sup> *De Atletiekwereld* and *Sport & Sportwereld* advocated the rational, methodical evaluation of training exercises and athletes' lifestyles

that were rapidly becoming the international norm.<sup>22</sup> As it catered to an active athletics community, *De Atletiekwereld* especially reported on international sports science conferences and reviewed foreign-language publications on modern training techniques and sports nutrition, trying to help Dutch athletes in keeping up with their international competitors.<sup>23</sup>

What follows first is a discussion of the ideas about female athleticism and sports nutrition in the editorial content of these two magazines. The second section of this article analyses the advertisements for sports food and beverages: their ergogenic promises, their visual language, and their affordance of female athleticism.

### *Female athleticism and female bodies in De Atletiekwereld*

*De Atletiekwereld* often focused on women and their successes. For the volumes of 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and 1980, 35 percent of its cover photos featured female athletes, almost always actively engaged in feats of athleticism, while many articles featured women's athletic achievements. Following an angry letter about the prioritization of men's disciplines in sports magazines in 1960, authors often put the achievements of female athletes first in the ensuing years.<sup>24</sup> What is more, women read *De Atletiekwereld*, evidenced not just by its editorial content but also by the multiple advertisements geared specifically to women.<sup>25</sup>

From 1960 to 1980, the authors of *De Atletiekwereld* grew increasingly supportive of different forms of female athleticism. One example was their evolving position on the physical consequences of long distance running for women, a major debate in the world of sports. In 1960, granting that it had taken them some time, they proclaimed that these events should be accepted 'for the full 100%'.<sup>26</sup> After an international conference in Austria in 1966, *De Atletiekwereld* confirmed that there was no medical reason for women to train or run less than men.<sup>27</sup> Such ideas about the limitations of the female body could shift gradually in the magazine, often backed by the opinion of medical professionals. In 1960, for example, *De Atletiekwereld* problematized menstruation: a period only suited for 'light sports'.<sup>28</sup> Yet twenty years later, the magazine conceived of menstruation as having no discernible effect on athletic performance whatsoever.<sup>29</sup>

In describing female athletic bodies, *De Atletiekwereld's* authors were not always as open-minded. On the one hand, female athleticism was celebrated. According to a 1960 article, Wilma Rudolph, a black American sprinter, was 'the ideally built woman, strong like a bear, yet gracious as a gazelle'.<sup>30</sup> While congruous with the concept of 'pretty and powerful' introduced earlier, the comment also seems inspired by the belief that there was something 'natural' about black athletic bodies.<sup>31</sup> More often than praising women's physical strength, however, *De Atletiekwereld* warned female athletes of becoming too masculine. In 1960, the magazine cited Dr Nelly Wegener-Sleeswijk's problems with strength training for women from a cultural, though not a medical, standpoint. She conceived of her ideas about female athleticism in a transnational framework, as she cautioned, 'The masculine shape of the heavily trained sports-

woman, as we see among Eastern European sportswomen, does not concur with our Western beauty standards'.<sup>32</sup> Dr Wegener-Sleeswijk's recommendations carried weight, as she was a member of the National Olympic Committee and a public figure.<sup>33</sup> Her remarks were poignant given the ongoing controversial sex tests, introduced by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) in 1950. Intended to assuage fears about Eastern European men 'secretly' competing in women's sports, they simultaneously reinforced existing ideas about feminine athleticism.<sup>34</sup>

*De Atletiekwereld's* authors allowed for feats of great strength and endurance, but that athleticism was not always permitted its bodily expression. As in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, authors proved concerned with the concept of 'grace', especially in 1960.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps here the unique position of athletics determined their ambiguous positioning. Some of the sport's elements were seen as similar to swimming: their bodily expression did not clash with traditional notions of femininity, or extended them in a way that was acceptable. But other disciplines, which featured the bodily demonstration of intense muscle power, remained the domain of men.<sup>36</sup> In 1980, for instance, the magazine praised runner Grete Waitz's 'feminine' body, because it did not evince her considerable physical efforts.<sup>37</sup> Two weeks later, however, a different article *and* a letter to the editor revealed that not everyone appreciated the persistent focus on feminine beauty and 'grace'. Its authors chided the prioritizing of appearance in *De Atletiekwereld's* writing on female athletes.<sup>38</sup> In a rare reference to broader societal struggles, the letter argued that running should not be a beauty contest 'in an era of women's emancipation'.<sup>39</sup> In subsequent issues, offending authors struck a more measured tone in writing about women's achievements.

