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Sport and the New Culture in the ‘Second Golden Age’: Amsterdam’s Sporting Entrepreneurs in the 1880s and 1890s

Abstract
In the second half of the nineteenth century, Amsterdam underwent important changes in its economic, social and cultural life and the city entered what is often referred to as its 'Second Golden Age'. Old elites gave way to new and a new more entrepreneurial culture emerged focused on mass, visible and consumable activities, including sport, in which the body played a central role. This was especially apparent from the late 1870s and 1880s when spatial changes within the city helped to ensure that sport was increasingly the location for new kinds of associational activity and the development of new products, all underpinned by the potential for profit. Entrepreneurs like Perry & Co., De Gruyter and the ASC were able to effect strategic combinations between the new body culture and consumerism, producing a range of new products and exploiting new technologies to create new markets. In seizing these opportunities, Amsterdam's entrepreneurs were also reproducing the concept of the trainable, measurable and consumable body.

Keywords
Entrepreneurs, Body Cultures, Amsterdam, Netherlands, Sport

As Amsterdam experienced a cultural and economic resurgence in the late nineteenth century and the patrician elite slowly faded from public life, to be replaced by a new merchant and financial elite, sport became an important new cultural product. Sport was a location that connected old and new elites, bodies, urban space and mass consumerism. In the shops of Perry & Co. and F.A.L. De Gruyter, sport goods became a profitable item to sell to a new group of consumers. As the Amsterdamsche Sport-Club (ASC) found out, the new fascination with sport, coupled with access to cheap urban space, could turn previously barren fields into sites of mass entertainment, visual culture and profit. In these conditions, entrepreneurial activity in and around sport flourished as entrepreneurs developed and sold new goods and services, created new competitions and sporting experiences and facilitated international links, not to mention engaging in 'dark' or illicit practices in some instances. Across a range of sports, local, national and international agents acted as cultural entrepreneurs expanding or improving access to sporting products.

An Entrepreneurial Field: Early Dutch Entrepreneurs in Sporting Historiography

Dutch financial and economic historiography after World War Two was 'obsessed' with why the Dutch did not experience a ‘classic ‘industrialisation”, as in Britain or neighbouring Belgium.¹ The role of entrepreneurship in the Dutch nineteenth-century economy has been criticized, with a mix of apparently poor or careless entrepreneurs, on top of an unadventurous national mindset, seen as contributing to the lack of any rapid industrial development.² However, as Wintle notes, these criticisms ignore that fact that many Dutch entrepreneurs were 'good at what they did', that they were more than simple ‘profit-and-loss calculators’, and were individuals whose actions were driven ‘by the culture in which they were embedded.’³ Part of this culture, towards the end of the nineteenth century, involved exploiting new niches and markets for sporting products. Yet, because of a currently small pool of academic sport history researchers in the Netherlands, the role of entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship in early Dutch sport has largely been peripheral to other research. Vamplew's call to reconsider the role of entrepreneurs provides a good opportunity to reframe existing work and to provide a representation of early Dutch
sporting entrepreneurs and products, be they not-for-profit entrepreneurs providing access to new sports, financial entrepreneurs seeking to maximize profits, or an amalgam of various forms and products.9

Both Willem ‘Pim’ Mulier and Baron Van Tuyll van Serooskerken can be placed in the field of not-for-profit sporting entrepreneurs who were involved in promoting new player products. In both cases, their involvement in the establishment of various competitions, leagues and associations, in providing new products and opportunities to engage in sport, mark them as important early Dutch sporting entrepreneurs. Mulier’s role is particularly well represented in Dutch sport history. However, as Luitzen and Zonneveld have shown, in addition to being a ‘pioneer, great promoter and organizer in early Netherlands sport, [Mulier is] an extremely unreliable historian … with his own agenda, not adverse to self-glorification’.5 Perhaps, like the best entrepreneurs, he had a flair for self-promotion.

