



Conference Report

Discrimination and Homophobia in Sports

The situation in Denmark and Europe

Friday, 30 May 2003



EuroGames 2003

The Copenhagen EuroGames hosted a variety of activities, one of which was a meeting on homophobia and discrimination of gay and lesbian people in sport. 31 EuroGames participants from 11 European Countries attended this special event, as well as a panel of five experts. The need for more personal testimonies about the difficulties of gay sportsmen and women in today's sports, and the need to support gay and lesbian athletes when they 'come out' are only a few of the recommendations.

Ms Conny Schällicke, co-president of the EGLSF, officially opened the conference. She pointed out that the EuroGames are one of the necessary events to assure the visibility of gay and lesbian sports among the general public. Therefore the EuroGames are a sports event for all.

Advocacy work, in close connection and with the support of the European Commission, also plays a role in the work of the EGLSF. The EuroGames are reflecting this work for the gay and lesbian community.

The Danish-British-Swedish-Dutch panel consisted of the following people:

- Ms Anne Bus and Mr Hans Bonde, both researchers at Copenhagen University;
- Mr Tony Banks, human rights politician, British Member of Parliament (MP) and chairman of the Committee on Sports of the Council Of Europe;
- Mr Peter Jansson, professional handball player and former football player from Sweden.

The panel was moderated by one of the founders of the EGLSF, Mr Ben Baks, who currently represents the EGLSF at the Council of Europe. Mr Baks is also chairman of the Advocate for Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Athletes (GISAH) in The Netherlands.

Human rights and free access to sport services and goods in Europe

In his introduction Mr Ben Baks stated that from a human rights perspective combating homophobia and discrimination in sports is one of the advocate roles of the EGLSF. The EGLSF also plays an advocate role from a European Common Market perspective when monitoring application of the European Union's anti-discrimination directives, which should prevent national or international sport authorities from misusing their power. Withholding a license or an allowance from gay, lesbian or bisexual sports people or clubs on the basis of homophobia or discrimination should not be tolerated.

Researchers about homophobia, discrimination and aesthetics

According to Ms Anne Brus, homophobia does not affect gay people only. Heterosexual women and men in sports can be exposed to homophobia when their behaviour is not what people in general expect from them as women respectively as men. Homophobia in sports has many faces: silence, denial, claiming heterosexual superiority, attacking or harassing women and gay men.

These forms of exclusion occur in popular and professional sports, and even more so in physical sports.

Also the press, especially the conservative press or so-called 'tabloids', can have a negative influence on the image of gay men and lesbian women in sports. According to Ms Anne Brus, stigmatisation in the press makes it even harder for gay, lesbian and bisexual athletes to come out. Mr Hans Bonde brought a new and positive element to the discussion. According to Mr Bonde, homosexuality contributed to the aesthetics and masculinity in sport.

A European debate should be launched

From a human rights and political point of view, Mr Tony Banks stated that only a very brave football player would dare to say he or she is gay, and that until now no professional football player in the United Kingdom did. Professional gay football players would become outsiders as soon as they were to come out of the closet. That is a sacrifice politicians cannot ask individual gay or lesbian players to make, Mr Banks said. However politicians should start and stimulate the debate about homosexuality in sports. They also should initiate mechanisms of support for gay athletes. Mr Banks, who is a former UK Sports Minister, called upon gay, lesbian and bisexual athletes for their personal testimonies. These testimonies could bring the debate further.

Moreover Mr Banks stated that, being the Council of Europe's Official Reporter on the situation of gay, lesbian and bisexual people and on homophobia in sport, he recently sent a questionnaire to all the Sports Ministers of the Council of Europe member states. He asked them to indicate "whether they do anything against discrimination of gay, lesbian and bisexual people, and against homophobia in sport". His action is a consequence of the successful lobby by the EGLSF within the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for a Recommendation on this very issue. Mr Banks will use the input of this EuroGames conference, the feedback of the Sports Ministers and the little material that is available on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and homophobia in sport, as elements of his report to the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, later this year.

