

Construction of masculinity and femininity in press coverage of 2010 and 2014 FIFA World Cup in “Gazeta Wyborcza”

KEY WORDS

gender, “Gazeta Wyborcza”, football, masculinity and femininity, press, FIFA World Cup

ABSTRACT

From the feminist point of view sport has always been a sexist institution. Especially, the aggressive, contact disciplines such as football contribute to sustain the current gender order. The aim of the study was the analysis of newspaper coverage of FIFA World Cup in 2010 and 2014. Those events were chosen because football is still considered as a discipline reproducing the hegemonic form of masculinity. “Gazeta Wyborcza” (GW) was chosen because it is the most opinion-forming newspaper in Poland. Content analysis was used to examine articles. The conclusion is that the press coverage of 2010 and 2014 FIFA World Cups in GW reproduces hegemonic masculinity.

Sport holds an important position in popular culture. It is no longer seen as innocuous entertainment, while its political, economic, and commercial aspects are increasingly noticeable¹. As David Rowe points out, separating sport from the media is increasingly difficult. Due to the large number of means of communication, institutions, and news about sport, it is now inextricably connected to the media². While this does not mean that there is a crisis of participation in physical culture, the narration about sport created by the media has a considerably greater range and importance now. The mediatisation in sport arises through the form, content, and organization of sport events³. Such terms as sport-media complex⁴ or media/sport production complex⁵ were coined to impart the relationship between the media and sport, so was the media sports cultural complex, which conveys not only the relational nature of sport and the media but also the primacy of signs and symbols in contemporary

¹ R. Boyle, R. Haynes, *Power play sport, the media and popular culture*, Edinburgh 2009.

² D. Rowe, *Sport, culture and the media: the unruly trinity*, Berkshire 2004, p. 2–3.

³ L. Wenner, *Playing the mediasport game*, in: *MediaSport*, ed. L. Wenner, London–New York 1998, p. 3–14; K. Kopecka-Piech, *Sport – od medialnego zapośredniczenia do mediatyzacji* [Sport: From mediation by the media to mediatisation], in: *Futbol i cała reszta. Sport w perspektywie nauk społecznych* [Football and all the rest: Sport in the lens of social sciences], eds. R. Kossakowski et al., Pszczółki 2013.

⁴ M. Messner, *Power at play: sport and the problem of masculinity*, Boston 1992, p. 80.

⁵ L. Wenner, *Playing the mediasport game*, op. cit., p. 9.

sport⁶. The economic significance of the institution of sport should not be overlooked either. The commercialization of sport and athletes “selling” their skills – their images and associated products as goods – has also been reinforced by the media⁷. The mass media made it possible to increase the number of recipients of sport events and to intensify their experience by emphasizing such themes characteristic of sport as unpredictability, emotionality of the message and the sense of belonging to a larger group, which turned sport fans into a loyal audience⁸.

The power the media wield to create meanings and reproduce certain cultural content is also an indubitably important question. Even though nuancing the issue of the impact of media upon recipients is strongly emphasized today⁹, it is in this conviction that the feminist paradigm in the study into communication is rooted. Feminist-oriented researchers of both sexes stress that the media often reproduce stereotypical messages regarding masculinity and femininity and the values predominant in a patriarchal society¹⁰. Moreover, it was noted that there are few women in the departments responsible for the decisions to publish a given content – directors, camera operators, producers – and that the media production itself is gender-based¹¹. It also seems symptomatic that the changes in information media, trivialization, and chasing the sensational are described as “feminization”¹².

Sport as masculinity

As numerous studies have shown, the under-representation of women in media coverages is indubitably related to the perception of sport as a masculine endeavour. And, even though this image is changing, the historical heritage of sport belongs to men¹³. Sport is an example being one of many cultural practices which affect the shape of male identity. This is due to the conviction that sport is an area which enables the confirmation of the “traditional male power,

⁶ D. Rowe, *Sport, culture...*, op. cit., p. 5.

⁷ Z. Dziubiński et al., *Mass media and professional sport*, “Baltic Journal of Health and Physical Activity” Vol. 4 (2012), No 4, p. 284–294.

⁸ R. Boyle, R. Haynes, *Power play sport...*, op. cit., p. 13.

⁹ D. McQuail, *Teoria komunikowania masowego* [Mass communication theory], transl. by A. Szulżycka, M. Bucholc, Warszawa 2007, p. 10; T. Goban-Klas, *Media i komunikowanie masowe* [Media and mass communicating], Warszawa 2009, p. 130–140; J. Fiske, *Television culture*, London 1987; S. Hall, “Encoding/Decoding”, in: *Media and cultural studies*, eds. M. Durham, D. Kellner, Oxford 2006.

¹⁰ L. Van Zoonen, *Feminist media studies*, Amsterdam 2004.

