

Sport for All and Elite Sport: Do They Benefit One Another?

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1 Introduction

The relationship between elite sport and sport-for-all is an important and very topical subject. Each is developing in a different direction, so that the mutual connection between the two is placed under increasing strain. It is not clear where this is leading to, or what course the organisations concerned such as sport associations and federations, should take. Should they serve and condone the diverging paths of sport-for-all and elite sport, or should they promote and encourage the common bond between the two? And if the latter is the case, in what ways do elite sport and sport-for-all benefit one another, and how can this mutual benefit be encouraged by sport policy?

So far these questions have received little attention in sport policy-making. In most countries 'elite-sport policy' and 'sport-for-all policy' are implemented from separate organisations or departments, with their own networks and budgets. As a result the two forms of sport are dealt with on a relatively separate basis. In as much as this mutual relationship is spoken of at all in the sport policy of international and national sport organisations, we hear much more about partnership than about mutual tensions and rivalry. Their ideas are generally based on the so-called double pyramid theory. According to this theory, thousands of people practising sport at the base lead to a few Olympic champions and, at the same time the existence of champion role models encourages thousands of people to take up some form of sport (IOC 2000).

This 'double pyramid theory' should be looked at in greater detail. Firstly it should be tested and specified through scientific investigation. Does this theory always hold or only in certain circumstances? In what ways does elite sport benefit from a strongly developed sport-for-all? And to what extent does elite sport stimulate sport-for-all? Secondly, the tensions which may arise between top sport and sport-for-all should receive greater attention. There are numerous examples in this regard, but little attention is paid to them. Should a swimming pool be equipped as a competition pool for example, or as a subtropical swimming paradise? Should the skating rink be made available to a select group of elite skaters or to recreational users? Should the very youngest football teams be selected on the basis of talent, or should this only be done from higher age groups? Should elite athletes continue to play for local clubs in line with national sport association policy, or disengage themselves from national competitions and representative teams? Should sport-for-all also receive a share of the proceeds from large-scale elite sport events? How should government money be distributed between elite sport and sport-for-all? (compare Bette 1985; Stokvis 1998).

In order to answer these and other questions, we need to have a better understanding of what elite sport and sport-for-all mean to one another. That is the purpose of the present paper. Drawing on the relevant literature from the social sciences, I have sought to provide an up to date assessment of the current relationship between elite sport and sport-for-all. I also report on a number of supplementary, empirical analyses which I carried out for the purposes of this conference. These are designed to test certain theoretical assumptions, and also to improve our understanding of certain crucial elements in the relationship between elite sport and sport-for-all. Both the partnership and the rivalry in this relationship are considered.

In my study of the literature for this paper, I was once again struck by the fact that little attention is given to the relationship between elite sport and sport-for-all. There are numerous examinations of sport participation, which look into such issues as current development, incentives and inequality. There are also many studies of the personality, motives and careers of top athletes, and of problematic developments in the world of elite sport such as doping and violence. Spectators and viewers are also increasingly the subject of social science investigations. These consider such issues as the emergence of media sport, how sport in the media has affected our perceptions of sport (and of athletes and sportswomen), profiles and motives of sport audiences, and the effects on fanship. However, the ways in which elite sport and sport-for-all affect one another is rarely a subject of inquiry.

Drawing on the publications which have appeared on this subject and my own research, this paper sets out to examine the partnership and rivalry between sport-for-all and elite sport. In chapter two, I begin by outlining some of the major developments which have taken place in this relationship. In parts three and four I consider the most important functional relationships between elite sport and sport-for-all which are assumed to exist by the double pyramid theory: on the one hand the supply function of sport-for-all, on the other, the inspirational function of elite sport.

2 The internal differentiation of the sport world

The relationship between elite sport and sport-for-all is subject to change. During the early period of organised, competitive sport towards the end of the nineteenth century, it was difficult to draw a real distinction between top sport and sport-for-all. As internal differentiation and the scale of participation in sport increased, a global competition system was developed which made it possible to participate at different levels. As a result of selection mechanisms, a link was created between the youngest athletes at the lowest level and in the smallest towns, and the gold winning Olympians. This principle of selection and competition used to be so predominant that the entire sport world could be regarded as a single pyramid, broad based and rising to a peak at the top. Pierre de Coubertin declared that every thousand athletes produced a hundred exceptional talents, and these one hundred produced in turn a single topper (Lenk 1974).

In the course of the second half of the twentieth century, this conception of the sport world came to be regarded as incomplete. As Frank Pfetsch remarked as long ago as 1975, the pyramid still exists (in competitive sport), but ongoing differentiation in the sporting world has led to the creation of new, additional structures. Sport, at least on the European continent, was initially practised mainly in the context of sport clubs; after 1945 new types of organisational relationship came into being. Informal sports participation, practised outside the auspices of sports clubs or other sporting organisations, also became much more prevalent.

This development was quickly taken up and encouraged by the sport-for-all movement. In 1959 the Deutscher Sportbund launched a campaign to stimulate sports among non-athletes, including men and women, young and old, strong and weak. This was referred to as 'die Zweiter Weg', an alternative to the then dominant model of competition in an association context, characterised by a high entrance threshold and a high level of drop-out. Other countries followed suit, and the European Council gave a further boost to the movement by endorsing a sport-for-all document. This led to many national campaigns encouraging sport-for-all in various European countries.

Importantly, these campaigns presented a new vision of sport, a vision which diverged from traditional attitudes. Sport was interpreted in the broadest possible sense, including everything from recreational physical activity to competition at the highest level, and with an emphasis on spontaneous, non-organisational physical fitness and fitness exercises (Hartmann-Tews 1996; De Knop, Renson, Taks, Vanreusel 2002).

In 1983 in response to this development the IOC set up a 'Sport-for-all Working Group', later raised to the status of 'Sport-for-all Commission', which was supposed to determine how best the Olympic movement could contribute to the new development. The organisation of a biannual 'World Sport-for-all Congress' is one such contribution. Whereas previous editions focused on the numerous facets of sport-for-all, the present, ninth edition concentrates for the first time on the relationship between elite sport and sport-for-all.

