

## **Routledge Research in Sport Business and Management**

Available in this series:

- 1) **Global Sport Marketing**  
Contemporary issues and practice  
*Michel Desbordes and  
André Richelieu*
- 2) **Public/Private Partnerships for Major League Sports Facilities**  
*Judith Grant Long*
- 3) **Managing Elite Sport Systems**  
Research and practice  
*Edited by Svein A. Andersen, Lars Tore Ronglan and Barrie Houlihan*
- 4) **Organisational Performance Management in Sport**  
*Ian O'Boyle*
- 5) **Sport in Latin America**  
Policy, organization, management  
*Edited by Gonzalo Bravo,  
Rosa Lopez de D'Amico and  
Charles Parrish*
- 6) **Sports Agents and  
Labour Markets**  
Evidence from world football  
*Giambattista Rossi, Anna Semens and Jean Francois Brochard*
- 7) **Managing Drugs in Sport**  
*Jason Mazanov*
- 8) **Elite Youth Sport Policy and Management**  
A comparative analysis  
*Edited by Elsa Kristiansen,  
Milena M. Parent and  
Barrie Houlihan*

---

# **Elite Youth Sport Policy and Management**

---

A comparative analysis

Edited by  
Elsa Kristiansen, Milena M. Parent  
and Barrie Houlihan

First published 2017  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2017 Elsa Kristiansen, Milena M. Parent and Barrie Houlihan

The right of Elsa Kristiansen, Milena M. Parent and Barrie Houlihan to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

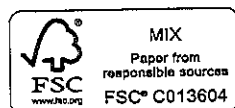
*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*  
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-138-88808-1 (hbk)  
ISBN: 978-1-315-71370-0 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon  
by Saxon Graphics Ltd, Derby



Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

## Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	ix
<i>List of tables</i>	xi
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xix

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
MILENA M. PARENT, ELSA KRISTIANSEN AND BARRIE HOULIHAN	

<b>PART I</b>	
<b>Europe</b>	<b>11</b>

<b>2 England/United Kingdom</b>	<b>13</b>
BARRIE HOULIHAN AND PIPPA CHAPMAN	

<b>3 The Netherlands</b>	<b>29</b>
AGNES ELLING AND NIELS REIJGERSBERG	

<b>4 Germany</b>	<b>47</b>
VERENA BURK AND KAREN PETRY	

<b>5 Russia</b>	<b>64</b>
VASSIL GIRGINOV	

<b>6 Norway</b>	<b>80</b>
ELSA KRISTIANSEN	

<b>7 France</b>	<b>96</b>
DENIS MUSSO	

- Platts, C. & Smith, A. (2009) The education, rights and welfare of young people in professional football in England: Some implications of the White Paper on Sport, *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 1(3), 323–339.
- Sport England (2014) 'Sport England supports next generation of sporting superstars' [www.sportengland.org/media-centre/news/2014/march/25/sport-england-supports-next-generation-of-sporting-stars/](http://www.sportengland.org/media-centre/news/2014/march/25/sport-england-supports-next-generation-of-sporting-stars/), accessed 9 May 2014.
- UK Sport (2012) *Annual Report and Accounts 2011/12*, London: The Stationery Office.

## Chapter 3

# The Netherlands

Agnes Elling and Niels Reijgersberg

### Introduction

The Netherlands is a small, densely populated and rather prosperous country located on the coast of north-western Europe, with a population of about 16.7 million. With 4.8 million members in nearly 25,000 sport clubs, this organizational structure forms the heart of competitive sport participation in the Netherlands. The Dutch have a long sports tradition, both in terms of grassroots sports and elite sports performance. The average ranking of the Netherlands on the summer Olympic medal index since 1960 has been eighteenth position, with a lowest ranking in 1980 (thirtieth) and a highest in 2000 (eighth). Since 1996, the average ranking has been rather stable at around thirteenth position with a market share of 2 per cent of all Olympic medals (Dijk, De Bosscher & van Bottenburg, 2014).<sup>1</sup> Abroad, Dutch performance in elite sports is mainly related to the results and playing style of the men's national football team – 'brilliant orange' (Winner, 2000). Apart from football as the most prestigious, professional and globalized sport, Dutch athletes have performed especially well in swimming and speed skating. The Dutch Olympic committee and sports federation NOC\*NSF initiated a focus sports policy in 2012, investing a relatively high budget share in only a few sports, a strategy that had been successfully implemented in several other countries since the 1980s (Van Bottenburg, Dijk & De Bosscher, 2014; NOC\*NSF, 2012).<sup>2</sup> Such a budget differentiation was initiated to eventually effectuate the long-term top-ten ambition, which was formulated after the successful summer Olympic Games in Sydney 2000. NOC\*NSF aims at a structural top-ten position in the world regarding elite sports performance for the Netherlands.

### Elite sports policy and talent development

Possibly due to values related to Dutch Calvinism such as modesty and temperance (Lechner, 2008), compared to other countries such as Australia, England or France, the Netherlands was relatively late in identifying

top-level sports as a sector of national importance. From the 1990s onwards, the Dutch government increasingly recognized the national importance of a professional national elite sports policy and system that legitimizes large financial investments (Ministry of VWS, 1999, 2008, 2011; see also Van Bottenburg et al., 2012). From a personal ambition of individual talents dependent on the elite sports climate within their sports club and sports federation (e.g. coaches, training facilities, competition), elite sports participation became an increasingly positively rewarded and facilitated primary-time investment for talented athletes. Being an athlete became a recognized job. Alongside the intensification of the search for national identity, the government increasingly legitimized its elite sports policy in terms of the contribution of top-level sports performances to national identity, pride and international prestige (Elling, Hilvoorde & Van den Dool, 2014). Since the end of the 1990s, the collective budget for elite sports from the national government and the national lottery has increased significantly, from €20 million in 1997 to €55 million in 2011. In 2012, however, for the first time, the total investments for elite sports somewhat decreased to around €52 million a year, and remained the same for the Olympic cycle 2013–2016 (Van Bottenburg et al., 2016).

