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Struggling with the amateur identity: the self-perception of the Danish football movement, 1880s to 1970s

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ABSTRACT

A vital element of the history of football in Denmark is the identity of the football movement. It developed itself in Denmark from the end of the nineteenth century. Contact with Great Britain was an inspiration, and the values of people of the new Danish bourgeoisie class dominated the movement. This led to a particular identity and a self-perception of the morals of the amateur. These aspects influenced Danish football until the legalization of professional football in the late 1970s. The Danish F.A. (Dansk Boldspil-Union) constantly changed the amateur rules to adapt to the demands of the clubs, their members and society. This article builds on sources from the clubs and the Danish FA. These are analysed as part of a historical narrative that contributed to the identity and self-perception of the Danish football movement.

Introduction

The game of football came to Denmark at the end of the nineteenth century. Trade with the British expanded greatly during that period, and at the same time, the Danish railway network proliferated. The introduction of football to Denmark came, among other things, with the help of British engineers, just as several Danish companies sent Danish employees to Great Britain to educate them.¹ Until then, Danish cultural life was primarily influenced by Germany. New contacts with Great Britain brought innovations, and football was one of them. Together with other social movements, the football movement contributed to creating a Danish society with a high degree of organization. The Danish football association, Dansk Boldspil-Union (D.B.U.), would develop into the country's largest member organization in sports.

Researchers have explored very little of the history of Danish football.² One major exception is the book in Danish by Grønkjær and Olsen, analysing the development of Danish football.³ We showed how football both affected and was influenced by political, social and cultural factors in Denmark. The Danish football movement saw itself as a character educator based on gentlemanly ideals. These can be traced to ideas and norms from Great Britain. A Danish construction of the gentleman ideals came about.⁴ It promoted health, good camaraderie and was considered a creator of class cohesion. These ideals were used to legitimize the football movement's integration into the welfare state. On a general level, the development is similar to other Scandinavian countries. These countries are described 'as an amalgam of voluntarism and commercialism with historical roots in the development of the Welfare State'.⁵

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Intending to synthesize knowledge on the development of football in Denmark, this article analyses the identity and self-perception of the Danish football movement from the 1880s to the 1970s. The D.B.U. legalized professional football in 1978. In other words, I examine the football movement's narrative and the culture and ideals that are the basis for this. In addition, the tension between these normative ideals and practices (what one says vs what one does) is highlighted in this article. The football organizations, clubs, the leaders, the players and the members constitute the football movement.

In the 1890s, football was presented as character-building, and it was included in the curricula for gymnastics in schools. In 1900–1911, clubs in Copenhagen appealed to the ideals of the time, highlighting the benefits of light, air and cleanliness for the population. In other words, the football movement appealed to social and health issues, and it gained acceptance with the Social Democrats.

The nationalistic and class-crossing element in football came only in the 1930s with the national team's matches against the Swedes – especially the explicitly nationalist manifestations during the German occupation of Denmark from 1940 to 1945. Up until then, the national team was almost entirely made up of players from the bourgeois Copenhagen clubs.⁶ However, many clubs have had very diverse memberships. In this way, through club membership, people from other social classes got together. This contributed to football's cross-class function – that is, as a creator of coherence and hence dismantling social stratification. Similar developments occurred much earlier in other nations. For instance, in Sweden, the working class dominated the football game on the pitch from around the time of World War I.⁷

What follows is the presentation of the research method and the sources used for the article. Here, the framework for the analysis is also explained. Then the context of Danish football through a historical overview of the organization of Danish football is presented. This brings us to the analysis, where I explore the narrative: the identity and self-perception of Danish football.

Research methods and sources

The sources for this article are part of a major historical project on the history of Danish club football.⁸ The sources used for this article are primarily journals and books published by clubs, plus annual reports and minutes from the D.B.U. The work published by the clubs themselves presents a narrative of how the clubs understand themselves. These publications are a construction of the past and are somewhat idealizing as a source. The self-perception of the football movement is illustrated by using quotes from different publications.⁹

Club publications are relics from the time they were produced. They construct a presentation of the reality of the writer and the club or organization. Since the bourgeoisie dominated the football movement for a long period, many club publications also reflect this. Thus, we can trace norms and mindsets of the time of production. Furthermore, the club publications act as a catalyst for creating or constructing a collective identity. Thus, the following can be read in a publication from Arbejdernes Idrætssklubs (A.I.K.) on its 100-year history: 'We searched for an identity that existed and still exists, but which over time has changed character'.¹⁰

Up until the 1970s, sports as a field of research attracted no interest from academics in Denmark.¹¹ Therefore, the writing of history was primarily taken care of by writers from the sports movement itself. Here, one dealt primarily with the history of one club, the excellence of one player, or one league's history, moreover, without significantly placing these in a societal context. Overall, the club publications serve as a tale of good camaraderie, proper morals, and the usefulness of sport.

