



Media and Body Discourses: Television and Discourse of Footballers' Athletic Body

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Abstract

Modern footballers are identical with athletic body. Famous players like Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar Jr., Zlatan Ibrahimovic have sturdy body shaped by years of discipline. It is no surprise if famous footballers are also selling off field as models and ad stars. Historically, the athletic body among footballers is a new phenomenon. It may have started to become a common phenomenon since the decade of the 2000s. In a certain era, we can trace that athletic football body shape is not a single norm. But when television shows dominate the flow of football world information, the athletic footballer's formality is idealized and made as the only measure. In the perspective of Michel Foucault, the phenomenon of dominance of athletic body images among footballers can be seen as one form of discourse that became a strategy of operation of power domination.

Keywords: Body discourse; Football; Athletic body; Power; Television

Introduction

Footballer Gonzalo Higuain moved from the club Napoli to Juventus with a reputation as one of the most dangerous strikers in the world, which he has carried for almost a decade. Transfer value is quite fantastic, 75 million pounds or about 12.5 trillion Rupiah. That means he values almost six times the amount of the Republic of Indonesian people's money which is stolen by an electronic KTP corruption congregation, which is said to be accounted more than 30 people.

Players with fantastic price tags are usually greeted with great buzz. However, in a friendly match in which Higuaian's debut in Juventus uniform, the Argentine received scorns from social media. The case was none other than the stomach of Higuain who was considered too distended.



In the 2015/2016 season, Higuain was named the top scorer in the Italian Serie A after for his 36 goals. That number is just less than two points from the total game of every Serie A club in one season. That is an incredible achievement. In comparison, his closest rival in Serie A, Paulo Dybala "only" scored 19 goals. But, the record was soon forgotten as soon as Higuain emerged with a conspicuous stomach. 36 goals a year removed by the appearance of a fat bell for several minutes.

Modern footballer is synonymous with athletic body. Famous players like Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar Jr., and Zlatan Ibrahimovic, have burly bodies formed by years of discipline. No wonder famous footballers are also selling out of the field as advertising models and stars. In addition to the big names on field, their body shape was "ideal" to display. Hence, Higuain's appearance in overweight condition became an anomaly in professional football. The athletic body has become a norm for modern footballers, especially in the popular leagues broadcasted in different parts of the world such as the English Premier League, Serie A Italy, Liga Primera Spain and German Bundesliga.

Historically, athletic body among footballers is a new phenomenon. It may have started to become a common phenomenon since the decade of the 2000s, although at that time we can still find the players whose body shape is not included in the athletic category. They were either too fat or too thin. Legendary striker Matthew Le Tissier, midfielder Paul Gascoigne, and defender Gary Pallister have too much fat for the current footballer size. While midfielder Steve McManaman's body actually looks too "thin" to duel with defenders who usually are tall. In the goalkeeping position of the 2000s decks, the owners of "overweight" bodies can still form long lines. Most strikingly, the most iconic footballer in history who was active in the decade of 1980 to the 1990s, Diego Armando Maradona, has a body that would look too fat for the standard size of nowadays' footballer body.

In 2010 era, we actually still found some footballers whose bodies were not in the proportional category. Lionel Messi is a special case. He was born with a hormonal disorder that made him too small. But because of his shocking talent, Barcelona was willing to spend much on his hormone treatment (Hunter, Graham, 2012). Although now he is not considered too tall, Messi's body looks more solid and athletic. Peter Crouch, Angel Di Maria, and Luca Modric are examples of footballers who are too thin, which in this case are caused by genetic factors. Instead we will find it difficult to find active footballers with excess fat in big football leagues.

How can having athletic body become the norm in contemporary football? We can easily designate knowledge about nutrition and fitness as trigger of this trend. However, by tracing the history of football development we can get an idea that the knowledge internalization about nutrition and fitness in football are not always related to the production of the athletic body's discourse on athletes.



As mentioned earlier, the athletic body among footballers is a relatively new phenomenon. In a certain era, we can trace that athletic football body is not a single norm. But when television programs dominate the information flow of world football, the athletic body of footballers is idealized, then made as one and only measure. In Michel Foucault's perspective, the domination phenomenon of athletic body among footballers can be seen as form of discourse which is the strategy in operating domination of power.

