



Soccer and Literature

A Look at Roberto “El Negro” Fontanarrosa **BY MICHEL DI CAPUA**

THE WOMAN IN THE BOOKSTORE IN ROSARIO, Argentina, could tell I wasn’t a native. She asked me what I was doing in the city. I told her I was trying my luck as a freelance writer. Writing about what?

“About Argentine soccer leagues,” I told her.

“Ok. Fontanarrosa’s books are over there,” she said.

“Whose?”

“Fontanarrosa’s. El Negro.”

She was surprised I had never heard of the man. You can call him, she told me. Why would I call him? “You’ll see,” she said, as she gave me El Negro’s phone number.

I had been traveling across Argen-

tina for several months before happening upon Rosario, a city four hours away from Buenos Aires on bus, where the tourist traffic was so incidental that I was the sole guest at the town hostel the nights I stayed there. Though Rosario had been billed as one of the country’s loveliest cities, it was unappealing. Its river is dirty, and its prized flag museum grandiose. And yet, in the days I spent there, I became attached to the city—not because of anything it offered, but because, quite by accident, I found myself in a gratifying daily routine. I’d bicycle along the river, eat ice cream in the late afternoon, and go to the local dance hall at night. The theme at the hall

would change (tango on Monday nights, salsa on Tuesdays, student bands on Wednesdays), but the crowd hardly did. During that stint in Rosario, I matured as a traveler. I learned how satisfying it is, in the middle of a long trip, to drop your pack in an unassuming place, commit to it, commit to routine and to not seeing much at all. But undoubtedly the memories of Rosario abide because of my having met El Negro.

I soon discovered that everyone in Argentina knew who El Negro was; he was a soccer journalist, novelist, short story writer, and, above all, the country’s

An Argentine street scene

comedian: a cartoonist famous for his “Inodoro Pereyra” comic strips about a gaucho, his talking dog, and his fat, petulant wife, Eulogia. He was also something of a local hero in Rosario, where he had grown up and had pledged his very public, very immoderate loyalty to a local soccer team. I was able to reach El Negro by telephone the day after meeting the woman in the bookstore, and he agreed to let me interview him several days later.

In anticipation of my meeting with El Negro, I bought a tape recorder. I had not done much interviewing before then. I spent a long time drafting questions. I remember my nervousness as the hour before our encounter approached; I found his house and sat outside for the remaining minutes testing and re-testing the recorder. And then I rang the bell; his wife, Gaby, ushered me in, and I found El Negro, bearded, sharp-eyed, gaunt... and immobile. For three years, he had been suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig’s disease, a neurodegenerative disease that causes muscle weakness and eventually results in loss of control of voluntary muscle movements. Because of his illness, El Negro had finally been forced to stop drawing his own cartoons, and had now resorted to dictating his writings.

Our conversation began. He was excited to learn that I was originally from Colombia; he had just returned from the Hay Festival in Cartagena (a literature festival once described by Bill Clinton as a “Woodstock of the mind”) where he had received the annual grand award given to a Latin American author. As it is a prize ordinarily given to “serious” writers, Fontanarrosa’s selection had come as a surprise. The applause from the crowd of fellow writers lasted three minutes, and his recognition speech, “In Defense of Vulgar Words,” was emblematic. (“I want to take note of the word *mierda* [shit],” he said, “which is a word that is irreplaceable, whose secret is in the letter *r*, which the Cubans pronounce much more weakly... and there lies the fundamental problem with the Cuban Revolution, in that it is limited by its expressive possibili-

ties...”) We talked about Cartagena, and about my travels in Argentina, for a bit. Then, I opened my notebook and began to scan through my list of questions that I wanted to ask him, and then—I closed the book and invited him to just tell me stories about soccer.