Professional gay football players still become outsiders

Mr Peter Jansson, a very popular Swedish football and handball player, has been threatened several times because he had come out of the closet. In his personal testimony he sketched the difficulties he went through, but also the consequences of his step for the official Swedish Sports Confederation's anti-discrimination policy. His step made the National Sports Authority aware of homophobia-related forms of discrimination.

Peter underlined the necessity of awareness-raising campaigns, not only in sports but also in education.

Mainstream sports authorities should not run away nor keep silent

In the debate that followed, the significance of role models in sports, whether professional or not, was unanimously agreed upon. Heterosexual professional players should use their role model function to be supportive, and should be

allies with gay, lesbian and bisexual athletes. Respect in sports includes respect towards and from gay and lesbian sports mates.

The debate also leads to the following conclusions.

Personal testimonies of gay, lesbian and bisexual athletes could give the current reports on discrimination and homophobia an extra dimension and could help stop the silence about and the denial of the problems that gays and lesbians face in sports. Personal testimonies could also prevent sports federations from ignoring these problems.

The influence of positive role models and visibility of gay, lesbian and bisexual athletes at sports events like the EuroGames should not be underestimated. Although this visibility may meet strong opposition, it is of major importance in influencing the agendas of mainstream sports organisations and in triggering the necessary awareness raising campaigns. Current anti-discrimination campaigns should also concentrate on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Jubilee conference and Munich EuroGames are next

At the end of the conference the EGLSF re-iterated the importance of the continuation of its advocacy work. The EGLSF also announced a follow-up to this conference. At next years' EuroGames in Munich, a meeting is planned on the FARE action plan against discrimination and homophobia in sport. On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the EGLSF, the EGLSF will organize a special conference in Amsterdam on Friday, 5 March 2004.



Introduction

The scene of the 8th European Gay & Lesbian Multi-Sports Championships **EuroGames** was Copenhagen (28 May - 1 June 2003).

Goal of the EuroGames is a Europe without discrimination and intolerance in sports. Sport ought to be an instrument for fair play, tolerance and integration. Therefore it is important to have a good visibility of gay and lesbian athletes.

Theme of the Conference

The aim of the conference is to provide closer insight into the situation of gay and lesbian sports in Denmark and the whole of Europe. The role of regular (non-) governmental national sports organisations, the influence of political conditions and the role of media will also be considered.

31 participants took part in the conference, amongst whom the official representative of the Swedish Ministry for Sports, representatives of the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association (DGI), and the representative of the FARE-partner Confederation of German Football Fan Clubs (BAFF).

Opening

Ms Conny Schällicke, co-president of the EGLSF, officially opened the conference. She sketched the importance of visibility of gay, lesbian and bisexual people in sports and welcomed the contribution of events like the Gay Games and EuroGames to the necessary awareness among the general public. EuroGames, she stated, is a real 'Sports for All' event. The European Commission supports this EGLSF-conference as one of the projects within the Football Against Racism Europe (FARE) action plan. She described the role of the EGLSF as a European advocate for gay, lesbian and bisexual people in the Europe of Sports.

The Copenhagen EuroGames is a wonderful opportunity for gay, lesbian and bisexual athletes to meet.

The Panel

The Danish-British-Swedish-Dutch panel consisted of the following people:

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- Mr Tony Banks, human rights politician, British Member of Parliament (MP) and chairman of the Committee on Sports of the Council Of Europe;

- Mr Peter Jansson, professional handball player and former football player from Sweden.

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Mr Ben Baks, one of the founders of the EGLSF and currently EGLSF-representative at the Council of Europe, welcomed the participants of the conference.

Human rights and free access to sport services and goods in Europe.

In his introduction Mr Ben Baks stated that from a human rights perspective combating homophobia and discrimination in sports is one of the advocate roles of the EGLSF. The EGLSF also plays an advocate role from a European Common Market perspective. A free and non-discriminatory use of sports goods and services in Europe is relevant, also for gay, lesbian and bisexuals. Freedom must be guaranteed for gay, lesbian and bisexual people to set up their own sports club or federation. The European Union's anti-discrimination directives should prevent national or international sport authorities from misusing their power. Withholding a license or an allowance from gay, lesbian and bisexual sports people or clubs on the basis of homophobia or discrimination should not be tolerated.

