

# Soccer chief's plan to boost women's game? Hotpants

Friday 3 August 2012, by [CHRISTENSON Marcus](#) (Date first published: 16 January 2004).

Football's most senior administrator attracted the wrath of the women's game last night by suggesting female players wear tighter shorts to promote "a more female aesthetic".

Sepp Blatter, the president of the world governing body Fifa, said women should have skimpier kit to increase the popularity of the game. "Let the women play in more feminine clothes like they do in volleyball," he said.

"They could, for example, have tighter shorts. Female players are pretty, if you excuse me for saying so, and they already have some different rules to men - such as playing with a lighter ball. That decision was taken to create a more female aesthetic, so why not do it in fashion?"

Blatter's comments outraged leading European female footballers, and have threatened to undermine the sport, which has 30 million registered players worldwide.

Pauline Cope, the England and Charlton goalkeeper, said the comments were "typical of a bloke". "He doesn't know what he is talking about," she said. "We don't use a lighter ball for one thing, and to say we should play football in hotpants is plain ridiculous. It's completely irresponsible for a man in a powerful position to make comments like this."

Marieanne Spacey, the manager of Fulham, said Blatter's views were harmful. "Surely it's about skill and tactical ability first and how people look second," she said. "Ten years ago we did play in tighter shorts. Nobody paid attention then."

The Swiss national captain, Evelyn Zimmermann, called the suggestions "horrible". "You can't compare us with volleyball players and, apart from everything else, those shorts are uncomfortable."

Norwegian player Lise Klaveness said hotpants did not suit serious sport.

"As footballers we have to think practically," she said. "If the crowd only wants to come and watch models then they should go and buy a copy of Playboy."

Another Norwegian footballer, Solveig Gulbrandsen, said: "If I wanted to wear a bikini I would have chosen to play beach volleyball."

Women volleyball players wear tight shorts, and in beach volleyball, an Olympic sport played in bikinis, the regulations stipulate a maximum size for their uniforms.

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**P.S.**

\* The Guardian, Friday 16 January 2004 02.42 GMT

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/jan/16/football.gender>