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The Sport Database and the History of the Netherlands until 1940

Abstract

*Sport is sometimes called the mirror of society and rightly so. All kinds of social relationships and developments can be found in the sports world of a country. The database *Sporting organisations, sports clubs and sporting periodicals in the Netherlands until 1940* contains data on thousands of existing and past associations and clubs for six prominent sports: gymnastics, hockey, korfbal, chess, tennis and football. This article shows how political relationships and philosophical differences had a major influence on the development of sports in the Netherlands until 1940. The article also deals with the naming of clubs, the background of their members and their size.*

Keywords: sport databank, social relationships, leisure activities, sports practice, use of club names

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Sport is expressed for example in times, distances, heights and final results, but rarely in dates. Athletes, sports associations and clubs have always focused on the future, because ‘tomorrow’ there are new competitions and new tournaments. Only on anniversaries sporting organizations and clubs tend to look back on their past, which sometimes results in an anniversary book. The anniversary book, however, often focuses on the history of one association or club and does not include others. In a broader context sport can make an important contribution to a better understanding of the history of a country or at least may serve as an illustration of popular culture. Numerous social relationships and developments can be reflected in the sports world from season to season. The databank *Sporting organisations, sports clubs and sporting periodicals in the Netherlands until 1940* maps thousands of existing and past sporting associations and clubs for six prominent sports: gymnastics, hockey, korfbal, chess, tennis and football. In this article the information in the database is linked to the national history of the Netherlands between circa 1880 and 1940.

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THE DESIGN OF THE DATABASE

On September 15, 2011, André Bolhuis, chairman of the NOC*NSF (the Dutch Olympic Committee/Dutch Sports Federations), launched the database *Sporting organisations, sports clubs and sporting periodicals in the Netherlands until 1940* during a meeting at Papendal – the national training centre – near Arnhem. The database (further referred to simply as: Sport Databank) was compiled by the Huygens Institute for History of the Netherlands, part of the KNAW and currently located in Amsterdam. The digital database contains data on sports organizations and clubs established before the 1st of August 1940 in the field of gymnastics, hockey, korfbal, chess, tennis and football. For every branch of sport there is an introduction with background information about the organization of the sport until 1940, such as the number of national sports associations and their departments ('afdelingen' and 'kringen' in Dutch)².

For national and regional sports associations, the records contain the name of the organization, the date of establishment, the objective and the periodicals in which the official announcements were published. In addition to the name and place of establishment, the records of the clubs state the date of incorporation (or first mention) and eventually the date of dissolution or merger (last mention), the objective, participation in competitions and the foundation of the association (neutral, Roman Catholic, Protestant Christian, Socialist or Jewish). If possible, abbreviations for club names are given in full. All in all, the database contains more than 16.000 records.

Gymnastics, hockey, korfbal, chess, tennis and football were chosen because these sports are still among the most important sports in the Netherlands. They are also interesting from a historical and sociological point of view. Some sports became very popular (gymnastics, korfbal, football) while others remained elitist due to the small number of practitioners (hockey, chess, tennis). There are sports with separate departments for men and women (gymnastics, hockey, tennis) and one sport that is played with mixed teams (korfbal). It was also a conscious decision to opt for one mind sport (chess) as opposed to sports in which the entire body is involved.

The database ends on the 1st of August 1940, because the new Nederlandsche Voetbalbond (Netherlands Football Association) was founded on this day. All existing football associations merged into this organization for the first time since the foundation of the Roman Catholic associations in 1915. The classification of the competition for the 1940-1941 season is still included for all clubs in all six sports to show the user where they were all classified, either in the national or in the regional league.

The database is equipped with a search page, whereby it is possible to search for clubs per province, per location, per association or per conviction (neutral, Roman Catholic, Protestant Christian, Socialist and Jewish) or combinations thereof. If desired, one can also search by year or period of incorporation (first entry). The results can be arranged alphabetically by club name or chronologically by year of incorporation or by last entry. The record van A.F.C. Ajax of

2 See <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/sportbondenclubsperiodieken> for more information.

Amsterdam, the best known and most successful football club in the Netherlands, is given as an example of the records in the database in Appendix 1.