Ms Anne Brus is a Danish scientist at Copenhagen University who has been researching why the media consider it interesting to focus on lesbian women in sports.

Anne Brus declared that especially the conservative press („tabloids“) often have a negative attitude towards gays and lesbians in sports. This can affect not only gay people, but heterosexual women and men in sports as well, particularly with regard to their behaviour. Heterosexual women and men can be victims of homophobia, too, if they don't behave according to the generally accepted female or male role models. Therefore homophobia in sports has many faces. But in the end stigmatisation in the press makes it even harder for gays and lesbians to come out.

Let the Sportswomen be!

By Anne Brus

As a student at the University of Copenhagen, I studied how the Danish media treated sportswomen a couple of years ago. My motivation for this was a number of upsetting articles by Norwegian and Swedish researchers that all pointed out that sportswomen chosen to be members of elite teams in Norway and Sweden were singled out as lesbians by the written press in these two countries. Whereas the Norwegian and the Swedish press merely had chosen to insinuate and start the rumour that a sportswoman might be homosexual before, it now had become common that the press confronted the lesbian sportswomen with their homosexuality. This was especially current

within the so-called masculine sport, football.

Homosexual women are no exception in the world of sports...

But I find it alarming to learn that these women felt suspicion thrown at them and that they were exposed to ridicule in relation to their sport because of this. In other words, the women often felt that they had to justify their sexuality in several ways only because they played football.

As I found no similar study of the Danish circumstances, it was natural to me to make a study of how the Danish media treated our best women football players. The interesting and gripping part should be the game, not the sportswomen's private life or whether they preferred men or women as partners.

My studies showed that Danish female football players were not stigmatised because of their sexuality in general like their Norwegian and Swedish colleagues. Unlike in Norwegian and Swedish women's football, the Danish team has not been particularly interesting to the press because of lack of international success. Compared to their Norwegian and Swedish colleagues, the Danish female football players have not been exposed very much by the media. The Danish women's handball team players have very much indeed, however. Whereas the Danish press had the image of being more positive to female football players and female sporters in general, this image is no longer spotless after two players from the women's handball team were singled out as alleged lovers.

Fortunately, the story about the women's handball team players was not left unanswered. A debate followed about the principles of the Danish weekly magazine concerned, "Se og Hør", and about whether it had overstepped the line and intruded into the women's privacy. The focus of the discussion quickly changed, however, to whether the women involved needed help to come out of the closet and if it was in the interest of the public to know if the women were lesbians or not. But I find that the discussion about these women should also be about the homophobia behind such assertions and opinions about sportswomen's assumed homosexuality, because it is not only the women's possible homosexuality that will be discussed. A number of myths about sports have also resulted from homophobic attitudes, and they may affect the women who practice those sports.

According to the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's description of women as "the second sex", the exposure of the Danish women's handball players' sexuality in the press also could be a sort of wish for men to be the first sex in team handball and women the second one. Some of us recall that not many years ago, life was too short for women's team handball.

For that reason, homophobia is not necessarily a phenomenon that

only strikes gay people. Also heterosexual women can be exposed to homophobia when their behaviour is not what people in general expect from them as women. A sport like team handball is a sport of physical touch, which, in many ways, is not in keeping with the standards for what is womanlike. A homophobic attitude may be a powerful weapon that can be used for changing the focus from the women's hard-won success in the playing field to a lack of recognition of their feats. All of them are lesbians anyway!

In this connection, the term "lesbian" is used to define the limits of what acceptable womanlike behaviour is like. When a woman is called "a lesbian" without necessarily being so, she has deviated from the standard of womanliness.

This way of stigmatising and ridiculing active sportswomen goes back to the end of the 19th century. At the time, doctors were free to define and to debate the sex and the body, because society in general needed the profession of medicine to solve a number of health problems.