The relatively successful elite sports performances of the Dutch athletes in the last two decades illustrates the working of the 'global sporting arms race' (De Bosscher et al., 2008), where elite sports success increasingly becomes dependent on the (totalization) process of the elite sports investments of national systems instead of the characteristics of individual talented athletes (Heinilä, 1982; Oakley & Green, 2001). Countries have to invest increasingly more money to become/remain successful in winning (gold) medals; the 'price per medal' increased significantly (De Bosscher et al., 2015).

Talent recognition and development is regarded as one of the key factors for continuous elite sports success. Due to the dense network of sports clubs in the country, a relatively high quality of sport-specific training programmes for competitive coaches and local to national sports competition in most sports, initial talent selection and development is organized within local sports clubs. Since 1993, the financial conditions of already successful elite athletes have improved, as a special Fund for Elite Athletes was established, to secure them a minimum 'wage'. In addition, there was increased professionalism in the management of full-time training/competition programmes and facilities for elite athletes in specific sports (National Training Centres). Furthermore, talent development also became more professionalized and centralized in the Netherlands (see also Van Bottenburg, 2009; Van Bottenburg et al., 2012; Van Heijden et al., 2012). Overall, talented athletes tend to train more at an earlier age, illustrating simultaneous development of intensification and rejuvenation of elite sports practices. Comparative Dutch data (Van Bottenburg et al., 2015) showed that current elite athletes had more training hours at the age of 15 compared

to earlier cohorts, increasing from a mean of 11.5 hours per week in 2008 to 12.6 in 2015.

Simultaneously, a decrease was found in the group that trained a maximum of ten hours a week from 60 per cent in 2008 to 38 per cent in 2015. Furthermore, compared to 2011, in 2015, more elite sport directors affirm that their sport federation has a policy – based on scientific knowledge – regarding the structural recognition and development of talents, that their federation starts 'on time' with talent recognition and that there are enough specific talent coaches appointed.<sup>3</sup> However, nearly all elite sport directors also recognize a shortage of money as a major problem.

### *The initiation and development of elite sport schools*

Athletes in most types of sports need to practice their sport for many hours over a long time period – e.g. a still often used mean is 10,000 hours over a period of ten years (Bloom, 1985; Starkes, 2000) – in order to be able to perform at the international top level. Since the hours of practice in sport will intensify during adolescence, the demands of elite sports make it difficult to balance both school and sport (Wylleman & Lavalée, 2004). Especially former communist countries such as Eastern European countries and China are known for state-run, centralized talent selection and development programmes from an early age (elite sport boarding schools; see Dennis & Grix, 2012 and Hong, 2008). Nowadays, many Western (European) countries have national programmes to facilitate increasingly younger talents to practice more hours and have amended mainstream educational laws and practices to accommodate their training regime (Elling et al., 2014b; Radtke & Coalter, 2007).

In 1991, the LOOT foundation was founded in the Netherlands, consisting of a group of six secondary schools – Topsport Talent Schools – to help talented athletes to better balance school obligations and elite sports ambitions. Over the years, the LOOT foundation grew towards a total of 30 regionally distributed Topsport Talent Schools in 2013/2014, supporting a total of around 3,000 young athletes with an official talent status (about 40 per cent of all status talents) and optimized individual support (Von Heijden et al., 2012; Reijgersberg & Elling, 2013; Van Rens et al., 2015). Similarly to mainstream secondary schools, Topsport Talent Schools are 'normal' schools, mainly attended by pupils without talent status.<sup>4</sup> But only accredited Topsport Talent Schools are legally allowed to reduce the national standard of at least 1,040 hours of education per year to 800 hours for pupils with an official talent status, for example by exemptions for specific courses such as physical education. Perhaps more important is that recognized talents receive individual support from a coordinator in creating a more flexible timetable and assisting them with requests for adjusted or delayed tests or the spreading of the final exam over two years. Such exceptions to the mainstream

educational laws are especially beneficial for young talents with a high amount of training hours and for talents in structured talent programmes of sport organizations with many training hours during school hours, like professional football organizations and, since 2012, the centralized talent programmes of sport federations at national trainings centres. Although the majority of Dutch athletes eligible to attend a Topsport Talent School still attend mainstream secondary schools (Reijgersberg & Elling, 2013), with the ongoing professionalization of national talent programmes, coordinated by NOC\*NSF, attending specific Topsport Talent Schools has become more compulsory for pupils when joining a national talent programme.

The results of a study about the effectiveness of Topsport Talent Schools concerning the elite sports success and school performance showed that former talents that had attended a Topsport Talent School achieved similar sport performance levels, and lower school performance levels than their counterparts that had attended mainstream secondary schools (Von Heijden et al., 2012; Van Rens et al., 2015). These results partly confirm other international research into elite sport schools (De Bosscher & De Croock, 2010; Emrich et al., 2009). The results can be partly explained as selection effects based on needs and motivations that could not all be controlled for in the analyses. Football talents and talents who are active in early specialization sports with high international competition (e.g., tennis, gymnastics) and with a relatively high sport performance level at an early age are more likely to attend a Topsport Talent School, although the chance of being eventually successful is relatively small for this group. Also talents choosing to attend a Topsport Talent School showed a higher sport motivation and a lower level of school motivation, which may be due to a selection effect before attending secondary school and/or develop during their secondary school career, since they are primarily supported in their elite sports career aspirations. Also in terms of self-regulating capacities that are positively related to becoming successful (Jonker et al., 2010) talents who are, for instance, very capable in structuring their tasks (i.e. time management) might be less likely to attend a Topsport Talent School, since they are less in need of the extra support offered. Furthermore, following the increased cultural acceptance of elite sports as an important societal practice, many mainstream secondary schools have invested in better support for talented athletes (Von Heijden et al., 2012). Nonetheless, a recent study showed that talents attending a Topsport Talent School are more satisfied with the support they received in combining school and sport (Van Bottenburg et al., 2015). However, talents are less satisfied with the support received in higher or vocational education institutions compared to secondary education. These studies among talents and studies among parents and coaches and other supporting professionals of talented athletes (Elling et al., 2013, 2014b) confirm the ongoing tensions between elite sports aspirations and the (increasing) demands from sport talent