Analytical framework

To examine the identity and self-perception of the Danish football movement, I look at the narrative presented within this context. Professor of business history Per Hansen presents a pivotal element to understand the place of the narrative in organizational history research:

Narratives create path dependence in organizations and serve as foundations for cultural assumptions and values. As a consequence, narratives can be both important catalysts for, and obstacles to, organizational change. This view has important implications for historians because it means that it is not possible to understand an organization's culture without understanding its historical narrative(s) . . . When changes in the context put pressure on the organization, strong historical narratives can be a serious obstacle to organizational change, and the organization may have to re-story its narrative in a credible way in order to adapt to the new context.¹²

For this article, the football movement is analysed. It is not an organization per se. Instead, I use the narratives of D.B.U. and clubs to examine the identity and self-perception of the football movement. Historical narratives are 'efficient tools for creating order, giving meaning to the world, and offering explanations'.¹³

The primary function of the narrative of the Danish football movement was to construct an imagined community. An identity was shaped mainly through an us–them dichotomy that drew on the contradictions in other political and cultural contexts.¹⁴ This contradiction at the macro level permeates the football movement with a constant focus on amateurs (us) and professionals (them).¹⁵ Danish football upheld the narrative of the amateur for a very long time. The strength of the ideal makes the narrative interesting to analyse.

Context: the development of Danish football

Football came to Denmark from Great Britain in the 1870s. It first gained a foothold in the boarding school environment in Zealand at Sorø Academy and later Birkerød Boarding School. Kjøbenhavn Boldklub ('Copenhagen Ballclub'), K.B., was the first club to introduce football, in 1878. The game entered as a supplement to cricket. The players came from the upper classes of society and the new functionary classes rather than the working class. Football was a socially limited movement at the time, as it was mainly geographically limited to Copenhagen.¹⁶

D.B.U. was founded in 1889. A few clubs from the Copenhagen area dominated the association, even though five clubs represented Jutland at the constituting meeting. The Danish Sports Confederation (DIF) followed in 1896. People from the upper classes dominated both organizations on the leadership level. Their presence had an essential impact on the perception of the football movement, where the concept of the amateur was given a central place. A committee chaired by the later first chairman of the DIF stated in 1889: 'Amateur is Anyone who pursues the Sport solely for his pleasure, and who does not seek Business or intend or enjoy any pecuniary Advantage in the Practice of his Sport'.¹⁷ D.B.U. had its view on how amateur rules should be perceived. DIF's position was that an amateur should not participate in competitions with professionals. D.B.U. ignored this and allowed, for example, Danish amateur football teams to play against foreign professional teams. The International Competition, 'Stævnet', in Copenhagen was an example of this, and the event was of great importance for the early development of football. The competition was first held in 1904 by the Copenhagen clubs Boldklubben of 1893 (B.93) and K.B. Other clubs joined in later on. They invited British teams, and the 'Stævnet' clubs made a significant income on entrance fees. Thus, e.g. a combined team of players from B.93 and KB played a match against Newcastle in 1904 with approximately 4.000 spectators. Newcastle won the match 3–1. The clubs involved in 'Stævnet' developed sportingly to a level far above all other clubs.

Moreover, members from the 'Stævnet' clubs also dominated the leadership positions in the D.B.U. This way, they controlled Danish football. Thus, for example, it was from these clubs that the D.B.U. chairman was elected, and they even dictated the tournament structure to be as favourable as possible to themselves. They viewed themselves to be far stronger than any other teams in Denmark. As a result, from 1912–1927, the national tournament was divided into two parts. Teams from other regions in Denmark played the Province Tournament, and the winner here would meet the best teams from the Copenhagen tournament. Then, a team from Copenhagen would win the overall

championship. Not until 1954 did a team from outside the Copenhagen region win the national tournament.