### *Female athleticism and female bodies in Sport & Sportwereld*

Two major ways in which *Sport & Sportwereld* differed from *De Atletiekwereld* were its focus on male achievements and its depiction of female athletes. To illustrate the first point: 90 percent of its cover photos exclusively featured sportsmen, most of them at the height of athletic achievement, while the great majority of the articles in the magazine were exclusively about male sports.<sup>40</sup> This particular focus had commercial reasons: generally, popular sports received the spotlight (70 percent of cover photos featured men's football). Women only featured during moments of international appeal like the Winter and Summer Olympics.<sup>41</sup>

However, when *Sports & Sportwereld* did cover women's sports, its appraisal of female athleticism was unreservedly positive. In 1960, the magazine lauded 'sturdily built' female swimmers for their 'fantastic achievements'.<sup>42</sup> Even when employing a 'strong, almost manly style', they were complimented for their 'magisterial times'.<sup>43</sup> Neither 1970 nor 1980 was different. Foreign athletes received praise too, like Soviet 'power skater' Nina Statkevich who was willing to 'cross the finish line more dead than alive'.<sup>44</sup> In 1980, *Sport & Sportwereld* openly celebrated female muscle power by putting a photo of Erica Mes, Miss World Bodybuilding, on the cover.<sup>45</sup>

*Sport & Sportwereld* occasionally fostered inflexible ideas about 'acceptable' bodies. Remarks about appearances – about 'gentle, intelligent little' faces<sup>46</sup> – not only trivialized women's accomplishments, but also tended to police bodies that were seen to be divergent from the norm. Like in *De Atletiekwereld*, medical professionals were most disparaging. A member of the medical commission of the IOC, the well-known Professor Ludwig Prokop, remarked upon the 'pyramids of flesh and bones' in weightlifting and the 'starving children' of gymnastics. He warned against hormone treatments and the 'manly traits' women might develop.<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, authors of *Sport & Sportwereld* became increasingly aware of their masculine conceptualization of athleticism. One 1970 column on women's football posited that 'womanly', like 'manly', would need to become a synonym for decisiveness or forcefulness.<sup>48</sup> Of course, women themselves often challenged gendered views on athleticism, like the group of female cyclers asking to join the 'muscle fortification' training of the Royal Dutch Cycling Union, despite not having been invited. The girls, the magazine wrote, were 'more fanatical than the boys'.<sup>49</sup>

Hence in various articles on women's sports, authors of both *De Atletiekwereld* and *Sport & Sportwereld* monitored female athletes' conformity to existing beauty standards. At the same time, they conceived of physical strength and general athleticism as important explanations for women's successes, and they generally cheered for these feats of female athleticism, especially by 1980 – regardless of a sportswoman's nationality. Herein, the magazines followed a trend seen in other countries like Sweden, where the trivializing focus on sportswomen's looks diminished somewhat – perhaps temporary – from 1970 onwards.<sup>50</sup> More importantly, the magazines presented these female successes as the product of women's dedication to their sport, and their rational approach to training and nutrition.

### *Sports nutrition in De Atletiekwereld and Sport & Sportwereld*

The early 1960s marked a turning point in the Dutch interest in sports nutrition. Four publications in four years, tailored to serious athletes, popularized the emerging international consensus on the diet of sportspersons.<sup>51</sup> These books featured frequent and explicit references to scientific, authoritative works from countries like West and East Germany, the United States, Switzerland and the Soviet Union. To the authors of *De Atletiekwereld*, sports nutrition was also a topic of increasing interest. A 1960 or 1970 issue of the magazine featured, on average, 0.6 references to sports nutrition, a figure that rose to 1.5 in 1980. Since the magazine catered to a community of active sportspersons, articles on the topic included practical advice, all the while presenting a specifically Dutch lack of nutritional knowledge as impeding international success in athletics.<sup>52</sup>

*De Atletiekwereld's* authors saw a link between variants of athleticism and nutritional components. Athleticism was neatly divided into two different strands: the capacity for short bursts of physical strength and the ability to endure prolonged, more moderate exercise. Increasing one's physical strength called for a protein-rich diet,

whereas endurance sports asked for simple and complex carbohydrates. These two strands of athleticism came with typical athletic disciplines – e.g. shot putting and running a marathon – and typical body shapes – leptosome and pyknic. A third body category, the intermediate, ‘athletic’ type, could theoretically excel at anything.

Dietary advice in *De Atletiekwereld* was generally not gender-specific. In a short piece on the Summer Olympics of 1960, *De Atletiekwereld* affirmed the importance of protein to the body of athletes, men or women: ‘chicken in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening [...]’.<sup>53</sup> The magazine also introduced male and female long-distance runners to the relatively new concept of carbo-loading.<sup>54</sup> There were some exceptions: sometimes, articles spoke of the diet of ‘sportsmen’ [‘sportmannen’] instead of ‘sportspersons’ [‘sporters’]. However, significantly, increasing one’s physical strength with the help of protein consumption was specifically presented as a method for young women on two separate occasions.<sup>55</sup> By aiming most of its articles on nutrition at both male and female athletes, and by sometimes offering up advice specifically geared toward women, *De Atletiekwereld* presented sportswomen with the tools for increasing their athleticism.

On the topic of sports and food, *Sport & Sportwereld*’s approach was less comprehensive and less academic than *De Atletiekwereld*. The food practices of male and female athletes came up in interviews and ranged from very deliberate – a personal seaweed recipe – to intuitive – ‘nonsense, that scramble for yeast flakes and wheat germs’.<sup>56</sup> Sports nutrition was at times part of the broader discussion about the international reputation of Dutch sports. The magazine argued that a lack of proper medical, psychological *and* nutritional guidance had rendered the Netherlands a minor actor on the international stage.<sup>57</sup> Without making any distinctions between the nutrition of sportsmen and -women, *Sport & Sportwereld* advocated a scientific approach, to compete with the ‘laboratory-grown and laboratory-fed athletes from America and Australia’.<sup>58</sup> However, because of its tendency of preferring male sports in general, the diet of male athletes did take precedence in *Sport & Sportwereld* in comparison to *De Atletiekwereld*. At any rate, the general impression of readers of both magazines must have been that sports nutrition constituted a mysterious and exciting field.