All forms of sport, from fitness exercises to organised competitive sport, have been regarded by the sport-for-all movement as a part of a single whole. In the light of this it is particularly interesting to note that the connection between sport-for-all and elite sport has weakened. Many people practise a sport without any desire to move up to a higher level, and without any possibility of their being selected to do so. This applies to many of the growing number of senior participants in various sports. It also applies to the large group of young people who engage in sport on the basis of an entirely different set of values. For those engaged in fitness sports (such as aerobics) or adventure sport (such as caving or rafting), it is health, fitness, excitement and companionship which provide the dominant motivation, and not the desire to improve on one's own performance or triumph over others (Bette 1985; Crum 1992; Antonissen 2000).

Nor can elite sport at present be regarded as a simple extension of sport-for-all. Admittedly, all top athletes have their roots in sport-for-all, and play according to virtually identical rules at the lowest levels of competitive sport. Nevertheless, elite sport has developed into a relatively autonomous world, one which functions in accordance with different principles to those of sport-for-all. Under the influence of globalisation, commercialisation and mass media, selection processes and performance are being pushed to the limits. In most sports today, achieving and maintaining a position at the international top is only feasible if elite sport is approached as a primary commitment, and (at least in part) on a professional basis. This gives elite sport its own particular dynamic. The levels of competence and skill in top sport are increasingly removed from what is possible for ordinary mortals, which is often a cause for admiration, but which can also result in a degree of alienation (Wann 2001). There are also a number of developments which are present to a far lesser extent or not at all in sport-for-all: such as problems of overtaxing, pushing the limits, growing costs, and the increasing influence of the media and commercialisation (Bette 1985; Digel 1995; Hägele 1996).

All the levels and forms in which sport is practised remain inextricably linked, and all are part of a single, global sporting system (Van Bottenburg 2001). Yet they also continue to grow apart, and athletes are obliged at an increasingly younger age to choose between the sport-for-all approach and the elite sport approach (Patriksson 1995). The elite sport and sport-for-all policies that are called for in line with this development are also acquiring their own individual character and dynamic. Whereas elite sport policy focuses on a group of athletes which is limited in number by definition, with policy implemented in accordance with relatively strict regulations that increasingly take the interests of the media, the business community and

consumers (spectators, viewers, readers) into account, sport-for-all policy concentrates on developing a wide range of organisations and facilities for mass use, and is primarily concerned with the well-being of the practitioners themselves.

In spite of the fact that this places the partnership between elite sport and sport-for-all under increasing strain, we should not jump to the conclusion that this is a negative development. It has in fact also helped to enrich the world of sport. As a result of the growing differentiation, sport today has something for everyone. Anyone can take up one of the many sports on offer in accordance with his or her personal capacities and preferences: alone or in a group, independently or as a member of a club, recreational or competitive, at a high or a low level, etc. Furthermore, growing numbers of people are enjoying sport as spectators or television viewers. Sport is one of the most important topics of daily conversation, from which virtually no-one is excluded.

If we take this public function at its face value, a new, contemporary and broader interpretation of sport-for-all in the Olympic movement might be possible. As Stokvis shows in a new (forthcoming) study of media sport, this interpretation is not restricted to active participation in sport at all levels and in all forms; it also provides a place for spectators, viewers and others interested in sport (in short, the sport audience). Elite sport assumes the existence of a sport audience. As I intend to demonstrate, this audience is not a passive one, nor is it a distinct group from those who participate in a sport. On the contrary, there is in fact a positive relationship between the sport audience and sport practitioners; the two groups largely overlap.

At the same time, opposing developments in elite sport and sport-for-all are raising questions with respect to sport policy. Should elite sport and sport-for-all be further detached from one another, or should they in fact be more closely integrated? What are the effects of an elite sport policy that does not take sport-for-all into account, and vice versa? Can a policy aimed at ongoing differentiation of sporting practice grow diametrically opposed to a policy which aims at achieving more elite sport successes? Can a policy aimed at early selection, developing talent, and promoting a performance mentality come into conflict with a policy aimed at mass physical fitness for young and old? To answer such questions we must first answer a scientific question: in what sense and to what extent do sport-for-all and elite sport encourage one another, and in what ways can they perhaps work against one another? We need to understand the influences which elite sport and sport-for-all exercise on one another. In the investigation of such influences I take the double pyramid theory as my starting point. This assumes on the one hand a supply function for sport-for-all, and on the other an inspirational function for elite sport. My investigation aims to establish how, to what extent, and under what conditions these two functions operate.

3 The supply function of sport-for-all

It is a clear and undisputed fact that elite sport depends on sport-for-all. Sport-for-all provides for the continuous training of talent and the supply of new top athletes. Sport-for-all is also a force for innovation. Repeatedly we see new sports being developed from sport-for-all, such as beach volleyball, mountain biking and snowboarding in recent decades, which all began at a small scale with low standards, but which reached increasingly high levels with the progress of time to become fully fledged elite sports. But as to the question of how and to what extent sport-

for-all affects elite sport, there is still very little known. Here I will attempt to analyse two such effects, referring to already existing and new data: the influence of sport-for-all on top sport success (section 3.1) and the influence of sport-for-all on the top sport audience (section 3.2).

For the rest, these are not the only effects or influences exercised by sport-for-all on elite sport. For example, it is also quite likely that sport-for-all also serves a supply function with respect to coaching and training. Sport-for-all creates employment opportunities for many trainers/coaches, providing a base for selection to elite sport positions. It is also reasonable to assume that elite sport events benefit from the organisational capacity of sport-for-all. Thanks to sport-for-all, it is now generally accepted that people are willing to commit their energies to sport free of charge. Though the continuity, scale, and organisation of this commitment, the volunteer workers in sport have developed a large organisational capacity from which elite sport also benefits. I will not look into these effects in any greater detail here however, owing to a lack of research data.

3.1 Does more sport-for-all lead to more elite sport success?

Sport-for-all – and the sporting club in particular – is a breeding ground for elite sport. Thanks to sport facilities and sport organisations, people are able to participate in sports in accordance with their wishes and insights. Some concentrate on organised competitive sport, with expert personnel and proper accommodation. A proportion of these athletes turn out to have some talent, and a fraction of these in turn reach the top. We may assume that the quality of the sport-for-all infrastructure (physical education, sport organisations, sport accommodation, sport personnel) also influence the numbers who move up to the top, and the numbers who achieve top sport success. The question is, how strong is this link, how far does it go, and whether there is a direct correlation between the size of the sport-for-all movement in a country, and the top sport success achieved by that country. Do the chances of top sport success for a country increase the more people participate in sport, and does this happen at all levels and in every kind of sport?

