... only HIGH FLYERS need apply ...
PLAN OF PRESENTATION

- Explanation of korfball
- The broader study
- Is korfball really egalitarian?
- Diffusion and international developments
- Media/Commercialisation/Olympic status
  - Including negative implications & resistance
- Final thoughts
WHAT IS KORFBALL?

- Goals
- It consists of 4 girls and 4 boys in each team
- Boys mark boys, girls mark girls
- Passing, quick movement, losing your opponent
Players either attack or defend then swap.

- Defended shots – no goal
- No solo play
- Co-operation is essential for success
Invented in 1902, by a Dutch school teacher, Nico Broekhuysen (Crum, 2005)

Non-contact for girls and boys to play (Crum, 2005)

Broekhuysen was inspired to develop korfball after seeing ‘ringboll’ in Sweden (Renson, 2003)

Number of disparities regarding the specific origins of korfball

- Basketball (1891), women’s basketball (1893)
- Sandra Berrenson attended Nääs, Sweden (1897)
- Broekhuysen attended in 1902 and took a version back to Amsterdam, making it a mixed sport
mixed education and cooperation to achieve a collective goal (summerfield & white, 1989)
no violence and non-contact, and rules to promote egalitarianism (summerfield & white, 1989)
equality, teamwork and cooperation
progressive educators course in sweden (crum, renson, 2003)
+ low cost, open-air game for both sexes (crum, 2005)
The gendered attitudes and experiences of children that play korfball

Whether a non-mainstream sport, that was created to promote gender egalitarianism between children, is impacting on children’s developing gender identities.

Ethnographic visits
‘the world’s only mixed sport’ (IKF, 2006: 1), with men and women playing in unison on a level playing field (Crum, 2003; 1988)

The IKF ‘sells korfball as “the coed sport” and as “a passport to coeducation”

‘the answer’ for coeducation, ‘the solution’ for a sporting world where gender inequalities are a continual controversy, and the ‘proof’ that integrated sport can indeed serve the interests of men and women equally well’ (Thompson and Finnigan, 1990: 7)

“truly egalitarian sport” (Summerfield and White, 1989: 146)
Players are only playing directly opposite their own sex
  - Height, muscular strength and speed
  - encourages self-control and discipline

Protected possession

Solo play is forbidden (IKF, 2006)

Playing together is key (Crum, 2003)
  - the rules make teamwork obligatory (Emmerik, et al., undated).

The ‘defended’ rule
Dutch Association had 96% of men in the high status positions and 61% of women in secretarial roles.

Men dominated and women often played the supporting roles to aid the male attack.

This domination was not true of two of the strongest teams.

Female players ‘tend to reject the idea of male superiority’ whereas all male players ‘tend to agree with the idea’ (Crum, 1988: 238).

Both male and female korfball players are disapproving towards the notion of instrumental aggression.

Male korfball players were not as susceptible or such strong advocates for men being superior to women in sport.
CRUM’S (1988) CONCLUSION

- All in all, when trying to promote the status and equality of women in sport, coeducational sports likened to korfball stand a better chance than sports where men and women are isolated, or more traditional male dominated sports.
- Women simply cannot contend with the height and strength of men when scoring or rebounding... it remains a coach’s dream that this will one day be the case (Crum, 2003).
Men were engaged in passes more often, 45% of passes in the second game were between two men, and happened twice as much as any other patterns of passing.

Summerfield and White (1989) discovered that irrespective of the gender of the person passing the ball, they were more prone to passing to men.

Moreover, men took more shots at the korf, shot from further away, and threw longer passes.

82% of the total goals in a number of analysed matches came from male shots, as well as 70% of failed goal attempts and every penalty taken (Summerfield and White, 1989).

‘The men drew attention to themselves verbally, constantly calling for the ball or directing play by telling the person in possession of the ball who to pass to’.

Women were more successful when intercepting passes.
Korfball is not successful in facilitating gender equality and promoting egalitarianism at this moment in time

The lack of success in this respect has been attributed to the players rather than the structure, tactics or ideals of the game (Thompson and Finnigan, 1990)

Korfball should be commended for its conscientious efforts to negotiate traditional gender norms in a sporting environment
SUMMERFIELD & WHITE (1989)

- Both sexes appeared together on the cover foreground of 68% of magazines, but where only one sex was displayed in the foreground men took centre stage over two-times as much as women.
- Centrefolds pictured either mixed-sex groups or men only, with men appearing frequently in attacking positions whilst women emerged defending.
- Articles were twice as often written by men as women, whilst a number were also co-authored.
- The rulebook held prejudice and endorsed ‘male authority and officialdom’.
- The International Korfball Federation (IKF) and the British Korfball Association (BKA) both refer to linesmen and referees as “he” in their official rule books.
- 75% of registered British referees were male
- Male positions in the Associations supersede female positions in a ratio of 2:1
- Presidents and Chairpersons always male and female positions revolved mainly around secretarial roles
- Men are twice as likely to score as women (on average, men scored from 1:6 of their attempts while women scored from only 1:12)
- Centre passes were dominated by men
- All teams studied had both male captains and coaches
Men were prone to lobbing long, hard passes, whilst women looked for the shorter passes to assist and link,

