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Sport and communication: the first traces of women's football in the Canary Islands

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Abstract

Introduction: Women's football was banned for many years until the first teams began to be created in the Canary Islands. **Methodology:** The research has been based on the bibliographic and hemerographic review of the specialized press and sports news of the time. Other current studies have also been taken into account to focus a position from the social history of sport. This communication includes the articles published in the Canarian newspapers between 1915 and 1950. **Results and conclusions:** The research shows the low representation of women's football in the Canary Islands in the period studied and an unequal treatment resulting from the historical, social and legal context of the analyzed time.

Keywords

Sport; football; women; press; Canary Islands.

Contents: 1. Introduction. 2. Theoretical justification. 3. Research question. 4 Methods. 5. Results. 6. Conclusions. 7. References.

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1. Introduction

The social movements of the 19th century marked the advancement of women and their role in the world of sport. In the early 20th century, detractors and advocates debated whether sport was a recommended activity for women's health, until the practice of some sport modalities began to be normalised due to the influence of the international participation of women in sport events like the

Olympics and national feminist movements. Women were forbidden from playing football for many years until, eventually, the first women's football teams emerged in the Roaring 1920s. The formation of these teams did not enjoy a good reception in the media, which actually gave a stage to very opposing voices. The normalisation of women in sport did not occur until the end of the Franco regime, when the first women's football clubs were constituted, influenced by the existence of national football clubs such as the Bilbao and Barcelona women's football clubs.

“When the men marched to the front of the First World War, the women started playing football. Especially since 1916, workers who manufactured weapons founded equipments in factories” (Alvarez, 2019).

Football is currently one of the main sports played by Spanish women, next to basketball. However, the normalisation of women's football took a long time to reach the Canary Islands.

“Today we can commemorate the first centenary of the presence of women's football in Spain. After the long parenthesis of the Franco dictatorship, the progression of this sport has reached the aspirations of those young people who for the first time have set themselves out to break with the prejudices of a society, until not so long ago, overly conservative in its gender relations” (Torrebadella-Flix, 2016).

Throughout the most recent history, the social construction of sport was based on an androcentric view with important gender biases.

“The sport has been socially and symbolically built as a sexist and patriarchal institution, characterized by a masculine hegemony that privileges, naturalizes and preserves the power of men” (Ramón-Vegas, 2012).

Faced with this panorama, women tried to legitimise their right to play football, but found great resistance in an antiquated sporting model based on ideas of male supremacy, especially during the Franco regime, when were forbidden from playing football.

The purpose of this study is to present the first journalistic news on women's football that were published in the Canary Islands, in the socio-historical context of gender relations. Our objective is not to establish the number of published news, as this would be a no-brainer, but to analyse the evolution, or lack thereof, of the discourse and its relationship with the historical, social, cultural and political contexts in which it takes place. We also aim to characterise the role of women in football and their media treatment during this time.

This study, which is still novel, aims to contribute to the construction of the social history of women in sport and, in particular, of women's football in the Canary Islands in the first half of the 20th century.

2. Theoretical justification

In the 19th century there was a series of social changes in Spain, such as the industrialisation of the nation, which changed the way of life of the Spanish population. Despite the advances made, women did not experience much improvement in their social role as they continued to be relegated to the family sphere.

"Women´s work, precarious and second level, took them out of their homes, so that their task was no longer limited to the care of the family and the home, but also contributed to family support." (Del Rio, 2019).

In the social context of the first half of the 20th century, women began to fight for their rights (which already existed in the 19th century) and achieved, among other things, the recognition of some rights, such as access to non-domestic work, which allows women to reclaim their role in society, with sport being the most banned area for them.

"The woman, during the last third of the nineteenth century, became the center of attention of writings and discussions, especially about their incursion into work, studies and sports. A large part of the male society rejected these practices, although a minority began to look forward to the physical practice of women, as long as it did not involve masculinization or be carried out in an excessively competitive way, since there was a fear that the sport generate a feminine role different from the ideal, creating determined, safe and independent women" (García García, 2017)

In this scenario, sport federations began to be developed and sport becomes established in society, while a minority began to see with good eyes that women can play some sports, as long as they complied with what was established as "normal" for the female physiology.