In the athletic body's phenomenon of football, the discourse about the athletic body is legitimized by the integration of science into football, particularly related to health and nutrition, as well as statistics. Health and nutrition knowledge controls the behavior discipline, exercise patterns, food intake and lifestyle to form an athletic body, which has a major effect on the player's fitness level. Increased player performance after taking the discipline to form an athletic body is shown by the statistical records of appearances in the field.

As a control mechanism, besides punishment, also occur to footballers who fail to apply discipline consistently. A striking case occurred to Brazilian Ronaldinho Gaucho. After three extraordinary years at Spanish club Barcelona, Ronaldinho began to lose focus in maintaining discipline. His profile has dropped dramatically from the winners of various prestigious competition titles and the best player two years in a row, becoming a player who had difficulty getting a place in the Barcelona first team. Press coverage at the time highlighted a photo of Ronaldinho focused on his stomach that looked fat and no longer athletic (Baskett, Simon, 2008). The case is like giving a warning to the footballers, that a legendary Ronaldinho ability can be suddenly useless when still in his golden age due to is carelessness in keeping his stomach size.

As mentioned earlier, discourse is a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic in a particular historical period. Because we only have knowledge about something if there is meaning to it, then the discourse produces knowledge (Foucault in Haryatmoko, 2016-2: 66). In the world of football, the integration of science in football has in fact happened at least since the 1950s. But the meaning produced is not merely an athletic body formation. In other words, in the previous era knowledge of athletic body formation was not relevant.

Legendary coach Helenio Herrera is known as one of the pioneers of the science integration in football. When dealing with the Spanish giant Barcelona (1958-1960), he involved himself in all aspects of his team's preparations, including controlling the players' diet (Wilson, Jonathan, 2008; 77). In addition, he also routinely performed various planned psychological treatment patterns to motivate his players. One of his former players called Herrera a good psychologist (Wilson, 2008: 79). In the present era, it is common for coaches who are involved in complex matters outside of tactical preparation. But what Herrera did at the time was a breakthrough.



In the 1960s, in two different places and in approximately the same time frame, there was an interesting tactics development in football. In Ukraine, a coach named Viktor Maslov developed the most influential tactic in history, which is referred to as pressing (Wilson, 2008; 69). By pressing, the players are instructed to reduce the space and time for the opponent to control the ball by bothering them as quickly as possible when the opponent gets the ball.

In the Netherlands Rinus Mitchel developed the most famous football strategy in history, called *totaalvoetbal*. This strategy combines cohesiveness and individual skills to dominate ball possession and produce surprising maneuvers. The foundation of *totaalvoetbal* is similar to the Maslov's pressing strategy (Wilson, 2008; 93). When losing the ball, players lock up the opponent to run out of time and space to control the ball.

This pressing tactic sounds simple indeed. In reality, it requires team discipline and teamwork, also high stamina resistance, because the players must move continuously throughout the game. Innovation by Maslov and Mitchel is only possible because of the background of the development of science in the era of the 1960s and its integration into football. At that time the world had experienced a period of calm for several years after World War II. Well-developed nutritional knowledge and sports science (both legal and illegal) are well advanced for building players' stamina to be able to run for 90 minutes (Wilson, 2008; 90).

What Herrera, Maslov and Mitchel did, inspired football coaches to this day. But the discourse produced is an improvement in physical stamina and strength among footballers, not an athletic body discourse. The *totaalvoetbal* iconic player, Johan Cruyff, has a wiry body, which in size now looks worrisome.

In Foucault's conception, discourse provides the language for making statements (ways of representing knowledge) about specific topics in certain historical periods (Haryatmoko, 2016-2; 3). In the Herrera, Maslov and Mitchel eras, the discourse of athletic body formation has no correlation of meaning with truth represented in the world of football. Then, since when did the discourse of athletic body formation become relevant in the world of football?

As mentioned earlier, until the 2000s we could still find players whose body shape were not included in the size of an athletic body discourse. But in this era, it was clear that the athletic body discourse among footballers began to become a kind of norm. Attention to nutrition and sports games that primarily aims in hefting the body, is also increasing. This new focus on athletic body shape was marked by the arrival of Arsene Wenger as Arsenal coach in August 1996, which will have a major influence on the preparation and fitness of the players.