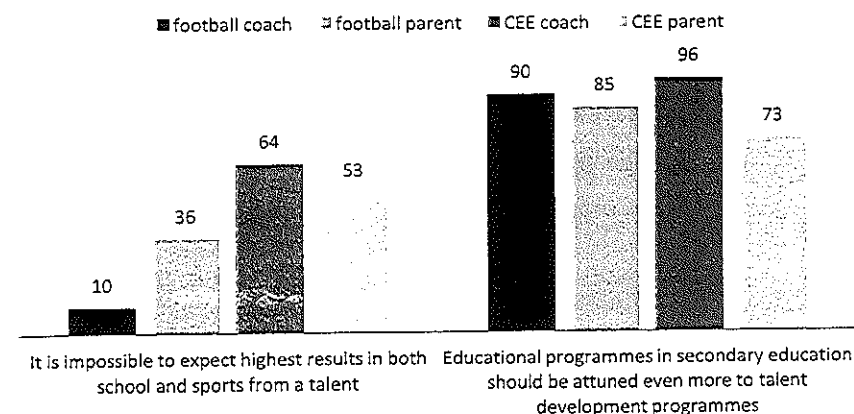


Figure 3.1 Opinions of coaches and parents from children in football programmes and at Centres for Elite sports and Education (CEE) about combining elite sports and school for sports talents, in % (completely) agree

programmes on the one hand and an educational development fitting the broader competencies and aspirations of talents on the other hand (see also Brettschneider, 1999; Elling et al., 2014a).

Increasingly, not only sports organizations (like professional football clubs or national training centres) but also talents themselves seem to demand the full cooperation of educational organizations in meeting their needs regarding their sports ambition. As shown in Figure 3.1, especially coaches at centres for elite sports and education regard the full-time talent development programmes as a clear priority, with all other obligations such as school having to accommodate the sports programme. A study among participants of the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) 2013 in Utrecht showed that Dutch participants scored middle range on the support received compared to athletes from other European countries ( $n=30$ ). The analysis showed that the variety of facilities available to enable the combining of school and sports is the most important factor in determining the overall satisfaction of student athletes with the support they receive. Such facilities correlate highly with the type of school: elite sports school more often offer more facilities than mainstream schools.

### Centralization

In 2006, the NOC\*NSF published a masterplan for talent development, with the main focus on more standardization, professionalization and centralization of talent selection and talent development over a longer time period to optimise the often difficult connection between the talent identification phase and senior elite sports participation (NOC\*NSF, 2006).

In the following years, an important reallocation of budget and supervision took place with primary investment in the development of multi-year 'full-time' talent development programmes by national federations certified by NOC\*NSF and in the establishment of national training centres, mainly located within four Centres for Elite Sports and Education (Amsterdam, Arnhem, Eindhoven and Heerenveen). Within these centres, high-quality sports facilities were supposed to be combined with flexible educational programmes (e.g., at Topsport Talent Schools for secondary education), housing and other supporting facilities and professionals (e.g., medical, psychological), all at near (cycling) distance. Also, specific full-time talent coaches were appointed to optimize the athletic and broader personal development of sport talents.

Since 2010, registration of official talents has become similar to the centralized registration system which allocated elite athletes to specific status groups (A, B or High Potential). Before 2010, there was no central registration and there were large regional differences in talent status designations, for example 'regional talents', that were awarded mainly by the local Olympic Networks. Currently, all talents with an international, national or 'promise' status are registered by NOC\*NSF, although the status allotment still differs per sports federation (Reijgersberg & Elling, 2013; pp.14/15). According to one Topsport Talent School coordinator: 'Sportsfederations all use different criteria. Some are far too strict, indicating that potential talents do not receive enough support.' This view was echoed by a talent coordinator for one sports federation who commented that: 'We think that talents need to comply to strict demands. In that way you can distinguish real talents. Giving such a status also has implications for making a choice for a specific training centre.'

Early specialization sports with many children practising these sports, such as gymnastics and swimming, are less generous with talent status acknowledgement compared to team sports such as basketball, handball, rugby and volleyball, which have far fewer youth practitioners, but are more dependent on having a sufficient number of same-age pupils for training. On the one hand, the central registration of talents is a clear objective tool for Topsport Talent Schools to differentiate between talents who may receive extra facilities and support and those who may not. On the other hand, the system appears to be more objective than it is and may give extra support to many talents who may not really need it, whereas other nonregistered talents may train many more hours and would benefit more from extra support in both sport and school performance (Von Heijden et al., 2012; Reijgersberg & Elling, 2013).

In the two last elite sport climate measurements in 2011 and 2015 (Van Bottenburg et al., 2015), elite athletes, coaches and technical directors of sports federations, were asked how they judge the influence of the clustering of training, education and housing in the centres for elite sports and education

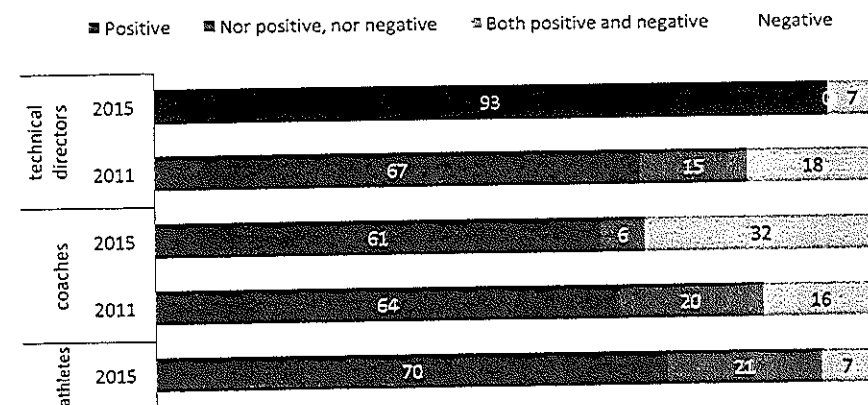


Figure 3.2 Judging the influence of the clustering of housing, education and training on the development of talents, by elite athletes, coaches and technical directors 2011, 2015, in %

(CEE) on the developments of talents. All groups were mainly positive, especially the technical directors (97 per cent), with coaches having become somewhat more ambivalent, also noticing negative influences (see Figure 3.2).