Another prominent sporting entrepreneur was Baron Van Tuyll van Serooskerken who played a key role in the development of sporting activities and associations, although rarely, if ever, in a commercial sense. He was involved in establishing the Nederlandsche Sport periodical, in providing sporting space, and presiding over sporting associations and clubs.6 He ‘used his personal network and local power to support sport’, joining the International Olympic Committee in 1898.7 He also played an important role in developing sport in the Netherlands and was key to Amsterdam’s successful 1928 bid to host the Olympics.8 Such pioneers, provided a mostly not-for-profit entrepreneurial impetus for sport in the Netherlands, often framed by ideological motives mixed with a love of sport and a love of its social networks.

Amongst researchers that have considered financial and entrepreneurial activities in sport, Luitzen, Bollerman and Delhey have demonstrated how new products provided new opportunities to play. Wingfield’s invention of a transportable lawn-tennis box was important in promoting the development of tennis in the Netherlands, particularly amongst the wealthy. Around the 1880s, Amsterdam retailers started to offer tennis equipment for sale and tennis clubs became more commonplace, alongside the establishment of tennis tournaments. The national tournament, established in Wijk aan Zee in 1887, was both intended to promote the seaside resort to tourists and to help investors in the resort recuperate their money more quickly. Demonstrating entrepreneurial links beyond sport, Baron Van Tuyll van Serooskerken had an interest in both the company promoting the resort and the tournament itself.9

Stoffers and Oosterhuis demonstrate that while the Netherlands suffered from a ‘lack of a strong industrial tradition’ there were some enterprising Dutch cycle manufacturers as early as 1869.10 In Deventer, the Burgers factory was the ‘First Dutch Bicycle Factory’, but before 1914, it was English, German and American manufacturers who dominated sales.11 The cost of bicycles was largely prohibitive to all but the richest in society;12 equipment manufacture was a largely foreign affair, which saw existing companies from abroad expanding into new Dutch markets. An 1884 receipt from Lillywhite’s store in London shows that representatives of the Haarlem-based Rood-Wit club had bought two bats and a set of cricket stumps indicating the role of foreign products and merchants.13 London’s Bussey & Co. used the Arnhem-based outlet of Bosch, Zijlstra & Rupp to sell their products in the late 1890s.14 Other receipts show that cricket balls could be bought in the Netherlands, notably from Perry & Co. and F.A.L. De Gruyter’s stores.15 Sport, as Biddle-Perry notes with reference to the British market, was the ‘embodiment of fashionable modernity for new kinds of young urban male consumers’.16 In the Netherlands, young internationally minded Dutch men, who, to some extent, possessed a fashionable ‘Anglomania’ helped expand the international nature of the sport market.17

Sport required space and finding it was a central concern for early practitioners; it also became one for budding entrepreneurs. Zonneveld has shown how Dutch cycle races in the 1880s struggled to find space in the city, often using public spaces with unsuitable surfaces. In Utrecht, attempts in 1892 to establish a new sport complex failed for want of municipal investment, but a group of private investors picked up the idea and by 1895, a large sporting
space had been created holding sponsored cycle races, professional competition and women’s events. In 1896, the complex was sold to the Municipality for city expansion, as this was a more lucrative plan than hosting sport and was perhaps the intentional all along. In this instance, the entrepreneurial developers demonstrated their speculative nature and the transient nature of sporting space. It also underlines that entrepreneurs, such as those behind the 1892 venture, were not always successful and that ‘sporting’ entrepreneurs were not always interested in providing a durable sporting product.

Cricket’s early years in the Netherlands were marked by the need to find spaces in growing urban centres. The Amsterdam Cricket Club had an agreement to use parts of the Vondelpark after 1875 and evidence of contract negotiations for 1876 suggests that landowners were beginning to think about capitalizing on sport and space. This, however, was perhaps less to do with entrepreneurial spirit and more to do with members of the park’s board being favourable to the development of the game, showing the importance of influential networks. A report from 1893 suggests that finding space to play cricket was still an issue in the 1890s, as safety concerns, poor pitch conditions and new locations all played a part.