¹¹ M. Gallagher, *Media and representation of gender*, in: *The Routledge companion to media and gender*, eds. C. Carter et al., London–New York 2014.

¹² S. Thornhan, *Women, feminism and the media*, Edinburgh 2007.

¹³ G. Pfister, *Women in sport – gender relations and future perspectives*, “Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics” 2010, No. 13:2, p. 234–248.

strength and violence and the contemporary fears of social feminization”¹⁴, establishes order, and defines the values and rules justified by the predominant concepts of femininity and masculinity. It occurs mostly due to the masculinization of the bodies and psyche of men¹⁵.

Michael Messner and Shari Dworkin argue that, apart from the commercial goal, the key objective in sport is to sustain the traditionally understood masculinity and femininity¹⁶. It stabilizes the theories of the “natural” gender difference and the ensuing hierarchy of genders. Numerous publications on the topic of constructing masculinity and femininity in sport indicate that hegemonic masculinity is being reproduced through sport¹⁷. For instance, Reawyn Connell developed an order of femininity and masculinity and a concept of hegemonic masculinity based on the fact of the domination of men over women in the society. The notion of hegemony refers to the domination achieved via specific practices embedded in the social structure. Considering that physicality is the basic source for the interpretation of femininity and masculinity, it should be said that sport is one of the social institutions where the role of the body in maintaining the relationship between genders is most easily to observe. Strength, endurance, and perfect training sustain the traditional view of masculinity. The feminist paradigm in the study of sport indicates that the efforts of women in sport are compared to the male model, hampering its autonomy, while the women’s sport is being marginalized and trivialized¹⁸.

Gender differentiation of media messages in sport

The studies carried out on media messages revealed discriminatory practices in the following areas: frequency and the way of presentation of male and female sport, journalistic practices, used language, sport commentary.

Even though the recognition of women’s sport is growing, the majority of broadcasting time and room in the press belongs to men. Both American and Polish studies

¹⁴ M. Messner, *The life of a man’s season. Male identity in the life course of the jock*, in: *Changing men. New direction in research on men and masculinity*, ed. M. Kimmel, Newbury 1987, p. 54.

¹⁵ M. Messner, *Boyhood, organized sport and the construction of masculinities*, in: *Men’s lives*, eds. M.S. Kimmel, M.A. Messner, Boston 1998.

¹⁶ M. Messner, S. Dworkin, *Just do what? Sport, bodies, gender*, in: *Sport and gender: A reader*, eds. S. Scraton, A. Flintoff, New York 2002; R. Connell, *Gender and power, society, the person and sexual politics*, Cambridge 1998.

¹⁷ R. Connell, J. Messerschmidt, *Hegemonic masculinity: rethinking the concept, gender & society*, Vol. 19 (2005), No. 6, p. 829–859; R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, Cambridge 2001.

¹⁸ A. Hall, *The discourse of gender and sport: from femininity to feminism*, in: *Sport and gender...*, op. cit.; A. Hall, *Feminism and sporting bodies*, Champaign 1996.

show that only between 5% (in American studies)¹⁹ and 15% (in Polish studies) of room/broadcasting space is devoted to women's sport. Women's sport is presented in a less professional manner; the articles on women's sport are shorter, which is related to the smaller interest of recipients²⁰. The conducted studies also indicate that women's sport and men's sport are presented in different ways. Even the camera-work is different when women's sport events are being covered. A trend to sexualize female bodies has emerged recently. In camera image, the body is often fragmented²¹. In contrast, the images of women on the covers of sport magazines are presented in line with the traditional view of femininity, which reinforces the message that women's sport is irrelevant²². Men are presented in a different manner. As the press messages have repeatedly stressed, male athletes are perfect candidates for heroes and, nowadays, celebrities as well. Through frequent public appearances, remarkable physical traits (valour, fitness, strength) as well as bravery and psychic endurance, they cultivate this ideal of masculinity. For this reason, the media maintain the image of men as heroes, rarely depicting women in this way²³. The relationships between fans, the media representation of sport, and its economic aspect are constantly reinforced, which leads to the perpetuation of the significant prevalence of men in the media as well as the depictions and values associated with hegemonic masculinity.

The depictions of masculinity often focus on describing the sacrifices and determination which were necessary to climb the heights of sport competition, as well as "injury reports". Such reports are meant to show the resistance to pain, the endurance of athletes, and the "hard man" image. In the TV, it is often possible to see the replays of dramatic events or hear about the aggressive and brutal attacks the athletes must endure. There are no such practices in the descriptions of women's sports. Thus, the experience of and struggle with injuries may be gendered²⁴. Similarly, which is best exemplified by the American football, the athletes' outfits relate to a specific concept of masculinity. Helmets,

¹⁹ M. Messner, C. Cooky, *Gender in televised sports: News and highlights shows, 1989–2010*, University of Southern California Center for Feminist Research, <http://dornsifecms.usc.edu/assets/sites/80/docs/tvsports.pdf> [accessed: 23 Feb 2014]; H. Jakubowska, *Świat sportu w gazetach codziennych na podstawie wyników 'The International Sports Press Survey 2011'* [World of sport in daily newspapers based on the results of 'The International Sports Press Survey 2011', "Studia Medioznawcze – Media Studies" Vol. 1 (2010), No 52, p. 47–62.