Positive outcomes mainly seem to relate to the enhancement of athletic performance resulting from optimizing the frequency and quality of training opportunities for a larger group of young sport talents. Technical directors recognize their return on investments regarding better performances (higher medal ranking) in international competitions. Coaches, however, may also notice possible negative consequences for several young talents regarding housing conditions, school-sport balance and psycho-emotional development that may also negatively affect sport performances. In another study, talent coaches and parents were asked about the evaluation of the general development of sport talents, compared to peers (Elling et al., 2014). Here the CEE coaches were most convinced (92 per cent) that sport talents developed even better compared to peers. Most parents were also positive (70 per cent), with others regarding the development neutral (26 per cent) or negative (4 per cent). In the focus group discussions held at CEEs with different responsible professionals (coaches, education coordinators, life skill coaches, physiotherapists, account managers), several challenges were identified regarding creating and maintaining a pedagogically responsible environment for talents including:

- Balancing sports and educational/societal development – see above.
- The risk of overburdening the young athlete. The daily programme for talents following education is overfull, indicating that talents are nearly permanently exhausted and on the point of being overburdened.

- Juvenization (i.e. the lowering of the age at which talent development begins) requires an intensification of pedagogical support – talents nowadays may leave their family at a younger age to join a CEE (eg 13–15 years), which may not be justified for all children's psycho-social development; moreover housing conditions at CEEs are not always adequate for young children.
- Communication within the team of supporting actors and between talents, coaches and parents – especially coach–parent communication has been rather poorly structured at CEEs.
- Accountability – it is not always clear who is accountable for different developmental processes.
- After-care – the support for talents that have to leave a talent development programme (CEE) was generally regarded as requiring improvement.

Whereas most CEE coaches and parents agreed that the overall attention for pedagogically responsible talent development was sufficient, only one in three agreed with the statement that talents who have to leave the programme receive enough support (see Figure 3.3).

The focus groups discussions showed a general consensus that CEEs have a pedagogical responsibility and that talent development should be tailored to individual needs as much as possible. Safety, trust, balancing sports and broader educational, social, emotional development and stimulating (self) responsibility and positive coaching/communication, were deemed key concepts. The study also exposed, however, that pedagogically responsible development may at times contradict the hegemonic performance culture aimed at winning medals, that there isn't always enough embedded pedagogical expertise within the CEE teams and that a transparent system of recognizing and preventing problems with respect to the welfare of athletes is lacking. One coach commented on always prioritizing pedagogic responsibility: 'I don't think we are a medal factory. We do not work to gain medals at all costs, at the cost of a child... It doesn't mean one has to undermine sports performance, certainly not. But it should remain

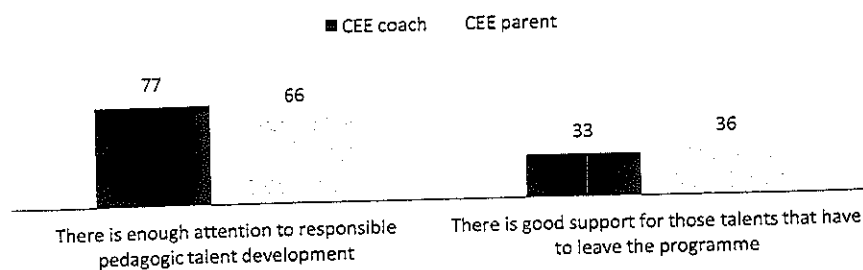


Figure 3.3 Evaluation of attention to pedagogic values, in % agree

responsible.' Another coach more clearly states that prioritizing sports includes making sacrifices with respect to pedagogical responsibilities:

Athletes here at the CEE make choices and want to win a medal at the Olympic Games, EC's, WC's, that is the main goal. Of course this should happen in a pedagogically responsible manner, that may be clear. But sometimes you must do things that are less pedagogically responsible, but help towards that goal... You should push them in a kind of corsage... they have to give up part of their freedom to win that medal... Sometimes I decide for them that they should give up on a particular educational goal... which may lead to problems with the parents,... but there is no other choice.

Apart from the national trainings centres, mainly integrated within the four CEEs, there has been in more recent years an additional development to initiate regional training centres. This process is stimulated by several sports federations (e.g. athletics, badminton, cycling, sailing, speed skating, swimming, table tennis, volleyball). These regional training centres (RTC) are not centrally structured, supervised and financed like the NTCs, but are recognized by, and under the supervision of, their particular sports federation. RTCs are regarded as a necessary step between primary talent selection and development at sports clubs and the full-time talent development programmes at the CEE. Such developments illustrate further systematic involvement of national federations in early talent identification and development. Furthermore, apart from the Olympic ranking of Dutch elite athletes the performance of talents at global level are nowadays also monitored in light of the top-ten ambition. In January 2015, the Netherlands ranked ninth position at the global medal ranking of World Youth Championships within Olympic sports (Infostrada, 2015).

