

News Release

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Sports scientists at the TU München compare men's and women's football Study on football: Women get up faster

When women play football (soccer), the individual interruptions, for instance for substitutions or to cheer a goal, are a lot shorter than when men play. In particular after injuries men remain on the ground significantly longer. This is what sports scientists at the Technische Universität München (TUM) discovered after analyzing 56 football games and evaluating the place, time and duration of every single interruption of the game. In football, men stage themselves much more than women, the scientists conclude.

Interruptions are frequent in football: Football players (m/f) spend on average 38 percent of the total game time not chasing the ball. This was established by sports scientists from the Chair of Training Science and Sports Informatics at TUM in a study of 56 football games. In some games, the interruptions took up as much as 53% of the time, thus exceeding the duration of the actual sports activity.

In sum, interruptions in men's and women's football are about the same. The individual interruptions, though, are significantly longer in men's football. Cheering a goal, for instance, takes almost a full minute with men, while women only cheer half as long. At 45 seconds, substitutions in men's football take almost 10 seconds longer than in women's football. Particularly striking are the differences in the duration of injury interruptions – the stronger sex remains on the ground 30 seconds longer. Overall, when women play, interruptions are more frequent, but the game generally resumes much faster than with men.

TUM sports scientist Prof. Martin Lames explains: "In general the differences can be interpreted as follows: For men the thought of staging themselves is much more pronounced than for women, where the game itself is obviously paramount." Pulling off a show, play-acting and protesting are more typical of men. Lames: "The reason for this could be that men's football generally pulls in more spectators and receives greater media coverage."

Malte Siegle, doctoral candidate at the Chair, adds: "We can even provide evidence that men use interruptions tactically. As many fans have conjectured, when they are in the lead, players take their time with injuries. Much more so than if the score is even, or when the other side is leading. This behavior cannot be observed in women's football."

Prof. Martin Lames's team of researchers at the Chair of Training Science and Sports Informatics is using the method of "Case-by-Case Analysis of Game Interruptions", which

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they developed, to cast light on how football games are structured. The results will help the scientists determine how football players (m/f) might best prepare for a game. The comparison between women's and men's football was actually the byproduct of a research project.

The Women's World Cup, which just started in Germany, will show whether or not these differences will persist in light of the fact that women's football is enjoying increasing numbers of spectators and growing media attention.

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Technische Universität München (TUM) is one of Germany's leading universities. It has roughly 460 professors, 7,500 academic and non-academic staff (including those at the university hospital "Rechts der Isar"), and 26,000 students. It focuses on the engineering sciences, natural sciences, life sciences, medicine, and economic sciences. After winning numerous awards, it was selected as an "Elite University" in 2006 by the Science Council (Wissenschaftsrat) and the German Research Foundation (DFG). The university's global network includes an outpost in Singapore. TUM is dedicated to the ideal of a top-level research-based entrepreneurial university. <http://www.tum.de>

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