#### *Advertisements for sports food and beverages*

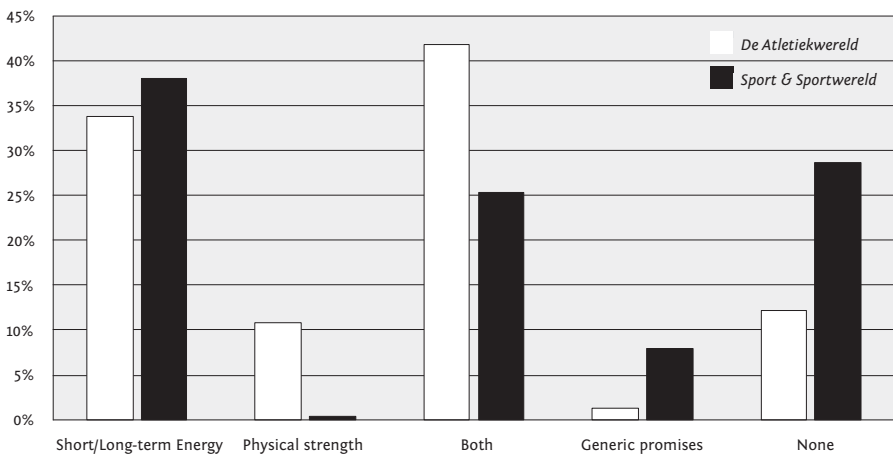
Commercial enterprises sought to capitalize on the increasing interest in the athlete’s diet. Corporations, producers of food and beverages in particular, played a large role in the post-war era world of sports. International brands such as Rivella, Mars, and Coca-Cola sponsored teams and increased their visibility in stadiums. One entire industry aligned itself with sports in countries like the Netherlands, the United States, and Great Britain: dairy associations promoted milk as *the* drink for athletes.<sup>59</sup> The Dutch Dairy Board paid for tournaments and advertisements, in addition to funding multiple scientific conferences and handbooks on sports and sports nutrition.<sup>60</sup> As a publicity stunt, one milk producer even spent 5,000 guilders in supplying Dutch Olympic contenders for the 1960 Summer Olympics with all the milk they could drink.<sup>61</sup>



An indispensable way to reach potential consumers was publishing advertisements in sports magazines. *De Atletiekwereld* printed 74 sports food/beverage advertisements in the years 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and 1980, compared to 265 ads in *Sport & Sportwereld*. For both magazines, sports food/beverage advertisements comprised 8 percent of total ads. There was a difference in concentration, however: the less commercial *De Atletiekwereld* contained only one sports food/beverage ad every 38 pages, whereas in *Sport & Sportwereld* the ratio was one in seven pages. In the latter magazine, advertisers often sought to associate their product with the broader sports culture without suggesting an ergogenic effect. In some Rivella advertisements, for instance, readers were encouraged to identify with spectators, not sportspersons, drinking its beverage.<sup>62</sup> Twenty different brands were promoted in the two magazines. Dextro-Energen, a German producer of glucose tablets, featured most prominently, comprising 20 percent of sports food/beverage ads. A range of international companies advertised for nutritional products, with seven of the ten most prevalent brands hailing from foreign countries such as the United States, Germany and Switzerland. Some advertisers even exploited the fact that Dutch sports commentators presented other countries as more nutritionally advanced. Champ, for instance, presented the logos of eight different West German sports federations that had endorsed their beverages.<sup>63</sup>

The ergogenic effects promised in sports food/beverage advertisements used similar concepts and language as both the articles on nutrition in *De Atletiekwereld* and the popular writings on scientific nutritional knowledge of the time.<sup>64</sup> Textually, sports food/beverage ads often promised an increase in short- or long-term energy (37 percent of them) or the increase of physical strength (3 percent). Many advertisements promised both effects (29 percent). There were no clear diachronic trends, and while different

FIG. 1 ERGOGENIC PROMISES IN SPORTS FOOD/BEVERAGE ADVERTISEMENTS IN *DE ATLETIEKWERELD* AND *SPORT & SPORTWERELD*, 1960-1980



companies advertised in the two magazines, the types of athleticism they promoted was quite similar (FIG. 1).