## Talent development in swimming, football and speed skating

### Swimming

Swimming is the fifth largest youth club sport in the Netherlands with about 75,000 youth members, of whom nearly 300 (0.4 per cent) have an official talent status. Dutch Olympic sporting success has traditionally been achieved in the water. The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and Athens 2004 Olympic Games were very successful for the Dutch swimming team, with eight medals (five gold) and seven medals (two gold) respectively, due to extraordinary talented swimmers Inge de Bruijn and Pieter van den Hoogenband. New talents have always emerged due to a broad swimming culture (swimming is the most practiced (recreational) sport in the

Netherlands) and an extensive network of local swimming pools which have their own clubs and dedicated coaches. However, as a globalized, early specialization and quickly improving and innovating sport, the Dutch swimming federation KNZB and private top swimming initiatives deemed that radical measures were necessary to be less dependent on great individual talents, and optimize the system of talent identification and development, in order to double the inflow of talents in elite swimming programs and maintain the status as one of the leading swimming nations (KNZB, 2005; Volkers, 2003).

The Dutch swimming building is based on several coincidental elements. The roof, elite swimming, is quite solid. We recognized that we should offer our talents another access route towards the top than via the clubs... The foundation of that building, the club culture, is in transition... I see the outlines of a new building. (Elite swimming manager, in Volkers, 2003)

Among the identified problems were the limited 'free' swimming time which constrained the opportunity for more training hours for talents and elite athletes, the shortage of top quality competition facilities and the limited number of professional talent coaches. Most swimming pools are small (25 instead of 50 metre) and dominated by recreational swimmers. Talent development within clubs was mainly dependent on highly committed volunteers. Furthermore, despite the highly praised Olympic successes of de Bruijn and Van den Hoogenband, the KNZB saw a decline in their membership from 2000 to 2008 (KNZB, 2009).

Two private professional initiatives had developed around the elite swimmers Van Hoogenband (Eindhoven) and De Bruijn (Amsterdam), with a third initiative in Dordrecht. However, talent development in swimming does not take place within commercial teams. Consequently, in 2006 the swimming federation established two NTCs and four RTCs in close cooperation with the existing professional structures (KNZB, 2005). Apart from the four accredited RTC talent programs, 13 Talent Centres are acknowledged as conforming to the required quality criteria and applying the multiannual training plan swimming and consequently receive intensive support from the federation. Similar to other sports, the national federation KNZB has taken a supporting and coordinating role in club-transcending and regional initiatives 'to help talents realise their ambitions' (KNZB, 2005). Central criteria for inflow to and outflow from the talent programs within swimming is competition performance, minimum amount of training hours (10–16 hours/week), full commitment and high elite sport ambitions (e.g. KNZB, 2010; 2014). Aspects of pleasure, safety, healthy physical and psycho-social development are not explicitly mentioned in the documents.

## Football

The largest group of sport talents with an official talent status ( $n=1,400$ ; about 20 per cent of all talents) are male football players (Reijgersberg & Elling, 2013). Different from most other sports, however, talent development in men's football is mainly organized by the Dutch Professional Football Organizations (PFOs), partly independent from the national football federation. Until 2005, all PFOs (then 38, currently 35) had their own youth academy. This was regarded as not effective enough with respect to 'real' talent production; most talents never became professional players and the quality of youth development was very different. In 2001, the Dutch football federation KNVB developed a quality mark for youth trainings. By 2005, a total of 14 different regional youth academies connected to one or more cooperating PFOs were certified by the football federation. In 2013 the KNVB initiated a new overall talent development plan, the Quality and Performance Programme, aimed at 'the complete football pyramid', including amateur clubs. Clubs can request an audit – by the KNVB and an independent management organization – for the certification of their youth development programme at four different levels (local, regional, national, international). Among a total of 62 audit aspects, several relate to child safety, for example the presence of enough medical support, pedagogic/didactic expertise, school progression and communication with parents (KNVB, 2013).

On the one hand, Dutch youth coaches and football academies traditionally have been rather successful in developing football talent that become professionals playing for Dutch clubs or abroad. Most clubs still strive towards 'educating' young football talents from their own academies to flow into their first teams. However, in recent decades, Dutch clubs have had more problems in keeping talents. Due to higher salaries abroad, young talents are often effectively scouted at an early age by international agents working for football organizations in, for example, England or Spain. Despite rules initiated by UEFA and FIFA, like the minimum contract age or the 'homegrown' rules, designed to end child trafficking by mala fide agents and PFOs (e.g., Scott, 2005; FIFA, 2010), these activities seem not to have decreased. Players and their families are contacted at younger ages and ways are found to avoid the rules. Many Dutch talents aged 15–18, or even younger, have moved abroad to 'big money' clubs like Barcelona and Arsenal, where, for example, their father was offered a small job, to avoid anti-child trafficking rules. A recent example is Bobby Adekanye, born in Nigeria and brought up in the Netherlands: he was scouted by Ajax at the age of 7 and was contracted by Barcelona – the La Masia academy – at the age of 12 in 2011 (Miserus, 2015; Verweij, 2015). Since Barcelona broke the FIFA under-age transfer rules, the club was sanctioned and Bobby and nine other young players were not allowed to play competitions until

January 2016. At the age of 15, Adekanye returned to the Netherlands to play a year on loan by the Dutch top club PSV Eindhoven. Both Ajax and PSV wanted to contract him for the 2015–2016 season, but Liverpool offered the best bid. He also played in the Dutch youth national team under 16. Football emigration abroad at a young age is mostly not successful, however. According to Bruma and Aké (2013), between 1988 and 2012, a total of 45 young talented players who had not yet played for the first team of their PFO went abroad, of whom only one played for the first team of their club. But young football talent trafficking is not only happening from the Netherlands abroad. Dutch clubs also recruit young foreign players, mainly from Africa or South America, but increasingly from Scandinavian and Eastern European countries, with often false promises to become football professionals. Compared to other Dutch sport talents, parents of football talents may be more inclined to stimulate a total focus on sports and regard school achievement as less important, both due to the potential of a professional football career and the higher proportion of parents with lower educational and socio-economic background and/or non-Western ethnicities. Among teachers at Topsport Talent Schools football talents are more negatively evaluated compared to other sports talents. They are more often regarded as 'spoiled' and having an attitude (Von Heijden et al., 2012). In addition, since football talents often come from lower class households, they may be more often stereotyped as less cognitively gifted, which is detrimental to school performance (cf. 'dumb jock stereotype'; Hartman, 2008; Winiger and White, 2008).