To the Danish Doctor Clod-Hansen the body was not only something that could differentiate between man and woman on the basis of biological differences. The body also emphasised the natural superiority of the man. So, sports were considered to be a field in which men could strengthen their masculinity. In the context of sports, men acquired a masculine identity through their performances, the competition and the unloading of aggression that were all part of the game. As for women, their participation in sports very much depended on the limits within which doctors put women's physical performances. So, several doctors advised women not to go in for sports, because they believed that physical training was dangerous to a woman's body, particularly to the ability of reproduction.

Therefore, women's participation in athletics in particular became the subject of a public discussion about what sports women could and should do. The claims of that athletics would be suitable for the highest and longest jumping and the fastest running were a breakaway from what was considered womanlike, and against medical arguments and presumed limits for what a woman's body could stand. The public discussion implied that sports made women more masculine and changed them into men. At the same time doctors claimed that intensive exercising and competition changed a woman's body so that it was no longer considered sexually appealing to men.

In the beginning of the '30s the term "a heterosexual failure" (*) was introduced by the doctors. The term was used to describe the strong and muscular sportswomen's lack of sex appeal to men. According to the doctors, a woman who was a heterosexual failure was actually a man captured in a woman's body. In spite of this, the hint that the masculine woman's body made the sportswoman a lesbian was

strange. According to Kari Fasting, a Norwegian sports researcher, it was not a big step to later assume that if a sportswoman was not attractive to men, she had to be attractive to other women instead.

When a weekly magazine like the Danish "Se og Hør" exposes a handball team ace for being a lesbian, medical and moral reasons are no longer used as arguments against women's participation in sports. On the contrary, the resistance is manifested in a homophobic attitude towards women's sports. Well, fortunately, "Se og Hør" is not the only weekly magazine covering women's sports in the press. As Alice Riis Back has emphasised in her book about women, sports and the media, the picture of active sportswomen is not as unambiguous as it used to be. Women can be cool as well as muscular and skilled in sports without being exposed to homophobic attitudes. Even so, the connection of active sportswomen and homosexuality is a step in the wrong direction as long as the women do not want to come out of the closet by themselves. So, let the sportswomen be!

Hans Bonde

Mr Hans Bonde, Dr Phil., is a professor for Sports History at the University of Copenhagen and has done research into the field of masculinity and sports. He has published a book about the famous Danish athlete Niels Bukh who is claimed to have been gay.

Mr Hans Bonde explained that Niels Bukh established a gymnastics club for boys, which was suspected to be supportive of homosexual activities. Mr Hans Bonde stated that everywhere one wants to find homophobia and discrimination, one will find it. He suggested the physicality of most sports was part of the problem. As soon as it is known that one of the participants is gay, the whole game changes. On the other hand, Mr Hans Bonde pointed out that homosexuality contributed to the aesthetics and masculinity in sport.



Mr Tony Banks, MP, is a former Minister of Sports in the United Kingdom and currently chairman of the Council of Europe's sub-committee on sports of the Parliamentary Assembly. Mr Tony Banks is also the reporter on the motion for a recommendation on the position of (young) lesbians and gays in sport in the 43 European countries, and he is elected member of the British Parliament.

Until now most of the people did not think about homosexuality in sports and they also did not think there was any necessity to make a theme of it, Mr Banks pointed out. Mr Banks considered football in detail. From a human rights and political view, only a very brave football player dares to say he is gay. Professional gay football players become outsiders as soon as they come out of the closet. Politicians have to stimulate the debate about homophobia in sports, and they should initiate a mechanism of supporting gay and lesbian athletes.

Mr Tony Banks

From 1997 to 1999 I was the Minister for Sport in the Labour government. I was then appointed by Prime Minister Blair to represent the government on England's bid to host the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

Currently I chair the Council of Europe's sub-committee on Sport. In that capacity I am here, and as part of the work I am doing on a hearing to report for the Parliaments Assembly on Homophobia in Sport.

The preparation of this report follows a report for a recommendation presented by our Dutch colleague Ms Ans Zwerver supported by a large number of European Parliamentarians. I hope we will be able to debate the final report in Strasbourg end next year (2004).