One of Wenger's first policies at the London club was to eliminate the habit of drinking alcohol, tightening everything that went through the players' hulls, also giving vitamin and creatine injection to improve fitness (Palmer, Myles, 2008). In addition, he



was also rumored to get rid of chocolate snacks from the team bus in incoming match days. Wenger's idea enhances the fitness and stamina of the players he gets from the Japanese diet tradition, which he learned when he coached a local club, Nagoya Grampus Eight. Specifically, he called the body shape to describe the diet in Japanese culture.

"All life activities are linked to health. Their diet generally centers on boiled vegetables, fish and rice. No fat, without sugar. If you live there you will know that in Japan there are no fat people," said Wenger (Lawrence, Amy, 2006). Wenger's special attention to the player's body building aspect is reflected in the designation of Philippe Boxiel as a staff. This person is an osteopath, an alternative medical field that deals with manipulation of muscles and bones.

The start of Wenger's regime in Arsenal is not far from the skyrocketing name of footballer David Beckham. This last name debuted at the senior level for the Manchester United team on April 2, 1995, at an age not even 20. Since then his name continues to climb and is considered one of the most potential young players.

Beckham has a beautiful face and an athletic body that makes him quickly become a teen idol. He is certainly not the first footballer to have an athletic body. In previous generations, for example, there was Paul Ince whose body was as sturdy as army. But it was only during Beckham era that the body of a footballer was exploited in such a way by the media.

In the course of his career, Beckham's popularity and financial success stretched on and off the field. As a player, he has some special abilities that are considered the best in the world of his time. Outside the field he transformed as a fashion icon, and back and forth into a model of various products. Start from soft drinks to underwear. He achieved various nicknames, ranging from the world sex symbol to popularizing the term of metrosexual man. Her hairstyle is an example for men, her facial expression when doing a free kick modeled on children in other parts of the world. His name is even familiar among people who do not like football.

Beckham is called the most famous footballer in history. He is the first global superstar from football. Pele and Maradona, two players who are often considered the best in history, are global football stars. But, Beckham is not just a football star. He is a global celebrity from football. What distinguishes the Pele and Maradona era from the Beckham era is television broadcast technology.

Television actually began to touch football since September 16, 1937, when the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) broadcast a major team match against the Arsenal substitute team, at Highbury Stadium, London (Kardi, Dika Dania, 2016). In 1954, the World Cup in Switzerland became a live global football program.

A lot of change in the face of football began in 1983, when the ITV (Independent Television) station reached an agreement with the authority of the English Football League Football League to broadcast live Premier League matches, through a £ 5.2



million dowry for two years (Simkin, John, 1997). This value jumped dramatically in 1988, with the amount of £ 44 million Pounds for four years. The nominal involved in this agreement shows the magnitude of the potential profit from live football.

In 1992, English football authorities FA (Football Association) renewed the Premier League by holding a Premier League whose broadcasting rights were valued at £ 304 million for a five years (Timeline, 2003), held by Sky station. The renewal of the agreement in 1996 required Sky to pay money of £ 670 million.

The moment around 1988 to 1992, in which football dealt deeply with the television broadcast industry, was often regarded as the opening of the industrialization phase of football. Football has truly become a global spectacle. The exploitation of football by the media did not stop at the action in the field, but to various aspects of the personal lives of footballers.

In the field, television camera technology has reached such a level that it can highlight various details very well, such as the expression of players. Camera technology has been able to present slow detailed reruns so the viewers can watch the players' sweat splashing when in action. Television presents things that cannot even be seen by the audience at the stadium. Outside the field, everything players do is important. The way in dressing is evaluated, the haircut becomes a trend, all the knickers worn are recognized by the public.

Medium is the message. All social and cultural changes cannot be understood without knowledge of how the media works (McLuhan, Marshall and Fiore, Quentin, 2001; 26). The dominance of television in the football show replaces the position of the print media, also to change the content that may be displayed by the media. In the era of print media, football news delivered through texts revolves around match reports and final results. In the television era, purely visual textual content like in print media is no longer possible; because it is too slow to be relevant and effective (McLuhan and Fiore, 2001; 6). Through television, events in the field and the final results of the game can be known instantly. The media needs other content that is relevant to the characteristics of television that is faster than media text. For that the exploitation of the other side of football becomes important. Coverage on the field is not enough. Television cameras began to penetrate the lives of players off the field and other things that are trivial.