### Speed skating

Compared to the Dutch football federation with more than 600,000 youth members and the Dutch Swimming federation with 75,000 youth members, speed skating is a relative small club sport among youth with less than 7,000 youth members, of whom about 350 (5 per cent) have an official talent status. However, speed skating is a very popular recreational sport in winter time and the most successful Olympic sport in history for the Netherlands. Especially in Sochi 2014, the Dutch speed skating team dominated by winning eight gold medals, with four 'clean sweeps' and a total of 23 medals out of all 36 speed skating medals (64 per cent). Another (bronze) medal was won in short track, which made a total of 24 medals, destroying the old record of 11 medals from Nagano 1998. Apart from a long speed skating tradition and the relative poor international competition, the success of the Dutch can also be ascribed to a functional talent development system. Like with most sports, talent identification and development traditionally took place mainly within local skating clubs and the eight rather independent regional skating federations of the national skating federation KNSB. Nowadays, all elite skaters are fully professional, skating for commercial teams.

Professionalization of Dutch elite speed skating started in 1995, when Rintje Ritsma started his own sponsored team, outside of the Dutch skating federations national team ('kernploeg'). Until the 2001–2002 season, skaters from commercial teams competed with skaters from the federation's national teams for selection for international competitions. Since 2002, the KNSB broke up their own national senior selection and only sent skaters from commercial teams. Due to extra financial investments and extra national competition between commercial teams and despite continuing conflicts between the commercial teams and the federation, Dutch elite speed skating has further professionalized and improved, culminating in the Olympic gold medal success in Sochi 2014. However, the rapid improvements at the top also have led to an increasing gap with talent development at club/regional/federation level that has not improved at the same pace, as Bogerd (2010) concluded, based on interviews with representatives from commercial and federation coaches, managers and (talented) top skaters. Many recognized both a gap between the quality of talent selection and development at club/regional level and the national trainings centre (NTC), 'Young Orange', and between the NTC and the commercial teams, with the results that many young talents have been 'wasted', for example by overburdening. In 2013, the Dutch speed skating federation KNSB published their new strategic plan concerning the optimization of talent development, by initiating five to six autonomous Regional Trainings Centres (RTCs) spread over the country, accredited by the national federation. Different to most other federations, the KNSB plans to end centralized talent development within the NTC. After successful talent development in the region, talents should be able to make the step towards commercial teams. The concept of the RTCs is based on the existing NTCs under the direction of NOC\*NSF, including the appointment of full-time talent coaches, medical, educational and psychosocial support, but lacks similar financial support. Funding should be mainly sought by local governments, sponsors and/or the skaters themselves (Schaatsacademie Haarlem, 2014; Straatmeijer, Elling & Reijgersberg, 2015). And although the initiation of different RTCs instead of one NTC can be regarded as a kind of decentralization, within the KNSB it simultaneously can be regarded as an increasing centralization of overall talent development, since it reduces the influence of the eight autonomous regional federations.

### Conclusion

The different financial and structural investments in the Dutch field of elite sports concerning talent development (e.g., registration, centralization, professionalization, coaches and other educational/medical/social support) have definitely improved possibilities for more young people, in specific sports, to develop their sporting talents with the potential of a future career

as an elite athlete. Furthermore, the athletic outcomes also seem to be promising with regard to both keeping in step with global developments in elite sports and the ambition to join the top-ten most successful sporting countries. However, the positive quantitative and qualitative developments regarding sport talent development in the Netherlands also have a darker side. Since winning more gold medals to reach a world top-ten position in international sporting success at senior level is the ultimate policy goal and professionals working in this field (e.g. talent coaches) are in the end assessed on whether they produce better athletes instead of contributing to the talent's wellbeing, the welfare of these talented children sometimes seems to lose priority. In tackling problems, for example with respect to balancing elite sports with education, 'it is always education that has to give in, since the elite sports system won't do it', as stated by a CEE education-coordinator. This means in the end that for an increasing group of young athletes the identity development is becoming more one dimensional, which increases the chance of problems when they are forced to quit, which is still the case for most talents since 'there is simply not enough room at the top...' (Ingham et al., 1999, p.246; see also Luijt et al., 2009; Oldenziel, Gagné and Gulbin, 2003). Moreover, the increased centralized structures and normative training and lifestyle scripts that are imposed do not always seem to fit the 'talent central' idea, that is often also mentioned as a key principle in policy documents. Especially in a small country like the Netherlands that cannot afford talents to be 'wasted', there should be enough space for talented and elite athletes to develop outside confined systems (Van Bottenburg et al., 2012).

There seems to have been a silent revolution within the sports sector and in society at large, that pursuing elite sports performance, that until recently was despised or devalued in large parts of the country including the national government, only seems to be regarded as a good thing without questioning possible risks and for talent's welfare and healthy, psychosocial development. Since the Netherlands is a small country, we should be extra careful with our talents, not only to be most effective in winning medals, but also to be careful in managing the human capital of this group. Where the Dutch are known to be rather expressive in showing moral superiority to unacceptable violation of human dignity elsewhere in the world, (including in sports, e.g. talent development in countries like China), critical notes on our own systems – whether internal or external, even by international human rights organizations – tend to be met with skepticism. Interestingly, but also worryingly, the Dutch national government seemed to have been more interested in increasing international prestige through higher international elite sports performance and has not invested equally in a critical, independent monitoring of the general welfare of sport talents, both during and after their sports career.