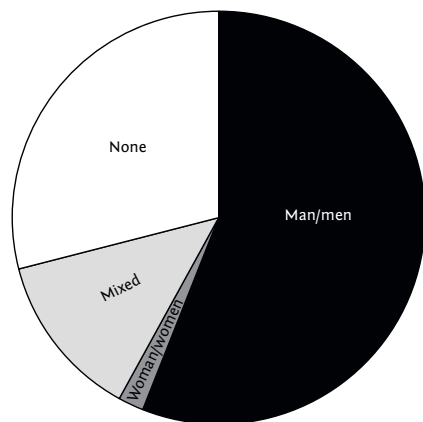
Still, some discernible differences between the two magazines did exist. Advertisers publishing in *Sport & Sportwereld* looked to attract both active sportspersons and spectators. This expansive strategy involved either making a very generic ergogenic claim, or not making a claim at all. Another incongruity between the two magazines was the share of advertisements promising an increase of physical strength through consumption of their protein-rich product, which occurred much more frequently in *De Atletiekwereld* (53 percent) compared to *Sport & Sportwereld* (25 percent). It would appear that the sugary beverages and chocolate bars in *Sport & Sportwereld* had a much broader appeal than protein-based foods and beverages. Thus, these facilitators of different types of athleticism offered to sportsmen and -women were the result of a complex interplay between existing international ideas about effective sports nutrition, the latest technological possibilities of producers and what they felt were consumers' aspirations, and the medium in which the product appeared.

#### *Gender in sports food/beverage advertisements*

The visual elements of sports food/beverage advertisements reveal existing, gendered views on sports nutrition, and on the type of athleticism these products were supposed to facilitate. Over 71 percent of sports food/beverage advertisements depicted a sportsperson, or a person who stood to benefit from the product's ergogenic potential. Of these advertisements, 192 out of 243 (79 percent) exclusively featured one or more men. Another 43 (18 percent) portrayed at least one man and one woman, whereas only eight advertisements (3 percent) exclusively depicted female athletes, none of which featured in *De Atletiekwereld* (FIG 2; the two magazines have been grouped together).

In advertisements, a relation existed between the gender of the sportsperson depicted and the promised ergogenic effects. Of the 51 advertisements featuring one or more women, most fixated on increasing short-/long-term energy (37), whereas none solely promised to increase physical strength. Visually, too, physical strength was mostly associated with sportsmen. One advertisement for Mars was very unambiguous: in the centre of the ad, a man is depicted lifting a giant Mars bar, while in the distance a woman, in Sunday dress, looks on. The weightlifter is holding up the

FIG. 2 GENDERED DEPICTIONS OF SPORTSPERSONS IN SPORTS FOOD/BEVERAGE ADVERTISEMENTS IN *DE ATLETIEKWERELD* AND *SPORT & SPORTWERELD*, 1960-1980



candy bar with apparent ease: a smile is visible on his face, which is turned toward the woman. His sleeveless shirt and very short pants reveal much of his muscular body. Near his feet is a barbell. The young woman has been drawn much smaller, in the upper-left corner. Gazing at the man, she is smiling with a hand near her heart, suggesting she is not just impressed by his achievement, but swooning over him. The text next to the weightlifter reads: 'A source of energy for You as well!'<sup>65</sup> In this advertisement, the product is depicted as an integral part of human interaction, with the ad promising a type of self-transformation. After all, it is the Mars bar that has given the man his strength.<sup>66</sup> Here, as often in the world of sports, the male body is worshipped 'to the exclusion of the female body as active'.<sup>67</sup> Depicting its central figure as the object of female desire, the advertisement's visualization of sports food clearly connotes heteromascularity.

Many advertisements often explicitly linked products to men and manliness. Two examples are a product line called 'Super Mascula', and a producer of coffee and tea, Douwe Egberts, which tried to alter tea's purported feminine image. It asked, by way of footballer Pieter Keizer, 'Tea a women's drink? Is football a women's sport?'<sup>68</sup> In 1965 and 1970, full-page advertisements in *De Atletiekwereld* for milk, a product consistently and prominently promoted in several Dutch sports magazines, portrayed masculine athletic achievement in all its forms. The series even depicted korfbal, conceived as a mixed-gender sport, as an all-male affair.<sup>69</sup> Here the gendered conventions of Dutch advertising do not deviate much from international standards, as milk producers in other countries also deliberately associated their product with masculinity.<sup>70</sup>

However, this focus on sportsmen and masculinity in sports food/beverage advertisements obscures certain subtleties. In general, advertisements did exhibit traditional ideas about masculinity and femininity, as other genres of advertisements of the time did.<sup>71</sup> Regardless, a change appears to have taken place around 1980, when a significant majority of advertisements lacked gendered representations, by featuring no sportsperson at all (60 percent), and the proportion of advertisements depicting men was lower than ever (34 percent). The series of masculine advertisements for milk in *De Atletiekwereld* ended abruptly halfway through 1975, replaced by a version in which gender played no role. Later, in 1980, milk ads promised 'more muscle power' – to men and to women.<sup>72</sup> In fact, six out of nine 'physical strength' advertisements found were without reference to any sportsperson, and therefore 'gender-neutral'. Perhaps producers of sports foods and beverages slowly started to seek out women in their pursuit for more revenue.

On limited occasions, advertisements could be found to explicitly celebrate and facilitate female athleticism. Most of the advertisements featuring female athletes showed them during feats of athleticism (38/51), like Grapillon's tennis player, in a dynamic depiction of anticipation before hitting the ball. A creation by Dextro-Energen even presented multiple female swimmers mid-action (FIG 3).<sup>73</sup> In the latter advertisement, four athletes are depicted as their bodies hit the water. The splashes created by their impact lend the ad a sense of dynamism, while the four women, lined up in the pool, suggest fierce competition. Because of the angle, the swimmers remain anonymous. Their athletic strength and agility are evidenced by their muscular bodies, with

FIG. 3 Advertisement for Dextro-Energen in *Sport & Sportwereld*, 24 May 1965. © Dextro-Energy.