Since the football and sports movement had its origins in the upper-middle class and bourgeois environments, those were also adapted to their ideals and self-perception. At the end of the nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie of the towns and the landowners in the countryside were the elite and leading figures of society. Within these circles, one marked one's power, reputation and prosperity through stately homes and a great deal of sociability. 'The bourgeoisie defined itself as a class that was fit to lead because of its many virtues: its high moral standards, its self-discipline and moderation, its thrift and rationality, its firm belief in science and progress'.¹⁸ Thus, bourgeois norms and values were virtually omnipresent, and constituted an ideal that many sought to live up to, especially in the middle class and later, gradually parts of the socially and culturally upwardly mobile working class.¹⁹

The workers enter the game of football

The large influx of workers came to football only after the turn of the twentieth century when the labour movement won its demands for shorter working hours and higher wages. With this came spare time to use on leisure-time activities such as football. In other words, when football had first come to Denmark in the late 1800s, it was nearly impossible for workers to have enough spare time and surplus energy for physical activities. However, there were a few clubs centred around the labour unions. In 1887 some of these clubs arose among painters, shoemakers and typographers. Thus, it seems that some skilled workers could afford and had sufficient time and energy to participate in football early on, while others did not. However, the trade union clubs did not have a long lifespan, and football did not gain a firm foothold amongst the trade union movement or the Social Democrats.²⁰ Instead, the workers were engaged in more vigorous sports such as boxing, wrestling and weightlifting. These were sports where athletes early on received some form of payment.

Leisure time increased gradually after the turn of the century. In 1919 (with effect from 1920), the 3 × 8 working day was completed. According to this formula, everyone had the right to eight hours of work, eight hours of leisure, and eight hours of rest. Thus, by the onset of the interwar period, people from the working class had entered the world of football both as spectators and as practitioners.

The implications of the amateur rules

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Danish national team had been a dominant international force. However, the national team suffered in step with Denmark's self-chosen isolation from international football and the nation's rigid adherence to the amateur rules. As a result, Denmark decided not to participate in the Olympic Games in 1924. The D.B.U. considered many of the other nations to have a different view on the amateur rules. At the same time, the I.O.C. did not recognize the Danish players as pure amateurs but only as second-degree amateurs. The D.B.U. would not accept this definition, and instead, the D.B.U. decided not to participate in the Olympic Games until 1948.

The national team's results gradually got worse, as the team no longer could compete with the best nations. However, the national team experienced great success immediately after the end of World War II. While the national teams of the warring countries were in ruins, the Danish national team won the bronze medal at the London Olympics in 1948. This result strengthened the belief within Denmark that the country had the correct position, namely, that of the amateur. However, the success had consequences for Danish football. Specifically, many players from the Olympic national team disappeared abroad, where they signed professional contracts. This effect also happened after the Danish Olympic silver in Rome in 1960. Due to the Danish amateur rules, the

professional players could no longer play with the national team, thus, once again weakening national team performance. In compliance with the us–them narrative of the self-perception of the football movement, those Danish players who signed professional contracts abroad were viewed as traitors. Thus, Jørgen Leschly Sørensen left his Danish club, Odense Boldklub (O.B.), to play for Atalanta in Italy in 1949. The chairman of O.B. sent him off with the following remark: ‘Disappear. You are a disaster for Danish sports. I will never see you before my eyes again’.²¹ He had reduced himself to a simple artist.²²

People interested in football and the spectators going to the matches gradually lost their patience with the amateur system. However, football leaders still praised the system as an expression of unique moral purity. Another example of this is that in 1966 the D.B.U. introduced an extended gift regulation in response to actual payments to the players and to prevent illegal payments to players. The new regulations allowed clubs to reward players with durable consumer goods such as refrigerators. Also, in 1970, the D.B.U. approved of advertising on the players’ jerseys, but the players remained amateurs and did not profit from this new form of advertising. D.B.U. continuously tried to make the system more spacious to withstand the pressure from the outside. However, by doing so, they contributed to the system completely losing its legitimacy.

Analysis

The bourgeois ideals of moderation, etiquette, operational control and mastery characterized Danish football. From this, the concept of fair play and, above all, amateurism was introduced. The idea was that under no circumstances should one mix money and leisure. As football spread socially to other classes and geographically in Denmark, it created considerable tension concerning the amateur rules. One example is this report from 1903 by the head of the tournament in the Zealand Union:

Most clubs have a lack of knowledge of the rules. This applies not only to the game’s purely technical side but in particular to the consideration of the opponents. The principle of football: That one must not play the man, but only the ball, must be significantly more evident in each club and player than it currently is. Likewise, the individual clubs and players do not correctly perceive the referee’s position and behaviour. It must be clear to every player that his ruling is an unassailable verdict and that no trace of objection must be made against his verdicts. In the coming season, emphasis should be placed on two essential things: more exemplary interplay within the individual clubs and a more noble and humane behaviour towards opponents.²³

The tension between the normative ideals and clubs and players from other social classes is traceable here. There was a concern that the fair play ideals would fall short of the brutal play and the simple winning mentality, and this concern became more and more visible during the interwar period. Accordingly, it became more difficult for the football leaders to control the spirit on the pitch and in the stands.