Piercey has also highlighted the importance of spatial developments in early twentieth-century Dutch sport. Football clubs frequently moved location, but by the mid-1910s, new mass stadia began to emerge in the Dutch cityscape. These stadia were financed by some of the best-connected individuals in Dutch society, and quickly became sites of entrepreneurial activity attracting vendors, both official and unofficial, who sold refreshments to spectators on match days. Those who invested in the ventures largely had economically liberal worldviews and an interest in extending similar discourses. Sporting entrepreneurs were neither socially nor culturally neutral, but through sport were reproducing discourses of power, control and capital within the city and, through the use of spatial segregation, observation and techniques of crowd management, within the body of the individual.

The 1880s: Amsterdam and its Second ‘Golden Age’.

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Amsterdam experienced ‘a breath-taking process of change’. From the mid-1860s, new developments in infrastructure and culture were often undertaken by private entrepreneurs. In 1864, the Paleis voor Volksvlijt was opened as a location for large industrial exhibitions. One year later, the city’s first large park, the Vondelpark, was established as a space to provide all Amsterdammers with access to greenery and leisure. The new park was constructed under the initiative of C.P. van Eeghen who believed that private investment and entrepreneurship could circumvent the inertia of the laissez-faire Municipal Chamber, and any potential arguments. If these ideas represented the first steps towards reorganisation, the completion of the North Sea Canal in 1876 provided Amsterdam with quicker access to international trade routes and represented a changing of the guard in the city; one where the old elite of the regents and nobility further withdrew from city life to be replaced by a newer, entrepreneurial elite. Despite such changes, a mass influx from the Dutch countryside in the 1870s created a shortage of housing and employment. While the Municipality hoped that private investors would resolve the housing problems, within a decade it became clear that this policy had not succeeded, producing only poor, piecemeal housing and few recreational spaces.

A new expansion plan in 1877 provided blueprints of where future streets, parks and squares were to be located, while leaving private developers to fill in the remaining space. Within the old city, the construction of a new central railway station began in 1882. It would be the first man-made barrier between the old heart of the city and the river IJ when it opened in 1889. Near the great expanse of the Vondelpark, the new building for the Rijksmuseum was finished in 1885 and the Concertgebouw opened in 1888. These new landmarks were intended to have a social purpose, to provide space for an increasingly cramped city to unwind and to
cement Amsterdam’s place as a world city.28 New entrepreneurs were not only attempting to shape the economic life of the city, but also its spaces, its cultures and its daily life.

It was not only in spatial terms that the city was changing. After all, this was Amsterdam’s ‘Second Golden Age’, one of economic expansion and cultural opportunity.29 The International Colonial and Export Exhibition, held in 1883, crowned a period of expansion and, apart from demonstrating the importance of an expanding colonial empire, demonstrated just how far Amsterdam had developed since the mid-1800s.30 Changes in technology permitted shops to become centres for consumer culture. New plate-glass frontages transformed them into smaller versions of the great nineteenth-century exhibitions, where the consumer could be tempted within to look and buy. The shopping street became a ‘hall of mirrors, [a] place which was made for an insatiable gaze, the delivery room of the new attitude to life, where love of products, identification with brands and narcissism became important characteristics.31 A new consumer culture was emerging where what one paid for said a lot about who one was.32 The new culture was dynamic, pluriform, visible and on a mass scale.

With developments in the natural sciences and new technologies of mass consumption and production, a new understanding of the body emerged where bodily appearance and functionality were central to a new mass culture; gymnastics with a competitive element became popular – sport.33 A variety of different clubs dedicated to sport and other physical exercise had already been established. In 1848, the rowing club De Hoop was founded and some of its well-to-do members went on to start the Amsterdamse IJsclub (Amsterdam Ice Club, AIJC) in 1864. Of the eight founders, five were captains or ship owners, and the AIJC was a place where old and new elites mixed while enjoying the entertainment of recreational or competitive skating. From the 1870s, gymnastic and swimming clubs provided a wider public with access to lessons and facilities, receiving subsidies from philanthropic organisations or the Municipality.34 Around 1880, the Amsterdamse Velocipede Club (AVP) was established and, from the early 1880s, first cricket and then football clubs became more popular, often using the Vondelpark for their activities.35 Demonstrating the importance of sport and exercise to the new culture of the city, the Algemeene Olympia-Vereeniging (AOV) was established in 1883 as a private organisation aimed at promoting physical education amongst Dutch boys and girls; they were also responsible for organising the wider sport activities in the Vondelpark.36