THE SOURCES

Archives of national and regional sports associations form the basis of the database. After all, they provide information about some of the clubs over the same period. This includes address books, registrations, the beginning and end of membership of clubs and other official announcements, annual reports and final positions of competitions. Many associations have left little or no archival material behind, especially from their first years of existence. In that case, data from national, regional and local newspapers were sought as compensation. Prime sources were *Delfpher*, the large collection of digital newspapers and magazines of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (Royal Library of the Netherlands), and collections of archive institutions.³

Hardly any archives of individual sports clubs have been used. After all, these mainly contain documents from one specific club and they give little or no information about other clubs from that period. Jubilee books of clubs have been consulted, because they often give details about the establishment of a club and their subsequent performances.

The names of the founders of associations and clubs are only included in the records if they were mentioned in the sources. The database does not specify the colors of the club suit, the number of members from season to season or the location of the accommodations. After all, the number of clubs is so large that this can never be done properly or completely in a short time. Also the performances of the best teams are not included in the records, only when they have played in the national competition and in the regional competition.

The database contains more than 16.000 records of sporting organizations and clubs that were established before August 1, 1940. On the basis of this data, a great deal can be learned about the rise of sport in the Netherlands and the relationship between sport and society. Some examples of this will be given below.

THE RISE OF SPORT IN THE NETHERLANDS UNTIL 1940

Most modern sports were introduced in the Netherlands in the period between around 1840-1910. This happened in a society that was divided into different groups: liberal-Neutrals, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews, socialists and communists. In historiography the term pillarization ('*verzuiling*' in Dutch) is used to describe this kind of society. Each group had its own social circles, its own political party, schools and social organizations, newspaper and later radio broadcasting. People mainly dealt with people from their own group and didn't have much contact with other groups. There were big differences between rich and poor within this

3 Please note that this only concerns newspapers and magazines that were already digitized in 2011.

society as well. Many still had to go to work or school on Saturday, leaving Sunday as the only day for relaxation.

Initially, only the upper classes had money and time for sporting activities. They could buy the necessary clothing and equipment and they could lay out or rent fields to play their sport. Later the lower classes of society also joined in sports activities, leading to the foundation of neutral national sports associations: gymnastics (1868), chess (1873), football (1889), hockey (1898), tennis (1899) and korfbal (1903), to limit ourselves to the six sports of the database. However, none of them had member clubs in all eleven provinces of the country in the first decades of their existence.

The national government and most municipalities thought that sport was a private matter that did not need financial support from public funds. Some large cities gradually started to spend money for the construction of sports fields, the construction of gyms and the like, but in smaller towns and villages sports practice could be opposed by political parties based on religion, invoking the Sunday Act of 1815.

Many Catholics and Protestants objected to sports on Sundays, because that was a threat to Sunday rest and church attendance. Catholics wanted to allow sport on Sunday after the mass celebration, but the practice of sport had to be under the supervision of the local clergy. The Protestants were content with sporting activities only on Saturday afternoon.

During the First World War (1914-1918), many young men were mobilized for national defense. The army command let them do sports for relaxation, because this was good for their physical condition and for team building. Many soldiers wanted to continue their sporting activities after their release from the army and they established their own sports clubs or joined existing ones. From 1919 a new workers' law applied, whereby every employee was given a free Saturday afternoon and a free Sunday. These changes triggered a growth in the number of sports clubs, as is shown in Appendix 2. Many saw the importance and usefulness of practicing sport for society. This was also officially acknowledged, because between 1918 and 1940, Queen Wilhelmina gave numerous neutral sports associations the right to call themselves 'Royal' ('Koninklijk' in Dutch), as can be seen in Appendix 3.

However, sport remained suspicious in Catholic and Protestant circles, as they did not want mass sporting events on Sundays. In 1928 the Olympic Games were held in Amsterdam. It was typical of social and political relationships that the government did not provide financial support to the organization. All necessary funds for the Games were brought in by private initiative. The Olympic Games greatly increased the active and passive interest in sports in the Netherlands. The participation of the Dutch national team in the World Football Championships in 1934 and 1938 also generated a great deal of enthusiasm in society. Despite the economic crisis of the 1930s, the number of sportsmen and the interest in sport in the media (radio and newspapers) would only increase.