In the world of sport, it is natural to see this demand for self-discipline and self-control embodied in the fair play concept of football. Here, too, is precisely the requirement that the winning instinct must not control the players. In Danish football, ‘Lose and win with the same attitude’ was a moral code. E. Semler was one of the four founders of K.B. In a speech at the club’s 50th anniversary in 1926, he highlighted the conditions under which the game of football began:

As boys, we had particularly favoured ball games. We agreed to prefer such play for the lazy way in which then Copenhageners used their free time, namely, to sleep as much as possible [...] It was not for us, and we agreed to seek together so many young people that we could start ball games like Sunday fun and sports.²⁴

Here we can identify the us–them relationship. It was an imagined community where the pioneers of the sports movement considered themselves as something special, where they could perform many socially beneficial tasks and do so with a unique morality and diligence. Semler and his equals were among the bourgeoisie for whom football, long ball, cricket, tennis and golf served as enjoyable

diversions from the rationality of working life. They used sport to exercise but just as much to create social cohesion.

Østerbro's Boldklub (Ø.B.) started like K.B. and many other Copenhagen clubs on the commons outside the city. Boys founded the club in 1894. The self-perception can be traced in the words of the long-standing member of Ø.B., Hans Hvilsted, in his contribution to the publication celebrating the club's 50th anniversary in 1944:

Now the Players must be wrapped in cotton wool, and it will never make men of them. But I am happy, as it is my impression by following Ø.B.'s well-being, that my old club does not seem to pamper the players. Ø.B. er shave to give more than they enjoy; therefore, some may disappear, but just let them go. Those who remain are the right ones. Those that we can safely leave the Future of Ø.B to.²⁵

Here Hvilsted emphasizes, like Semler 18 years previously, that the forerunners took a particular moral stance. One had to be willing to work for the club, and, by nature, this would be done voluntarily. The salary was to be the club's progress, just as the social network and the sport's beneficial effect on the body. The desire to explore the many facets of the sport made the early football players disregard the rather primitive conditions. A field or commons outside the city formed the playground. Since it was also, among other things, a grazing area for cows, the players had to remove both animals and their leftovers before they could play football. The most important thing was the sport. In some places, the description of its early days was rosy. Thus, one member, C. A.H, of Frederiksberg Boldklub (F.B.), founded in 1912 by boys, dreams of a bygone era when the club located at Rehberg's Commons in Copenhagen had a wooden shed clubhouse. Nevertheless, they were proud to have a house to meet in.

There was a certain cosine over the old Course and Clubhouse. After training, when the sun was still shining red in the west, we took tables and benches outside the house, where we could sit until late in the evening and enjoy the nice weather and camaraderie that was there at the time, all the while discussing the chances of Sunday's match. Yes, those were good times in F.B. We were like one big family altogether. Thus, we always met in good and cheerful fellowship for training and empowerment in the beloved sport we had chosen.²⁶

The social community and play were indispensable features of the football movement's self-perception. In addition, nature and leisure became the arena for the authentic, genuine community that unfolded nicely here.²⁷ Despite the transition from being a game for the few, the bourgeoisie, to include the general population, these elements did not change character. At the same time, the sport was attributed mainly to its health properties. In the middle of Jutland, we find an example of this. Boys from 'the upper bourgeoisie' founded Viborg Fodsports-Forening (V.F.F) in 1896. The purpose at the time was the same as at the club's 75th anniversary in 1971: '... to achieve a whole lot of good results, but first and foremost to fulfil the motto: A healthy soul in a healthy body'.²⁸

Inspired by the philosophers of antiquity, the ball was given greater significance than the game itself on the field. Health played a significant role. This applies to both physical and mental health. Thus, a guide issued by the Gymnastics Commission, at the instigation of the government's Department for Church and Educational Service (Kirke- og Undervisningsvæsenet) in 1897, emphasized that football required all players to move continuously. It was, therefore, helpful in teaching physical education as a supplement to gymnastics in school.