However, neither medical science nor civil society, in general, saw the figure of the female athlete with good eyes. The former did not consider playing sports was suitable to improve women's health given their physical constitution while society in general did not like the idea of a determined, confident, independent and empowered woman, which is the image conveyed by sport women.

As Millán and Ruano (2019) affirm, "*the incorporation of women into competitive sport has historically occurred as a scheduled assignment. What has allowed to create feminine spaces where it was inconvenient that they existed, but separated from me*".

Thus, physical activities began to be recommended for women in the early 20th century, such as hiking, exclusively for health reasons: to improve the health of mothers-to-be and their children.

In England, during the Great War, women's football grew through teams formed by the female employees of ammunition factories. This reaction is seen by some as the initiation of women's football in Europe (Brennam, 2007; Simón, 2009; Tate, 2013), although in 1921 women were totally banned from playing this sport (Tate, 2013). Subsequently, the Women's World Games were celebrated for over twelve years (Paris 1922; Goteborg 1926, Prague 1930 and London 1934), which served to vindicate the role of women in sport.

International news had a positive influence in Spain. Women's sport begins to develop in our country in the 1920s (Bahamonde, 2011; Simón, 2009). The main sports had an individual character with the male company. Actually, it was the social and political context of this period that gave women the opportunity to practice physical activity outside the home.

The first references to football played by women at the national level date back to 1914, when the Spanish Girl's Club organised a match between its own female players in the Spanish field. Subsequently, this Club started a tour across Spain to raise funds for social causes.

In 1923, the Catalan sport press opened a debate about women's football. That same year, the first international women's football match was held in Barcelona between France and Great Britain for the benefit of the Sport Journalists Union.

It was at that time that women's football teams such as *Romea FC* and *Metropolitano FC* were funded. In 1932 several football teams, such as *Levante*, *España*, *Atlético* and *Valencia*, became consolidated. And in 1934 Ana María Martínez Sagi became the first female member in the Board of Directors of Spanish football, in this case of the FC Barcelona (García, 2007).

Although, as mentioned, sport would become an opportunity for women to leave the home and for emancipation, in this era the illusion would not last much because after the Spanish Civil War brought back the conservative and condescending sport model.

The international context favoured the beginning of sport in Spain and the Canary Islands especially after the Paris 1924 Summer Olympics, where women's participation was limited to fencing, swimming and tennis, but with space in the national and Canarian press.

The Second Republic institutionalised women's sport in modalities such as basketball and handball, but not in football. "Sport continues to exist for, for and about men" (Cooky et al., 2013).

Since 1939, the creation of the Women's Section serves to remind women their social role and sport is recommended to improve the reproductive capacities of women as a compulsory subject from primary school to university.

With the Franco dictatorship, the role of women is reduced to a passive figure, being merely spectators in football and bulls fighting. Since 1941, physical culture has been controlled by the Falange and is used as a control tool.

In this period, the main women's college sports were volleyball, swimming and basketball. Football is a discipline considered specifically for men and not suitable for women. References to women's football matches in Spain in this period include a match between two teams of female artists, "*Las finolis vs. Las folclóricas*", who were ridiculed in the press.

In the Canary Islands, some newspapers cover international news about women's sport and so women's practice of physical activity begins to be perceived as a synonym for modernity and social

mobility.

Educational centres, the movements of workers' federations and the creation of sport federations set precedents for sport to become embraced by Canarian youth.

Between 1915 and 1950, Canarian media opened the debate on the practice of sport by women. This discourse of the debate takes different directions depending on the political period as well as the social context.

It is worth noting that in this half of the 20th century there was an absence of equality laws and sport laws. The most significant laws that contributed to the emancipation of women were the right to vote (1931); the divorce law (1932); and the abortion law in Catalonia (1936). It should also be noted that some educational policies favoured access to sport in secondary education, prioritising games and sports in physical education.