**In het water geeft  
Dextro-Energen  
razendsnel nieuwe energie!**



Nerveuze spanning kost energie. Slap gevoel? Eerst krachten verzamelen met een tablet Dextro-Energen: pure druivesuiker, die grif in 't bloed wordt opgenomen en direkt in spierkracht omgezet! Houdt zo'n pakje Dextro-Energen altijd bij de hand. Bij sport, bij 't werk, in de auto. Een pakje met 6 dubbeltabletten kost 50 ct.

**DEXTRO-ENERGEN** geeft razendsnel nieuwe energie.

two of the athletes suspended in the air just before impact. The advertisement's text, however, has a somewhat different message, stressing a perceived problem with the combination of women and athleticism: 'Nervous anxiety costs energy. Are you feeling weak?' Consequently, despite its celebration of muscular athleticism, the overall effect of the ad is ambiguous: it offers women the chance at self-transformation through the consumption of Dextro-Energen tablets, but it also implies that the natural state of the female athlete is, at times, problematic. Without the product, her purported 'nervous energy' would be a barrier for achieving great feats of athleticism. Hence, in the cases of Grapillon and Dextro-Energen, advertisements offered women a new purchasable form of female athleticism, through the commodification of strong, female bodies, but not without qualifications.

Other advertisements were more resolute. The Dutch company Medica-sport openly targeted women with a product called Medivas, produced 'for the sports-woman'. The 1965 advertisement explained that these lozenges contained iron, for the proper functioning of the organs, 'especially during menstruation'.<sup>74</sup> Here, the commercial product once again matched scientific knowledge as popularized in contemporary monographs,<sup>75</sup> but it also aligned with the needs of at least some female athletes. Runner Grete Waitz, for instance, announced in *De Atletiekwereld* that she herself took iron pills, 'but every woman does that!'<sup>76</sup>

## Conclusion

Scholars have often presented past views on female athleticism in an uncomplicated manner. Historically, they contend, sportswomen were trapped by hegemonic ideas of masculinity and femininity, which has only recently given way to a more complex 'messy multiplicity'. However, a survey of existing notions of female athleticism in Dutch sports magazines shows that in some cases, this characterization does a disservice to understanding complex, protracted historical processes.

The first hypothesis of this article, that Dutch media increasingly presented athletic bodies as obtainable and desirable to women, can be accepted. To be sure, athleticism was – and is – a gendered concept. Both journalists and advertisers often associated feats of athleticism, especially feats of great physical strength, with men and masculinity. Yet despite the transnational exchange of ideas between scientists, journalists and corporations, there were distinct variations in representations between types of media, between national contexts, and between different periods. In the Netherlands, the attitude toward female athleticism appears to have been complex: often and increasingly progressive, while on occasion fixated on traditional ideas about femininity. Though broader cultural trends like the second wave of feminism were rarely discussed in a direct manner, it seems likely that women's emancipation had some influence on its development.<sup>77</sup> After all, the world of sports can form its own cultural sphere, but it is always tethered to society at large, as evidenced by research demonstrating the relation between women's positions in sports and societal gender roles.<sup>78</sup> Neither *De Atletiekwereld* nor *Sport & Sportwereld* displayed anything similar to the unrelenting praise for the traditional 'girl next door' occasionally encountered in other countries. These demanding feminine norms were related to anxieties about the successes of 'manly' Eastern European women, a Cold War frame perhaps not as influential in the Netherlands as in countries extensively entangled in this global conflict.<sup>79</sup> Hence, it seems evident that different societies could harbour conflicting ideas about athleticism.<sup>80</sup>

The second hypothesis, that advertisements of sports food and beverages sought to promote various forms of female athleticism, cannot be accepted unreservedly. In the two magazines, the topic of sports nutrition was presented as a flourishing discipline. Especially *De Atletiekwereld* made mention of the scientists from West and East Germany, the United States and the Soviet Union who were providing the groundwork for women looking to improve in physical strength or in endurance sports. However, the gendered representations in advertisements by international companies were often more traditional. The lack of sportswomen in many of these ads could be read as a dismissal, and their scattered depictions were often not as broad-minded as some of the editorial content in *De Atletiekwereld* and *Sport & Sportwereld*. Regardless, even these ads afforded sportswomen the tools – on occasion explicitly – to shape their own athleticism, especially by 1980. By sometimes presenting positive representations of female athletic achievement, and by increasingly advertising their products as useful to men *and* women, producers gradually tried to change the market for sports food and beverages. Herein, the focus on these products of international origins on offer to

sportsmen and -women particularly reveals the patently limited, but significant space that female athletes could navigate in the Netherlands during the 1960s and 1970s.