Furthermore, the commission found football valuable and practical for school teaching because it could include many students at once. It could increase discipline as one necessarily had to get to know the rules and follow them. Football also provided for cooperation and camaraderie, as the individual student learned that the team came before the interests of the individual player through the game.²⁹ Football was healthy, but it was also educational. The chairman, Henrik Jespersen, of Brønshøjs Boldklub (founded in 1919), illustrated this perspective for the club's 50th anniversary:

The club was created by good and farsighted leaders, good players, which is a condition and a great unity. Behind all this, there is an excellent idealism for the cause of sport and youth, a youth who has vastly not changed in the years that have passed.³⁰

Erik Christensen, chairman of Asaa Boldklub (founded 1932), described a similar perception:

For the city, Asaa Boldklub is a unique asset that forms a gathering point for the residents. At the same time, we offer young people a meaningful, healthy and in many ways developing leisure activity with the opportunity for many rich experiences with other young people.³¹

Another example is Nils Middelboe, who was one of Denmark's first big players. He participated in the Olympics in 1908, 1912 and 1920. He had his football upbringing in K.B., but he moved in 1913 to the club Chelsea F.C. in London. He played for the club as an amateur while working in a bank. After his playing career, he became an advocate in Denmark for the concept of amateurism and healthy life. In 1942, he gave a talk on how real athletes should organize their lives. The lecture covered everyday life from personal hygiene, getting fresh air, exercise and rest to nutrition. In addition, Middelboe stressed that every athlete should stay away from alcohol and tobacco. Middelboe talked about sportsmanship, which in his opinion, meant complying with the unwritten rules on and off the field. Middelboe believed that sports – and especially football – were character-forming. Through the game of football, one could learn cohesion, loyalty and selflessness. Middelboe's perception of the right way of life was similar to the amateur and gentlemen debate in Denmark around 1900.

From the clubs' various publications, we find a historical narrative portraying a Danish football movement that shows constant progress. If problems occurred, they were handled with great perseverance and jointly, as in Ø.B.'s case:

The healthy tradition [of the club] has continued and gained a foothold in the younger people, which, despite the adversity the club was facing for some years, has maintained the good unity that has once again led the club among the best. It is not the work of a single man, but the strength of togetherness and good camaraderie – a good tradition – which is the reason why Ø.B. can celebrate its 50th Anniversary.³²

The football community's chroniclers emphasize leadership and voluntary labour and attribute social value to the sport that draws threads to different social areas. Here is how this notion is exemplified using Vejle Boldklub's 100th-anniversary publication: 'Foresighted men have through the ages understood to create the right framework, the right unity and have the best in just the right place at the right time so that everything comes together'.³³ Thus, most clubs share the same ideals of camaraderie, volunteering, health, upbringing and community.

The fight against professionalism became the hallmark of Danish football and the overall framework for the historical narrative that was to permeate football's clubs and organizations. As the newspapers began to cover the sport, interest in football increased. More spectators came to the stadiums, thus increasing the big clubs' power and offering the D.B.U. opportunities to make money on football. It, therefore, seemed increasingly strange that the players were not allowed to get the smallest share of the revenue, especially for those players from lower social classes who had to take time off work to play matches. At the same time, there were rumours that many players received gifts, illegal payments or were otherwise rewarded. Consequently, in 1921, the D.B.U. introduced compensation for lost earnings for national team players or when clubs travelled to play in other countries. In this way, the rigid interpretation of the concept of the amateur was softened, and a more pragmatic, liberal system was introduced, which to a greater extent signalled an openness to the various social classes. According to their self-perception, however, the D.B.U. still viewed themselves and the system like that of an amateur operation. The D.B.U. defined professionals as employees paid to play football. 'They are and will only be artists in this connection'.³⁴ Therefore, they could not possibly have the same sincere love for the game as the Danish amateur players. The D.B.U. gradually revised the rules for payment to players and coaches. As a result, the amateur ideals were emphasized more rigidly and almost religiously as these same amateur ideals were gradually being undermined over the next 50 years. We find an example of this as early as 1922 when England insisted on fielding a team with both professionals and amateurs in

a match with Denmark, as the Danes were no longer regarded as amateurs. The D.B.U. did not accept this position, and the match was cancelled.

The amateur rules permeated all parts of football. One example is the expected behaviour of players. In November 1946, D.B.U.'s tournament committee sentenced a player from Vejen S.F. to quarantine for the remainder of the year because during a match, he shouted to a referee that he was 'useless'. This was a violation of the perception of fair play on as well as off the field. Another example was the rules on the substitution of players. It was initially not allowed to substitute a player according to the rules of Danish football. If a player was injured, he had to continue playing with the injury or leave the field.

