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9 Momentous spark or enduring enthusiasm?

The 2011 FIFA Women's World Cup and its impact on players' mobility and on the popularity of women's soccer in Germany

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Introduction

World championships are the top-ranking competitions of national teams, as well as indicators of the development, performance level and the global spread of a sport. This is especially true of championships in sports which have a relatively short history, such as women's soccer. The Women's World Cup, organized by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) since 1991, attracts an increasing number of teams which participate in the qualification matches. The number of participants and their performance show that women's soccer has now spread to many parts of the world (Hong and Mangan 2003; Williams 2007), with 29 million women and girls now playing soccer worldwide (FIFA 2013). However, the recognition and support given to women's soccer, as well as its organizational bases, vary considerably from country to country; for example, although there were 120 football federations listed in the FIFA Women's World Ranking with an active national squad in 2013,¹ women's soccer leagues exist in only 61 countries.

Unlike in the men's game, the professionalization process in women's soccer is in an incipient stage and the sport is thus not dominated by the "global sportsindustrial complex," which shapes developments in men's soccer to a large extent (Maguire 2004; Scherer, Falcois and Jackson 2008; Giulianotti and Robertson 2009; Schaaf and Nieland 2011). Nonetheless, there are certain indications that women's soccer is on its way to becoming a global sport with transnational networks, as indicated by the increasing number of women playing in national leagues abroad (Botelho and Agergaard 2011; Tiesler 2011, 2012b).

In 2011, Germany hosted the FIFA Women's World Cup. In contrast to developments in other countries, there were few attempts in Germany to establish women's soccer until 1970. Then national soccer federations of many countries began to accept the fact that women were playing soccer, so that the German Football Association (Deutscher Fußball Bund – DFB), too, had to agree to taking women members (Pfister 2003). The sport has experienced a [.....]