Although a correlation between the scale of sport participation and the scale of sporting success would seem to speak for itself, there are scarcely any figures available in this regard. The reason is the lack of internationally comparable data. The situation is improving however. Firstly, the membership figures of sport organisations from an increasing number of (mainly European) countries are becoming available. Secondly, on the initiative of CONI and UK Sport, the so-called COMPASS project has been launched. COMPASS activities have made a number of numerical indicators for different countries in the survey of organised and unattached sport participation comparable (see <http://w3.uniroma1.it/compass>). Using both kinds of data, it is now possible answer the question, and to say more about the effects of the scale of sport-for-all on the degree of success in elite sport.

Table 1 gives the percentage of the total population engaged in organised sport, and the number of Olympic medals that were won in the period from 1992 to 2000. There appears to be a significant correlation between the percentage of organised sports participants and the number of medals won per million inhabitants (Pearson correlation coefficient = .535, significant).. .007). The number of medals won by a country in the Olympic Games therefore depends in part on the numbers engaged in organised sport. Or to put in another way, as the percentage of

organised sports participants increases in a country, the chance of winning an Olympic medal is increased for this country. At the same time the table makes it clear that there are exceptions, such as Hungary and Romania, where a relatively low percentage of athletes has not stood in the way of relatively high success at the Olympic Games. The impact of the state-run elite sports policy still makes itself felt here.

Table 1: percentage of organized sports participants and number of Olympic medals won from Barcelona 1992 to Sydney 2000 per million inhabitants in 20 European countries.

Country	Percentage of organized sport participants on the total number of inhabitants #	Number of medals won during the Olympic Games, from Barcelona 1992 to Sydney 2000, per million inhabitants*	Total number of medals won during the Olympic Games, from Barcelona 1992 to Sydney 2000
Norway	40%	17,44	75
Hungary	3%	6,73	68
the Netherlands	29%	4,77	74
Slovenia	12%	4,74	9
Switzerland	30%	4,58	33
Sweden	29%	4,32	38
Austria	39%	4,25	34
Iceland	32%	3,70	1
Denmark	36%	3,65	19
Germany	29%	3,14	256
Rumania	1%	2,81	64
Greece	4%	2,19	23
Czech Republic	22%	2,14	22
Italy	7%	2,06	118
France	22%	2,02	117
Ukraine	1%	1,40	72
Spain	6%	1,26	50
Poland	2%	0,82	31
Portugal	4%	0,41	4
Turkey	3%	0,26	16

Source: Sports Information Bulletin, 10 (44), February 1997.

* Calculated by myself

The same correlation probably applies to all kinds of sport. The Dutch situation supports the hypothesis that a proportionately high number of sport practitioners increases the chances of international top sport success. Sports in which the Netherlands has been virtually continuously in the world top over the last twenty years are skating, hockey, korfbal and – with ups and downs – football. For the first three of these, there is scarcely any other country in which so many people participate in the sport in a club context. With a million practitioners, football is the biggest sport in the Netherlands, but from an international perspective this number is not so impressive. Germany for example has six times as many footballers.

Judging from the Olympic medals won by the Dutch over the past two decades, swimming, equestrian sports and cycling are also among the most successful Dutch sports. Of these,

swimming and equestrian sports are among the top ten most practised sports in the Netherlands, but here the same applies as for football: big in the home country, small in the global perspective. This shows that there is in fact a correlation between the scale of organised sport and success in top sport, but it is not the only variable which should be taken into account. For smaller countries and (within countries) smaller sports, there is also a chance of top sport success.

Other data also points to this conclusion: The Netherlands has more organised tennis players than Spain, but Spain has had more tennis successes over the last decade. The Italian volleyball team also reached the world top, even though there are more people participating in this sport in a club context in Germany than in Italy. The scale of sport-for-all is just one factor among several which helps to determine the degree of success in elite sport (compare Van Bottenburg 2000; De Bosscher & De Knop 2002; Nys 2002).

If we look at the entire range of sport-for-all, which means also taking non-organised sport into account, it appears that the correlation between the degree of sport participation and top sport success primarily depends on the intensity, competitiveness and the degree of organisation in sporting practice. If we adopt a very broad definition of sport (the percentage of the population that participates in a sport more than once a year) we find that there is no significant correlation between participation in sport and elite sport success (Pearson correlation coefficient = .618; sign. .139). However, if we only take that part of the population which engages in sport in an intensive, competitive or organised fashion, then the correlation is found to be significant (Pearson correlation coefficient = .789; sign .035; see table 2).

Table 2: Degree of formal and informal sports participation and number of medals per million inhabitants in seven European countries.

Country	Percentage of inhabitants participating in sports in an intensive, organized and/or competitive way#	Percentage of inhabitants participating in sports at least once a year #	Number of medals won during the Olympic Games, from Barcelona 1992 to Sydney 2000, per million inhabitants*
Finland	44%	81%	6,08
the Netherlands	26%	63%	4,77
Sweden	42%	70%	4,32
Italy	7%	23%	2,06
Ireland	25%	64%	1,94
Spain	11%	31%	1,26
Great Britain	22%	66%	1,13

Source: <http://w3.uniroma1.it/compass>.

* Calculated by myself

Previous research into the regional distribution of top sport success in the Netherlands pointed in the same direction. A strikingly large number of top Dutch athletes who won a medal in Sydney were found to come from the south of the Netherlands. Comparative data on sport participation in this southern part of the Netherlands showed that there, the percentage of the population participating in sport was no higher than elsewhere in the country; however, among

this sporting part of the population there was a much higher percentage who participated in sport in an intensive, organised and competitive way (Van Bottenburg 2000).

The strong correlation between the degree of top sport success and extensive participation in sport-for-all raises new, supplementary questions. Does the chance of elite sport success increase to the extent that a few sports strongly dominate in a country, and decrease to the extent that participation is more widely distributed over a greater number of sports? Or does a greater variety of sports actually help to increase the chances of young people finding the sport they most enjoy, and which they are best at? To answer such questions, we need to investigate the extent to which a greater distribution of participation in many kinds of sport has a positive or negative effect on the number of elite sport successes. However, the information necessary for such an analysis is only available with respect to five countries. In the period from 1992 to 2000, for these five countries (Germany, the Netherlands, France, Czech Republic and Spain) there was found to be scarcely any correlation (Pearson correlatiecoëfficiënt = .224) between the distribution of sport participants over the sport associations which are members of the national sport federation, and the number of Olympic medals won per million inhabitants (see table 3).