Lastly, though the power of recurring representations of female athleticism should not be underestimated, it would be a serious mistake to assume that women blindly accepted them, or that they did not buy sports food and beverages marketed to men. Part of this audience should be conceptualized as active, resistant, or subversive toward the dominant narratives of the advertising genre.<sup>81</sup> While this article represents an attempt at analysing the (nutritional) possibilities offered to audiences in Dutch sports culture, a fruitful focus for future studies could therefore be the dietary strategies of female athletes themselves. Chances are this increased focus on the nutritional affordances of women would verify that the theoretical concept of a 'messy multiplicity' concerning representations of female athleticism should be embraced for the twentieth as well as the twenty-first century.

#### NOTES

- 1 This study is part of the larger research project 'Sport History: Sport, Identity and Modernity in the Netherlands (1813-2013)', supervised by professor M.E.B. Derks. The author would like to thank professor Derks and professor W.J.H. Furnée, the peer reviewer and editor, and members of the cultural history section of Radboud University for their comments on an earlier version of this article.
- 2 Leslie Heywood and Shari Dworkin, *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon* (Minneapolis, MN/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 2-3. In this article 'athleticism' is defined as the bodily actions that advance sporting achievements.
- 3 Agnes Elling, Rens Peeters and Leonne Stentler, 'Tussen nieuwe heldinnen, voetbalbabes en lerende amateurs', in: M.S. Prange and M. Oosterbaan (eds.), *Vrouwenvoetbal in Nederland: Spiegel en katalysator van maatschappelijke veranderingen* (Utrecht/Amsterdam: Klement/Atria, 2017), 209-236, here 222.
- 4 Mary Jo Kane and Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, 'Media Treatment of Female Athletes: Issues of Gender and Sexualities', in: L. Wenner (ed.), *MediaSport* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 186-201, here 186; Noortje van Amsterdam et al., 'A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words: Constructing (non-)Athletic Bodies', *Journal of Youth Studies* 15 (2012) 3, 293-309, here 293.
- 5 Toni Bruce, 'New Rules for New Times: Sportswomen and Media Representation in the Third Wave', *Sex Roles* (2016) 74, 36-376, here 368. Historian Nancy Hewitt coined the term: Nancy A. Hewitt, 'Introduction', in: idem (ed.), *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 1-12, here 7.
- 6 Heywood and Dworkin, *Built to Win*, 2-3; Jennifer Hargreaves and Eric Anderson, 'Sport, Gender and Sexuality: Surveying the Field', in: idem (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality* (London [Etc.]: Routledge, 2014), 3-18; Bruce, 'New Rules'.
- 7 Stephen Wagg, "'If You Want the Girl Next Door ...": Olympic Sport and the Popular Press in Early Cold War Britain', in: S. Wagg and D.L. Andrews (eds.), *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2007) 100-122; Lindsay Parks Pieper, 'Sex Testing and the Maintenance of Western Femininity in International Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31 (2014) 13, 1557-1576; Dennis Krämer, 'Mediale Praktiken des Gendering: Tamara und Irina Press im westlichen Sport-

- diskurs zu Zeiten des “Kalten Krieges”, in: G. Klein and H.K. Göbel (eds.), *Performance und Praxis: Praxeologische Erkundungen in Tanz, Theater, Sport und Alltag* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 191-209.
- 8 Joyce Kay, ‘A Window of Opportunity? Preliminary Thoughts on Women’s Sport in Post-war Britain’, *Sport in History* 30 (2010) 2, 196-217, here 209.
  - 9 James A. Mangan, ‘Epilogue - Prospects for the New Millennium: Women, Emancipation and the Body’, in: J.A. Mangan and F. Hong (eds.), *Freeing the Female Body: Inspirational Icons* (London/Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 237-250, here 242.
  - 10 The two most well-known Dutch cases being, respectively, Fanny Blankers-Koen and Foekje Dillema, who both enjoyed their greatest successes in the 1940s. See also: Parks Pieper, ‘Sex Testing’.
  - 11 K.N.A.U. membership: 1955-13,000; 1965-20,000; 1980-40,000. *De Atletiekwereld* readership: 1955-2,000; 1980-7,000. Untitled, *De Atletiekwereld*, 9 July 1955; ‘K.N.A.U. boekte 40.000° lid’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 6 November 1980.
  - 12 ‘Tennisdirecteur ontvangt eerste proefnummer AD Sportwereld Pro’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 25 February 2008; Untitled, *Algemeen Dagblad: Sport & Sportwereld* (From here on: AD: S&S), 6 July 1970.
  - 13 AD Advertisement, AD: S&S, 27 May 1980.
  - 14 Bruce, ‘New Rules’, 362.
  - 15 King Peppermints advertisement, AD: S&S, 2 November 1970.
  - 16 Mike Huggins, ‘The Visual in Sport History: Approaches, Methodologies and Sources’, *International Journal of the History of Sport* 32 (2015) 15, 1813-1830, here 1813 and 1817.
  - 17 Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, ‘Mobilizing the Consumer: Assembling the Subject of Consumption’, *Theory, Culture & Society* 14 (1997) 1, 1-36, here 6.
  - 18 If during a year a product was promoted using the strategy mentioned here, *all* ads for that product of that year have been coded as sports food/beverage advertisements.
  - 19 William Leiss et al., *Social Communication in Advertising: Consumption in the Mediated Marketplace* (New York/London: Routledge [3rd ed.]), 163-166; Nicholas Holm, *Advertising and Consumer Society: A Critical Introduction* (London/New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 45-55.
  - 20 Peter van Dam and Joost Jonker, ‘Introduction: The Rise of Consumer Society’, *BMGN- Low Countries Historical Review* 132 (2017) 3, 3-10.
  - 21 Resp.: ‘Atletiek-expert zegt: conditie belangrijker dan techniek’, *Sport & Sportwereld*, 19 September 1960; ‘De weg naar prestaties’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 February 1970; ‘De weg naar prestaties’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 5 March 1970; ‘De weg naar prestaties’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 9 and 23 April 1970.
  - 22 Uta A. Balbier, ‘“A Game, a Competition, an Instrument?”: High Performance, Cultural Diplomacy and German Sport from 1950 to 1972’, *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26 (2009) 4, 539-555, here 547-550.
  - 23 ‘Op uw plaatsen ... Jeugdtribiek’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 7 May 1960; ‘Boekbespreking’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 8 October 1960.
  - 24 ‘Revue der clubbladen’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 9 April 1960.
  - 25 E.g., advertisements for sports bra’s. *De Atletiekwereld*, 5 June 1980.
  - 26 ‘Van het wedstrijdfront’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 9 April 1960.
  - 27 ‘De weg naar prestaties’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 27 May 1966.
  - 28 ‘Het MEISJE en de VROUW in de sport’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 November 1960.
  - 29 ‘Première avon running circuit’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 22 May 1980.
  - 30 ‘Onstuitbare Wilma Rudolph wint ook de 200 meter’, *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 September 1960.