“Yyyyyyyyyyyyyy, *que sé yo?*” [What do I know?] he said, in that typical Argentine expression of feigned ignorance. And then without pause, the storytelling started. He talked about the rivalry between Buenos Aires’ two famous soccer franchises: Boca Juniors, long associated with the city’s poorest neighborhood, and River Plate, founded by wealthy Englishmen and linked to the city’s aristocracy. At La Bombonera, Boca’s home stadium, fans sing elaborate, profanity-laced chants about the murdering the “rich chickens” from River. At River Plate Stadium, River fans mock the “second-class” citizens that constitute Boca’s fan base by unveiling large banners that read “Welcome to Argentina.”

El Negro, however, is most famous for his allegiance to his home soccer team, Rosario Central. In Rosario, the most jingoistic city in an already proud country, hordes of townspeople gather in the local stadium every December 19 to commemorate *and re-enact* a legendary goal by Rosario Central that had occurred on

match in which the proceeds would benefit a local leprosy hospital. Rosario Central refused the offer and branded Newell’s fans “lepers,” as if sympathy for and contraction of the disease were indivisible. In exchange, Newell’s fans referred to Rosario’s as “*canallas*” (scoundrels). The names have endured. Men holler *leproso* and *canalla* at each other in the city’s streets, and a Rosario café is host to regular meetings of a secret, black-clad group named O.C.A.L. (Organización Canalla Anti-Leprosa).

The hour I spent listening to Fontanarrosa’s soccer stories is a treasured memory. At the end, we talked with Gaby, we exchanged e-mail addresses, and he prepared me for another upcoming interview, this time with Daniel Passarella, the River Plate coach. Afterwards, during the rest of my travels, one Argentine after another would tell me about their own fascination with El Negro. No one, it seems, could better articulate how Argentines see themselves than he could with his irreverent jabs. No one was funnier. (A man goes hunting for hares with Inodoro, the central character in Fontanarrosa’s comic strip. Inodoro cautions him that hares are guided by their sense of smell, so it’s necessary to coat oneself with cow manure to cover human scent. “But it’s disgusting,” says the hunter. In-

No one could better articulate how Argentines see themselves than he could with his irreverent jabs. No one was funnier.

that date more than thirty years ago. One of Fontanarrosa’s most celebrated fictional stories, titled “19 de diciembre de 1971,” is about the effort of young fans to force an old man to come to the stadium during the game, because the team had never lost with the old man present. He went on to describe the rivalry between Rosario Central and Newell’s Old Boys. In the 1920s, Newell’s offered to play Rosario Central in a no-stakes charity

odoro responds, “That’s why we cover it with cow manure.” “And you don’t wear any?” says the hunter. “*Con uno alcanza*,” replies Inodoro. [If one of us wears it, it’s enough.]

I watched a performance of Les Luthiers, an ingenious Buenos Aires-based comic troupe, for whom Fontanarrosa is a chief scriptwriter. In April 2006, the Argentine Senate honored him for his contribution to the country’s

culture. When I returned to Argentina months later, this time during the 2006 World Cup, he was writing soccer-related humor articles for *Clarín*, Argentina's largest newspaper, just as he had done in previous World Cups.

With the bewitching, salacious Hermana Rosa as his clairvoyant protagonist, the articles were rich in knowledge and passion for soccer, unfailingly droll, and sometimes, somehow, also profound. In one article, he claims to have found an epic poem, "*Veintisiete toques y una flor*" (twenty-seven touches and a flower), about Argentina's sensational goal in the second game of the World Cup (he even gives us the final verses of this fictive poem).

El Negro's health worsened. I had remained in touch with Gaby, who publishes a wedding magazine in Rosario, and when I called to wish them a happy new year in 2007, she sounded discouraged, even as she informed me that they were trying new treatments. But El Negro spoke of his disease as "*este quilombo de mi salud*" (this mess with my health), as if it were principally an aggravation. I didn't know enough to gauge how well he was coping, but I do know the line every reader of Inodoro Pereyra knows. Each new storyline in the comic strip unfolds with a character asking Inodoro how he's doing, to which Inodoro responds, "*Mal, pero acostumbrau.*" ("Bad, but used to it.")

Roberto "El Negro" Fontanarrosa passed away in July 2007 from respiratory failure. He was 62.