Given the central nature of consumerism and the body to the new culture, it is perhaps no surprise that sport and physical activities became an important area for entrepreneurial development. In the late nineteenth century, several entrepreneurial shop owners practiced ‘new strategies’ which brought a range of new goods to the market.37 Enterprising stores marketed sports and leisure products, which capitalized on the demand for imported goods. In Amsterdam, Perry & Co. brought table tennis, dominos and mah-jong to a Dutch audience.38 Both they and De Gruyter’s stores sold cricket balls to Dutch teams;39 and customers started to refer to the tennis ball as a ‘Perry-ball’, suggesting the effective nature of early sport marketing.40 F.A.L. de Gruyter produced catalogues for his store in the Leidschstraat highlighting the plethora of goods on offer. Between 1883 and 1892 the expansion of the sport and games sections in the catalogue suggest an increase in the market for sporting products in both scale and diversity. In the 1882 catalogue, there were 8 pages of assorted games, equipment and sport goods followed by illustrations.41 However, by the 1892/3 catalogue customers, could choose from 38 pages of fully-illustrated wares; between 11 different croquet sets, three pages of tennis racquets an extensive range of cricket bats, balls and protective equipment, footballs, ice-skates, as well as bicycles and their associated paraphernalia.42 De Gruyter developed a partnership with the Coventry Machinist Company in the United Kingdom and in 1886 was the sole agent for their bicycles in the Netherlands.43 Other British companies developed networks for selling bicycles, often including active Dutch bicycle-racers.44 In January 1887, the Coventry Machinist Company advertised that they would be manufacturing special machines for the Dutch market, which would be more suited to their cobbled streets. These machines would have a special stamp
affixed and customers were warned that they could ‘only’ be bought from their sole Dutch agent, Mr F.A.L. de Gruyter.  

Whether this stamp was indicative of a specific shift in manufacturing for the Dutch market or a hint that darker entrepreneurs were trading in counterfeit bicycles is unclear, but it highlights the increasing importance of transnational relationships between sporting manufacturers and retailers.

In October 1886, an advert proudly announced the expansion of F.A.L. de Gruyter’s shop in Amsterdam, which was to include a new area for ‘children’s play goods and sporting articles’. De Gruyter played an important role in facilitating the organisation of the 1888 Wijk aan Zee national tennis tournament and used this opportunity to sell his goods to those in attendance. Later he would invested in attempts by the Amsterdamse Wielerwedstrijd Vereeniging (Amsterdam Cycling Race Association, AWWV) to build a new cycle track, demonstrating that he was not content with only selling sports equipment. New shopping techniques and international networks allowed entrepreneurs to bring new sporting goods to the market, but they did more than just sell, they expanded participation in the sporting product through investment in sporting events and businesses.

[FIG 1 AROUND HERE]

The press also became a location for sporting entrepreneurship. While daily newspapers paid little attention to sport in the late nineteenth century, some periodicals aimed at those participating in sporting activities began to appear. The Nederlandsche Sport, established in 1882, was aimed at the Amsterdam elite with an interest in sports, especially horse racing, hunting and rowing. Nederlandsche Sport became a vital paper of record for a number of associations, providing participants and keen observers of sport with all the information they needed, as well as making advertising space available for the increasing number of retailers and manufacturers supplying sports and sports-related goods. The pre-1900 sporting press was small and for ‘insiders’; it focused on those who already participated in activities as players or administrators, rather than spectators. However, the news about sport and its paraphernalia became an important sporting product in itself and an agent in its development. By the early twentieth century, sport was becoming more central to the daily press and in 1902, John Coucke became the first sport editor at De Telegraaf. Around this time, a range of sporting publications emerged attempting to capitalize on this aspect of the new mass culture. In The Hague, De Sportkroniek appeared in 1901, in Rotterdam, De Sport first published in 1905 and De Revue der Sport became the first sport magazine to include photographs in the early 1900s. While sport publications in the late nineteenth century were largely for insiders, in the twentieth century they slowly became more orientated towards a mass, consumer audience.