3. Research question

In this research we want to take a historical tour through the first half of the 20th century to explore the role of Canarian women in football and their coverage in the main newspapers of the time.

4. Methods

The research starts with the documentary review of the main digital open databases available on the Internet. Essentially, the main documentary sources have been the newspaper and periodicals libraries of the University of La Laguna and the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, and, in particular, the following newspapers:

- *Diario de Tenerife* (1886-1917).
- *La Opinión* (1885-1916): political and general-interest newspaper.
- *El Progreso* (1905-1932): Republican political newspaper.
- *El Progreso de Canarias* (1905-1906): magazine of agriculture, industry and commerce.
- *La Gaceta de Tenerife* (1910-1938): established in 1910 as a publication with a right-wing editorial line. During the Second Republic the newspaper aligned itself with the Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Right-Wing Groups (CEDA) and became one of the most-read right-wing newspapers in Tenerife. It continued to be published after the outbreak of the Civil War. Its last issue is 2 October 1938.
- *La Prensa* (1910-1939): it sided with the Allies during World War I, as most of the Canarian press. It had its boom during the 1920s and the Second Republic but went into decline after the takeover of the Canary Islands by the rebel side, during the Civil War. However, it lasted until 14 February 1939 when it merged with *Amanecer* to create *El Día*.
- *El Día* (1939-2018): it was a publication of the National Unionist Movement during the Franco dictatorship. It is currently the largest newspaper in the Canary Islands.

This research also takes into account different documents and publications by national authors to place chronologically news and hemerographic information, as well as gender-specific studies in the Canary Islands and Spain.

5. Results

Research shows that until the Roaring 1920s the practice of sport in Spain by women was almost non-existent. However, it is important to know the stages prior to its arrival, as it is 1915 when the Canarian press began to reflect on the role of women in physical activities.

On 15 November 1915, *La Prensa* published one of the first articles on women and sport:

“Sport and Spanish women: let’s set the Spanish woman free from her miserable historical life, from the mystical shadow in which she vegetates and bring her once and for all to the conquest of strength and health through exercise, which enriches her blood; let’s rip the horrible hysteria from her head and “crown her with the flowers of healthy joy, so that, loud and happy, she enjoys the feast, the light and the air. The English woman is the prototype of strength, vitality, endurance and agility. Educated in gymnastics and athletic games, her muscles acquire a resistance to all tests; she jumps, plays tennis and hockey, rides horses with admirable dexterity, climbs the mountain peaks, astonishing her guides with her courage and serenity,; she skates on the alpine lakes without giving into fatigue, and with her “Bocdeker” under her arm, she is able to go around the world without mishaps or incidents, seeing every remarkable thing, contemplating the most beautiful panoramas, enjoying, in short, life in its most spiritual and highest aspect.

“Regarding the perfection of the breed, the English sportswoman gives birth to healthy children first, and then makes them strong by educating them in sports. Oh, enviable English people! More than your statesmen and warriors, you owe the prosperity and greatness that have been able to throw away ridiculous worries and become manly so that your children are not effeminate.

“And Spain, what progressive path has it taken in this educational mission? When we manage that women in Spain reaches a perfect physical education, we will have taken the first step to the real regeneration. The children of these mothers will have the heart and arms to guide the country and give new glory days to it, and will their will won’t faint, which is the sickness of the current generation. Won’t such comforting perspective move you, oh beautiful readers, to undertake with enthusiasm and determination the practice of sports and outdoor exercises?

“Sport revives the fright of our nature, if they are weak. It blushes our cheeks, if they are pale. It turns our muscles into steel, elastically hard. It places on our head the most precious crown that can be encased in our temples: the crown of health.

“This is what sports does to women: it gives her an edge, makes her beautiful, enlarges the natural cluster of its sore grace that paints in its body the colours of health.