SPORTS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF LIFE

The existence of several social groups in society had a massive impact on the development of sports in the Netherlands⁴. If one didn't have a specific philosophy of life, one could set up a club and join the neutral association of that sport. Catholics and Protestants, however, did not want to let their sons and daughters exercise with peers outside their group. Therefore, they had to set up their own sporting organizations.

Between 1915 and 1919 all Catholic football clubs founded their own organization with the help of the Roman Catholic Church. All five dioceses in the Netherlands got their own football association (Breda, Den Bosch, Limburg, Utrecht and Haarlem). They had a R.K. Federation of R.K. Football associations to organize a national competition. A similar structure based on dioceses with a national federation developed for gymnastics as well. All Catholic clubs were given a spiritual advisor, usually the local pastor. There were no Catholic sports associations in the other four sports of the database. The Protestants established a national gymnastics association in 1910, a national korfbal association in 1920 and a national football association in 1929.

In 1926, the socialists founded their own *Nederlandse Arbeiders Sportbond* (N.A.S.B., the Dutch Workers Sports Association), which offered several branches of sport to its members. This was completely different from the neutral and confessional sporting organizations. Some socialist football and korfbal clubs, however, preferred to become member of the neutral civic sports associations (the "burgerlijke bonden" in the socialist jargon), because they had more opponents here in their immediate environment. The Jews and communists also had their own sports clubs, but they were too small and too far apart to organize their own competitions. They also had to join the neutral sports associations if they wanted to play matches on a weekly basis.

In football, there were also all sorts of regional and local organizations, which did not join the neutral national football association. This often happened because they had few members and preferred to take care of their own affairs. In large cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Groningen there were also office football associations with teams from local companies and institutions. They played their games on Saturday or Sunday afternoons.

Hockey had two neutral national organizations, one for men (founded in 1898) and one for women (founded in 1911). This division based on sexes was unique in Europe. They would not merge until 1941. Tennis only had one national neutral association. Many hockey and tennis clubs were socially exclusive and had regulations for joining the club (ballotage). Both associations had strict admission requirements as well, so that not every club could become a member of the association. Each aspiring member had to be nominated by two clubs that were already members of the association before joining the organization. All other sports associations didn't have such strict rules. The first hockey clubs in the Catholic south were founded in the 1930s, but they would not join the neutral association until after 1940. There were hardly any Catholic tennis clubs, because the clergy were not in favor of mixed sports.

⁴ See Appendix 3.

Chess was such a modest sport in the Netherlands that one neutral national organization was sufficient. There were Catholic and Protestant clubs affiliated with the association in the 1930s, but the games were always played on weekday evenings, so the problem of playing on a Sunday did not exist here.

Therefore religion and political views definitely had an influence on the practice of sport. In the 1920s and 1930s the neutral N.V.B. (Netherlands Football Association) had a national competition divided in five districts (West I and II, North, East and South). In four districts there were separate competitions for first teams and for lower teams except in the South district. In North Brabant and Limburg there were not enough neutral clubs so that the first teams had to compete against the best lower teams of other clubs in the same national competition. The neutral Nederlandsche Korfbalbond (Netherlands Korfbal Association) hardly had any clubs in North Brabant and Limburg because the Catholic clergy opposed mixed sports here. There were mixed korfbal clubs only in large cities such as Den Bosch, Breda, Tilburg, Eindhoven and Helmond because only in these towns were enough non-Catholics to set up and maintain clubs. It was not until the late 1930s that more korfbal clubs emerged in the two southern provinces, but those were only women's korfbal clubs. The Christian gymnastics and korfbal federations and the N.A.S.B. also hardly had any clubs below the major rivers Rhine, Waal and Maas. On the other hand, the Catholic sports associations had none or a few clubs in the northern provinces Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe.