Michel Di Capua works in the private sector, in the renewable energy industry. He has a Master's degree in literature, with a focus on early 20th century European novels, as well as a Master's in Business Administration. His published freelance writing has included soccer-related articles for the Buenos Aires Herald in Argentina and the Business Standard in India. He is based in New York City.

The Cradle of Brazilian Soccer

Working-class History and the *Futebol de Várzea* in São Paulo **BY PAULO FONTES**

THOUSANDS OF FANS DRIVE TO A SOCCER stadium, a very common scene every Sunday in soccer-mad São Paulo. Brazilians are proud to be five-time World Champions, to be the home of Pelé, Garrincha, Romário, Ronaldo and many other skillful players, who earned Brazil the epithet as the land of the kings of the "beautiful game."

However, the soccer scene that Sunday, November 13, 2011, looked far from glorious. It was not a match gathering Corinthians, São Paulo F.C. or Palmeiras, the best-known professional soccer clubs in the city. Distant from the glamorous, rich and comfortable world of top professional players, two modest neighborhood clubs were disputing that day the final of the municipal amateur championship, considered to be the largest in Brazil. Despite the humbleness, enthusiasm and spirits were high. For many, the fervor

of the fans and the sense of attachment between the local clubs and their communities make amateur soccer, the *real* soccer, the heir of the best of Brazilian soccer tradition.

In the last decades, the scarcity of playing fields due to state speculation, changes in popular leisure activities and even urban violence made amateur football less visible in the major cities. Nevertheless, after many years of decline and ostracism, amateur football seems to be back in fashion again. Popular major championships, films on the topic and Internet and television coverage are helping to recover, little by little, the lost prestige of this leisure practice, especially in São Paulo.

During the Brazilian soccer golden age between the 1950s and '70s, the widespread workouts of amateurs in the main cities of the country spread the



familiar idea that amateur football was the cradle of Brazilian soccer. In fact, the majority of professional players started their careers in humble local clubs. In places such as Rio and São Paulo, experts from professional clubs used to pick the best amateurs and hire them in a constant flow from city lots to fame. Since the professionalization of the sport in the 1920s and '30s, soccer was one of the forms of upward mobility for working-class youngsters in Brazil.

In cities such as São Paulo, amateur football has a very long history that strongly merges with the trajectory of civil society organization and working-class activism. Introduced through the interaction of the English community with the local population, and cultivated in aristocratic sports clubs of Brazilian/English elites, soccer quickly spread through the city's neighborhoods. The sport was soon mastered by the working class, which included the sport in its recreational menu. The move to professionalism in the early 1930s even boosted soccer's popularity, both as a spectator sport and as a leisure activity. Analysts conservatively calculate there were around 3,000 football amateur popular clubs in São Paulo, involving a very significant part of the working-class population during that decade.

Many of these clubs were related to the new factories and workplaces of the city. Indeed, textile industrialists promoted the creation of company clubs as part of a broader paternalistic industrial relations policy, seeking to discipline and to control the leisure time of the workers. However, it was the working-class neighborhoods that became the locus par excellence for the practice and creation of popular football clubs. In the first half of the century, thousands of these clubs were created in the industrial districts of the city, such as Brás, Mooca, Belenzinho, Bom Retiro and Lapa, among others. This first industrial belt of São Paulo was located near the main rivers

Chemical workers union soccer team, São Paulo 1950s

and rail lines of the city, with plenty of low and flat land alongside the watercourses. It was in these spaces that the working-class practice of soccer proliferated. These peculiar conditions helped to popularize the term *futebol de várzea* (lea or field football) for amateur soccer.

Frequently stigmatized by the ruling classes and the police as a space for disorder and violence, this *lea football* became the most popular leisure activity in the districts of the city and, by the 1930s and 1940s, gained some recognition and legitimization. Until the 1970s, amateur soccer was widely reported on in the popular and sports press. Impressive crowds gathered at many of these amateur games.