Table 3: Dispersion of sports participants over sports associations and number of medals won per million inhabitants in five European countries.

Country	Dispersion (standard deviation) of 15 most practised organised sports– in thousands)#	Number of medals won during the Olympic Games, from Barcelona 1992 to Sydney 2000, per million inhabitants*
the Netherlands	2,7	4,77
Germany	17,3	3,14
Czech Republic	0,8	2,14
France	5,0	2,02
Spain	1,4	1,26

Source: calculations based on information of Clearing House (*Sports Information Bulletin*) and NOC*NSF.

* Calculated by myself.

Other data also throws some light on this issue. Generally speaking it is fair to say that young people have a wide variety of preferences when it comes to sport. In the Netherlands, young people as a whole participate in more than a hundred different kinds of sport. They do so with widely varying degrees of intensity, and for different reasons (Elling 2001). Several studies have shown that a positive response to such diversity is not only desirable in terms of encouraging sport, but also in terms of promoting elite sport. The conclusion reached is that all-round sport engagement at a young age and delayed specialization of talent helps to promote the development of top athletes. Many top athletes start practising a sport at a very young age, often before they are seven years old. Usually their sporting career starts with a different sport to the one in which they later excel. In the first years of their sporting career, top athletes often participate in several sports at once before specialising in the sport in which they will later climb to the top. On the other hand, specialisation and adopting a professional approach too soon can have a negative effect on the development of talent (Patriksson 1995; Carlsson 1988, 1997; Hill 1993; Engström 1993).

In spite of this insight, the age at which young talent begins to specialise and subject itself to the discipline of elite sport is declining (Patriksson 1995). This is understandable in view of the growing demands of elite sport and the growing competition between countries to gain prestige through top sport performance, but from the point of view of personal development it might raise problems. The risk of the most talented athletes dropping out of their sport – and in principle these are the ones we would expect to derive the most enjoyment from it – is higher as a result. It could also reduce the opportunities to participate in other recreational activities in the early years of life (Rak 1989). If we ignore such personal interests – which I am not suggesting that we should – and only consider the competition for prestige in our analysis, we can say that smaller countries in particular should certainly take the positive effects of delayed specialisation into account. These countries must nurture every talent, whereas countries with a large pool from which to recruit can allow ninety-nine talents out of a hundred to drop out.

Several researchers conclude that about ten years are required in order to become a top athlete in any particular sport (Eriksson et al 1993; Bloom 1985; Singer & Janelle 1999). In an analysis of the careers of Canadian top athletes, it was found that this period can be divided into three stages: the sampling years from the age of six to thirteen in which fun and excitement are of primary importance; the specialising years from the age of thirteen to sixteen in which pleasure and excitement continue to be central elements, and the development of specific sporting skills is also important; and the investment years in which the commitment and amount of time invested dramatically increase (Côté 1999). Here once again there will be differences from one sport to another (compare Patriksson 1995).

3.2 Does more sport-for-all lead to a larger elite sport audience?

Sport-for-all can also have a serious effect on elite sport in a more indirect way. The contemporary significance of elite sport strongly depends on the involvement of the business community and the media, which is in turn based on the huge size of the sport audience. The question here is: to what extent is the interest in sport connected to previous or current participation in a sport and – to take the question a step further – to what extent does sport-for-all affect the consumer market (and with it, an important component of the revenue for elite sport).

According to a wide range of persuasive research data, there is indeed a strong correlation between sport participation and other forms of involvement in sport. As long ago as the nineteen-fifties Blücher (1956) pointed out that active and passive sport involvement are in fact very much interwoven, and not two separate forms of behaviour. Thirteen years later a study by Bloss (1969) confirmed the interaction between the two. Recent studies point to the same conclusion. Shank & Beasley (1998) concluded in a study of American consumer behaviour that sport fans and sport participants cannot be regarded as separate groups. “Significant correlation was found between the number of hours viewing sport on television, reading about sports in magazines and newspapers, attending sporting events, and participating in sports.”

It makes little difference here whether we are talking about following sport in the media, or watching competitive sport events as part of a live audience. Thrane (2001) found in a secondary analysis of data about consumer behaviour in Denmark, Norway and Sweden that “the more people participated in sport the more likely they were to attend sporting events.” His

conclusion confirmed the expectation of White & Wilson (1999) “that people who are active in sport are also the most typical sport spectators.” Irlinger came to the same conclusion in relation to watching sport on television. On the basis of a survey among 3000 French citizens, he was also able to specify this correlation in greater detail: the more frequently people watched sport on television, the more likely they were to participate in a sport, and to do so in an organised and competitive context (see tables 4 and 5).

Table 4: Watch sports programmes at least occasionally

58%	of those in France who do not do any sport
74%	of those in France who do it less than once a month
75%	of those in France who do it once or twice a week
80%	of those in France who do it once a week
83%	of those who do it twice or three times a week
87%	of those who do it more that three times a week

Source: Irlinger 1994

Table 5: Watch sports programmes at least occasionally

58%	of those in France who do not do any sport
71%	of those in France who keep fit or sports for health reasons
71%	of non-licensed sports participants in France who take part in the activity
83%	of sports participants in France who have licenses and take part in the activity
92%	of sports participants in France who have licenses and take part in competitions

Source: Irlinger 1994

Dutch data demonstrated the same correlation, although somewhat less clearly. A secondary analysis of AVO data showed that the percentage of the population who follow sport is higher among people who participate in sport. The more sports people take part in (in a competitive context or as member of a sport association) the higher this percentage becomes. The correlation applied irrespective of whether sport is followed on radio and television, or watched live at sporting events. The greatest differences with non-athletes were found among those who participate in competitive sport, and those who practise four or more kinds of sport (see table 6 and 7). All these differences remained relatively constant in the period from 1983 to 1999.