²⁰ M. Ducan et al., *Gender stereotyping in televised sports*, in: *Women, sport and culture*, eds. S. Birrell, C. Cheryl, Champaign 1994.

²¹ N. MacNeill, *Active women, media representations and ideology*, in: *Women, sport...*, op. cit.

²² A. Martin, A.M. McDonald, *Covering women's sport? An analysis of sports illustrated covers from 1987–2009 and ESPN the magazine covers from 1998–2009*, "Graduate Journal of Sport, Exercise & Physical Educational Research 2012", No. 1, p. 81–97.

²³ L. Berg, *The sport hero meets mediated celebrityhood*, in: *MediaSport* ..op. cit., p. 139.

²⁴ D. Sabo, C. Jansen, *Prometheus Unbound: Constructions of masculinity in sport media*, in: *MediaSport* ..op. cit., p. 209–210.

thigh pads, knee pads, and collars are meant to mitigate brutal clashes in collision sports, yet, on the visual level, the perception of men wearing them and assuming characteristic poses is closer to the image of the battles of old than of sport²⁵.

Furthermore, Gary Whannel points out that the sport stardom of today univocally becomes the predominant form of media production and may lead to the exclusion of the remaining forms of media communications²⁶. He also shows how the characterization of sport stars evolves, adapting their images to the changes in gender relations in the society. The demand for biographies filled with emotional messages about their victories and failures is connected with the need to peep on the private life of stars and the eroticization of their image as well. For this reason, the care for appearance and emphasis on corporeality do not contradict the predominant conception of masculinity.

There are significant differences in the used languages and sport commentaries as well. It is prevalent in the commentaries concerned with women's sport to compare the performance of women to men's sport considered as the norm. Thus, there are monikers rendering them infantile ("girls", "goldies" – Pol. *złotka*), their physical appearance and non-sporting life is commented on, and their failures and difficulties that sport poses to women are accentuated²⁷.

The commentaries about men, in turn, underline their valour and strength. Comparisons to fighting or battles and war metaphors are also frequent²⁸. The language used in team sports commentaries (usually contact and collision sports) is stylized and full of references to famous battles and war heroes, thus sustaining the male warrior myth. According to Greg Malszecki's theory, sport has replaced war as the fundamental experience of patriarchal society²⁹ also on the level of language, constructing a dichotomous division involving masculinity and femininity.

Football – the bastion of men

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 211.

²⁶ G. Whannel, *Media sport stars: Masculinities and moralities*, London–New York 2002.

²⁷ M. Duncan et al., *Denial of power in televised women's sport*, in: *Gender and sport: A reader*, eds. S. Scraton, A. Flintoff, London–New York 2002; N. Christopherson, M. Janning, M. Diaz, *Two kicks forward, one kick back: A content analysis of media discourses on the 1999 women's world cup soccer championship*, "Sociology of Sport Journal", 2002, No. 19, p. 170–188; J. Segrave, K. McDowell, J. King, *Language, gender, sport: A review of the research literature*, in: *Sport, rhetoric and gender. Historical perspectives and media representation*, ed. L. Fuller, New York 2006.

²⁸ F. Wachs, *'Throw like a girl' doesn't mean what it used to: research on gender, language and power*, in: *Sport, rhetoric and gender...*, op. cit.

²⁹ D. Sabo, C. Jansen, *Prometheus Unbound: Constructions of masculinity in sport media*, in: *MediaSport ..op. cit.*, p. 203.

Football is the most popular sport in the world, and such events as the FIFA World Cup and UEFA European Championship enjoy an improbable interest of the media and fans. The interest in football still more frequently involves men than women and, beyond doubt, is an important component in constructing their identity³⁰. The descriptions of relationships often refer to the bonds forming between men due to their (active or passive) participation in football. This notion refers to a place where men can maintain mutual relationships without the risk of comments about too much proximity or homosexuality³¹. Women are symbolically excluded from this society. One of the most frequently employed strategies to do so involves referring to them in the language followed by dividing oneself from them by associating femininity with inferiority and humiliation. Apart from being the object used by men, at least symbolically, to strengthen their bonds and “exercise” their masculinity, women play other roles as well. They can be seen in stadiums as sexual objects (sexy supporters focused on by cameramen), footballers’ wives and girlfriends (WAGs), participants of footballer-related scandals, or sex industry workers³². None of the above categories of women are taken seriously: all are judged through the lens of sexuality and physical attractiveness. Whereas the issue of prostitution associated with the greatest world sport events hardly ever reaches the public opinion: it is only perceived by feminist circles and institutions combating human trafficking. As Rowe is right to notice, it is difficult to find comments in the media regarding other roles in life of women than as footballers’ mothers or wives, even when they achieve significant professional successes; what prevails instead are details of affairs and scandals, and fears that footballers may not play in best form due to their relationships with women³³. There is no serious reflection on the situation of women in sport and their symbolic submission to men.