After World War II, amateur soccer accompanied the growth of the city, spreading out around the new working-

the social conformation of the older and more central industrial areas.

Although football was a predominantly male recreation, women could also explore the clubs as a leisure space. The sport itself was restricted to men, but women were eager spectators, sometimes bringing along the whole family for picnics and parties on the side of the fields. Moreover, the clubs often expanded their activities beyond soccer itself by promoting balls, parties and beauty contests. At best they worked as real centers of working-class leisure and integration, but they also gave rise to varied forms of conflicts and antagonism.

Almost every district and new concentration of people had its own club and soccer team—important for the reinforcement of local identity. The residents frequently considered the teams

The residents frequently considered the teams a sort of representation of their “space,” their “area,” a representation of the place where they lived and shared difficulties but also of solidarity with their neighbors and friends.

class districts on the outskirts. In every neighborhood, dozens of different clubs and teams were created and constituted a fundamental aspect of working-class leisure and associational practice.

The number of soccer playing fields in São Paulo during the 1950s is a clear indicator of the widespread diffusion of the sport. However, while in the original industrial belt of the city real estate speculation and the canalization of the main central rivers destroyed hundreds of fields, the new outskirts areas had plenty of space for practice. As Afonso José da Silva, an old resident of the outskirts of the city, recalls, “Every new neighborhood had to leave a space, a specific area for a soccer field.” Progressively, a geographical dislocation of working-class sociability was taking place, altering

a sort of representation of their “space,” their “area,” a representation of the place where they lived and shared difficulties but also of solidarity with their neighbors and friends. Therefore, the clubs were also important for the constitution and reinforcement of ties and bonds among specific working-class communities.

The rivalry between clubs from different districts could be fierce. It is not surprising, for instance, to note the huge participation and enthusiasm of the fans and supporters (including women and children) during the local tournaments. The general climate was partisan, and violence and conflicts could frequently break out.

Beyond the localities, the clubs could express ethnic and racial identities or other working-class cleavages.

Amateur soccer clubs existed specifically for blacks, international migrants' groups such as Italians, Spaniards, Hungarians or Portuguese, or internal migrants' groups from different areas in Brazil. Clubs could even be composed of individuals from specific cities or regions within these countries and states. However, the clubs' identity exclusiveness could vary a lot. The neighborhood, friendship relations and ties seemed to be more important for club association than other criteria. In this sense the clubs were important forms of popular organization to integrate residents of the same locality. But they achieved more than that.

The so-called football festivals (a sort of championship tournament in which clubs from various districts could play against each other) integrated residents from different neighborhoods, allowed them to get to know the city space and landscape and also stimulated experience exchanges. As early as 1921, neighborhood tournaments were taking place. The District Championship, for instance, gathered together teams representing the main neighborhoods of the city. These clubs and tournaments integrated the São Paulo working class in a communication network that connected the different areas and spaces of the popular city.

The amateur soccer clubs are interesting examples of a network of local and voluntary associations that proliferated in the working-class districts of São Paulo in the years following the World War II. These neighborhood organizations, the *Sociedades Amigos de Bairro* (Neighborhood Friends Society), were the most vocal in demanding infrastructure improvements and social equipment, such as schools and hospitals, for the deprived working-class districts. This neighborhood associationism is a fundamental feature of the working-class culture and political action in São Paulo. In the late '50s and early '60s, neighborhood associations, trade unions and popular political parties joined forces in demands against inflation, agitating for urban improve-

ments and deep social reforms. During the 1950s trade unions and neighborhood organizations grew increasingly close, including joint participation in local sports clubs. Trade unions used soccer as an instrument to recruit support from its working-class audience, promoting championships and trade-union clubs. During a 1957 general strike in the city, for instance, many meetings and picket lines were organized at amateur football clubs in the neighborhoods.

The supposed borders between the world of labor and the world of residence were frequently crossed by these organizations, reflecting an inclusive class perspective, which took into consideration the diverse dimensions of the workers' lives.