I have written to all the Sports Members covered by the Council of Europe asking for their comments and details of any policies or initiatives their governments might have taken to address the issue of homophobia in sport.

When I was the British Sports Minister I attempted to open up a debate on the same subject. My intention was to encourage a campaign against homophobia in sport along similar lines to our domestic campaign against racism. I didn't achieve my goal mainly because most sport bodies maintained either there was no need for a campaign or there simply wasn't a problem to address. When a sports body tells you homophobia isn't an issue in their sport - it could well be that they are convinced there isn't a problem. Alternatively it could be they don't want to find out and would prefer you to go away and leave them alone. Well I haven't gone away and don't intend to do so until I have helped to stimulate a grown up debate on something which directly affects a large number of people and ought to concern us all. However it is necessary to address a number of obvious questions. I get asked frequently: Why bother to create a fuss about - homophobia - After all, unlike racism in sport, at the top levels, no gay or lesbian athlete is openly complaining.

In this situation there are a number of subsidiary questions.

- Is there a lack of complaints because there aren't any gay / lesbian athletes?
- Well if we accept there clearly are many gay /lesbian athletes why the absence of complaints? Particularly in professional sports.
- Does it mean that gay / lesbian athletes are unaffected by homophobia or is it because they don't care?
- Or- more significant - is it that they are unwilling to say anything for fear of public/ media reactions and a possible loss of sponsoring?

SO: even if we accept (as we do) that there are gay/ lesbian sportsmen and women and there is homophobia in sport (as there is) the next fundamental question is

Does it matter?

I can only speak as a non-gay individual, but it does seem obvious to me that unless an athlete is totally focussed he/ she will not be able to contribute at the very highest level of their sporting ability. It surely must be difficult to fully concentrate if the athlete is not able to be open on something as crucial as his/ her sexuality. Athletes under any stress, whether caused by relationship problems; money worries, injuries, bereavements etc.; etc; are athletes whose nerves will not be 100% concentrated on their sport. To spend ones life trying to avoid detection and may be having to pretend to be something you are not, can ultimately be destructive. At the very least it will make life unpleasant and unhappy and sport should never be about that -

other than the short-term unhappiness brought about by your local links poor results, which tend to wear off in time for the next match. Sport should always be about optimism whether you compete or whether you are as spectator. So anyone involved in sport should be concerned about homophobia, because it is highly certain that the gay /lesbian athlete is not giving of their best and that means all of us are deprived.

The sport I know best is football.

Sad though it might sound, football for me is not just a sport that I follow enthusiastically; it is also a major factor in my social life. Those of us closely involved in football know there are quite a number of gay footballer at the professional level - I say know when more accurately I should say believe - but such is the nature of the game that any of them who opens declared it would likely experience an hostility worse than that forced by the first black footballer to break into the highest levels of the sport.

The fact is, there is no way of hiding skin colour in order to try and avoid discrimination and hostility in sport. However it is possible to hide sexuality all be it at a personal loss to be individual.

It's a similar situation for gay /lesbian supporters who are often forced to sit and listen to homophobic comments from those around them with little or no possibility of the stewards or police taking any action. In Britain we have made it illegal to shout or chant racist abuse but there are at present no laws to ban homophobia abuse.

In truth Homophobia is still present in many societies in Europe (and far more so everywhere). The same is true of racism.

Attitudes in sport tend to reflect the strength and weakness prevalent in the wider society. Sometimes we can use sport to give a lead at, because of its profile, influence change in the wider society but to do this there needs to be a general acceptance in society that change is necessary. We haven't eliminated racism in our societies but we have taken political action to deal with its excuses because of the political will.

In the case of homophobia there is a long way to go in both our societies and in sport before a similarly robust stance is taken to deal with it.