“Those who attack women’s sport, arguing that it undermines the virtue of women; they are two-faced hypocrites that perpetuate the execrable theories of Inquisitor Torquemada (a disgrace of Spain); the Pharisees, the false ones, the despicable, repugnant priests of Levite,

who by day hide their ignoble face, like owls, and show it later, valiantly, when no one sees them at night, like toads, giving complete lies, with their repulsive behaviour; the expression of their sayings”. Mary de los Santos Inclán.

On Friday, 26 July 1920, *La Prensa*, a newspaper from Santa Cruz de Tenerife, publishes an article titled “Sport Women”.

“The sports woman must bear in mind that her purpose in cultivating sports is different from that pursued by a man. Suddenly, no woman aspires to become a great athlete, able to lift great weights, and all are distracted with retaining their youthful beauty. There are two things that every woman should take special care of, which are breathing capacity and abdominal muscle elasticity. Respiratory capacity refers to the amount of air that can enter the lungs as a result of deep breathing. Air contains oxygen, which is a vital gas; therefore, the more air is absorbed, the purer the blood.

“Men have in this regard a small physical superiority over women, that is, they have a superior respiratory capacity, because female chest muscles are weaker. Women’s sport, therefore, has a general objective set in advance; but it is worth bearing in mind that all sports are good if they are practiced outdoors. However, there is an exercise as good as the best to develop thoracic capacity, and that seems especially designed for them to exercise it. For this, there is nothing better and nothing more pleasant than singing.

“Abdominal muscles must also be developed, because we should never forget that women have to go through, physically, the test of motherhood. The most effective sports in this regard are rowing, swimming and walking. Any of them is enough to give women a slender line, but also a strong health, freeing her from the terrible discomforts that occur when the abdominal muscles give way. However, it is important to note that most women stop playing sports when they begin to need them. It is in middle age when muscle tone is most threatened, and if exercise is neglected its vigour declines rapidly.

“Many claim a lack of pecuniary means to cultivate sports; but the apology is unacceptable, because there is no woman, no matter how busy she is, who cannot walk, every day four kilometres, which is sport that is as valid as any other. Walking must be understood as moving non-stop outdoors to reach a point four kilometres away.

“We make this clarification to avoid the confusion of that lady who meticulously added the distances she travelled during the day on her walks and visits.

“In the same order of ideas, Swedish gymnastics is excellent, if somewhat boring, and therefore contrary to the idea we have of sport, which must be, above all, a cheerful thing. However, any sacrifice is preferable than living sedentarily, which means entering old age at thirty. The greatest beauty does not stand the test of sedentary life.

“On the contrary, sport is prolonged youth. You will be surprised that singing is called a sport, but nonetheless, there is nothing so good to exercise the muscles from the chest and the

diaphragm, thanks to the long and deep aspirations and inspirations it provokes. A poet doctor used to say that there shouldn't be a single woman who didn't accompany her breakfast with a cup of air."

At a time when the Canary Islands joins the widespread national debate about whether women should play sport, we found few news stories about it. *El Progreso* published the following article on Tuesday, 13 June 1922:

"Women's sport. A certain doctor recently lamented in a journal of Medicine the horror and havoc that some fashions cause to women's beauty. For example, women's habit of concealing their breasts and looking androgynous, which is now in vogue. The doctor said that our girls deform their bodies with atrocious bandages to hide their breasts and that this, squealing the female sculpture, causes diseases and glandular atrophy, which lead to impotence for the beautiful maternal work of breast feeding.

"In Spain, the physical development and energy of women are not really taken care of. Among men, sport is widely played. Our pugilists cross borders there. The female, the receptacle of our race, does not. She lives sedentary. Read some foreign sports magazines and you will see photographs of women dedicated to sport, swimming contests, jumping contests, cycling. You'll see females who are a little too tough maybe, but full of energy, as well-built future mothers.

"Unhealthy and broken beauty can be poetic. Strong beauty is more joyful, and above all more practical. Here, only a few aristocrat women who engage in tennis, and some girls who play racquetball, have this atmosphere of physical vigour. The female pelota players! Recently, the sport chronicler has attended one of these shows and he was amazed by the grace, strength and beauty of those girls. They didn't seem to be Spaniards. And they were, for our pride and the possibility of amending our ways.