The supposed borders between the world of labor and the world of residence were frequently crossed by these organizations, reflecting an inclusive class perspective, which took into consideration the diverse dimensions of the workers' lives. Based on informal relations and on diverse social networks, these local associations were not necessarily permanent entities. Actually, organizational discontinuity was one of the features of these social movements, although this rarely meant absence of struggles for rights. Often leisure activities could be the basis for demanding movements. The longtime trade unionist Waldomiro Macedo, for instance, affirms that "many recreational associations themselves used to claim benefits for their neighborhoods." Through these clubs, many local politicians got information about the residents and their problems and established fundamental network contacts during the electoral period. It helped them to reinforce their claims of belonging to specific localities, communities or even to the working class as whole.

Amateur soccer clubs were key elements of working-class culture and po-

litical action during the 1950s. They were deeply connected with the process of fast industrialization and urbanization in São Paulo and interacted with both the formal and informal world of the workers during that period, helping us to understand the varied facets of working-class lives, including their solidarity and conflict aspects. The creation of new football clubs and teams by informal groups in the different districts and streets of the city also opened a space of relative au-

tonomy for workers facing control by the companies, the entrepreneur organizations concerned with working-class leisure, and the state. Football as a leisure activity was very much part of a clash of aspirations and values among social classes in the Brazilian society—a representation struggle—which helps us to understand not only working-class culture, its sociability and cleavages, but also the classes' relations at a vital moment of the histories of the city and country.

Paulo Fontes is an Associate Professor at the Fundação Getulio Vargas in Rio de Janeiro. He was a Visiting Professor at Duke (2004) and Princeton (2006-07) Universities and is a historian of Brazilian labor and working-class culture in São Paulo after World War II. In 2011, his book Um Nordeste em São Paulo. Trabalhadores Migrantes em São Miguel Paulista, 1945-1966 was the winner of the first Thomas E. Skidmore Prize, sponsored by the National Archive, Rio de Janeiro and the Brazilian Studies Association. As a result, the book will be published in English. e-mail: paulo.fontes@fgv.br



Women's Soccer in Brazil

Invisible But Under Pressure **BY CARMEN RIAL**

“NO ONE KNOWS, NO ONE SAW,” READS THE headline in an important Brazilian newspaper announcing the conclusion of the main women's soccer championship on the continent—the Taça Libertadores da América—accompanied by a photograph of an empty stadium. The team from Santos won the Cup for the second time with six victories in six matches, scoring 25 goals and suffering none. Brazil's national champions dominated the other teams, even Chile's Everton and Argentina's Boca Juniors. The tournament finished with an average audience of 300 people per game, in other words, all of the games were played in nearly empty stadiums.

By comparison, the men's D Series championship (the fourth from the top in the country) averaged 2,700 paying viewers per game, nine times as many.

The paucity of fans can be interpreted as a lack of interest in women's soccer in Brazil, a sport which is new in the country. But in 2009, 15,000 people went to Pacaembú Stadium to watch the final

of the women's Libertadores Cup, largely because the game was broadcast on television and Marta was playing for Santos.

Marta Vieira da Silva, or simply Marta, is a midfielder who has played for Sweden's Umeå IK, Santos, L.A. Sol, FC Gold Pride and Western New York Flash and was a member of the Brazilian national team that won the silver medal at the 2004 and 2008 Summer Olympics. Marta was voted FIFA's Women's World Player four times. During the 2009 final, the fans chanted, “Marta is better than Kaká,” referring to Brazil's internationally famous male star. Still, her fame does not compare to that of male players.

Santos was not able to hire Marta in 2010 because of the higher salary (\$400,000-\$500,000 annually) she commands at the L.A. Sol. Without Marta on the field, games were only broadcast on pay television.

The way the few television broadcasts narrate women's games points out the great gap between men's and women's soccer. The players are regularly charac-

terized with formulas such as “Cristiane, who is on the Brazilian national team,” and the recent history of women's soccer needs to be explained—“women's soccer became an Olympic Sport in 1996, when Brazil was in fourth place.” It is difficult to imagine having to inform viewers of men's soccer that Maycon, Robinho or Neymar is on the Brazilian national team or that Brazil is a five-time world champion.