Article in the TIMES newspaper last month written by a former national footballer - Tony Cascarino. The article was needed - 'Only an extremely brave player would dare admit to being gay.' A chunk of Cascarino's article related to one well-known gay footballer in England named Justin Fashanu, who, in 1981, became the first black player to be transferred for one million pounds. Justin Fashanu ended up killing himself. It appears he got little in the way of support from his teammates, his family or his team managers. It was a sad and tragic fate and Tony Cascarino summed up the situation well, when he wrote. This is the measure of the problem we are facing here the

comments related to football, but they are more or less true in respect of all other team sports.

In such circumstances it is a lot to ask from a gay/lesbian athlete to make a stand. But unless and until they do we will find it difficult to confront the problem of homophobia in the same robust way we deal with racism.

It is the duty of concerned politicians and groups and individuals who believe homophobia to be unacceptable to stimulate the sort of debate that demands political action be taken.

Open debate is the first step towards resolution and part of my job at these 8th gay & lesbian EuroGames is to engage debate to assist the preparation of my report for the Council of Europe.

Discrimination on the bans of sexual orientation is totally unacceptable. It is a violation of personal freedom and individual rights and that applies as much in education's employment as it does in sport.

Sport - despite its competitive element - is an undoing boarding experience and this is particularly true in the case of team sports. If people feel or indeed are excluded, because they are discerned as different then a vital avenue of championship and social interaction is denied to them.

They are therefore pushed further to the fringes of society:

Role models: Martina Navratilova, Billy Jean King

I will be using this conference as a way of assisting me to the preparation of my report for the Council of Europe and I am grateful to the organisers for having invited me.

Peter Jansson

Mr Peter Jansson is a very popular Swedish football and handball player. He influenced the anti-discrimination policy of the official Swedish Sports Confederation.

Mr Peter Jansson talked about his official coming out via radio and about the sports problems he had to handle because of his sexuality. He also highlighted his fight with the national Sports Confederation.



Mr. Peter Jansson

It's a pleasure to be here in Copenhagen and to tell you about my experience of having been one of the official homosexual sportsmen in Sweden and about my work against discrimination in sports.

I have been doing sports all my life, especially football and handball. I am one of the hidden ones who don't exist, who is not allowed to enjoy sports under the same conditions as everyone else.

I have been fighting for my rights, and have even been hit to the ground while doing so, and today I still stand here on the barricade to tell my story to you.

- Many will say that they don't have any problems with this matter in their sport.
- And that they have never encountered problems with being gay in sports.
- Or that they don't have any gay sportsmen in their team.
- Or they might even say that theirs is not a sport for gay people.

You have all heard about stories from gay people and how they have been discriminated in sports because of their sexual orientation. I have not been asked to talk about this matter. What I want to talk about is how I have been able to change some people's views about homosexual athletes on all levels in Swedish sports.

My story begins with how I was asked by a Swedish e-mail based network of homosexual athletes if someone could stand up and talk about his or her experiences on the radio.

The point was that this radio programme was to be at 06:00, early in the morning. This radio programme was not to be broadcast at other times.

I participated in this programme and answered questions about my experiences within the sporting world. In this radio programme I accused trainers for making homophobic statements during the 90's.

I went out, publicly, talking about being homosexual and about all the prejudices and jokes that homosexuals are exposed to. In only presented my own point of view.

I only used my first name and didn't give the programme many thoughts until one day when on the way to training I suddenly heard myself talking about homophobia on prime-time radio.

At the same time my cell phone rang and a colleague from Swedish handball said: „I just heard you on the radio!“ I turned the cell phone off and denied as I have done for 15 years.

This was on Friday in the same week the first show had been aired. On Sunday at sports primetime, when everybody sits in front of the radio to listen to the sports news, I was on my way home; and again I heard myself talking about homophobia within the sporting world. A few minutes later someone called me from the Swedish Handball Federation and I just couldn't keep it to myself anymore. I told them that it was I talking on the radio.

As always in media it got blown up. I talked openly about the same issue to many different kinds of media. When I also spoke open-mindedly to the media about the cases of homophobia and discrimination which had happened to me during my career, and which had stopped me from living a life in harmony, they were amazed.

Is it true?

I started to research and to my horror I saw that, whereas different organisations had tried to approach the Swedish Sports Confederation during the last 10 years to highlight various problems, their policy programme did not the sexual discrimination issues.