In 1965, the D.B.U. used a Talent Tournament to test a new initiative. The teams could take an extra player. He could come on the pitch to replace an injured player. Four years later, the teams in the Danish tournament could do the same. In the 1969 season, the D.B.U. allowed substitution of a player for the first time, whether he was injured or not. D.B.U.'s reservations for substitution were connected to the amateur rules. If a team had five players as reserves, it meant increased expenses. The club would necessarily have to pay each player for any travel, lost earnings and more. Furthermore, if a coach substituted a player due to a fictitious injury, it was cheating. For the D. B.U., the substitution was not a tactical tool at all. The D.B.U. learned lessons from other countries on the issue of substitutions. A description from Belgium read:

A match is certainly a spectacle, and it might be even more attractive for the spectators if new forces could be deployed during the match. However, it must first and foremost be a sports presentation, subject to strict rules that give it the value'.³⁵

The fear of misuse of substitutions was the crucial part. Ideally, like all sports, football was still an enjoyable game that should serve as a sensible diversion. With substitutes, someone would not get to play, and the game would quickly be ruined for them.

The football movement in Danish society

Industrialization brought a sharp division of life-worlds: home and the outside world, work and leisure, and production and reproduction. An ideology was created that the possibility of being a whole human being existed in nature, at home and in leisure time. This ideology is the antithesis of production and the efficient, rational life that unfolds there.³⁶ Here is a significant explanation of why amateurism became a cornerstone of the sports movement. The combination of money and leisure would precisely mix the two worlds of life and thus make impossible the real, authentic, 'natural' life, which was the purpose of leisure life. During the twentieth century, leisure time also became an opportunity for the working class as economic development made it possible to reduce working hours. Workers could use the time off to enjoy life and have fun.³⁷ In addition, the process explains why the workers so relatively smoothly slipped into and accepted the amateurism of organized football. It became part of their worldview as, at the same time, it entered the labour movement. In 1935, the Social Democratic Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning wrote in the introduction to *Den danskeidræts bog* ('The Danish Sports Book'): 'The Sports organizations teach Participants a healthy, beautiful and selfless Fellowship, to fight honestly, win and lose in the peaceful Contest with the same Smile and Mind'.³⁸ In other words: lose and win with the same attitude. The labour movement did not challenge the bourgeois ideals that underpinned the sports movement. Instead, they adapted them to their self-perception.

The football movement, and the sports movement in general, have been part of the very organized Danish society. Along with an increasingly strong welfare system, popular movements emerged in the late 1800s centred around associations, organizations and institutions of a civil society nature, including the cooperative and folk high school movement, the labour movement, the various religious revival movements, the shooting and gymnastics movement and the cooperative and savings bank movement. These movements were centred around associations, organizations

and institutions of a civil society nature.³⁹ Outside the public sector, these movements formed and educated their members from indirect and direct motives.⁴⁰

The social origins of football as a diversion for the bourgeoisie are visible in the ideals that became the football movement. These ideals were challenged as people from other social classes appeared on the football field. However, the ideals were still maintained in their substance. New players needed to know fair play, and they had to follow the rules. Football thus became part of disciplining the population.

The historical narrative emphasized that competition is only a minor element in football. Instead, good camaraderie based on voluntariness and equality was highlighted. Equality was of utmost importance because everyone – chairpersons, board members, coaches and first, second and third teams alike – carried the same load. At the same time, volunteering became a cornerstone in opposition to professionalism, as payment would undermine volunteering. Denmark experienced enormous economic progress when the world economy came back on track in the late 1950s. Danish football was also affected, and sports, in general, enjoyed greater political attention than before. The Social Democrats were developing a welfare state and recognized the football movement as something positive and constructive. Football embodied the good community and camaraderie, and it provided a low-cost and effective tool to activate people in their spare time. From this perspective, increased public support for – and thus more significant public influence on – the sport was evident.

Football became increasingly more integrated into the welfare society, and it provided new opportunities and challenges. In 1948, the Danish parliament passed a gambling law ('Tipsloven'). The funds were not tied up in any political demands, and for the years to come, state-regulated gambling provided large sums for amateur and grassroots sports, including football. As a result, the D.B.U. encouraged Danes to spend money on gambling. The support helped maintain the political independence of sports organizations. The grants were crucial for football because they supported the amateur system. After all, the funds could not go to professional athletes, which was a weighty argument in the battle against paid football. In doing so, the gambling funds, in a way, undermined the market forces. Uncertainties about what paid football would mean concerning the subsidies from the state gambling system were for a long time a strong argument for amateur advocates. On the other hand, spectators and the media wanted a better product in the form of the best Danish players staying in Denmark to benefit Danish tournaments and to have the national team increase their performance again. Combined with societal developments, this force challenged the D.B.U. The membership of the federation constantly grew, but the interest in football from spectators declined. Moreover, increased leisure time gave the Danes many other opportunities to spend their free time rather than with sports.