## Notes

- 1 From 1960–1996 the Netherlands performed even better in the Paralympic Games with a top 10 position. However since 1996 Paralympic medal performance declined rapidly (position 27 in 2004) until London 2012 where the Dutch Paralympic team reached tenth position, reclaiming again.
- 2 Since 1948, 96 percent of all Olympic medals by Dutch athletes were won in only eight different sports: equestrian, field hockey, judo, rowing, sailing, speed skating and swimming.
- 3 Top coaches regard the age of 12 as the mean optimum age to start talent recognition in their sport; among elite sport directors the mean optimum age is 11 years. Three to four out of ten of these coaches and managers mentioned an optimum selection age under 12 years (Source: data Elite sports climate measurement 2015).
- 4 Topsport Talent Schools on average have 2.100 pupils, of which most schools have between 50–100 (41 per cent) or more than 100 (41 per cent) pupils with an official sports talent status (Reijgersberg & Elling, 2013, p.21).

## References

- Bloom B.S. (1985) *Developing Talent in Young People*. NY: Ballantine.
- Bogerd, J.A. (2010) *Twee kanten van de medaille. Sleutelfiguren uit de schaatssport over de gevolgen van de ontwikkeling van de merkenteams voor het topsportklimaat van het langebaanschaatsen en talentontwikkeling in het bijzonder*. Master thesis. Utrecht: Utrecht University (Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance).
- Bottenburg, M. van (2009) *Op jacht naar goud. Het topsportklimaat in Nederland 1998-2008*. Nieuwegein: Arko Sports Media.
- Bottenburg, M. van, Dijk, B., Elling, A., & Reijgersberg, N. (2012) *Bloed, zweet en tranen – en een moment van glorie. 3-meting topsportklimaat in Nederland*. Nieuwegein: Arko Sports Media.
- Bottenburg, M. van, Dijk, B., Elling, A., Dool, R. van den & Reijgersberg, N. (2015). *Topsportklimaat 4-meting*. [Main results] Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht /Mulier Instituut.
- Bottenburg, M. van, Dijk, B., Elling, A., Dool, R. van den & Reijgersberg, N. (2016, in progress). *Topsportklimaat 4-meting*. Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht.
- Brettschneider WD (1999). Risks and opportunities: Adolescents in top-level sport growing up with the pressure of school and training. *European Physical Education Review*, 5, 121–133.
- Bruma J. & Aké, N. (2013) Jonge voetbaltalenten zijn het beste af in Nederland. Buitenlands geld blijkt niet zalmakend. *The Post online*, 13-07-2013.
- De Bosscher V., Bingham, J., Shibli, S., Van Bottenburg, M. and De Knop, P. (2008) *The Global Sporting Arms Race: An international comparative study on sports policy factors leading to international sporting success*. Oxford: Meyer & Meyer.
- De Bosscher, V. & De Croock, S. (2010) De effectiviteit van de topsportscholen in Vlaanderen: een vergelijking van het loopbaantraject van topsporters al dan niet in een context van een topsportschool. Brussel: Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