Table 6: Following sports live and on radio/television, crossed by forms of sports participation, in percentages of Dutch inhabitants, aged 6-79 (1999)

	sports spectator live		sports viewer on radio and television	
	yes	no	yes	no
Sports participant	38.0	16.9	44.3	41.9
Member of sport club	47.5	24.8	48.8	39.7
Takes part in sports competition	55.8	25.1	55.3	37.9

Source: secondary analysis Facilities Usage Survey (SCP)

Table 7: Following sports live and on radio/television, crossed by number of sports practised, in percentage of Dutch population, aged 6-79 (1999)

number of sports practised	sports spectating	sports viewing
1 sport	28.8	43.1
2 sports	34.1	41.5
3 sports	41.9	44.1
4 or more sports	54.9	52.5

Source: secondary analysis Facilities Usage Survey (SCP)

Van den Heuvel (2000) found similar results in a representative survey of the Dutch population (see table 8 and 9).

Table 8: Intensity of watching sport on television, crossed by sports participation, in percentages

Sports participation	Non-viewer	Moderate viewer (0-1 hour/week)	Average viewer (1-5 hour/week)	Frequent viewer (>5 hours/week)	Total
Yes	31	51	57	67	51
No	69	49	43	44	49
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Van den Heuvel 2000.

Table 9: Intensity of watching sport on television, crossed by number of sports practised

Number of sports practised	Non-viewer	Moderate viewer (0-1 hour/week)	Average viewer (1-5 hour/week)	Frequent viewer (>5 hour/week)	Total
1 sport	24	23	12	15	18
2 sports	29	24	16	25	21
3 sports	15	18	18	7	17
4-5 sports	15	18	26	18	21
>6 sports	17	17	28	35	23
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Van den Heuvel 2000.

Further support can be found in the studies of Knoppers & Elling (2001) and Elling (2002) among 1025 youths of 14 to 21 years. These studies found a significant correlation between the sports in which young people participated and the sports they tended to watch the most. Checked for gender, ethnicity and age group, it was found that the only significant correlation was between participation of young people in sport and the number of hours per week engaged in a sport, and the number of hours spent watching sport. Young people who engaged in a lot of sport also spent more time watching sport on television.

On the basis of surveys into the relation between practising sport, going to sport events, watching sport on television, and reading about sport, several authors concluded that there is a strong correlation between all these kinds of sport involvement. According to Van den Heuvel (2000) there is apparently a distinct group of people who demonstrate an extremely broad interest in sport. This interest is manifested in various forms of sport behaviour and experience which, rather than being mutually exclusive, are in fact mutually supportive. According to Van

den Heuvel this group may rightly be regarded as the ‘omnivores’ of sport. Their pattern of consumption is both broad and intensive. Non-practitioners watch less sport on television, and are less concerned with sport in other ways. Thrane (2001) and Wilson (2002) also use the word ‘omnivore’ to describe the ‘sport glutton’ with diverse sporting interests.

According to Thrane (2001: 60) “the competing hypothesis that sport spectating occurs at the expense of sport participation did not receive any support whatsoever.” The image of the sport fan as a ‘lazy, overweight male watching sport on television with crisps and beer to hand’ should therefore be modified accordingly (Wann et al 2001). “With respect to the relationship between spectator and athletic participation, a number of empirical investigations have found that sport fans are more likely to participate in sport as athletes.” It was from this point of view that I argued earlier in this article that we should regard the sport audience as part of the Olympic movement. Sport audience and sport practitioners overlap one another to an important extent, and for a proper understanding of the development of contemporary sport, they should not be regarded as separate groups (Stokvis, forthcoming).

Furthermore, people with and without a sporting past differ in their motives and behaviour as sport spectators. Those who have practised a sport have a greater sport competence than those who have not (Stokvis, forthcoming). This means they appreciate different elements of sport contests and are quicker to see and comprehend the course of the contest and the efforts of the participants. According to Slepicka (1995) their sport sport experience leads them to evaluate sport contests differently, which also affects their behaviour as spectators. According to him, research has demonstrated that most of the troublemakers among spectators do not take part in any sport themselves. Heino (2000) is of the same opinion, and states that spectators without any sport experience are more likely to be looking for sensation than subtlety. Surveys by Van Bottenburg & Heilbron (1996) among spectators at so-called ‘free fights’ provide further support for this hypothesis: those who do not practise a martial art were more likely to say that they came to the event for ‘blood, aggression and violence’, whereas active martial art practitioners were more likely to describe their reasons for attending in terms of technique and competence.

This amply demonstrated correlation between sport practitioners and sport audience says nothing about the causality of the relationship between these two variables. Irlinger (1994) rightly points out that the fact that the percentage of viewers active in sports varies with the continuity, frequency and level of institutionalisation of such sports and physical activities, does not allow us to conclude that the one variable explains the other. In principle we may only conclude on the basis of the research referred to above that there is a relationship between doing sport and watching sport, but not that participating in sports creates an interest in televised sport or that watching televised sport motivates people to take up sports. Nevertheless, there is data which points in the direction of such a causality. What Lamprecht & Stamm (2000) conclude from their investigation of sport activities and sport consumption in Switzerland is confirmed by numerous other surveys (see section 4): the practising of a sport – especially in a club or competitive context – raises the level of interest in sport enormously, while conversely, those who take an interest in a sport through the media do not set out take up that sport themselves.

In this respect it is interesting to note, as Stokvis (forthcoming) does, that the number of people that practised sports before, by far exceeds the number of current sports participants. In a sample of consumers in Cincinnati MSA, which also found a significant correlation between the

number of hours sports viewing, sports reading, sports attending, and sports participating, more than 80% of the respondents had participated in organized sports at some point of their life, while only 27% were currently participating in organized sports (Shank & Beasley 1998). Another interesting point in this regard is that people who practise a sport would like to see more of that sport on television. In the Netherlands girls think that dance, basketball, hockey and volleyball do not receive enough attention, whereas boys would like to see more basketball, martial arts, football and hockey (Knoppers & Elling 2001). In Switzerland the answers given pointed in the same direction (Lamprecht & Stamm).

In short: People who practise or have practised a sport watch more sport on television, attend more sporting events, and read more about sport. This means that sport-for-all not only provides for a continuous supply of new top athletes, but also partly determines the scale of the consumer market for elite sport. The economics of elite sport depends therefore to an important degree on sport-for-all. Furthermore, the quality of the sporting audience is partly determined by sport-for-all. People who have taken part in a sport themselves, especially in a competitive or club context, understand better the challenges faced by top athletes and the effort required from them, and have more sport-specific reasons for watching sporting events.