A CLOSER LOOK AT SPORT CLUBS

As Appendix 2 indicates, more clubs were established every decade than in the previous decade. Only in the 1930s was there a slight decline due to the economic crisis. These figures should not be taken as absolutes; they mainly serve to indicate a trend. Research has shown that many clubs were small and that they only had one team in the competition. This meant that a lot of clubs disappeared as quickly as they came to the scene because of lack of members, financial problems and cancellations. Others had to merge with neighboring clubs in order to survive. If a club wanted to play in the national league of the Nederlandsche Voetbalbond, it had to have at least forty members (almost four teams). The entry requirement at the R.K.F. (Catholic Football Association) was twenty members, so one team with nine reserves. In 1919, D.E.V. (Amsterdam) was the only club in the competition of the Nederlandsche Korfbalbond with more than a hundred members (106). T.O.G. (Lochem) was the smallest with fifteen members, or twelve field players and three on the reserve bench. In 1935, only Blauw Wit (124) and R.O.H.D.A. (119), both from Amsterdam, had more than a hundred members in the Nederlandsche Korfbalbond. It is no coincidence that the largest korfbal clubs came from the largest city in the Netherlands. Lochem was just one of the many small towns in the Netherlands, located in the province of Gelderland.

The database makes it clear that certain club names were very popular in the Netherlands. Countless clubs were called Ajax, Excelsior, Olympia, Sparta, Volharding, and so on or had abbreviations such as H.B.S. (Hold On Firmly), K.D.O. (Strength Through Exercise), O.D.I. (Relaxation By Effort) or S.S.S. (Sport Steals Muscles). Certain color combinations derived

from the club kit were also used as a club name, such as Rood Wit (Red White), Blauw Wit (Blue White), Groen Wit (Green White), Oranje Wit (Orange White) and so on. Many clubs linked their sport to their location, such as M.V.V. (Maastrichtsche Voetbal Vereniging), S.V.V. (Schiedamsche Voetbal Vereniging) and V.V.V. (Venlosche Voetbal Vereniging) and A.K.C. (Almelosche Korfbal Club), D.K.C. (Delftsche Korfbal Club) and P.K.C. (Papendrechtsche Korfbal Club).

Some sporting organizations tried to regulate the tangle of club names to avoid errors in their administrations. The Nederlandsche Voetbalbond tried to introduce unique club names through registration. A.F.C. Ajax was among the first clubs to be registered; it got number 32 – 1911⁵. The Nederlandsche Korfbalbond also had a registration, but these registrations only applied to their own members. Other sporting organizations did not take their registrations into account.

In May 1940 the Germans occupied the Netherlands. Only a few weeks later, on July 31, 1940, a new Nederlandsche Voetbalbond was established with all neutral clubs combined with all clubs of the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Socialist organizations and office football associations. Officials feared the Germans would force a merger and decided to bring their clubs together on their own terms. The new national football association enforced uniformity of club names by adding the year of establishment (A.D.O. versus A.D.O. 1920 and Blauw Wit versus Blauw Wit '34), by the addition R.K. of Roman Catholic or C. of Christian (A.V.V. versus R.K.A.V.V. and G.V.V. versus R.K.G.V.V. and C.G.V.V.) or by the addition of the (first letter of the) name of the location (Ajax Amsterdam versus Ajax Breedenbroek and D.O.S. versus D.O.S.R.). Anyway, the database helps the user find a club from the jumble of clubs with almost the same names or abbreviations.

The names of the sports clubs sometimes also reveal the social background of their members. There were clubs where all players came from the same neighborhood (Het Funen, Feijenoord, Laakkwartier), from the same school (H.B.S., De Eerste Vijfjarige and Gymnasias-ten Korfbalvereniging) or from the same parish (Sint Anna, Sint Lodewijk, Sint Willebrordus). Some clubs were founded by students of a university and were only open for others students. A.E.G., Hema and Shell started as company clubs, but this caused problems when they wanted to join the N.V.B. They registered their names as abbreviations for Allen Eén Goal (All One Goal), H.E.M.A (The Team With Ambition) and S.H.E.L.L. (Sport Keeps Every Body Limber). In korfbal, clubs as Gemeente Telefoon and Stedelijke Gasfabrieken comprising employees of the municipal telephone company in Amsterdam and the municipal light factories in Leiden. Some clubs came from the total abstinence movement, such as Blauwe Vogels (Blue Birds) and D.O.T.O. The last abbreviation stood for Through Abstinence Comes Development. A.G.O.V.V. started out as Apeldoornsche Geheel Onthouders Voetbalvereniging (Apeldoornsche Fully Abstaining Football Club), but later admitted alcoholic beverages within the club. The abbreviation was then adjusted to Alleen Gezamenlijk Oefenen Voert Verder (Only Common Practice Provides Progress). Some socialist clubs took the name N.A.S.B. after their organization, followed by the town in question.