"What a loose and light charm, frivolous and elegant! What an accuracy in sight and in the pulse, in the dizzying race, in the energy of the smart racket!

"Why are there no organisms in Spain for the physical cultivation of women? Why don't we imitate those foreign encounters? Why is this Basque sport, which is even prettier in girls than men, spreading?

"We have here everything we need to be a great nation. But we're trying to diminish ourselves. The physical cultivation of future Spanish mothers is much more interesting, in my view, than the cultivation of our future councillors and deputies". Luis Antón del Oimet.

El Progreso newspaper published a text on 28 January 1923 titled "The Olympic Woman", which cover a Medical Conference that concluded with the following statements:

"The Conference considers that girls should not devote themselves to sport, except when they are admirably prepared for it by a methodical and rational physical education; that allowing

women to practice sport with the current intensity and exaggeration, without rest or vigilance is to meet the most serious physiological or even pathological consequences; and regrettably compromises the results pursued, from the point of view of the physical and moral development and general health of women, and from the point of view of improving the race; and that women's sport does not work well if it is not practiced in very specific conditions that require very serious vigilance”.

On 22 August 1923, *El Progreso* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife) dedicated a column to women footballers in Las Palmas:

“In Las Palmas, according to the newspapers of that city, women, beautiful married girls, are going to form their football teams. I protest such heresy. A female footballer, it's an abnormality, a confusion, a sex inverted. It's at odds with women's delicacy.

“A woman footballer is not a woman. She is a tomboy; a “macho”, as we call in the Canary Islands those women who naturally have manly features, in the way of speaking and behaving. And a butch woman only pleases untrusted spirits, those who pitifully confuse grace and poise with carelessness and brazenness. The woman footballer, with shorts and a very tight sweater, acts in public.

“But the ban has been imposed, because the matches, more than anything else, were a display of exuberant and sweaty women, who were also insulted by the opponent. While football is the most complete and enthusiastic of sports and has the largest number of fans; this is not enough for women to decide to practice it.

“Women must bear in mind that this manly sport is totally at odds with feminine grace and harmony, which are the supreme charm of women, which is achieved through the whims of fashion, shaving and many other means, in order to correct the mistakes of nature.

“If the purpose of these girls from Las Palmas is to exercise, they can play tennis, hockey, cycling and other sports, which are fit for their sex and lack the violence of football, which could cause them so much moral and material damage.

“Now, if what they want is only to display their forms, to see whether there are men who can make them their wives, we apologise to them. But be aware that you will be exposed to us giving you nicknames: Juanita will be names bear or stone chest; Siena, pot hip; Petra, cow's thigh, and so on they will be called by the body part that most attracts the attention of viewers; the nickname will be more shameful the more intimate the member or region put into a foul critique.

“In one way or another, I vote against the woman footballer. There are things that should not come out of the narrow circle of the amical, secret and picaresque gathering. And this one, women's football, is one of them”. Fernando Ondino.

The voices alluding to women's sport practice in the press at the time were diverse. Some were in favour of its physical benefits while the majority were against it because they found it to be unsightly, abnormal and even a "heresy". In this period, the first reference to the creation of a women's football team stands out. On 13 November 1924, *La Gaceta de Tenerife* published the first article about the creation of a women's football team:

"Sports". FOOT-BALL. Women's team. A football team has been formed with girls from Las Palmas. They want to take women's sport to the level of other cities where these teams operate. In Las Palmas, people are very eager to witness a match between the aforementioned team and the other one that has been constituted in the city of Arucas.