4 The inspirational function of elite sport

So, sport-for-all is in many ways a condition of elite sport. Does the reverse also apply? Does elite sport exercise an effect on sport-for-all and if so, in what sense and to what extent? This effect is discussed at length in the literature. It is not just a matter of the effect of elite sport, but also that of the media. After all, any influence which elite sport may have on sport-for-all is largely only possible thanks to, and by way of, the media.

The influence of elite sport on sport-for-all, with the media as an intermediary, is the central concern of this chapter. In section 4.1 I discuss research into the influence of television sport on sporting practice in general. In section 4.2 I consider the effects on the scale of sport-for-all on the basis of popular championships as magnified by the media. Other media effects are will not be examined here, although these also deserve a closer analysis. One example in this regard is the influence of television on the organisation, financing and/or regulation of sports (see for example Whannel 1992) and the strengthening of the meaning and interpretations of sport (as in Hargreaves 1986; Knoppers & Elling 2001).

4.1 Does media attention to elite sport lead to a growth of sport-for-all?

Doing leads to watching, as we saw in chapter 3, but does watching also lead to doing? The research data on this tends to be contradictory.

No-one disputes that elite sport is increasingly being brought to people in their homes in an insistent fashion. The continued existence of sport is not dependent on the media, that much is clear. But the public reach and commercial success of sport does increasingly depend on the involvement of the media (Coakley 1998). The sport media have changed elite sport into audience-oriented events, in which the entertainment value for the public has become much more important. The media have quickly discovered how influential sport is in attracting a mass

audience, and the advertising of commercial enterprises along with it. The prices for sport programs rose enormously in the last decade of the previous century, and the television networks and sport organisations did well out of this (Lobmeyer & Weidinger 1992). Apart from financial gains, the growing attention of the media has also influenced sport in other ways. Firstly it has portrayed sport selectively, whereby elite sport, men's sport, new records and heroism have been given a much greater emphasis than factors associated with sports for all (Coakley 1998). Secondly, there is a lot of evidence which suggests that the sport media promote the function of sporting heroes as role models, although a degree of scepticism is called for in this regard (Wann 2001). The influence of sporting heroes is felt both inside and outside the world of sport, and it is exercised both unconsciously (through the registration of the behaviour of top athletes by their fans) and consciously (by using top athletes in information and promotion campaigns). There is still not much known about the extent of this role-model function, or whether both the positive and the negative characteristics of top sportsmen tend to be imitated. The fact that children and young people emulate sporting heroes has been amply demonstrated, but this is more likely to result in a strengthening of patterns of behaviour rather than actual changes of behaviours (Whannel 2000).

Although there has been a great deal of discussion about the influences of the media on sports participating (Andreff, Nys & Bourg 1987; Irlinger 1994; Wann 2001), most studies have shown that watching sport on television does not lead automatically to participation in sport. Lamprecht & Stamm (2000) conclude from Swiss research data that participating in sport (especially competitive sport in a club context) raises the level of interest in sport, but that the reverse does not apply (people exposed to sport on television do not automatically take up a sport themselves). Men play and watch a lot of football, women on the other hand watch a lot, but practise this sport relatively little. Van den Heuvel (2000) has pointed out that the air time for the biggest television sports in the Netherlands (football, tennis, cycling and skating) in the first half of the nineteen nineties was fairly stable, whereas the percentage of the population that played football and skated between 1991 and 1995 actually declined, although there was a slight increase in the percentage of tennis players and cyclists. He also points out that the sports which rose strongly in popularity in the nineties, such as fitness, aerobics and skating, were not broadcast very much. Similarly, Van Bottenburg (2001) found that volleyball actually declined in popularity after television attention for the sport increased, but grew strongly in popularity in the period when there was no such attention.

Motivation surveys support these conclusions. In large scale surveys into the original motivation of young people carried out in Ireland (Scully & Clarke 1997), just 2% indicate that watching sport on television or as a spectator was an influence on their decision to try out a sport. Irlinger (1994) also points to the extremely small percentage of people who say that they were inspired to take up a sport by television. Having established a clear correlation between doing a sport and watching a sport (see chapter 3) he analysed data on sporting motivation in order to determine the causal correlation. He found that only 1.2% of respondents felt that watching sport on television had encouraged to participate more in sport. Representative surveys of the Dutch population arrived at a higher percentage (Van den Heuvel 2000). Some 10% were in agreement with the proposition: 'If I have watched sport on television, I feel an urge to take up a sport myself'. The vast majority, 66%, disagreed with this proposition.

Crossing membership figures of sports organisations and data on broadcasting time does not give any empirical support either to the idea that television exercises an independent effect on

the degree to which a sport is practised (in an organised framework). The group of sports which received the least broadcasting time in the two sample years (1994 and 1997) were the sports that actually grew most in popularity from 1990 to 2000, whereas the sports that were broadcast the most (football, tennis, skating, cycling, motor racing and athletics) grew the least. In short, the membership figures of those sport associations which received the most broadcasting time tended to grow the least, and vice versa (see table 10).

Table 10: Growth in club membership of sports organisations divided by broadcasting time

Average broadcasting time a year (1994 and 1997 as sampling years)	Sports	Growth in club membership 1990-2000
>4000 min/year	football, tennis, skating, cycling, auto racing	+ 4,35%
150-2500 min/year	athletics, basketball, skiing, base/softball billiards, golf, gymnastics, handball, equestrian sports, field hockey, motorcycling, volleyball, aquatics, swimming	+10,25%
<150 minuten/jaar	all other	+19,00%

4.2 Do appealing champions promote the growth of sport-for-all?

A potential function of sporting heroes is its supposed ability to encourage fans to take up a sport (Krüger 1975; Wann 2001). In a previous study I referred to this as the 'Boris Becker Effect'. This supposed effect may sound very plausible. After all, major wins by countrymen and countrywomen generate enormous enthusiasm. They receive huge media coverage, are incorporated into advertisements, and are standard lunchtime topics at work. But whether they actually encourage people to take up the sport concerned and boost club membership is another matter altogether (Van Bottenburg 2001).