Professional football

For an extended period, many of the professionals in the domestic league were transferred abroad for free. Due to the amateur rules, foreign professional players were, until 1971, banned from participating in the national team. Nevertheless, the football movement, led by the D.B.U., showed a moral sense of superiority. The story of Danish football as amateur still lived on at the D.B.U. The narrative had long had a positive effect on building the football movement. However, the story became less suitable as the pressure to introduce professional football increased. The pressure came partly from internal challenges, such as excluding players from the national team and partly from international amateur rules, which meant a long period in which the national team did not participate in the World Cup and Olympics. In continuation of this, it was evident that the football movement had problems adapting the 'amateur story' about the good camaraderie, the happy playing amateurs, the volunteering and the morale of the good sport to the increasingly commercialized and professional reality.

Erik Rasmussen from the Copenhagen Football Union personified the firm belief in the amateur ideal. At the D.B.U.'s Board of Representatives meeting in 1969, he said:

We have all tried to play and had ambitions. What drove us was simply the joy of playing and the prospect of getting on the first team. Is it dead today? Denmark is not a sports nation that can compete against the big nations. The professional ghost is evoked by the sports press and readers' letters – most often the day after we [the Danish national team] have lost a match. We must not take this into account, but preserve our amateurism, which procures the talents'.⁴¹

The following year, in 1970, the D.B.U. approved advertisements on clubs' uniforms, and more money entered Danish football. But, as before, the players did not benefit from it as the D.B.U. reached the peak of hypocrisy. As a Danish football magazine wrote in 1974, 'On the one hand, one does not want to take the step into a kind of semi-professionalism – despite gift checks and advertisements on the club uniforms. But, on the other hand, they will continue to play with the big football nations – without giving the Danish players reasonable opportunities to achieve satisfactory results'.⁴² In the fall of 1977, the D.B.U. board approved a proposal for paid football in Denmark. The following year, at the General Assembly, the members' representatives of the D.B.U. also approved the proposal. By and large, the time was right. The amateur system was outdated and had lost all legitimacy, undermined as it was both from within and without.

The narrative and the inherent self-perception created a tension that serves as a significant element for understanding football today. Football is more than business and cynical, competitive sport. In 2014, the D.B.U. launched the vision 'Part of something bigger' whose purpose was twofold: to make Danish fans enthusiastic about the national team again and to focus on how football can take greater responsibility in Danish society. The D.B.U. chairman Jesper Møller stated: 'It is about D.B.U. – but it is just as much about the whole of football Denmark'.⁴³ The strategy of the Danish FA is in line with a recently published study showing that a quarter of the chairpersons of grassroots clubs in Denmark agree that the clubs' primary purpose is to 'offer football with a focus on social benefits'.⁴⁴ Comprehending the narrative of the Danish football movement is essential to understanding the organization of the sport. In addition, the narrative helpfully provides order and explanation.

Conclusion

The ideal of the amateur football player is a crucial part of the Danish football movement. The amateur rules were part of Danish football from the very beginning, and these rules and the moral of the ideals needed to adapt as the game itself did. Football originated in bourgeois environments but has continuously adapted to new member groups. Therefore, the concept of amateurism became less stringent and more contradictory and hypocritical. However, this showed that the identity of the Danish football movement had a self-perception that changed. Its ideals were constantly negotiable because they were in tension between fair play, morals and commercial aspects. Even before the introduction of professional football, self-perception was challenged by commercial initiatives both in Denmark and abroad.

The D.B.U. developed a self-understanding with a system of positions, views and values. The narrative provided a general idea of what was essential and valuable for football and society. The narrative of the football movement took hold in the period leading up to World War II, and it has since survived despite increasing commercial initiatives and public support for change. Thoughts, values and attitudes have developed in step with the development of society and the possibilities and limitations this entailed. The increased cash flow to football in the form of entrance fees, broadcast rights and public support undermined the amateur system from inside. Eventually, everyone except the players made money on football, which raised questions about the amateur rules that the D.B.U. and most of the country's clubs upheld.

The football movement was integrated into the welfare society, where it undertook the public task of offering sports, health and moral guidelines to all citizens. The D.B.U.'s self-perception approach can be said to be more visionary and idealistic than practical. The reality of everyday football unfolded in the clubs and the players. Here the ideological aspects did not have the same importance as in the D.B.U. There was a tension, and over time also an interaction, between the normative demands from the D.B.U. and everyday practice. However, the D.B.U. has constantly tried to adapt the requirements in line with the overall development of society.

This article has aimed to analyse the general identity and self-perception of the Danish football movement. However, a more thorough review of the club publications could demonstrate interesting local or regional and even class differences, leading to a more nuanced view of the narrative of Danish football.

