

It shows a series of impressive highlights, ostensibly featuring members of the French men's squad. Later, the digital trickery is revealed: viewers have actually been watching the women's team. A paper published last month in *Sport Management Review*, a journal, had participants watch videos of men and women playing football. Viewers rated the men's videos more favourably than women's—but the difference vanished when the players were blurred to hide their sex.

Yet another study, published in 2019 by Arve Vorland Pedersen, a neuroscientist and sports scientist at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, and his colleagues, concludes that the women are indeed playing a game that is subtly different—and considerably harder—than the one being played by the men.

The researchers start from the observation that women are physically different from men in many ways. Women are shorter than men (168cm v 182cm in a Norwegian sample). Female footballers are lighter (65kg v 76kg). Women are slower (4.84 seconds to run 30 metres, v 4.25), and cannot jump as high (36cm v 57cm). Those differences persist even among the most athletic members of each sex.



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