- 31 Brett St Louis, 'Sport, Genetics and the "Natural Athlete": The Resurgence of Racial Science', *Body & Society* 9 (2003) 2, 75-95.
- 32 'Het MEISJE en de VROUW in de sport', *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 November 1960.
- 33 E.g., 'Vrouwen en sport', *Driekwart in de middag* (Dutch TV), 13 June 1963. On: [https://www.npo3.nl/vrouwen-niet-gebouwd-voor-de-voetbalsport/06-07-2017/WO\\_NTR\\_9702402](https://www.npo3.nl/vrouwen-niet-gebouwd-voor-de-voetbalsport/06-07-2017/WO_NTR_9702402).
- 34 Parks Pieper, 'Sex Testing'; Wagg, 'If You Want'.
- 35 Ibidem, 1561; Ibidem, 105.
- 36 Marjet Derks, 'Nette vrouwen zweten niet. Sportvrouwen van marginalisering naar profilering', in: Prange and Oosterbaan (eds.), *Vrouwenvoetbal in Nederland*, 37-59, here 39 and 43.
- 37 'Grete Waitz geeft lange afstand nieuwe dimensie!', *De Atletiekwereld*, 27 March 1980.
- 38 'De tweede avon-loop', *De Atletiekwereld*, 23 October 1980.
- 39 'AW-lezers grepen naar de pen', ibidem.
- 40 The current global average for the proportion of men's/women's sports in print media is about 90/10. Bruce, 'New Rules', 362.
- 41 Globally, representations in sports publications become more gender-equal around the time of big tournaments, such as the Summer and Winter Olympics. Pirkko Markula, Toni Bruce and Jorid Hovden, 'Key Themes in the Research on Media Coverage of Women's Sport', in: T. Bruce, J. Hovden and P. Markula (eds.), *Sportswomen at the Olympics: A Global Content Analysis of Newspaper Coverage* (Rotterdam [Etc.]: Sense Publishers, 2010), 1-18, here 3.
- 42 'Ilsa Konrads opent recordjacht!', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 11 January 1960. Dutch female swimmers had achieved great international successes even before World War II. Marjet Derks, 'Sportlife: Medals, Media and Life Courses of Female Dutch Olympic Champions, 1928-1940', *Historical Social Research* 39 (2014) 1, 144-162.
- 43 'Extra record zwemmen door Nederlandse meisjes', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 13 June 1960.
- 44 'Russin Nina Statkevitsj de sterke Europese kampioene vóór Stien, Ans en Attje', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 2 February 1970.
- 45 'Erica haalt de top', *AD: S&S*, 10 November 1980.
- 46 'Erica Terpstra bereikte zeer snel de top der vrije slag-cracks', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 22 August 1960.
- 47 'Geslachtstest barrière voor enkele vrouwen', *AD: S&S*, 2 Augustus 1980.
- 48 'Kick Geudekers Kolom: De dames waren heel wat "mans"', *AD: S&S*, 23 November 1970.
- 49 'Winterse conditie-training van KNWU werd afgesloten', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 16 February 1970.
- 50 Pia Lundquist Wanneberg, 'The Sexualization of Sport: A Gender Analysis of Swedish Elite Sport from 1967 to the Present Day', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 18 (2011) 3, 265-278, here 269-271.
- 51 Nederlandse Sport Federatie, *Symposium 'voeding en sport'* (Hilversum, 1962); Het Nederlands Zuivelbureau and Nederlandse Sport Federatie, *Voeding en sport: Inzichten en uitspraken van Europese en Amerikaanse medici met betrekking tot de invloed van de voeding op conditie en prestaties van sportlieden* (Amsterdam: s.e., 1963); Jan de Wijn, *De voeding bij sportbeoefening: Richtlijnen voor kaderinstructie* (The Hague: s.e., 1965); Voorlichtingsbureau voor de Voeding, *Sport en voeding* (The Hague: s.e., 1965).
- 52 'Olympische lessen', *De Atletiekwereld*, 22 October 1960.
- 53 'Op uw plaatsen ... Jeugdtribiek', *De Atletiekwereld*, 8 October 1960.
- 54 'De weg naar prestaties', *De Atletiekwereld*, 10 April and 7 August 1975; Claudia Ridel Juzwiak, 'Reflection on Sports Nutrition: Where We Come From, Where We Are, and Where We Are Headed', *Revista de Nutrição* 29 (2016) 3, 435-444, here 437.