5 See Appendix 1.

All clubs in the database have foundation dates or a first mention. However, these dates are not always 'hard facts'. Members of the oldest sports clubs didn't always record the exact birthday of their club. They sometimes chose a date just to be the oldest club in the city or to be one of the first clubs in the country. Some clubs took the date of joining a sport association as a foundation and made themselves younger than they were in fact. Certain clubs had a turbulent history in which they were established and dissolved several times under the same club name. It appears that they sometimes chose the oldest foundation date to give their club a respectable age. For club mergers, the founding date of the oldest merger partner was often used for the same reason. Some clubs started with one sport, but later also got a division for other sports. These so-called "omniverenigingen" used the original founding date for all departments. In the database, all departments are listed separately for their specific sport with their 'real' date or year of establishment.

THE DATABASE IN THE FUTURE

The database *Sporting organizations, sports clubs and sporting periodicals in the Netherlands until 1940* contains a wealth of information about sport associations and clubs that were active in six prominent sports. It is a wonderful source of inspiration and background information for research into the sports history of the Netherlands.

Archives of sports associations and sports clubs can be used for broad social research. One can beautifully illustrate the pillarization in the Netherlands and the influence of faith and politics on sport on the basis of the records of the database, as illustrated above. Other interesting issues such as the role of women in sports and the emancipation of workers in sports can also be adequately studied with archival documents from sports federations and sports clubs.

The database helps interested parties with data about sport associations and clubs and through references to relevant archive material. The records do not contain details such as the composition of the board and the committees, the membership numbers, the performances and the accommodations. It would take too much work to collect such data, but the interested researcher can find it himself/herself in the federation magazines and club archives. Even genealogists can use sports archives, because many people in the Netherlands got married to another member of a sports club and some families can sometimes be found for generations at the same sports club.

Currently, the Sport Database contains more than 16.000 records from roughly the period 1800 to 1940. The Huygens Institute for History of the Netherlands intends to expand the database up to December 31, 1999, so that all kinds of developments come to light in the even longer term. The expansion will take place in parts. The first supplement is planned for next year with a new version for the part up to 1940 and a new part for 1940-1945. The first contains additions and improvements for the part up to 1940 based on digital newspapers and magazines that came online from 15 September 2011 onwards. The second will contain new information about sports in the Netherlands during the Second World War.

With the end date of December 31, 1999, all mergers between neutral and denominational sporting organizations are also covered. In 1940 all national football associations merged into

a new one Nederlandsche Voetbalbond. In 1973 the Christian Korfbal Association merged with the neutral Korfbal Association. In 1987 the Catholic gymnastics association joined the neutral gymnastics association and in 1999 the Christian gymnastics association did the same (see Appendix 3). This meant the end of sports federations on a religious basis in the Netherlands. In short, the Sport Databank will continue to be an important tool for research in the future.

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Appendix 1 The record of A.F.C. Ajax Amsterdam in the Database Sport.