Notes

1. See, for e.g. Taylor, 'Football's Engineers?'; McDowell, 'To Cross the Skager Rack'; McDowell, 'Queen's Park FC in Copenhagen'.
2. Olsen, 'Fodbold som idræthistorikernes stedbarn-historiografiske pejlinger'.
3. Grønkjær and Olsen, *Fodbold, fair play og forretning*.
4. Basically, Danes involved in the football movement needed to translate English rules and descriptions to the Danish language. In this process meaning can be lost or changed. One example of this is the translation from Danish to English of the amateur-saying 'Tab og vind med same sind'. E.g. 'Lose and win with the same attitude' as it is presented later in this article.
5. Andersson and Carlsson, 'Football in Scandinavia', 299.
6. Meaning people from mostly the upper-middle class. This social group dominated the sports around this time. See e.g. Wøllekær, 'Hvad man nu kalder sport'.
7. Andersson, *Kung fotboll*.
8. Grønkjær and Olsen, *Fodbold, fair play og forretning: Dansk klubfodbolds historie*. I co-authored this book which was published in Danish in 2007. This special issue on *Soccer & Society* allowed me to convey part of the project's results in English.
9. The quotes are translated from Danish to English by the author of this article.
10. Rolfsen, *AIK København. En idrætsforening gennem 100 år*.
11. Olsen, 'Fodbold som idræthistorikernes stedbarn-historiografiske pejlinger'.
12. Hansen, 'Organizational culture and organizational change', 949.
13. Mordhorst, 'Arla and Danish national identity – business history as cultural history', 119.
14. Hansen, 'Organizational culture and organizational change', 931.
15. Grønkjær and Olsen, *Fodbold, fair play og forretning*.
16. Toft, 'Fodbold mellem myter og kilder'.
17. Jørgensen, 'Dansk Idræts-Forbunds dannelse'.
18. Frykman and Löfgren, *Culture Builders*, 266.
19. Holt, *Sport and the British*; Grønkjær and Olsen, *Fodbold, fair play og forretning*; Frykman and Löfgren, *Culture Builders*.
20. Toft, 'Fodbold mellem myter og kilder'; Bertelsen, *Frispark – den danske fodboldbevægelses historie*.
21. Reproduced in *Jyllands-Posten*, 29 December 1989.
22. The amateur rules had similar consequences for Carl 'Skomar' Hansen. He was the first Danish player to have a professional career. He signed a contract with Glasgow Rangers in 1921. As a professional player he could not continue to play for the Danish National team.
23. Hartoft, *Sjællands Boldspil-Union gennem 50 år*.
24. Thomsen, *K.B. – 125 år. Et kalejdoskopisk billede af en boldklub og dens by*, 15–16.
25. Aldorf, *Ø.B. gennem 50 Aar*, 63.
26. Hardestoft and Møller, *Frederiksberg Boldklub 1912–1937*, 36–37.
27. The ethnologists Frykman and Löfgren analyses this sentiment in their book *Culture Builders: A Historical Anthropology of Middle-Class Life*.
28. Primso, *V.F.F.s jubilæumsskrift 1896–1971*, 22.
29. Grønkjær and Olsen, *Fodbold, fair play og forretning*, 50.
30. Juel, *Brønshøjs Boldklubs Jubilæumsskrift 1919–1969*.
31. Boldklub, *Asaa Boldklub. Jubilæumsskrift 1932–1992*.
32. Aldorf, *Ø.B. gennem 50 Aar*.
33. Hansen, *Vejle Boldklub 100 år 1891–1991*, 3.

34. Boldspil-Union, *Årsberetning 1926*.
35. Boldsport, *Nr. 8 1956*.
36. Frykman and Löfgren, *Culture Builders*, 65.
37. Nielsen, *Bonde, stat og hjem*.
38. Hermann and Andersen, *Den danske idræts bog*, 5.
39. Mordhorst, 'Andelsbevægelsen mellem national identitet og globalisering'.
40. Korsgaard, *Kampen om kroppen: Dansk idræts historie gennem 200 år.*; Trangbæk, *Mellem leg og disciplin: gymnastikken i Danmark i 1800-tallet.*; Bertelsen, *Frispark – den danske fodboldbevægelses historie*, Jørgensen, 'Orden i Idrættens Hus-Dansk Idræts-Forbund og sportens gennembrud ca. 1896–1918'.
41. Boldsport, *Nr. 2. 1969*.
42. TIPS-Bladet, 26 July 1974.
43. Boldspil-Union, *Årsberetning 2015*.
44. Bennike et al., 'The Organization of Club Football in Denmark: A Contemporary Profile', 558.

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