**Sporting Entrepreneurs: The Amsterdam Sport-Club NV**

The Algemeen Handelsblad of 2 March 1886 carried a report reproduced from a recent edition of the Nederlandsche Sport announcing that ‘twenty-five of [Amsterdam’s] most well-known sportsmen have established a limited company…named: “De Amsterdam Sport-Club’’. The formation of sporting clubs was not new; however, the ASC was not a sporting club, but a sporting business. Not only were the participants well known, but they had put up a ‘more than sufficient’ sum of money with the explicit aim of developing ‘grounds in the near vicinity of Amsterdam for trotting, horse-races and other competitions and activities in the area of sport.’ Together, they had put 15,000 guilders into the new company, which was intended to both service the growing public desire to consume sporting products and to make a profit. The venture was a legacy of previous race meetings held in Amsterdam in the second half of 1885. In July and September, the grassy space behind the Rijksmuseum, which had been used to host the International Colonial and Export Exhibition of 1883, was transformed into a
racecourse, with races run in accordance with the rules of the Nederlandsche Harddraverij en – Renvereeniging (The Netherlands Trotting and Race Association). Three individuals who would invest in the ASC played influential roles at the events. Baron de Salis was named as ‘Clerk of the Course’, Mr C.J. den Text Bondt was the ‘Stakeholder’, and Baron Van Brienen van de Groote Lindt was the judge for horse races. Equestrian events were not new to the Netherlands, as races had been held on the Wieselsche Veld near the Royal Family’s summer residence of Het Loo around 1840. Other courses operated from the 1840s in different parts of the Netherlands.

In 1884, a short-track trotting race took place behind the Rijksmuseum as part of the International Agricultural Exhibition. Those who founded the ASC sought to use this undeveloped piece of land to create a site near the city centre, which could capitalize from the increasing interest in sport that had become a part of Amsterdam’s ‘Second Golden Age’.

Those that were named in the Nederlandsche Staats-courant as founder members of the ASC belonged to families that had a history of investing in clubs, societies and associations. Research into their lives is made more difficult by members of families sharing the same name across generations and the uncertainty of digital searches. However, it is possible to propose a representation of the networks of some of the investors. These illustrate how, in the 1880s, sport quickly became part of Amsterdam’s daily life and offered the potential for profit. Some investors came from aristocratic elites, including two of the officials from the 1885 race meeting. Baron A.N.J.M. van Brienen van de Groote Lindt, who had close links to the Dutch Royal Family, came from the old elite but was not averse to new trends in the Netherlands, especially sport. Throughout the 1880s, Baron Van Brienen van de Groote Lindt was one of the few patrons of Dutch cricket and hosted yearly representative matches at his country estate at Clingendaal in Wassenaar. Summer matches often saw English cricketers invited to play against the best that Dutch cricket had to offer. In addition, in 1882, he established a racecourse at his stately home, Clingendaal, near The Hague, which became an important location for elites to meet.

He was also a shareholder in the company charged with developing the Wijk aan Zee resort and in 1887 was a member of the organising committee for the national tennis tournament. Baron de Salis, the driving force behind the ASC, originally came from Chur in Switzerland and moved to Amsterdam in the late 1870s, but quickly ingratiated himself with local clubs and in 1882 was involved in the establishment of the Nederlandsche Schaatsenrijders Bond (Dutch Skaters Association). In 1890, De Salis died at the age of 48; reporting his death De Tijd noted that the sports world had ‘lost one of its most industrious members’. Many others in the list also had links to sporting activity or administration.