In 1925, *La Prensa* (October) published an article titled "Women and Sport" in its section "Pages for women":

"Even though many fame doctors claim that femininity is not for the practice of the most violent exercises and the hardest works, others consider certain sports and laborious work to be dangerous to women's health. In fact, many of the women who carried out certain jobs during the European war became ill afterwards and future generations suffered the consequences of those years of struggle for such a cause. It is impossible to know to what extent those who think so are right. This is altered by the fact that women must practice sport by choosing, if anything, those exercises that require less strength, such as equestrianism, tennis, golf, jockey, a well-directed gymnastics, or dancing, which today is considered more like a sport than an art form.

"Another huge advantage of sports is that it totally increases female beauty, as women who practice sport significantly improve their shape. Women's silhouettes have become thinner and more flexible, their movements more graceful, the walks lighter and the complexion fairer. To these moral and physical advantages, we must add that fashion is always attentive to the whims of its addicts...

"[...] Even jewellers must take into account women's fondness for sports and create for them new models of wristwatches or pocket watches, cufflinks, tie pins and cute bras. Undoubtedly, the interest that women have in different exercises of physical culture also benefits fashion directors.

"It is expected that the inventive genius of fashion artists will not run out, since the beauty of the weak sex depends largely on them." Beatriz Galindo.

Back in November 1925, we found a short article in *La Prensa*, titled "A women's football team?"

"It is said that a women's football team will be formed soon in this city, and that it had not been formed yet because they were waiting for the orders of footballs could be made through the fur

shop “La Campana” Calle de Alfonso XIII, number 2, which also has a huge variety of shoes for ladies, gentlemen and children, in all kinds and colours, at very cheap prices”.

During this period, Primo de Rivera comes to central power, which in the Canary Islands implies a period of reforms of the socio-political structures. At this time, the press focused on the conflict in the archipelago, which led to the separation of the provinces. In this climate, the sports press that alluded to women, focused on a discourse oriented to the practice of physical activities to preserve beauty and on its benefits for motherhood, and this discourse spread into the 1930s.

With the arrival of the Second Republic (April 14, 1931), important social and political reforms arrived in the Islands. However, the most important milestone of this period is the arrival of women into politics. At this time, numerous civil rights are recognised at the national level (civil marriage, divorce, secular education, freedom of expression and manifestation). The most important of them was the right to vote in 1931.

From then on, the empowerment of women in different social fields begins to be a reality, except in sport, where women’s football continued to be for some time for women, who were only allowed as spectators.

La Prensa (Friday, 4 August 1933) published:

“Women and Sport. Inne Lenglen, great tennis pioneer. An article about the advances in women’s tennis.”

During the Civil War we found an international news story. On 24 April 1936, *La Prensa* published: Ten women’s football teams in Austria.

“Women’s football has already become an institution purely about the sporting life in Austria [...] During April, several women’s football matches will be played to arouse public interest in the tournament. These matches will start on 3 May and the ten women’s teams from Austria will participate.

“Difficulty of the fields. For now, women only have three fields to play in. The old football clubs are almost all subjected to the general rules of the National Football Association. This Association stipulates that some facilities will not be provided to women. Women and some men’s football fans believe this arrangement is based on fears that women’s matches could reduce the income of men’s matches.”

The truth is that men’s football captured all the attention in the Canarian press since the creation of the Canarian Football Federation (1925) articulated in the Tenerife Football Federation and Las Palmas Football Federation. The press only covered international women’s football news, keeping the same discourse of the early years of our study.

During the Franco period (1939-1975), news related to women and sport focused on sports that were “allowed”, such as fronton, swimming, which already had a Canarian women’s team, Basque ball, women’s hockey and the University Games and physical activities of the University Student Section. Although our study is based on the first half of the 20th century, we found some news stories concerning international football.

On 30 April 1945, *Aire Libre* articulated:

“Women keep getting themselves involved in everything. English women have founded fifty football clubs and plan to play against France and Belgium whenever possible. English women are getting prepared to perform in a sport reserved almost entirely for men today. More than fifty women’s football clubs have been formed and the few sports societies that existed during the war have been bombarded with petitions from women in the War Service who wish to play football in peacetimes.