Without the right media technology to deliver it, news that is trivial is impossible to exist ... readers cannot make trivia a daily matter (Postman, Neil, 1986; 6). In the era of print media, it is impossible for football news to develop so far as to deal with players' girlfriends or boyfriends, the form of players' stomach or hairstyles. The body shape of Argentine legend Diego Maradona who tends to be fat and midget had never been a long talk in the era of print media. The community did not have the media to express attention to such trivial matters. But this kind of thing is relevant in television



media, where discourse is delivered primarily through visual portrayal (Postman, 1986; 7).

With a detailed level of media exploitation, the body is no longer just a biological framework, but has become a social body; become a discourse field that is arranged in such a way. The body of the footballer becomes a regulated object. Power, which primarily tends to discipline and produce through mechanisms that take place at the micro level of social relations, presents discourse that is legitimized as truth or meaning. Athletic body shapes that were previously not relevant to the discourse of scientific integration into football, in the era of television became relevant, even becoming a single norm. Television allows the audience to recognize the details of the footballer's body.

In this era Arsene Wenger and David Beckham became relevant. Wenger represents the image of a successful modern trainer as it benefits from the science of the body. Beckham is an ideal target for television culture as well as a source of legitimacy for athletic body discourse.

Discourse is a system of knowledge that provides information about social technology and governing technology which is a form of power in modern society (Haryatmoko, 2016-2; 3). Physical improvement, as Wenger did at Arsenal through knowledge of nutrition, muscle and bone, became the legitimacy of technology governing athletic body discourse. Likewise, with the application of statistics to measure the performance of footballers who provide evidence of the results of the discipline of body formation. Because of this field has grown rapidly since the era of broadcast football via television.

There are three implications of operating discourse on the subject (Haryatmoko, 2016-2; 66):

1. The meaning is directed by the rules in forming discourse, then the discourse does not originate from the subject who speaks (Haryatmoko, 2016-2; 66). The footballers are obedient subjects. They follow discourse regulations governed by social technology and commanding technology that are spread in knowledge of nutrition and body, football statistics, popularity levels and so on.

2. Second, social identity is dispersed: fragmented subjects formed in role identities that are unstable by discourse formation (Haryatmoko, 2016-2; 66). The discourse of the athletic body destabilizes the image of the formerly pluralistic footballer body shape. The footballer becomes the subject formed in the identity of that role.

3. Third, the acquisition of social identity is the process of inauguration into the practice of discourse and adherence to the practice of discourse (Haryatmoko, 2016-2; 66). Obedient footballers and disciplines following the rules of discourse practice gain social identity as a professional, dedicated soccer player, improved appearance statistics, salary increases, become fashion icons and so forth.



Television that invests in large amounts to broadcast football is concerned with normalizing the physical appearance of footballers. Footballers are subjects who become a field of discourse operation. The productive nature of power is present in the development of various knowledge that has emerged since the dominance of football broadcasting through television. The dutiful footballers gain a social identity through financial success, popularity and titles.

Thus, since Arsene Wenger has put his influence on the world of football, the problem of forming an athletic body is relevant. Since David Beckham is present in the world of football, the plurality of soccer body shape is captured by single discourse of athletic body. Both are not subjects that produce discourse. Instead, they become enforcers of discourse rules that support the economic interests of television broadcasting. Wenger provides commanding technology, Beckham presents an ideal picture of an obedient and disciplined subject.

Literature Review

In this section two important concepts will be discussed in Michel Foucault's thoughts, namely power and discourse. The elaboration will be followed by a discussion of how these two concepts relate to each other.

1. Power

Foucault's conception of power is appreciated as an authentic idea. Previous thinkers, such as Max Weber and Karl Marx who viewed power as possessed or centered on a figure or class in power. While Foucault's conception emphasizes more on operational strategies and the properties of power. In his book *Discipline and punish*, Foucault explained power as, "... not about 'the center of power', not also a network of forces, but ... a distribution strategy of elements with different properties and levels" (Foucault, 1995; 307). According to this, we can understand that the power in Foucault's conception is not as the king's power that is centralized and owned, but as a strategy of spreading power through various elements and institutions. The aim is to discipline and normalize.