In 2010, the press barely covered the women's Libertadores Cup, preferring to use the space for the coverage of unimportant international matches of the “seleção,” the Brazilian national team, and the national league in male soccer. A study conducted of the leading Brazilian news magazines, *Época*, *Isto* and *Veja*, and the leading sports magazine, *Placar*, showed that in the past four years there were only 11 articles about women's soccer (Almeida, Caroline. *Boas de Bola*.

A woman soccer player prepares for a big match.

Projeto de dissertação. PPGAS/UFSC, 2011). In other sports, differences exist in coverage between genders, but not nearly as sharp as those in soccer.

A BIT OF HISTORY

When soccer came to Brazil from Europe in the mid-19th century, it did not totally exclude a female presence. In fact, the name that designates a fan in Brazil, *torcedor*, comes from women squeezing white handkerchiefs (*torcer* in Portuguese) at the peak of their demonstration of passion for one of the teams. The throng of women at the games was encouraged as a form of sociability between the genders, creating another location to meet a “good partner,” a white husband from the elite. The women were there to make the location more attractive, not to learn to play a new sport.

As workers gradually took up the space previously reserved for aristocrats on the teams, women also shifted their role from fans to players. These transitions met with strong resistance, strongest and longer-lasting against women's soccer. In men's soccer, professionalism was once prohibited as an indirect way to exclude the lower classes, and blacks and mulattos were not allowed on the teams. These interdictions died at the beginning of the 20th century with the gradual inclusion of blacks on the teams and the institution of the so-called “brown amateurism” in which players were paid on the side (Mario Filho, *O Negro no Futebol Brasileiro*. RJ: Mauad, 2003).

Historians differ about the date of the first women's soccer game played in Brazil. For the first decades of the 20th century, there are records of women's teams playing soccer in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Historian Fábio Franzini, in the article “Futebol é coisa ‘para macho’?” points to the existence of at least 10 women's teams, including Cassino Realiengo and the Eva Futebol Clube, competing in tournaments in Rio de Janeiro by the 1940s, when Brazil was under the control of dictator Getúlio Vargas.

The number of women's soccer teams increased with time, according to Franzini,

and reached about 40 in Rio de Janeiro in the mid-1940s. But then women's soccer suffered a tremendous blow, with a ban that would last decades.

A letter from a Mr. José Fuzeira to President Vargas, which helped trigger the law, asks for “the clairvoyant attention of your Honor to avoid a calamity that is about to fall upon female youth in Brazil.” He explained:

“I refer, Mr. President, to the enthusiastic movement that is inspiring hundreds of girls, attracting them to become soccer players, without considering that a woman cannot practice this violent sport without seriously affecting the physiological equilibrium of her organic functions, due to the nature that disposes her to be a mother... The newspapers say that in Rio there are nothing less than ten women's teams. In São Paulo and Belo Horizonte others are being formed. And, with this growth, within a year it is probable that throughout Brazil there will be 200 organized women's soccer clubs, or, in other words, 200 centers to destroy the health of 2,200 future mothers, who, moreover, will be caught in a depressive mentality and given to rude and extravagant exhibitions... It would not be surprising that the feminine movement to which we are referring is just a beginning, for, over time, the daughters of Eve will also present themselves in

women's bodies by pretending to protect their maternal functions, and forwarded the letter to the Minister of Education and Health, who, in turn, corroborated the writer's thesis, raising scientific and medical arguments that supported the drafting of article 54 of the decree of April 14, 1941 by the National Sports Council, stating that

“Women will not be allowed to practice sports incompatible with the conditions of their nature, and for this reason, the National Sports Council should issue the necessary instructions to sports entities in the country.”