According to Stokvis & Minee (1986) and Van Bottenburg (2001) the facts hardly confirm this correlation. However, in view of the fact that there are examples of short term effects, the question of the circumstances in which such an effect is exerted, and how it can be encouraged and used by sporting organisations, remains a topical one. The question also arises as to whether the chances of a 'Boris Becker Effect' have increased with the arrival of a growing number of commercial broadcasters, and the increasingly intrusive presence of media sport. With these new questions in mind, I will examine this assumed effect in greater detail by showing how the number of organised participants in a particular sport develops after an appealing championship in that sport has taken place.

According to Van Bottenburg (2001), if the existence of a 'Boris Becker-Effect' is to be convincingly demonstrated, the rise in sports federation membership must fulfill three criteria:

1. The federation's growth in membership must be more marked than before the championship. It is therefore essential to look at the figures over a long period of time.
2. The federation's growth in membership must be more marked than that of other sports federations, in which no major championship win has been achieved. Otherwise, the rise in membership could simply reflect a general trend. In other words, it is important to look at relative, not absolute growth.

3. The federation's growth in membership must be more marked than in other countries, in the same sport, where no major win has been achieved. So, international comparison must be part of the analysis.

Using these criteria, I will start with an analysis of the ascendancy of Boris Becker. Or better still: of German tennis. After all, the success of Boris Becker was immediately followed by the successful championships of Steffi Graf, Michael Stich and the German Davis Cup team. Boris Becker won Wimbledon in 1985, 1986, and 1989, Steffi Graf in 1988, 1989, and 1992, and Michael Stich in 1991. In addition to several other Grand Slam tournaments, the German Davis Cup Team also triumphed in 1988, 1989, and 1993. The absolute membership figures of the German tennis association over the last twenty years show a small amount of extra growth following the first success of Boris Becker in 1985. In the longer term however membership fell, and even fell dramatically towards the end of the nineties. I will return later to the question whether the lack of continuing success may serve to explain this. If we look at the number of tennis players in proportion to the total number of participants in organised sport in Germany, we find that the successes in the second half of the eighties were accompanied by a slight, relative rise in the number of tennis players. Membership stabilised in the early nineties, and fell into a strong relative decline in the second half of that decade. If we then compare the development of membership figures in Germany with the figures for the Netherlands, we see that the growth in the mid eighties also occurred in the Netherlands, but without this country winning any important tennis championships in that period (see figure 1). Richard Krajicek was the first Dutchman to win a grand slam tournament, and he did so in 1996. This championship did not have an effect on club membership figures either.

FIGURE 1

I will now examine a number of other important championships along similar lines. I will concentrate on Dutch top sport achievements, not because these are any more impressive than others, but because of the availability of membership figures in all branches of Dutch sport over the last fifty years. Let me start with a number of championships whereby it is easy to see that there has been no effect on the numbers of organised sport participants, or only a very short term effect.

The first example is the gold medal of the Dutch volleyball team in Atlanta 1996. In the mid-eighties Dutch elite volleyball was changed dramatically, after the arrival of the successful American volleyball coach Arie Selinger. He brought about a revolution in volleyball in the Netherlands by taking the best players away from their clubs and appointing them as professional players, so that they could devote themselves entirely to training and playing for the national selection. This policy, continued and adapted by Joop Albeda, proved to be very successful. In 1992 the Dutch men's team won a silver medal in Barcelona. Four years later they won gold. Figure 2 shows that these medals in 1992 and 1996 did not lead to a growth in club membership. On the contrary, from 1985 onwards the membership of the Dutch volleyball association actually declined in relative terms. Meanwhile, the relative number of volleyball players in Germany increased, even though German volleyball was not doing particularly well in the international arena.

FIGURE 2

The same goes for the championships won by Bettine Vriesekoop (winner top-12 and European championship in 1982, top-12 in 1985 en European championship in 1992). Just like was the case with volleyball, these championships followed an increase in club membership and was followed by a decrease (see figure 3).

FIGURE 3

The third example is the gold medal in rowing by Nico Rienks and Ronald Florijn in Seoul 1988. At that time, the Dutch rowing association was already on the rise. Since the early eighties club membership increased. After the gold medal rowing did not grow faster than before (see figure 4).

FIGURE 4

The gold medal of Ellen van Langen in track and field (800 meter, Barcelona 1992), was quite unique in Dutch history, which generated enormous enthousiasm. However, her fantastic performance did not lead to a considerable growth in club membership figures (see figure 5). Looking at this figure, it's also striking that the relative membership figures of the German athletic association is decreasing in the long run, although German athletes were repeatedly successful in Olympic Games and World championships.

FIGURE 5

The European Championship of the Dutch football team in 1988 and the Champions League won by Ajax in 1996 did not have an impact on club membership figures either. Figure 6 shows that in relative terms the popularity of Dutch football declined from the mid-seventies to the early nineties, after which the Dutch football association consolidated its position. Both championships in 1988 and 1996 did not alter these long term trends.

FIGURE 6

In short, none of these championships had an impact on club membership figures. The euphoria of success is short-lived, as sports stars themselves wil know better than anyone else. The thrill of a superb win at one event is soon followed by a disappointment at another. Moreover, neither the public nor the media tend to concentrate on a single sport for very long. One might suppose therefore, that the number of club members will grow for sports with recurring appealing championships. To test this hypothesis figure 7 shows the trend in club membership of the Dutch skating, hockey and football association together. And again, no impact on club membership figures can be found.

FIGURE 7

But there are exceptions. I would like to discuss three of these. The first concerns the championships of the current IOC member Anton Geesink. The success of Geesink began in 1952 with a European Championship victory. The most important and impressive triumphs were in 1961 when he became world champion and in 1964 when he won Olympic gold in Japan. Judo had just been included in the Olympic program for the very first time. There was in fact a huge growth in membership figures of the judo association at around the same period (see figure

8). This growth started in 1958 and continued up to 1966. Considering that the growth actually started three years before Geesink's victory at the world championships, we cannot ascribe this growth to the successes in 1961 and 1964, but it is possible that a number of previous European titles played a role here. Judo was a sport that had only just been introduced to the Netherlands. It is reasonable to assume that many people first came into contact with this sport through the media attention for Anton Geesink. In this sense, the effect is somewhat different to the other effects we have been considering. In the case of Geesink, it was perhaps more a matter of the spread of a new sport, rather than an expansion.