Men also loitered around the post in order to possess the strongest scoring positions, and ultimately took control of dead ball situations

Men being better skilled, having physical advantages such as height, speed and strength, and also having played korfbal for extended periods of time
AMENDMENTS

- Restricting verbal commands during the match
- Put all female players in one end and male players in the other (Thompson and Finnigan, 1990)
- Alternation of male and female conducted penalties, centre passes and other dead-ball situations
- A compulsory appointment of one male and one female captain
- Encourage women to become coaches and referees, providing training programmes and courses to improve their skills and confidence in these areas (Summerfield & White, 1989)
- Reaffirmation of gender difference and separation?
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- First Dutch korfball association in 1903
- 1920 Antwerp Olympic Games – Belgian Korfball Association in 1921
- IKF 1933, but real growth in the 1970s
- The IOC officially recognised korfball in 1993
- 59 affiliations - Great Britain, Germany, Spain, France, Papua New Guinea, USA, Australia, Taiwan, India, Poland, Hungary, Japan, Hong Kong, New Zealand, China, Russia, South Africa
Combination of CKB and KNKB
Coaches and specific training
1974 the penalty spot was moved
International ‘clinics’
Still lack of ‘exciting’ international competition
IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA ATTENTION

- Exciting international contests can attract media coverage, and this is what ultimately establishes the status of a specific sport (Fransoo, 2003)
- It also increases the scope to recruit new players, ‘without its attention, it is impossible to recruit new members outside of ‘the family’” (Emmerik, Keizer, Troost, et al., undated: 176).
Topsports ‘are played all over the world, are media involved and have exciting leagues, both national and international’ (Crum, 2003: 2)

Topsports need heroes

Too ‘gentle’ and too ‘nice’

Topkorfball will only become a reality when the spectacle of stronger Dutch opposition comes into play (Emmerik, Keizer, Troost, et al., undated)
MEDIA AND SPECTATOR INTEREST

- No national media coverage
- Renovation
- Indoor korfball
- 10,000 spectators filled the capacity of the stadium in which the Netherlands and Belgium competed in the final of the World Championships in 2003 (Crum, 2005)
BASKETBALL VS KORFBALL

- Influential worldwide media in America
- Commercialisation & professionalization
- Susceptible to change
- Delayed changes to Women’s basketball
- Korfball’s aversion to change
- Korfball is ‘a game to which the modern luxury of sports has not yet penetrated’ (Cottaar, 1963 cited in van Bottenburg, 2003: 98).
- Ball sport competition
  + Indoor rules
  + 3-section court to 2-sections
- High performance at all costs
- Prospective changes on the cards
  + Wicker basket
  + Defended rule
  + No solo play
  + Protected possession
  + Physical contact
  + Advantage rule
- Improved commercialisation and media attention
- Importance of an audience
To gain the opportunity to become a topsport, the IOC would have to recognise korfball as a topsport (Crum, 2003)

Olympic membership is required in order to encourage media coverage and sponsor attention (Crum, 2003)

Olympism and ‘korfballism’

‘with regard to the admission of women to the Games, I remain a fervent opponent. It was against my will that they were admitted to a growing number of competitions (De Coubertin, 1928: 105 cited in Crum, 2003: 123)

Demonstration sport in 1920 and 1928
‘the mixed nature of korfball – the distinguishing feature that from the 1970s opened the doors to so many countries – must have been a thorn in the flesh of de Coubertin. And although his direct influence on the Games was on the wane, it did spoil korfball’s chances at the time’ (Crum, 2003: 124)

- Olympic commercialisation
- Olympic competition
- Korfballs disadvantage
IF KORFBALL HAD BEEN BASKETBALL...

- Sponsorship, professionalization and media encouragement
- Two forms: the single sex male version and the single sex female version.
- The male version - commercialisation, media and professionalization
- The female version - slower movement towards the male transformations
- The mixed version – stunted growth/termination
- Olympic privilege
- Basketball by another name...
NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF CHANGE

- Impacts on the korfball culture
- ‘prams along the out-line, juniors lying in the sun, kids shooting korf all day are examples of the cast-iron korfball culture’ (Rodenburg, 2003: 155)
- Changes are not necessary: korfball has a USP
- Changes would undermine philosophies of korfball
- Korfball enthusiasts as ‘archconservatives’
- Mirror image of basketball?
  - Losing traditionalists & failing to attract newbies
- Changes are not marketing orientated (Rodenburg, 2003; Van Bottenburg, 2003)
Would it be beneficial for current korfball players and enthusiasts to enter a world where excesses are normal, and decisions are dictated by ‘politicisation, mediatisation, commercialisation, professionalism and scientification’ (Crum, 2003)?

Emmerik, Keizer, Troost, et al. (undated) warn of these developments and stress that other sports that have entered professionalism, created super leagues and welcomed sponsorship willingly, have paid a price and lost control of their game.
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS NOT HOMOGENOUS

- Cultural and religious limitations - the mixed character will only serve as more restrictive even in those countries that accept single sex female sports
- Where women are not viewed as equal in society, korfball will never have the opportunity to flourish
- The IKF is not in a position to fund countries with no financial backing of their own (Fransoo, 2003)