The ASC investors were part of an influential Amsterdam-based network. Van Loon was a member of a noble family and rose to prominence in the last decades of the nineteenth century as one of Amsterdam’s most important traders. W.G. Dedel was a direct descendent of Amsterdam’s regent elite and had gone to the private Noorthey school which afforded both a good education and a chance to interact with new sports made popular in England. At 21, he inherited a sum of 80,000 guilders after his father’s death and went on to study law in Utrecht. Both Féodor and Carl Eugen Bunge met Dedel at Noorthey and were part of a successful family of German merchants who operated in Amsterdam. Marez Oijens – who invested in the Concertgebouw development – as well as members of the Van Eeghen, Leembruggen, Dubourcq, and Wurfbain families, were all part of an elite who had played a leading role in the city’s financial development through their involvement in banks, merchant houses or insurance agencies.

Gerrit dDen Tex and Cornelis Joan dDen Tex Bondt, who each bought one share in the ASC, were from a well-known patrician family and were grandchildren of the academic and
political politician Cornelis den Tex. Gerrit was son of the former liberal mayor of Amsterdam and longtime member of the Municipal Chamber C.J.A den Tex. J.H. Schmitz was another investor with an influential father. F. J. W. H. Schmitz had been a major industrialist in the Wijnand Fockink liquor firm and, at one time, a member of both the Amsterdam Municipal Chamber and the Provincial States. He had also been part of the preparatory committee that brought the International Colonial and Export Exhibition to Amsterdam’s fields in 1883. D.A. Fock was grandson of Abraham Fock, president of the Nederlandsche Bank, and from a powerful Mennonite family who were involved in Amsterdam’s financial world. He was also the nephew of Cornelis Fock, who preceded C.J.A. den Tex as mayor of Amsterdam.

The investors in the ASC provide a snapshot of the changing nature of Amsterdam’s elite; they represent a mix of the sons of old aristocratic families and members of a new entrepreneurial elite linked to trade, commerce and political networks. This sporting business was part of a wider cultural network, which encapsulated all aspects of Amsterdam’s daily life, from manufacturers and merchants to politicians and sports administrators. Those who invested in the ASC were either prolific investors or were related to families from a range of different religious backgrounds who were participants in several social, cultural and financial organisations; in this regards sport was no different to other areas of cultural life. What was different about the ASC was that it developed locations that brought together emerging mass, competitive bodily cultures, and the new mass consumer culture.

**Constructing Sporting Space in the City, 1886-1892**

In the absence of an ASC archive, much of the story of the business is hard to locate. It is, however, possible to construct a sketch of some of the activities of the ASC using digitized newspapers, journals and memorial books provided via the Delpher platform. The land behind the Rijksmuseum was intended to become a new residential neighbourhood in the late 1870s, however, failures to agree on how to utilise the space had left it undeveloped in the mid-1880s. While residential plans were debated, the large, open space could be temporarily used for other activities. In partnership with the Amsterdam division of the AOV, the ASC was given access by the Municipality to the space behind the Rijksmuseum to develop sporting space, although, initially, how long this would last was unclear. As an organisation that charged a low entry fee and had an ideological goal, the AOV did not pay for the use of the land, while the ASC was required to pay 500 guilders for each day of racing on the land, as well as maintaining the boundaries and fences. The AOV were transforming the area into a ‘paradise for lovers of open-air gymnastics and games’, with cricket pitches, croquet lawns, tennis courts and facilities for football, as well as facilities that could be rented by clubs. In turn, the ASC focused on sports that required greater space, maintenance or money, in particular equestrian events, ice skating, athletics and cycling, bringing new products, ideas and opportunities to Amsterdam’s leisure market.