Aim of the research

The theoretical assumptions presented above show that sport-related media communications imply evaluations and reconstruct the traditional divisions between genders. The aim of this study is the critical analysis of press communications concerning the 2010 and 2014 FIFA World Cups in South Africa and Brazil, respectively. This analysis is expected to verify whether the media messages carry meanings significant for the construction of masculinity

³⁰ C. Giulianotti, *Globalizacja i piłka nożna: socjologiczna analiza tematów i zagadnień* [Globalization and football: Sociological analysis of topics and issues], transl. by A. Peisert, in: *Futbol i cała reszta...*, op. cit.

³¹ D. Rowe, *Sport, media and gender-based insult*, in: *The Routledge companion to media...*, op. cit.

³² V. Pillay, E. Salo, *FIFA World Cup: gender, politics and sport*, “Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equality” Vol. 24 (2010), No 85, p. 4–10.

³³ D. Rowe, *Sport, media and gender-based...*, op. cit., 396–397.

and femininity (related to the category of masculinity). The discussion involves football since – as explained above – it is the key discipline shaping a specific male identity; it is also the most popular and media-oriented.

Material and methods

Critical discourse analysis was the method used in the research. As many studies has shown, the discourse analysis of press articles is so important because what the media show and how they do it, as well as what they do not show, is extremely important for the formation of public opinion, attitudes, and values³⁴. The research sample included World Cup-related articles published in the sport pages of *GW* between 12 June and 14 July 2014 and between 11 June and 13 July 2010. Columns were not analysed. “Gazeta Wyborcza” (*GW*) was chosen for the study as an opinion-making daily newspaper, open to the issue of gender equality, and reaching a wide group of recipients with its content. The content of press articles was structured based on the following dimensions: focus on physical appearance, corporeality and sexuality of footballers; sarcastic, ironic, predominant negative comments; references to footballers’ private life, their relationships with loved ones, spare time activities, etc.; glorification of strength, endurance, and fitness (sustaining the concept of hegemonic masculinity); using war metaphors in descriptions of matches.

Research results

In the course of research, 156 articles from *GW* from 2014 and 212 from 2010 were analysed. The authors of all texts were men. The performed analysis revealed frequent use of war metaphors when describing matches and players’ behaviour. The footballers are called “soldiers” or “heroes” (*Żołnierze z kraju bez armii* [Soldiers of the state with no army] – 1.07.2014): “But then the other soldiers of Tabárez did very well, too” (*Włosi bronią Europy w grupie śmierci* [Italians defend Europe in the group of death” – 24.06.2014), or those who go “to battle”: “The tenacity of the midfield should improve thanks to Gennaro Gattuso, a fearless warrior, recently sentenced by the Milan coach to watch matches from the reserve bench” (*Mecz o przeżycie: Włosi do tego przywykli* [Match for survival: Italians are used to it] – 24.06.2010); “battlefield” is also referenced, and the pitch resounds with the “clangour of arms”.

³⁴ M. Lisowska-Magdziarz, *Analiza tekstu w dyskursie medialnym* [Text analysis in media discourse], Kraków 2006; R. Wimmer, J. Dominick, *Mass media research: An introduction*, Wadsworth 2006.

The players are also described as “warriors”, “cowboys”, “gladiators”, and “commandos”: “The Algerians, all physically prepared like a commando team” (*Tylko Algierii żal* [Just sorry for Algeria] – 1.07.2014), who need to “take by force what belongs to the emperor” (*Złote urugwajskie maleństwo* [Golden little thing from Uruguay] – 6.07.2010). They vanquish and hunt “kingdoms”: “And the fate of German footballers is cruel, even the semi-finals are nothing unusual: these players come from the power that has been stopped earlier, in quarter-finals, only 3 times since the war” (*A na końcu nie zwyciężą Niemcy* [And Germans won't win in the end] – 8.07.2010) and conquer “empires”: “True, they have no queen or empire, but a king as a keeper” (*Cztery cuda Ochoi* [Four wonders of Ochoa] – 23.06.2014).