Name	Ajax
Comments about name	Full Amsterdamsche Football Club Ajax
Place	Amsterdam
Province	North Holland
First mentioned	18 March 1900 (establishment)
Last mentioned	
Royal Decree	4 April 1908 no. 11; 14 September 1912 No. 60; 8 September 1913, No. 10; 4 April 1918, No. 24; 4 January 1930 No. 11; 2 February 1934 No. 35; 6 March 1937, No. 25
Objective	Practicing the football game (1908). Practicing the football game and also other sports, for which the approval of the board is needed (1930).
Scope	Local
Sport	Football
National association	K.N.V.B. (1902)
Regional association	Amsterdamsche Voetbalbond (1900-1940) Afdeling Amsterdam (1940)
Denomination	Neutral
Accountability data	Het Sportblad 13 sep. 1900, p. 3 (accession A.V.B.). Voetbal-almanak 1900-1901, p. 161 (A.V.B.). Voetbal-almanak 1902-1903, p. 22 (accession N.V.B.). Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 10-11 mei 1908 no. 110 (Royal Decree no. 586; foundation). O.M. van den A.V.B. 8 aug. 1911, p. 3 (registration club name for N.V.B. and A.V.B.). Adreslijst N.V.B. 1911-1912. Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 17 okt. 1912 no. 243 (Royal Decree no. 1437; amendment of the articles of association). Voetbal jaarboekje 1912-1913, p. 266 (A.V.B.). Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 23 okt. 1913 no. 248 (Royal Decree no. 1468; amendment of the articles of association). Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 27 aug. 1918 no. 200 (Royal Decree no. 1057; amendment of the articles of association). Adreslijst N.V.B. 1921-1922 (foundation). Sportkroniek 9 mrt. 1925, p. 311-312 (overview at the 25th anniversary). Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 14-15 feb. 1930 no. 32 (Royal Decree no. 255; foundation and extension). Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 13 mrt. 1934 no. 51 (Royal Decree no. 259; amendment of the articles of association).

	Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 23-24 apr. 1937 no. 77 (Royal Decree no. 263; amendment of the articles of association). Sportweek 26 aug. 1937, p. 23 (Saturday A.V.B.). Het volk 7 okt. 1940, p. 9 (reserves in District Amsterdam Sunday).
Remarks	Ajax (Amsterdam) was registered as 32 - 1911. The amendment to the articles of association of 1912 concerned the establishment of associate members; that of 1918 minimum age of 16 for working members.

Appendix 2 Foundations of new clubs in the Netherlands between 1850 and 1940. All sport clubs are included even the ones that didn't become member of a sports association. The numbers are only indications. Most of the new clubs disappeared in the following years because of cancellations, financial problems or mergers.

Period	Gymnastics	Hockey	Korfball	Chess	Lawn tennis	Football
1850-1860	-	-	-	18	-	-
1861-1870	16	-	-	16	-	-
1871-1880	61	-	-	22	-	2
1881-1890	169	-	-	23	21	70
1891-1900	133	15	-	54	39	189
1901-1910	325	36	89	60	53	685
1911-1920	299	34	347	68	438	2201
1921-1930	417	82	638	159	293	3567
1931-1940	342	132	487	393	322	3350

Appendix 3 The national sporting organizations of the six sports of the Sport Database. The dates and K in brackets indicate the year in which Queen Wilhelmina gave permission to use the adjective Koninklijk (Royal).

Gymnastics

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1919: K.) N.G.V.	Neutral	1868	1987
(1966: K.) N.C.G.V.	Protestant Christian	1910	1999
R.K.N.G.B.	Roman Catholic	1921	1987
N.A.S.B. afd. Gymnastiek	Socialist	1926	1941
K.N.G.B.	Neutral	1987	1999
K.N.G.U.	Neutral	1999	

Football

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1928: K.) N.V.B.	Neutral	1889	
R.K.F.	Roman Catholic	1916	1940
N.A.S.B. afd. Voetbal	Socialist	1926	1940
C.N.V.B.	Protestant Christian	1929	1940
A.V.B.H.	Communist	1932	1935

Korfbal

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1938: K.) N.K.B.	Neutral	1903	1973
C.K.B.	Protestant Christian	1920	1973
N.A.S.B. afd. Korfbal	Socialist	1926	1940
K.N.K.V.	Neutral	1973	

Hockey

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1938: K.) N.H.B.	Neutral	1898	
N.D.H.B.	Neutral	1911	1941

Chess

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1935: K.) N.S.B.	Neutral	1873	

Lawn tennis

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1939: K.) N.L.T.B.	Neutral	1899	