Clare O'Farell (Key concepts, without years of publication) mentions five points of Foucault's definition of power:

1. Power is not an object but a relation
2. Power is not merely repressive but productive
3. Power is not only owned by the state. Power is not something that is exclusively monopolized by government and state. Power is practiced through a social body
4. Power operates on micro-level social relations. Power is everywhere at every level of the social body
5. Power practices are strategic and war-like

Thus, power operates through social mechanisms that are built to ensure health, knowledge and prosperity (Foucault, in Haryatmoko, 2016-1; p. 9). That is the reason



why Foucault said that the practice of power is not merely repressive but can also be productive. In addition, because of its dispersed and operating nature in these various spaces, power cannot be focused on certain figures or groups, such as rulers or the state. First, the state does not cover all actual power relations. Second, the state can only operate effectively based on other existing power relations (Nugroho, Alois A., *Kekuasan dan pengetahuan*).

2. *Discourse*

For Foucault, discourse provides a way to limit the domain, defines what is being said, by giving status to an object - and by making it manifested, can be named and described (Foucault, 1972; 41).

Discourse is seen as a language in social praxis, or a language that becomes a social event. So, discourse provides language to make statements (ways to represent knowledge) about specific topics in certain historical periods (Haryatmoko, 2016-2; p. 3). Discourse produces or validates knowledge to legitimize the truth about a topic, as a practice of power control.

That way it can be said that discourse determines how an object or conversations theme is interpreted through defining and limiting its scope. This meaning applies specifically in a specific historical period. For example, the discourse of beauty standards defines and limits through various criteria to measure the physical attributes of a female figure. But these criteria are not fixed, but they can be varied in different periods of history.

3. *Relations between power and discourse*

As stated earlier, the power in Foucault's conception is a strategy of power spreading through various elements and institutions, with the aim of disciplining and normalizing. To that end, discourse acts as a working device that ensures the power of work and distributed effectively.

In a discussion of the history of punishment, Foucault said that the corpus of knowledge, techniques, "scientific" discourses were formed and twisted in the practice of power to punish (Foucault, 1995; 23). By that it is intended that the power to punish is legitimated by discourse about individuals who are defined as criminals and discourse on punishing techniques.

Research Methodology

This study uses critical paradigm, with qualitative approach. While the type of research undertaken is descriptive research, to explain the shift in the meaning of the body of a footballer through a historical review.



Results

The results of this study found that, historically the discourse of athletic bodies that today became the sole norm in football, is one among the plurality of body discourses among footballers. The discourse of athletic body as a single norm is a new phenomenon among footballers. Historically, the search shows that the athletic body discourse among footballers is not solely related to the development of human knowledge about the nutrient of body building technology fund.

Factors that trigger the monopoly of athletic body discourse among footballers is the development of television technology that has the ability to expose body details and any accessories worn by footballers. Knowledge of nutrition and the development of soccer statistics, becoming a technology of body control and giving legitimacy of truth to the athletic body discourse which exploited through the medium of television.

Discussion

The popularity of television media encourages the athletic body's discourse to become the single norm among footballers. With camera technology that enables high levels of exploitation of the body and every player's movement, the player's hallmark features are important part of the football audience's imagination on television. In previous media technologies such as print and radio which do not allow deep visual exposure, the player's body is not an important factor for audiences.

In addition to the "natural" nature of television media that has its advantages in visual exposure, the monopoly of athletic body shape discourse becomes relevant as part of the show business on television. Television football has become a separate industry field, which goes far beyond the scope of exploitation of print and radio media.

Conclusion

Based on discussion, the conclusion of this research is as follows:

1. Discourse of athletic body shape is basically one of the plurality of discourse of body shape among footballers
2. The discourse of athletic body shape among footballers is not always related to the development of knowledge about nutrition and technology of human body formation
3. Television, through the ability to expose the body shape and all accessories that are subjected to footballers, is a trigger factor that encourages the monopoly of athletic body discourse among footballers.

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