For the media, coaches are “commanders” who “plan campaigns”: “And sometimes rewarding accidental victors, who have to fall in the lethal South-American campaign” (*Dlaczego Europa przegrywa?* [Why does Europe lose?] – 30.06.2010); they “build strongholds”: “The Spanish team must be getting a stomach ache thinking about attacking another stronghold, crossing the moat, and storming the drawbridge” (*Paragwaj chce powstrzymać Hiszpanię po szwajcarsku* [Paraguay wants to stop Spain the Swiss way] – 3.07.2010); “Christiano Ronaldo, who wearing the colours of Manchester Utd or Real Madrid needs no support to carped bomb the opponent’s penalty area, under Portuguese colours can only shoot at the audience and banners” (*Niemcy ponad wszystko* [Germany above all else] – 18.06.2010); also, a “mini-shooting squad”. They are considered fearless, “ready to die on the field”, “snipers”, and “firing shotguns”.

Such expressions are reinforced by stressing the hardness and even brutality of players, showing them as “carnage specialists”, “beasts”, or directly as “brutes”: “The Dutch have Mark van Brommel, who literally takes out his opponents, being the rare thug and brute he is” (*Jak pokonać Hiszpanię* [How to beat Spain] – 10.07.2010).

In the analysed press messages, football is also compared to martial arts and boxing, the collision sport commonly associated with masculinity: “Both rivals acted like boxers who lost their self-preservation instincts in the heat of battle” (*Fenomen Mirka Klose* [Phenomenon of Mirek Klose] – 23.06.2014), or like in the information on Spain: “Its score against its group rivals brought to mind a heavyweight boxing world champion, who usually wins by knockout, and by decision when he has a bad day” (*Mecz pelen przygód* [Game of adventure] – 25.06.2010). Hence knocking the opponent out is so frequently mentioned. For instance, the 2014 World Champion Miroslaw Klose is described as follows: “He was rather like a disciplined soldier who is aware of his talent as a sniper yet subjects everything to the

events on the front”, and the German team as playing the role of the “total, ruthless, precise, and ultra-fast dominator”.

War metaphors are suggestive and make the football look like a deadly serious occupation and the footballers attain the rank of national heroes. In the articles from both 2010 and 2014, 17% of texts contained war metaphors. Quite remarkably, there was an article about using them to describe the struggle on the playing field on the sport pages of GW. Explaining their frequent use, the author refers an unworked through post-World War II trauma, yet fails to notice their significance for patriarchal culture (*To był mecz, nie bitwa* [It was a match, not a battle] – 10.07.2014).

Besides war metaphors, the greatness of the footballers and their improbable skill are often emphasized by calling them “wizards” or “mages”: “No players can match the football artistry of the Argentinian wizards” (*Ciężki nokaut Diego Maradony* [Diego Maradona’s hard knockout] – 5.07.2010); “Schweinsteiger has played a great tournament but crashed into a wall in the match for everything with the whole German team. The Spanish showed that, at this level, perfection is not enough – you need creation” (*Gorzki smak hiszpańskiej porażki* [Bitter taste of Spanish defeat] – 8.07.2010).

It is also frequent to call footballers “gods”: “Maradona is said to be the only one to ever win the World Cup (1986) alone; himself, he either despised or hardly tolerated coaches – if they were quiet. He was declared god, and the faithful of his church call themselves Diegorians” (*Dunga + Maradona = klęska* [Dunga + Maradona = defeat] – 5.07.2010), “demi-gods”, “messiahs” (*MESSIasz narodu argentyńskiego* [MESSIah of the Argentinians] – 3.07.2014)

More than once, the articles emphasize the athletes’ endurance and fitness: “He’s a natural athlete, who cannot live without physical exercise. He doesn’t pull his shirt after each goal off any more, you get a yellow card for it, but his muscles always make him stand off after games, both in his club and national teams. At the World Cup, he discredits the theory about the league and cup season being so exhausting to the organism that the most run-down stars cannot stand on their feet any more. [Diego] Forlan’s worked himself hard” (*Sir Alex zatęsknił za Forlanem* [Sir Alex misses Forlan] – 6.07.2010); “Nobody obstructed him, though the US players had already established their reputation of hard-boned athletes, never without breath to turn the midfield into a hell for their rivals (*Urodzeni, by walczyć* [Born to fight] – 19.06.2010); “The players of the last team from the continent proved even harder than the US thugs, and they will play the quarter-finals against Uruguay. / In every game until Saturday, the Americans were like strongmen bursting with excess energy, moved to a lower

weight category by accident. The longer they fought, the more they attacked with passion, jostling rivals and pushing the resistance into the goal with the ball. Then they crashed into another steel line, formed of players as wide in the shoulders as always humbly and reliably doing their little tasks” (*Czarne gwiazdy* [Black stars] – 28.06.2010); „And so, Brazil preferred to be a muscle than a fragile artist” (*Pieśń o Neymarze* [The Song of Neymar] – 7.07.2014).