Many had tried and didn't understand why they couldn't get a meeting with the Swedish Sports Confederation. I took the phone and called them and asked for a meeting the day after. I wanted to discuss homophobia, discrimination and homosexuality in sports, and I wanted to hear their ideas about these issues. Before they had time to say yes, I added that I would have a meeting with a journalist for one of Sweden's biggest newspapers the day after. After ten years of trying to get the Swedish leading organisation to listen, they said yes to the meeting.

Now they wanted to listen - thanks to the media --, and agreed to a meeting that organisations for homosexuals had tried to arrange for several years, without success. You can say whatever you want, but the media have a huge power.

In this meeting I managed to show the responsible people for the Swedish Sports Confederation to see the problems that homosexual athletes fight with daily.

I even got them to understand that we really exist in every level of sports.

This resulted in a debate-programme, showing all Swedes the problems that exist for homosexual athletes, and the Swedish Sports Confederation promised on Swedish Television to listen and take care of the problems. They promised things that homosexual athletes had demanded for a long time.

As a consequence of this television programme, more and more media opened their eyes and revealed similar problems all over Sweden.

For instance, there are issues between gay and lesbian trainers and players. It is a big problem when a Swedish football trainer says on live television that if you are homosexual you can only be a member of the team if you are good enough.

The same trainer said in the same television show: „If there is a gay player, and this affects the team spirit, I will remove him.“

This announcement got big headlines and personally made me mad. Even more media joined in, and I had contact with more authorities. Finally even the Swedish minister Mona Sahlin took part in the debate and more or less told the Swedish Sports Confederation that they had to listen.

During this time there also was an ongoing debate in the media about homosexual athletes and their problems, and all the Swedes took part in it.

The Swedish Sports Confederation is Sweden's highest determining organ within sports, and it couldn't do anything about homophobic expressions or discriminating expressions, because their program was probably not at all written with the needs of homosexual athletes in mind.

The Sports Confederation asked me how they should address this issue in their programme. I even had to hand them the vocabulary - apart from the words sexual orientation.

It took me two seconds to come up with a concept which is now established in the Confederation programme. Now, in 2003, for the first time nobody in Sweden can discriminate or express themselves homophobic without being punished by Sweden's highest sports organisation.

Of course this doesn't take away discrimination or homophobia within sports, but at least now we have written rules on these issues in Sweden.

The most important thing is that, except from writing in the programme about sexual orientation, education will be provided to the different district-organisations in the country.

The Swedish Sports Confederation will produce educational materials and help to educate leaders, and I have demanded that they produce materials and work actively against homophobia and discrimination.

Only by showing the problems and talking about them will we manage work against homophobia. By speaking out and by educating leaders when they are young, we will finally succeed.

I have taken the steps that so many others should have taken earlier in their careers: the step to life in full harmony that also greatly improves the athlete's presentation.

But now it is up to the Swedish Sports Confederation and the Government to do what they have promised: to produce a sports society in which everybody can work under the same conditions without discrimination. I have initiated a discussion and I hope that the responsible instances in Sweden take this issue seriously now, as they did when they addressed the media.

The first of December 2002, I was knocked down from the barricades against homophobia and discrimination within sport, when I got exposed to bodily harm which was likely to be a directly consequence of my deep engagement in this case.

But today, the 30th of May 2003, I have climbed up again, and this time I will not give up until we have realised a sports world in which we are not discriminated or exposed to homophobia.

Debate

In the following debate the particular importance of role models in every kind of sport was discussed. Not only gay, lesbian and bisexual athletes should be supportive towards the homosexual community. Heterosexual players could use their publicity to promote a better understanding of and respect for all athletes regardless of their sexuality.

Therefore sport events like the EuroGames are extremely important to set a positive example to other homosexual people, but also to heterosexuals. The debate also focussed on the current anti-discrimination campaigns and the urgent need to include sexual orientation issues.

Mr Ben Baks asked the keynote speakers how homosexual athletes could be supported with their coming out.