- 55 'Voeding en sport (3)', *De Atletiekwereld*, 25 September 1964; 'De weg naar prestaties', *De Atletiekwereld*, 22 January 1970.
- 56 "'Arie, laat je tanden zien, want je zal het heel moeilijk krijgen!'", *Sport & Sportwereld*, 4 January 1960; 'Als in Rome de wind links van achteren waait ...', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 11 April 1960.
- 57 'Sport-Nederland is lelijk achterop geraakt', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 5 September 1960.
- 58 'Amerika heroverde in Rome zwemhegemonie', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 12 September 1960.
- 59 Maria J. Veri, 'Got Athletes? The Use of Male Athlete Celebrity Endorsers in Early Twentieth-Century Dairy-Industry Promotions', *Journal of Sport History* 43 (2016) 3, 290-305, here 291.
- 60 'Het MEISJE en de VROUW in de sport', *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 November 1960. The Dairy Board spent 19 million guilders on advertising in 1968 alone. 'Nederlands Zuivelbureau: Reclamebudget 1968 ruim 19 miljoen gulden', *Revue der Reclame*, 1 May 1968.
- 61 'Olympische deelnemers zullen genoeg melk kunnen drinken', *Sport & Sportwereld*, 7 June 1960.
- 62 Advertisement for Rivella in *Sport & Sportwereld*, 15 February 1960.
- 63 Advertisement for Champ in *De Atletiekwereld*, 7 August 1980.
- 64 Lundquist Wanneberg, 'The Sexualization'.
- 65 Advertisement for Mars candy bar, *Sport & Sportwereld*, 4 April 1960.
- 66 Leiss et al., *Social Communication*, 186, would classify this advertisement as part of the 'personalization' genre.
- 67 Patricia Vertinsky, 'Gender Matters in Sport History', in: R. Edelman and Wayne Wilson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sports History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) 445-460, here 448.
- 68 Super Mascula advertisement, *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 September 1960; Douwe Egberts advertisement, AD: S&S, 21 December 1970.
- 69 Advertisement for milk in *De Atletiekwereld*, 19 November 1970.
- 70 Veri, 'Got Athletes?', 296.
- 71 Jon Verriet, 'Ready Meals and Cultural Values in the Netherlands, 1950-1970', *Food & History* 11 (2013) 1, 123-153, here 134-141.
- 72 Advertisement for milk in *De Atletiekwereld*, 29 May 1975 and 25 September 1980.
- 73 Grapillon advertisement, *Sport & Sportwereld*, 19 July 1965; Dextro-Energen advertisement, *Sport & Sportwereld*, 24 May 1965.
- 74 Advertisement for Medica-sport in *De Atletiekwereld*, 29 January 1965.
- 75 Lundquist Wanneberg, 'The Sexualization of Sport'.
- 76 'Grete Waitz geeft lange afstand nieuwe dimensie!', *De Atletiekwereld*, 27 March 1980.
- 77 Ruud Stokvis and Ivo Martijn van Hilvoorde, *Fitter, harder & mooier: De onweerstaanbare opkomst van de fitnesscultuur* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: De Arbeiderspers/Het Sporthuis, 2008), 157.
- 78 Inge Claringbould and Annelies Knoppers, 'Regimes van genderongelijkheid in voetbal', in: Prange and Oosterbaan (eds.), *Vrouwenvoetbal in Nederland*, 139-153, here 140.
- 79 Heywood and Dworkin, *Built to Win*, 2-3; Jennifer Hargreaves and Eric Anderson, 'Sport, Gender and Sexuality: Surveying the Field', in: idem (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport, Gender and Sexuality* (London [Etc.]: Routledge, 2014), 3-18; Bruce, 'New Rules'.
- 80 Henning Eichberg, 'Body Culture', in: S.W. Pope and J. Nauright (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Sports History* (London/New York: Routledge, 2010), 162-181, here 174.
- 81 Huggins, 'The Visual', 1824.

# Building Bodies

## Transnational Historical Approaches to Sport, Gender and Ethnicities



YEARBOOK  
OF **WOMEN'S**  
HISTORY  
JAARBOEK  
VOOR **VROUWEN-**  
GESCHIEDENIS

FOOTBALL KICKING MAIDENS.