In the GW articles, footballers were also compared to machines working well in any situation. Such a view of their bodies is in line with the descriptions typical of hegemonic masculinity, alienation from one’s own body, ignoring its problems and pain: “Could, if only his players’ legs could still carry them at least like they did in 1/8 finals, when they did not let the South Korean players, durable like machines, run them down” (*Futbol jest piękny* [Football is beautiful] – 12.07.2010); “The 2010 Dutch team attacks with two wingers, an attacking midfielder, and a centre forward. The machine works perfectly: only the players on these positions scored in South Africa” (*Wygrać nie po holendersku* [Win not like the Dutch] – 6.07.2010).

The image of “hard men” was also reproduced by referring to the footballers’ physicality: “Once during a briefing in the Bayern locker room he pulled down his suit trousers to show the players he was a real man” (*Jak mistrzowie z wicemistrzami* [Like champions with vice-champions] – 13.06.2014) and through the story of Yoan Gourcuff, allegedly bullied by one of his team-mates for refusing to go to a “very men’s club”. He wanted to show his “toughness” on the field by fouling an opponent, which the journalist described as follows: “His team-mates want him to turn from a dandy into a killer, so he closed his eyes, pulled out a hard member, and struck. A tough guy?” (*Krótką piłką, ładny chłopiec* [Short ball, beautiful boy] – 23.06.2010).

References to the footballers’ affairs, private relationships, and games outside of the field appear in the World Cup-related articles and can be interpreted as yet another strategy of referring to the players’ masculinity and stressing their heterosexuality. At the same time, they fulfil the recipients’ need for the sensational and allow themselves to better know their favourite athletes, for whom these references are a part of constructing their images. The way relationships with women are described also speaks volumes about constructing the category of femininity around men’s sport: “The 32-years old forward, a sated sportsman, enjoying millions on his account and a local fame, did not see his third World Cup as his prime. He grew fat, dated until dawn, invited prostitutes to his hotel. He’s never been a fierce patriot” (*RPA znów wierzy w Bafana* [South Africa believes in Bafan again] – 11.06.2010); “In

Barcelona, Thierry Henry has to listen, not to shout; in Chelsea, John Terry and Didier Drogba can change the coach, but Florent Malouda and Nicolas Anelka can't; when Manchester United goes to town, it is not Patrice Evra who chooses the night clubs to visit (and not just because the left defender of the vice-champions of England prefers evenings at home)" (*Francuzów tęsknota za Zidane'em* [French longing for Zidane] – 17.06.2010); "Some say that his greatest rival, the self-proclaimed boss of the outfit known as the French Team, Franck Ribery, once organized a clubbing night after a game. The night – obviously – was to begin with a visit to a very men's club. 'I'm staying,' said Gourcuff, to which Ribery was to reply: 'Mommy won't let you, faggot?' The new coach of the French national team surely must help him chose whether to stay himself, read books, watch films, and play his game, or rather to taste the real life in the places visited by his teammates, whom he's about to lead. In the end, shouldn't the general sometimes sleep in the trenches, for the good of the army?" (*Krótką piłką, ładny chłopiec* – 23.06.2010).

As the given quotations show, the sexual prowess was associated with masculinity here, with taking leadership in the team, and gaining the teammates' respect. The journalist's comment regarding carrying out the tasks the rest of the team accept for the good of the team ("In the end, shouldn't the general sometimes sleep in the trenches, for the good of the army?") may indicate a permission to use prostitutes for the greater goal, a coherent team. Even though the articles about the World Cup describe using prostitutes more frequently than the quoted passages, the journalists never address this kind of behaviour and fail to notice the broader background related to the practices of masculinity and sport.

The footballers' partners are rendered infantile in their descriptions, usually emphasizing their beauty and attire: "she's my cousin!" 19-year-old Schweinsteiger shouted at security guards. He lied; he had met the girl a few hours earlier at a night club. He wanted to impress her, so he took her to the Bayern training centre and then hosted in the club Jacuzzi. The guards found them there at 2 a.m."; "Changes in the image are just as evident. He advertises the Stuttgart Market instead of salami and doesn't storm the door to the training centre with half-naked teenage girls but has been dating model and journalist Sarah Brandner for a few years" (*Schweinsteiger już nie jest maskotką* [Schweinsteiger is not a mascot any more] – 7.07.2010); "Some say Cruyff was not allowed to go by his wife, who four years ago learned from *Bild* about his playing with female company in a hotel pool" (9.07.2014); "Anderson Luis de Souza (Deco) is a piece of work, too. In 1997 he brought himself a fiancée to Europe; they married and had 2 children in God's way. He left her for a Brazilian beauty though, but when she was pregnant with her second child, he had group sex in London with

prostitutes” (*Jako mąż i nie mąż* [As a husband and not] – 16.06.2010); “This may be why, during a recent team camp, his panicked second wife called him, having lost their 5-year-old daughter for a few hours during Hannah Montana’s concert. And she had plenty of people to call, as since the divorce she had already found the arms of his friend Fernando Couto and the dandy singer Angelico. Even the Vietnamese tabloid *Tin Tien Tao* wrote in detail about it. (*Jako mąż i nie mąż* – 16.06.2010);