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| <i>Peter Jansson:</i> | <i>It must begin with the youngsters! Education is an important key to the fight against discrimination.</i> |
| <i>Anne Brus:</i> | <i>It's more difficult for men than for women to come out.</i> |
| <i>Tony Banks:</i> | <i>Women are seen as objects in the media and society.</i> |
| <i>Hans Bonde:</i> | <i>Women are sexualised. They don't want to come out because of selfishness</i> |

Mr Ben Baks asked about the integration of homosexuals in sports.

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| <i>Hans Bonde:</i> | <i>Sports is a bastion of masculinity and heterosexuality</i> |
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Peter Jansson: agrees with that

Mr Ben Baks asked how that could be changed.

Peter Jansson: You have to try to get the government on your side.

Mr Ben Baks wanted to know what they could do to change the current situation and to help athletes with their coming out?

Tony Banks: Football players have to do things they don't want to do, because otherwise it will be a lead to their sexuality if countries don't have tableaus.

Peter Jansson: I needed 15 years, due to the fact that I don't have any backing, but now I feel well.

Hans Bonde: Nobody should walk through the world always saying what kind of sexuality he or she has.

Tony Banks: It doesn't depend on their sexuality, but you can only be free if you can behave freely, and this includes to kiss or to touch the one you love.

Mr Hermann Brehm from Munich, Germany, wanted to know from Mr Hans Bonde why the gay community organise EuroGames or Gay Games.

Hans Bonde: It's fantastic if you don't feel alone on this world, but there is also the danger of non-integration into the general public.

Mr Chris Baker: Congratulation on your opinion, but can you give a reason why Mr Banks or the major of Copenhagen welcomed the EuroGames?

Hans Bonde: no answer

Tony Banks: It's always difficult to have an opinion on something in which you are not involved.

Ms Conny Schällicke wants to know from Anne Brus what kind of subjects she studied and how she suggests changing the situation for gays and lesbians?

Anne Brus: Prejudices have to be reduced, so that women who play football are not automatically labelled as lesbians.

Hans Bonde: You don't have to take everything so seriously.

Ms Sabine Malecek from Germany remarked that it is important not only to consider professional athletes but also athletes in general, and wanted to know what all of us can do to avoid being explicitly labelled as a homosexual.

Peter Andersen: Today it is much easier to get involved into sports for young homosexuals.

Tony Banks: There is a connection between famous professional players and the popular sports. You can promote homosexuality but it is always good if there are famous athletes who fight against discrimination and especially against homophobia.

Anne Brus: Homosexuals don't want to be role models, but they want to be popular because of their sport.

According to Mr Peter Andersen Mr Hans Bonde ignored that his own experiences could not transmit to homosexual experiences. Gay sports? Men don't erotise if they take a shower together, but most school children assume they do.

Hans Bonde: I know that I simplify, and it is right that men are used to see other men and that they don't erotise every time.

Mr Carsten Overby wanted to know whether it's right that hetero-phobia provokes homophobia?

Tatjana Egegeling: Everything has to start at the childhood. We have to improve the education in school and sport clubs.

Beppo Brehm: Officials have to start setting a good example before athletes will do so.

Tony Banks: Sport is very important for the general public and therefore role models are really important, because everyone is speaking about them all the time.

Conny Schällicke: It would be a great help if officials would do something against discrimination - e.g. Franz Beckenbauer or Pele.

Tony Banks: Pele did say something against discrimination but everyone forgot it very quickly.

Mr Ben Baks thanked the keynote speakers and the participants for the attendance and summarised what had been discussed. He confirmed the continuation of the advocacy work of the EGLSF and announced the next conference planned at the EuroGames in Munich in co-operation with FARE.

Jubilee conference and Munich EuroGames are next

At the end of the conference the EGLSF re-iterated the importance of the continuation of its advocacy work. The EGLSF also announced a follow-up to this conference. At next years' EuroGames in Munich, a meeting is planned on the FARE action plan against discrimination and homophobia in sport. On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the EGLSF, the EGLSF will organize a special conference in Amsterdam on Friday, 5 March 2004.

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