The medical reports that supported excluding women from soccer sought to protect their procreative capacities, which would supposedly be placed at risk. The argument is a corollary to eugenic ideologies influential in the country since the 18th century, which preached the importance of protecting women's bodies so that they could breed healthy children and thus improve the white race in Brazil. The theory is highly refutable because of the simple fact that women's reproductive organs are internal, unlike men's, which are outside the body, objectively at greater risk when playing soccer.

Behind this supposed protection, we find the *mise-en-jeux* of a biological-social image of woman: that of the mother, conforming to an ideal corporal model of

Prohibited since the 1940s, women's soccer continued to exist in the shape of sporadic transgressions against the order of male domination.

wrestling matches and even in the “noble art” whose nobility consists of two opponents hitting each other until they drool blood (Franzini, Fábio, “Futebol é ‘coisa pra macho’? Pequeno esboço para uma história das mulheres no país do futebol.” *Revista Brasileira de História*. n. 50, vol. 25. São Paulo. 2005. p. 316–328).

Vargas gave heed to the clamor for maintaining male domination over

a plump body, without visible muscles, with rounded forms and limited mobility. This model corresponds to socially prescribed feminine behavior: passive and submissive, without agency.

THE LONG EXCLUSION

Prohibited since the 1940s, women's soccer continued to exist in the shape of sporadic transgressions against the

order of male domination. Luiz Carlos Rigo's article, "*Notas acerca do futebol feminino pelotense em 1950: um estudo genealógico*" [Notes on Women's Soccer in Pelotas in 1950: a genealogical study], documents the organization of two women's soccer teams in the city of Pelotas in southern Brazil, the Vila Hilda F.C. and the Corinthians F.C., which challenged the legislation and functioned until banned by the Regional Sports Council. Most of the players were young, ages 13-18, came from the lower middle class, and lived in the neighborhoods where the clubs were located. Some of the athletes stood out, such as the striker Gelsi, described in a local newspaper as an "element of great quality," who "controls the ball with precision, with the opportunity to translate her qualities as the playmaker of the Sunday match." The respect offered in this brief newspaper article, however, was not enough to change the position of sporting authorities, and, unfortunately, the teams had short lives.

There were other cases similar to those in Pelotas, but only a few, and when they gained notoriety they were systematically stopped by the Regional Sports Councils. What is surprising is precisely the rarity of the transgressions.

The 1941 law remained in force and was affirmed by the military dictatorship in 1965. Thus during the 1970s, a time of great transformation in gender relations in the Western world, Brazil reinforced the exclusion of women from the sport that occupied (and still occupies) a central place in the Brazilian imagination. Banning women from soccer, which articulated nationalism and modernity, excluded them from a greater collective and a broad spectrum of social practices. Incapable of symbolically representing the nation, they were not only passive, silent and submissive, but also second-class citizens. To keep them from playing soccer was to exclude them from full participation in the nation.

The prohibition of women in Brazilian soccer was revoked in 1979, after the country's political opening, following heated debates in the field of physical



education which were stimulated by the feminist movement. In the same year, an Amnesty Law was passed which allowed the return to the country of women who fought the dictatorship and went into exile, mostly in France. The feminism that began during the 1970s and was linked to the struggle against the dictatorship raised questions at the end of the decade related to the body and to sexual and

reproductive rights (Grossi, Miriam P. 1996. "Feminismes et Generations Politiques des Années 90 au Brésil." *Cahiers du Cedref (Politique et Recherches Feministes)*, Paris, v. 6, p. 169-190). In the end feminists linked to the field of physical education gained a great victory: the end

Brazil's Marta Vieira da Silva, or simply Marta, was voted FIFA's Women's World Player four times.

of the prohibition of women's participation in soccer (and in other sports) as spelled out in Deliberation no.10 of the National Sports Council.

MARTA AND THE EXCEPTION THAT IS THE RULE.

According to Fábio Franzini in his 2005 article "Futebol é 'coisa para macho'? Pequeno esboço para uma história das mulheres no país do futebol," various women's soccer teams sprung up around the country beginning in the 1980s, linked to both traditional clubs and independent businesses, with games in the 1970s organized by gay bars, if we believe a *Veja* magazine report. The National Sports Council maintained ridiculous rules for bodily protection such as breast shields and shorter game time. Women's soccer began to organize local and regional competitions, but the first Brazilian championship wasn't held until 1994.

