

A History of Women's Soccer

Read the article and answer the questions that follow.

Question - What do the Football Associations of, England, Holland and Germany have in common with China's Qing Dynasty (founded 1644)?

Answer - All four governing bodies at some stage banned women's football.

Surprising though it may seem in the light of the boom in women's soccer during the last decade of the 20th Century - and with the fourth Women's World Cup finals set for 2003 - the game was cripplingly held back in earlier times through the prejudice of male-dominated organisations.

The first known records of the game are frescoes of women playing football at the time of the Donghan Dynasty (AD 25-220). How far women's football had progressed before the Qing Dynasty came to power is not known, but it quite obviously never became the Sport of Qings.

Following the draconian ban it was not until the 1920's that football began creeping into China's school curriculum for girls. Fittingly in the context of the game's history, the first Women's World Cup was destined to be held in China in 1991 - and won by America, whose national team had played its first competitive match only six years earlier.

The old and new worlds of women's soccer were thus symbolically brought together - though not before further massive hurdles had been cleared during half a century of the game being played almost as an 'underground' sport.

As Chinese girls were beginning to play the game in the 1920's, so their English counterparts were being told that football was "quite unsuitable for females" in a pompously worded Football Association edict which at a stroke halted the rapid progress being made.

Perhaps feeling threatened at seeing an attendance of 53,000 for a women's match played at the ground of Everton FC, the FA Council decreed in December, 1921: "... the Council feel impelled to express their strong opinion that the game of football is unsuitable for

females and ought not to be encouraged....the Council request clubs belonging to the Association to refuse the use of their grounds for such matches."

It was 34 years later that both Holland's KNVB and Germany's DFB imposed similar bans, but the effect was similarly devastating and it was not until the 1970's that the game was released from its shackles.

When women's football at last began to grow on a universal scale the pioneers were Italy, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The Swedes won the first European Championships, in 1984, but it was Germany who came to dominate the competition - they have now won it five times, most recently on home soil in the summer of 2001.

America, comparative newcomers to the women's game, have won the World Cup twice and also took the Olympic gold when women's football was introduced to the competition in 1996. Other 'new' women's soccer nations which have prospered on the world stage include Brazil, Nigeria and Japan.

The players of the American national team were the first women to be paid on a full-time professional basis, though in Italy a number of players had part-time contracts in club football from the 1970's and in 1992 a professional league was set up in Japan.

A pro league is scheduled to begin in England in 2003, though the rewards will not compare to those on offer in America's WUSA League. In its inaugural season of 2001 salaries up to \$85,000 were on offer, while top players can also land six-figure sponsorship contracts.

This is perhaps a reflection of the way that women's football has over the years been perceived in different countries - as a low-grade, even unwanted sport where the men's game is embedded deep in a nation's psyche or as an equal and integral part of a country's sporting culture. What would those Qings have made of it?

Tony Leighton, January 2002

A. Main Idea – skimming for information

Read the article quickly and answer the following questions:

1. Underline all the countries mentioned
2. Underline the dates / years / numbers
3. Underline the organizations mentioned

B. Main Idea – note taking

Read the article again and take notes under the following headings.

China	
England	
Holland	
USA	

C. Main Ideas – True or False

Read the report and decide whether the following statements are true or false. Give a reason for your choice.

1. T / F The women's World Cup started in 2003.
2. T / F The women's game has always been encouraged by male organizations.
3. T / F The United States women's team played their first game in 1985.
4. T / F It was not until the 1970s that women's football broke free from male prejudice.
5. T / F Germany won the first European Championship for women.
6. T / F Japanese women are paid to play football.

D. Vocabulary

Explain the underlined word below in your own words.

1. '... the game was cripplingly held back in earlier times through the **prejudice** of male-dominated organisations'
2. 'Following the **draconian** ban it was not until the 1920's that football began creeping into ...'
3. '...together - though not before further massive **hurdles** had been cleared during half a century ...'
4. 'Perhaps feeling threatened at seeing an **attendance** of 53,000 for a women's match played at the ground of Everton...'
5. 'When women's football at last began to grow on a universal **scale** the pioneers were Italy ...'
6. '... though the rewards will not compare to those on offer in America's WUSA League. In its **inaugural** season of 2001 salaries

E. Summary

Write a short summary of the article (100 words)

ANSWERS

READING: Worksheet

A History of Women's Soccer

A. Main Idea – skimming for information

Read the article quickly and answer the following questions:

1. Underline all the countries mentioned
2. Underline the dates / years / numbers
3. Underline the organizations mentioned

B. Main Idea – note taking

Read the article again and take notes under the following headings.

China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First records of women's football • Banned women's football (Qing Dynasty) • 1920 – football appeared on school curriculum • First WC for women in 1991
England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1920s English FA banned football for girls • Pompous view against girls' game
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German FA banned girls' football in 1955 • Have dominated European football (5 times winners)
USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Won the WC twice • Olympic Champions in 1996 • First professionals (WUSA) league

C. Main Ideas – True or False

Read the report and decide whether the following statements are true or false. Give a reason for your choice.

1. T / F The women's World Cup started in 2003.
The 4th World Cup was in 2003
2. T / F The women's game has always been encouraged by male organizations.
the game was cripplingly held back in earlier times through the prejudice of male-dominated organisations.
3. T / F The United States women's team played their first game in 1985.
won by America, whose national team had played its first competitive match only six years earlier

4. **T / F** It was not until the 1970s that women's football broke free from male prejudice.
not until the 1970's that the game was released from its shackles.
5. **T / F** Germany won the first European Championship for women.
The Swedes won the first European Championships, in 1984
6. **T / F** Japanese women are paid to play football.
and in 1992 a professional league was set up in Japan

D. Vocabulary

Explain the underlined word below in your own words.

1. '... the game was cripplingly held back in earlier times through the **prejudice** of male-dominated organisations'
bias / chauvinism / discrimination / bigotry / intolerance
2. 'Following the **draconian** ban it was not until the 1920's that football began creeping into ...'
unjustly harsh, excessive
3. '...together - though not before further massive **hurdles** had been cleared during half a century ...'
obstacles / difficulties
4. '... threatened at seeing an **attendance** of 53,000 for a women's match played at ...'
the number of people who watch the game in the stadium
5. '... football at last began to grow on a universal **scale** the pioneers were Italy ...'
level / range
6. '...not compare to those on offer in America's WUSA League. In its **inaugural** season of 2001 salaries
first / opening / introductory

E. Summary

Write a short summary of the article (100 words)

Suggested Answer

This 2002 article by Leighton traces the history of women's football and in particular focuses on the prejudice and problems that they faced. Records suggest that women's football first appeared in the Donghan Dynasty (AD 25-220) but soon after was banned by the Qing Dynasty and did not reappear until the early 20th Century. Ironically, at the same time, despite being extremely popular, women's football was banned by the English FA and did not reappear until the 1970s. Soon afterwards, women's international football took off and the first European Championship took place in 1984. Since then two sides have dominated – Germany winning five European titles and the USA two World Cups.

Some tips for writing a good summary.

- It should be reduced in length – about 1 / 3 of the original
- Include the main ideas
- Do not include too many details
- Try and use your own words as much as possible
- Do not copy sections from the original
- Refer to source – mention the author and the date
- Avoid including your own opinion
- Avoid including extra detail
- The summary should be cohesive – full sentences and paragraphs, not bullet points
- Changing the order of the information from the original is fine