Interestingly, the stereotypical belief that the partners of footballers can bring bad luck during the World Cup by distracting the players can be found in the GW articles. The decisions of coaches whether to allow players to meet their wives and partners in break between games are also discussed. The decision of the Argentinian coach, Maradona (2010), who allowed the players to meet their partners, was emphasized. There is a common conviction, that such customs negatively affect the form of players, thus they are banned. “The Spanish media believe that the girlfriend of the goalie Iker Casillas, Sara Carbonero, considered the sexiest sport journalist in the world, is also somewhat to blame for the defeat against Switzerland” (*Winna dziewczyna Casillasa?* [Is Casillas’s girlfriend to blame?] – 18.06.2010).

The attire of female supporters at the World Cup in South Africa was also intriguing to observers. The journalist’s words can be read as the conventional critique of South African weather, which forced the supporting women to look less attractive. It thus confirms the results of other studies, which stressed that female supporters attend stadiums mainly as sexual objects. “Forget the throng of slender goddesses in the audience, dressed in handkerchiefs. The World Cup took place during African winter, ground frost was common, so long underwear and warm hats were more useful than shorts and tops” (*Mundialowy alfabet* [World Cup ABC] – 12.07.2010).

The analysed articles show that the GW media message sustains the sport stardom cult. The newspaper publishes long and usually emotional biographies of footballers. They mostly describe the complicated periods in the athletes’ careers, their determination and strong character, which was necessary to overcome the difficulties (*Rooney chce się cieszyć* [Rooney wants to enjoy] – 14.06.2014; *I jak go nie kochać?* [How not to love him?] – 16.06.2014; *Tajemnice niemego idola Argentyny* [Secrets of Argentinian silent idol] – 17.06.2014; *Aria dla Robbena* [Aria for Robben] – 17.06.2014; *Thomas Müller, niemiecki piłkarz nieoczywisty* [Thomas Müller, the non-obvious German footballer] – 21.06.2014). Moreover, the emphasized moments in footballers’ life include growing up in poverty (*Anioły Angela Di Marii* [Angelo Di Maria’s angels] – 26.06.2014); leaving the country early and moving to a

club abroad; waiting a long time for an opportunity (*Profesor Pekerman i żółta febra* [Professor Pekerman and the yellow fever] – 4.07.2014; *Demoniczna pomarańcza* [Hell-work orange] – 5.07.2014; *Jeden błysk Robbena więcej* [One more flare of Robben] – 29.06.2010), or their persistent struggle with contusions (*Pieśń o Neymarze* – 7.07.2014; *Koniec Gianluigiego Buffona* [The end of Gianluigi Buffon] – 18.06.2010). All these stories promote footballers as men of extremely resistant psyche, resilient, and unyielding in the face of adversity.

The studied texts often made use of irony and sarcasm. Rows and conflicts within teams were also stressed. In spite of creating the players as “demi-gods” and devoting much space to them on the sport pages of GW, those footballers who failed and did not meet expectations were harshly criticized. It is noted in the studies on gender communication that anecdotes and irony sometimes serve as a tool gladly used by men to achieve a certain status or to reduce ambiguity³⁵. They confirmed their decisive opinions with unequivocal judging positions: “Still, it was hard to watch these two and the whole national team play, and not only for their compatriots. How can it be, that a Brazilian at the World Cup, wearing the canary shirt, juggles the ball by the side-line so that he stumbles over it? There are two landings: the randomly kicked ball lands out-of-bounds, the Brazilian on his backside. Such was the fate of another Chelsea player, in the 19th minute, at the score of 0:2 (*Brazylia na czterech literach* [Brazil on its backside] – 14.07.2014); “So far, he wanted so much and so wanted to prove himself that he ended prematurely. Now he wants to show you can overcome this affliction. Even when the demanding partner does not believe him” (*Rooney chce się cieszyć* – 14.06.2014); “He simply plays in a way hardly ever observed anymore. We might call him one of the last members of the Tap-Tap Club (Pol. *Klub Tup-Tup*), whose activists we have admired since Kazimierz Deyna’s times. Mincing somewhere in the midfield, he plays half of the passes one touch back at two, three meters, the other half he keeps for a while and only then plays back to a colleague. Acceleration: zero. Belching testosterone: nope” (*Klub tup-tup* [Tap-tap club] – 16.06.2014); “On Friday, it didn't take Dunga long to decide if Michel Bastos should stay on the field after 4 fouls on Robben and close to getting a second card before the 52nd minute. Still, he couldn't predict that Filipe Melo would be even more stupid to foul Robben twice during a single action, deserving to go to shower, as the classic used to say” (*Tatę jeszcze pokopią* [They'll kick dad a little more] – 3.07.2010); “For