- De Bosscher, V., Shibil, S., Westerbeek, H. & Bottenburg, M. van (2013) *Successful Elite Sport Policies: An international comparison of the Sports Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success (SPLISS 2.0) in 15 nations*. Aachen: Meyer & Meyer Verlag.
- Dennis, M. & Grix, J. (2012) Sport under communism: Behind the East German 'miracle'. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 7(4), 721-726.
- Dijk, B. De Bosscher, V. and Bottenburg, M. van (2014) Topsportbeleid in relatie tot prestaties. In A. Tiessen-Raaphorst (red.) *Rapportage Sport 2014* (pp. 224-247). Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- Elling, A. Hilvoorde, I. van & Dool, R. van den (2014a) Creating or awakening national pride through sporting success: A longitudinal study on macro effects in the Netherlands. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 49(2), 129-151.
- Elling, A., Otterloo, M. van & Hakkers, S. (2014b) *EYOF participants on EYOF and combining elite sports & education*. Utrecht: Mulier Instituut.
- Elling, A., Rijgersberg, N. & Hakkers, S. (2013) Talenten in balans?! Talentcoaches en talentouders over pedagogisch verantwoorde ontwikkeling van jonge sporttalenten. Utrecht: Mulier instituut.
- Elling, A., Rijgersberg, N., Hakkers, S. & Koolmees, R. (2014b) *Een kwetsbare balans: talentcoaches en andere CTO-actoren over pedagogisch verantwoorde talentontwikkeling*. Utrecht: Mulier Instituut
- Emrich, E., Fröhlich, M., Klein, M. and Pitsch, W. (2009) Evaluation of the elite schools of sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 44(2), 151-171.
- FIFA (2010) Revolutionary moment in football: Transfer Matching System becomes mandatory. FIFA.com, 29 September 2010.
- Hartmann D (2008) High school sports participation and educational attainment: Recognizing, assessing, and utilizing the relationship. University of Minnesota/LA84 Foundation.
- Heijden, A. von, Elling, A. Rijgersberg, N., Hakkers, S., Rens F. van & Wisse, E. (2012) *Evaluatie topsport talentscholen*. Nieuwegein: Arko Sports Media.
- Heinilä, K. (1982) The Totalization Process in International Sport. Toward a theory of the totalization of competition in top-level sport. *Sportwissenschaft*, 12(3), 235-254.
- Hong, F. (2008) China. In B. Houlihan and M. Green (eds.) *Comparative elite sport development: Systems, structures and public policy* (pp. 26-52). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Infostrada/NOC\*NSF (2015) Top 10 Wereld Junior Kampioenschappen 2014. Table available at <https://www.volksgezondheidenzorg.info/sport/kern-indicatoren/presteren#node-talentontwikkeling>
- Ingham, A.G., Blissner, B.J. & Wells Davidson, K. (1999) The expendable prolympic self: Going beyond the boundaries of the sociology and psychology of sport. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 16, 236-268.
- Jonker L., Elferink-Gemser, M.T. and Visscher, C. (2010) Differences in self-regulatory skills among talented athletes: The significance of competitive level and type of sport. *Journal of Sport Sciences* 28: 901-908.
- KNSB (2012) *Verbindend naar de Top*. Utrecht: KNSB.
- Koninklijke Nederlandse Schaatsenrijders Bond.
- KNVB (nd) *Regionale voetbaltraining*. Zeist: KNVB.
- KNVB (2013) *Informatie Kwaliteit & Performance Programma Jeugdopleidingen*. Zeist: KNVB.
- KNZB (2005) *Topzwemmen in uitvoering*. Nieuwegein: KNZB.
- KNZB (2009) *Waterkracht 2012*. Nieuwegein: KNZB.
- KNZB (2010) In- en uitstroomprocedure voor regionale trainingscentra (RTC) en nationale trainingscentra (NTC). Nieuwegein: KNZB.
- KNZB (2014). *Beleid TOPzwemmen Nederland 2014-2016*. Nieuwegein: KNZB.
- Lechner, F.J. (2008) *The Netherlands. Globalization and National Identity*. New York/London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Luijt, R., Rijgersberg, N. & Elling, A. (2009) Alles voor de sport!? (Gestopte) topsporttalenten en hun ouders over investeringen, opbrengsten en offers. Nieuwegein/ 's-Hertogenbosch: Arko Sports Media/ W.J.H. Mulier Instituut.
- Oakley, B. & M. Green (2001) The Production of Olympic Champions: International Perspectives on Elite Sport Development Systems. *European Journal for Sport Management*, 8(1), 83-105.
- Oldenziel, K., Gagné, F. & Gulbin, J. (2003) *How do elite athletes develop? A look through the 'rear-view mirror': A preliminary report from the national athlete development survey (NADS)*. Canberra: Australian Sports Commission.
- Miserus, M. (2015) Als jong voetbaltalent naar het buitenland: Bobby's droom bij Barcelona is nu voorbij. *de Volkskrant*, 10 April 2015.
- NOC\*NSF (2006) *Talent Centraal. Masterplan Talentontwikkeling 2006-2010*. Arnhem: NOC\*NSF.
- Ministerie van VWS (2008) *De kracht van sport*. Den Haag: Ministerie van VWS.
- NOC\*NSF (2010) *Nederland in de top 10*. Arnhem: NOC\*NSF.
- NOC\*NSF (2012) *Sportagenda 2016*. Arnhem: NOC\*NSF. (English summary available)
- Radtke, S. and Coalter, F. (2007) Sports schools: An international review. Stirling: University of Stirling Rijgersberg, N. & Elling, A. (2013) *Evaluatie van de beleidsregel voor Topsport Talentscholen*. Utrecht: Mulier instituut.
- Rens, F. van, Elling, A. & Rijgersberg, N. (2015) Topsport Talent Schools in the Netherlands: A retrospective analysis of the effect on performance in sport and education. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 50(1): 64-82.
- Schaatsacademie Haarlem (2014). *Schaatsacademie Haarlem: Talentontwikkeling binnen een professioneel topsportkader*. Haarlem.
- Scott, M. (2005) UEFA taking on child traffickers. *The Guardian*, 14 December 2005.
- Starkes, J. (2000) The road to expertise: Is practice the only determinant? *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 31: 431-451.
- Straatmeijer, J., Elling, A. & Rijgersberg, N. (2015) *RTC schaatsen in Tilburg. Onderzoek naar de haalbaarheid van een regionaal talenten centrum schaatsen in Tilburg*. Utrecht: Mulier Instituut.
- Verweij, J. (2015) Toptalent Adekanye tekent meerjarig contract op Anfield. *Voetbal International*, 2 July 2015.
- Volkers, J. (2003) Wachten op het nieuwe zwemtalent. *de Volkskrant*, 13 December 2004.

- Winiger, S. and White, T. (2008) The Dumb Jock Stereotype: To What Extent Do Student-Athletes Feel the Stereotype? *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education* 2: 227–237.
- Winner, D. (2000) *Brilliant Orange: The Neurotic Genius of Dutch Football*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Wylleman, P. and Lavallee, D. (2004) A developmental perspective on transitions faced by athletes. In M. Weiss (Ed.) *Developmental sport and exercise psychology: A lifespan perspective* (pp. 507–527). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.

## Germany

Verena Burk and Karen Petry

### Introduction

The actual situation of German elite youth sport is closely related to the social changes taking place in Germany. The demographic trend in Germany is leading to fewer children and young people engaging in sporting activity and becoming part of the elite youth sport system. In addition to sport offers, there are a wide range of alternative leisure facilities available (such as the media) and the changes in the educational policy created by the introduction of the eight-year high school, reducing the number of years at *Gymnasium* (upper secondary school) from nine to eight years and all-day school, are certainly having an impact on the leisure time of young children and young people (Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund, 2013).

Creating social conditions that support elite youth sport calls for political management and intervention, which is evident in Germany, but only to some extent. Neither political party policy sports programs nor the government institutions responsible for sport indicate that top-level sport has been accorded a particular priority which, in part, reflects the deeply embedded principle of the autonomy of sport that is embodied in the differentiated structures that exist for the self-administration of sport. In general, Germany is less interventionist in sport, including elite sport, than many other countries.

The situation with elite youth sport in Germany is marked in particular by a high degree of fragmentation and a system of different competencies of governmental and non-governmental organizations. In the *Elite Youth Sport Concept 2020*, which was adopted in 2013 by the General Assembly of the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), the DOSB mentioned the failure to adopt a systematic approach to talent identification and talent development in junior sport. Instead, the focus is placed on short-term success and early specialization rather than on offering diverse, basic training in motor skills. A lack of motivation among young athletes transitioning into top-level sport is also identified as one of the reasons why the situation in Germany is deteriorating by international standards (Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund, 2013).