FIGURE 8

A similar effect could be found following the darts championship victories of Raymond van Barneveld. Van den Heuvel (2000) has pointed out that this sport, just as previously in England, attracted more practitioners after its discovery as a television sport by the (in this case Dutch) commercial television channel SBS6. In 1998 SBS6 started broadcasting the official world championships from the Embassy in England. In that year a total of 3.5 hours of darts was shown. This was 7.3% of the total sport transmission time of SBS6. On average more than half a million people watched these broadcasts. The final, won by Raymond van Barneveld, attracted more than a million viewers. The following year Van Barneveld was once again victorious. Membership figures after these championships grew more rapidly than before (see figure 9). So, there would seem to have been a Boris Becker Effect in this case, but one that is comparable to the Anton Geesink Effect. Here once again, media attention to the championship appears to have contributed to the spread of a comparatively new sport. It is quite possible that there was already a large number of recreational dart players in the Netherlands, and that thanks to the success of Van Barneveld, they now realised that darts could be practised as a serious sport. However, international data which is at present lacking needs to be collected so that we can judge to what extent there was a similar trend in other countries, countries which did not have a 'Barney'. Moreover, we need some more years to conclude whether this rapid growth has to be considered as a short term effect or not.

FIGURE 9

A third and final example of championships that seem to have had an effect on sporting practice are those that have been won by the Dutch hockey teams since 1996. The Netherlands has had a long tradition of international success in this sport, but the achievements from 1996 onwards (especially by the men) were particularly impressive: Olympic gold in 1996 and 2000, world champion in 1998 and victories in the Champions Trophy in 1996, 1998 and 2000. In particular, the world championships in 1998 played in the home country, at which the men won gold and the women silver, attracted a lot of attention in the Dutch media. Figure 10 shows a swing from 1997 on in the Netherlands and that there was no such growth in the neighbouring country of Germany (data of 1999 and 2000 unknown). Of course we should not conclude from this parallelism that the growth in membership was only a result of the championship. Other factors may well have played a part, such as the policy of the hockey association. This policy was characterised by the fact that organisational innovation, quality improvements, media attention and elite sport were deliberately interwoven. If this is in part responsible for the new growth phase which took place at the end of the nineties, then a new and interesting hypothesis deserves to be considered: a championship does not automatically affect the scale of participation in a

sport, but sport organisations can encourage or bring about such an effect by means of well targeted policy.

FIGURE 10

5 Conclusions

Which brings me to my conclusions, one in regard to scholarly sports research and one related to sports policy.

It is clear from the above that sport-for-all and elite sport are developing in different directions, but that they nevertheless continue to exercise a number of effects on one another. In the light of these effects, I think the ‘double pyramid theory’ needs adaptation. There are three arguments for this.

First, we have to be more clear and specific about the relationship between elite sport and sport for all. This relationship is more complex and less unambiguous than explained by the double pyramid theory. Indeed, sport for all has a supply function for elite sport. As the percentage of organised sports participants increases in a country, the chance of winning an Olympic medal is increased for this country. However, if we look at the entire range of sport-for-all, it appears that the correlation between the degree of sport participation and top sport success primarily depends on the intensity, competitiveness and the degree of organisation in sporting practice. If we adopt a very broad definition of sport, we find no significant correlation between participation in sport and elite sport success. Conversely, elite sport does not automatically encourage sports participation. Doing leads to watching, but watching does not automatically lead to doing. Not even when a popular top sportsman wins a prestigious tournament, in spite of ample media attention. No doubt that the social and economic impact of elite sport is ever more increasing, but we have to be more precise if it comes to the inspirational function for sport for all.

Second, we have to bring the sports audience in a revised and extended ‘double pyramid theory’. For a proper understanding of the development of contemporary sport, sport spectators should not be neglected. The sport audience is an essential component of the modern top sport system, and is the foundation for the financially attractive alliances which have been formed between top sport organisations, media and the business community. The idea that this sport audience is a mass of passive individuals who stand outside the real world of sport is a misconception. On the contrary, sport viewers, spectators, readers and practitioners all actually overlap to a very large extent. There is much evidence that sport spectating does not occur at the expense of sport participation. Elite sport assumes the existence of a sport audience and sport-for-all plays an important role in the growth of this sport audience.

A third argument is that this metaphor is an incomplete impression of today’s sporting world. The pyramid still exists in competitive sport, but the ongoing differentiation in the sporting world has led to the creation of new, additional structures.

My fourth and last argument for revising and extending the ‘double pyramid theory’ that we have to rethink the rivalry between elite sport and sport for all. In this paper I only mentioned this topic briefly, but I am well aware of the fact that this topic deserves more attention.

Sport for all does not supply elite sport automatically. Specific organisations and facilities are required. In the Netherlands, sport associations play an indispensable role in this regard. They have to ensure that there is a good atmosphere, proper sport accommodation, training opportunities, skilled coaches and sufficient volunteers. Depending on their wishes and potential, they should also offer guidance to sportsmen and sportswomen in their transition from physical activity to sport-oriented activity, and on from there to competitive sport and perhaps even elite sport. Sport clubs also play a very important role in encouraging the competence of the sport audience, which in turn helps to determine the motives and behaviour of spectators and viewers. This is where the rules of the game are learned. This is where people can learn to appreciate and understand the beauty of sport.

The same goes for the inspirational function of elite sport. Elite sport does not encourage sports participation directly and automatically. Here once again, we find that it is up to the sport organisations to make the difference. The question of the extent to which sport-for-all benefits from elite sport is one that should be addressed to the sport organisations concerned, and in the following form: what are you doing to make use of the supply function of sport for all on the one hand and to strengthen the foundation of elite sport, which is sport-for-all, on the other hand, using the opportunities that are provided to you by elite sport? Stimulating effects can be encouraged by a well targeted policy. Such as that of the KNVB, who are investing part of the proceeds from Euro 2000 in a youth plan. Or that of the Den Bosch municipal council, which wants a fixed percentage of the investment in elite sport events to be allocated to sport-for-all. Or that of the hockey association, which takes advantage of the opportunities offered by the organisation and the media attention for an elite sport event in the home country (and the success at that event) in order to realise sport-for-all objectives. Or that of sponsors, of whom I will mention here the Rabo bank and Coca Cola Company, who invest in sport-for-all as well as in top sport.

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