The re-initiation was led by Radar in Rio de Janeiro, which had the leading athletes. While Radar enjoyed a series of victories in international competitions, it was only with the Olympic Games of 1996 that we can speak of a significant return of Brazilian women to the soccer fields.

Despite the strong performance of Brazilian women in international competitions, activity within the country is far below that in other countries. Although gender relations have been transformed in recent decades, the famous line of the former coach of the Brazilian men's team, João Saldanha, still rings true for most Brazilian men: "Can you imagine your son coming home with his girlfriend saying: 'she's the defender for Bangú'? No way, huh."

The women who enter the universe of soccer must be capable of attracting male eyes not because of their athletic performance, but for their quite specific physical attributes. Without any embarrassment, the São Paulo Soccer Federation indicated that "feminine" beauty is a fundamental requirement for selecting the girls who would play in the competition. In the words of Federation Presi-

dent Eduardo Farah, "We have to try to combine the image of soccer and femininity." Another director of the FPF, Renato Duprat, was even more categorical: "No one plays here with short hair. It's in the regulations" (Arruda, Eduardo, "FPF institui jogadora-objeto no Paulista" at <http://listas.cev.org.br/cevmlt/2001-09/msg00216.html>.2001).

Thus, although permitted, women's soccer continues to be limited by a macho perspective of gender, which only accepts the presence of women on the field by

Although permitted, women's soccer continues to be limited by a macho perspective of gender.

controlling their bodies: now, however, it is not mothers that they want, but sensual models. Those who may think that this view is limited to Brazil have never seen the websites of the most important sports media in the world.

In this situation, the chant "Marta is better than Kaká" truly seems to be an exception. And it's true: to get where they are, the Martas of Brazil need to overcome much tougher obstacles than the Kakás.

THE INTERNATIONAL CIRCULATION OF ATHLETES

With limited space in Brazil, few clubs, and poor salaries, some women soccer players have sought other places to play. In Brazil, most professional women players earn about R\$500 (200 euros) a month. In the large clubs, the salaries range from R\$1,500 to R\$5,000 (600-2,000 euros) a month. In the United States, a typical salary among the top players is US\$500,000 a year (Frutuoso, Suzane G. "A bola está com elas. O futebol feminino começa a ganhar espaço com salários melhores e campeonatos importantes, como a Libertadores." *Época* n. 2082 de 07. Out. 2009). In Sweden, it is estimated that Marta earned about US\$8,000 a month.

The export of players to countries in the North has gone on for years. Pretinha, one of the precursors in this movement, played 3 seasons in the United States, and later in Japan. Kátia Cilene and Simone Jatobá went to France, Elaine and Marta went to Sweden and the United States, Cristiane went to Germany, Sweden, and the United States and Rosana to Austria. Of the 11 starters on the Brazilian women's team, 8 play abroad. But this flow is far less than that of male athletes, and the women obviously do not

have the same visibility as the men. The Brazilian Football Federation (CBF), an entity linked to FIFA, has records of the departure from 2004 to 2009 of only 46 women from the country, compared with 3,000 men. The United States led the importation of Brazilian women with 14, followed by Spain with 10.

On November 18, 2010, the main sports program on Brazilian television concluded with a report on two games the night before. Argentina had defeated Brazil 1 to 0 in a friendly in Qatar. In a second light-hearted commentary, the report noted the 4-0 victory of the Brazilian women over Argentina. Nevertheless, unlike the avalanche of images of the men's defeat, the television showed only a few photos of the women's victory. It was an official game of the South American championship, which Marta and her colleagues won a few days later. Although theoretically such a match was more important than the friendly, there was no televised transmission, and few images to show. Once again, no one knew, and no one saw.

Carmen Rial is a faculty member in the Anthropology Department at the Universidad Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) in Brazil.