“Women’s international football matches against France and Belgium are likely to take place. In Kent, a Women’s Football League has been formed and in the north of England and Scotland clubs have been strengthened in such a way that new football leagues are expected to be established”.

This was the last text found in our study period (1915-1950) in relation to the role of women in football in the Archipelago.

6. Conclusions

Since 1915, there is evidence of the practice of sport by women in the main Canarian newspapers under study. It is in this period when the debate on whether women’s practice of sport is positive or counterproductive begins. At this time, there is a favourable social context for women to be able to play sports: the first workers’ federations, mixed education centres with mandatory physical activity and the soaring 1920s at the national level.

However, the image of women in physical or sport activities continues to be based on an androcentrist discourse that established that women were only “allowed” to play feminised sports, such as tennis, hockey and swimming, and that they could only observe manly sports, such as football.

As Matud, Rodríguez-Wangüemert and Espinosa Morales (2017) express “the importance of the media in gender socialization and equality between women and men has been recognized, not only from the scientific and academic point of view, but from the political and legislative”.

Between 1915 and 1930, women in sport in the Canary Islands received an exclusively aesthetic representation, as a spectator in the case of football while the selected newspapers open a debate that lasted two decades: only some sports should be played by women to prepare their body for motherhood.

Republican newspapers mainly published opinion columns that reclaim the presence of women in

sport, including the need to imitate the British model to grow as a society. This is not the case in conservative newspapers, which advocate to prevent women from playing those sports they consider to be exclusively for men.

The historical, social and political national context tells us about the evolution of women's football in Spain and its development in parallel to other sports accepted in the country. In the case of the Canary Islands, in the first half of the 20th century, we only found news about the creation of women's football teams in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (1924) as a preface to the rise of this sport among island women.

During the civil war and the Franco dictatorship it was clearly established which activities women were allowed to perform, and which activities were not recommended for them, although the veto on football was not tacitly expressed.

In this period of the Franco regime there is a change and “what best illustrated the direction of the new times” was the emergence of the female modality in what already was the mass sport par excellence, football, whose first manifestation in Tenerife dates back to the summer of 1968, when a match between a local team and a consolidated team from Gran Canaria was celebrated during La Laguna's patron saint festivities, according to *Diario de Las Palmas* on 13 July 1968 (Yanes, 2015).

“Things had barely changed because the initiative rather than being treated as just another sporting event, was seen as an abnormal rarity. At least now women were tolerated to practice a sport that in the early years of Francoism was inconceivable, because according to the ideologues of the regime, the social roles of selfless mother and wife were incompatible with the cultivation of sports in which values classified as exclusive masculine prevailed” (Gil Gascón and Cabeza Deogracias, 2012: 205-206).

There are data on the existence of women's football teams in the Province of Gran Canaria since 1926, however, it is not until the end of the Franco regime when the Canarian Federation included women's football in its competition. Until then, women's football matches were charity, friendly or amateur, in both the student and leisure fields.

From the second half of the 20th century, women's football teams began to consolidate internationally and nationally. In the case of the Bilbao Athletic Club and the women's section of the FC Barcelona, they were already looking for opponents to play matches in the national scene.

On 26 July 1970 *Eco de Canarias* published the following: “Women's football is also played here, but only in certain areas of the country. Although it seems that it will be spreading as soon as the Spanish Federation authorises the formation of women's teams”.

According to data from the Royal Spanish Football Federation, it started with the organisation of a team and a national cup to encourage women to participate in football. The first Queen's Cup was played in 1981 and the first women's federated league was organised in the 1988/1989 season.

Therefore, it could be important to study whether the advent of the federated competition changed the discourse and treatment of women's football in the Canarian press and the respective equality laws favoured the greater participation of women.

There are many studies and research in the Canary Islands that talk about the figure of women from the point of view of Literature, Art, or music. This information tries to know the social life of women, especially those belonging to the most favored classes because the others did not exist in the intelligentsia. However, there are no studies on the role of women in sports or physical activity, so it is a difficult task to trace their tracks.