³⁵ D. Tannen, *Ty nic nie rozumiesz! Kobieta i mężczyzna w rozmowie* [You don't understand! Woman and man talking], Poznań 1999; K. Handke, *Socjologia języka* [Sociology of language], Warszawa 2009; M. Karwatowska, J. Szpyra-Kozłowska, *Lingwistyka płci* [Gender linguistics], Lublin 2005.

half an hour they didn't try a single original play, and when Robinho had an idea to pass with his heel, he hit a leg. His own. This is the new Brazilian team. So indistinct in their movements that even their canary shirts go grey" (*Brazylia szara ale jara* [Brazil grey but spry] – 26.06.2010); "Together, Wayne Rooney, Leo Messi, and Cristiano Ronaldo scraped a single goal. After the World Cup, the Englishman and the Argentinian hid, while Ronaldo, before going for several weeks-long holidays, or a permanent paparazzi session, said he became a father. It seems the mom agreed to him raising the boy alone, and the tabloids worldwide keep guessing how much she was paid. The boy was named as expected, Cristiano Jr" (*Mundialowy alfabet* – 12.07.2010).

An emotional state, namely the footballers crying in public during and after the game, also attracted the attention of the media. The Brazilians were most often described crying (*W imię Neymara* [In the name of Neymar] – 8.07.2014; "To był wspaniały chaos" [It was a wonderful chaos] – 14.07.2014), yet this kind of emotional behaviour was pointed out in other players as well (*Furia i łzy* [Fury and tears] – 20.06.2014; *Idź złoto do złota* [Gold to gold] – 12.07.2010): Neymar cries even during the anthem, David Luiz couldn't help himself after scoring against Chile. Nor keeper Júlio César even before penalty shootouts. And the captain Thiago Silva went all soppy, didn't want to shoot, the coach had to help him stand up. 'Big boys do cry, but only after the game. Only cry-babies who wet their shorts cry during the match,' Brazilian writer and publicist Ruy Castro minced no words" and "Without him the current Brazil, never mind crying or tough, won't go far" (*Brazylia nie chce łez* [Brazil wants no tears] – 3.07.2014).

Paying attention to conflicts and disputes between players may be used to show that they deal with problems "like men", solving them once and for all – sometimes using physical strength. In the social perception, such a conduct is known to be characteristic of men. In 2010, the conflict between the French team footballers and coach was covered for a dozen days or so (*Francja: Trzy kolory znów w harmonii* [France: Three colours in harmony again] – 26.06.2014; *Blanc: Nie będzie rewolucji* [Blanc: There'll be no revolution] – 7.07.2010; *Thuram: Wykluczyć buntowników z kadry* [Thuram: ban the strikers from the national team] – 6.07.2010; *Włosi remisują, Francuzi strajkują* [Italy draws, France on strike] – 21.06.2010; *Strajk francuski* [French strike] – 21.06.2010), describing in detail the abuse they threw at one another. Also, the conflict between Van Persie and Sneijder was covered (*Mocni, mocniejsi, najmocniejsi* [Strong, stronger, the strongest] – 14.06.2010; *Mundial do góry nogami* [World Cup topsy-turvy] – 9.07.2010) and between the players and coach of Ghana (*Sensacja nad sensacjami?* [Sensation of sensations?] – 23.06.2010).

Conclusions

The results of content analysis presented above are mostly in line with the results adduced in the first section of this article. The use of war metaphors and descriptions of endurance, strength, and fitness of players sustains the connection between the category of hegemonic masculinity and sport. The players discussed in GW texts are appointed modern gladiators, valiant and committed men. The analysed press messages can be used to support the notion that sport has replaced the experience of war. Similarly, describing the sexual prowess of footballers, multiple partners, and new affairs, maintains the belief in their “masculinity”. It also involves emphasizing scandals with using prostitutes. Whereas returning to the subject of sportsmen crying may be indicative of a certain anxiety with a behaviour considered unmanly among men who should be models of masculinity.

A significant part of articles in GW was devoted to football stars. The descriptions of World Cup events focused mainly on them. In these articles, besides the parts confirming the “greatness” of the protagonist, one may find information about the private life of stars and the scandals in which they took part. Describing World Cups from this point of view helps maintaining the category of stars as the fundamental one in the perception of sport mediated by the media.

Using irony and sarcasm to describe the actions of players is characteristic of masculine communication style. The footballers enjoy the status of demi-gods and heroes, and their exploits are thoroughly followed. All failures are harshly judged, “as men do”. Using such a style of expression may also mean that the texts were mostly targeted at male recipients.

Moreover, the observation that femininity in football stadiums is mainly described in terms of physical attractiveness is corroborated. The partners of footballers are described according to beauty, not treated seriously, and trivialized.

All the above examples show that the media message in “Gazeta Wyborcza” concerning the FIFA World Cup reinforces the perception of sport, and football in particular, as a discipline recreating the concept of hegemonic masculinity also by using narration which devalues women.