There are references to friendly matches in the 1960s and 1970s on Santa Cruz and other points of Tenerife isle. However, according to the Tenerife football federation, the first recognised match in Tenerife did not occur until the early 90s.

In the whole period under study, not a single reference has been found in the press of the Canary Islands to female football managers, coaches or referees, bearing in mind that their inclusion did not happen until the second half of the 20th century. However, we did find sports news written by female journalists.

Historically, the social construction of sport has established parameters of exclusion for women and their development in competitive sports. The treatment in the first period studied has been uneven and women are assigned diminutive adjectives, such as “miss or girls”. Language used in the press reflected how women are perceived as inferior than men.

“The reality of women continues to be explained in the media from an androcentric perspective, which reiterates the dominant values and sexist prejudices, maintaining a strong load of masculinity in the information produced by the professional” (Gómez-Colell, Medina- Bravo and Ramón, 2016).

In addition, depending on the political affiliation of the newspaper, the debate around women's practice of sports translated into favourable texts or critical voices, a fact that coincides over time with the socio-political movements governing the country and the consequent role that was given at the time to women in society. The media somehow contributed to perpetuating these gender stereotypes and roles assigned to women.

“Various authors (Brown, Pearson, Braithwaite and Biddle, 2013; Reigal, Videra, Parra and Juárez, 2012; Richard et al., 2015) reinforce this idea by stating that there is “the underrepresentation of women in sport, which can influence in that it is not considered as a “feminine” characteristic and influences its lower involvement in such activities by women, an effect that is important given that physical activity is associated with better physical and mental health”

Based on this research data, it would be important to analyse whether at the end of the second half of the 20th century, with the coming into force of the Constitution, the Equality and Sport Laws and the political and social context, the role of women in football has changed.

Football played by women is still in a situation of inequality with regards to viewers' preferences, popular culture and social acceptance, even by women themselves.

“There are different studies in which a trivialization of the contents is denounced as well as a scarce representation of women athletes and a clear increase in stereotypes (Rintala and Birrel, 1984; Sainz de Baranda, 2013) “and it is indifferent if we talk about a generalist or sports communication media, because in both of them it is seen that women are at a *clear disadvantage compared to men, especially in the case of Spain*” (Fernández Ramos, 2014).

This study shows that the role of women in football in the Canary Islands between 1915 and 1950 lived different times depending on the political and social context. In the 20s the first football teams in Tenerife and Gran Canaria began to be created but their federated organization would not arrive until the end of the 21st century.

On a social level, women could, through work and education, emancipate themselves from the roles assigned to their gender and began to practice sports, first for reproductive reasons and, subsequently, to compete. During this period, football was not recommended because it was a sport reserved for men, although this did not prevent friendly meetings from being organized and played.

In relation to the treatment of the press studied, there are few texts that mention the female soccer player in the Canary Islands, since most of the prominence was for the male soccer player. The publications that speak of the woman athlete do it from an informative tone, but always emphasizing that the woman must do sport for aesthetic or health reasons, because in this period the physical activity was reserved only to improve the reproductive capacity of the woman.

As for the texts found on women's football, they are informative information about the constitution of a football team in Gran Canaria and a critique of women who want to occupy a space for men. “I protest such heresy. A female footballer is an abnormality, a confusion, an inversion of sex. It is somewhat at odds with the delicacy of women.” The text, cited above, justifies what was stated at the beginning of this investigation: football was banned for women until the second half of the twentieth century.

Women had to overcome social obstacles (emancipation from home), cultural (their secondary role in the face of the supremacy of men), legal (universal suffrage and divorce law) in the first half of the twentieth century to enter the world of sports. It is not, until the Franco dictatorship is over, when he manages to compete in football at the federated level, although as the texts contain, since the 1920s they already began to practice football informally in the Canary Islands.

We are currently working on new lines of research that could answer the following questions:
Has the media discourse changed in relation to the first half of the 20th century?

Have women managed to overcome these inequalities almost a century after the beginning of the analysis of this research?

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7.1. Webgrafía

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