[FIG 2 AROUND HERE]

Central to the ASC’s summer calendar was the operation of the racecourse for national and international meetings; so too was benefiting from the new consumer spirit of 1880s Amsterdam. Following the success of the 1885 meeting, changes were made to the ground to ensure a more comfortable spectator experience. A gravel path was laid for the convenience of those coming by coach and different entry prices offered the opportunity to sit in the grandstand or cheaper entry to the course. In addition to the numerous trotting and horse races, the meetings also featured sporting products on show. The first meeting of 1886 saw a competition for the ‘most beautiful exhibition of saddles, harness etc.’, with the Amsterdam-based Verweegen & Kok outshining Davis & Co. of London due to the range of products available.
The ASC course was a place for competition outside the track. From June 1887, the ASC introduced the first pari mutuel totalizer in the Netherlands, providing stiff competition for visiting bookmakers who complained that this had resulted in a downturn in business. The opportunity for gambling not only generated revenue but also highlighted the growth of media interest in sport. In 1889, a new sport magazine *Het Sportblad* collaborated with the ASC in promoting an international meeting, distributing copies of its racing sheet (Tip) to all racegoers who bought a programme. In the late 1880s, the grassy space behind the Rijksmuseum represented the growing interest in sport and the increasing relationship between sport, space, consumerism and capital. It symbolized the changing nature of Amsterdam society as equestrianism, a preserve of the old elite, encountered a new spirit turning disused land into another location for entertainment and public consumption.

If equestrian events represented a mix of the old and the new, then athletic events represented the emergence of the new sporting culture in the city. In April 1886, the *Nieuws van de Dag* paper announced that the ASC was to hold a running race for skaters. The aim, it was said, was to provide Dutch skaters with a way of measuring their summer training, spurred on by a prize of 100 guilders. The competition was to be the first organised athletic event in the Netherlands, and by linking it to the more popular and established sport of ice-skating, the ASC, perhaps, hoped to attract the public by offering them the chance to see famous skaters in an unfamiliar event. However, attendance at the event was lower than expected, partly due to inclement weather. In 1891, the ASC held an international athletics meeting under the rules of a youthful *Nederlandsche Voetbal en Athletiek Bond* (Netherlands Football and Athletic Association). Reinforcing links between sport and the new consumer culture, the Sunlight Soap Company sponsored a trophy to be presented for the fastest Dutch athlete to complete a mile in the 1890/91 seasons - providing they broke the 5-minute barrier.

In the winter, the land used to hold equestrian and athletic events was transformed into a public ice rink, which also held competitions. New developments in sporting facilities elsewhere provoked interest, especially the use of ‘artificial ice rinks’ in Hamburg. Following a fact-finding mission to the German city, the AIJC board decided that it wanted to create its own artificial rink in cooperation with the ASC. However, despite many attempts and some crossover in personnel between the two groups, the partnership faltered. The ever-enterprising ASC then took the decision to create their own rink and transported water from nearby canals by steam engines to create an artificial pool in front of the grandstand, hoping that a hard frost would finish the work. The additional facility was popular and was often open when rinks operated by the AIJC had to close as the ice thinned; the sandy soil under the ASC rink seemed to keep their ice in better condition. Committed to providing the public with entertainment and spectacle, the ASC offered a music tent and refreshments, artificial lighting was set up so that the rink could operate during the evenings, and evening festivities, fireworks and illuminations all catered for those wanting more than a gentle evening on the ice. By 1889, the ASC had created a toboggan area and had brought in sleds from Canada for patrons to use. The development of unique attractions was part of the wider development of consumer culture in Amsterdam and a way of differentiating the ASC’s sporting space from others in the leisure market.

Recognising the popularity of skating and skaters amongst the Amsterdam public, the ASC invited famous skaters to provide exhibitions and organized competitions. In 1889, it invited skaters from Europe and the USA to take part in a four-day event in what was called a ‘world championship’. Although no individual skater won enough races to receive the overall prize, the event was a success for the ASC and met with international acclaim. In the same year, the ASC saw the opportunity to capitalize on its success by challenging Frisian professionals to compete against amateur skaters in a prize race-against-the-clock, offering 250 guilders to the first professional to skate 160 meters in under 11 seconds. Following failures in both of the ASC challenges, the *Nieuws van de Dag* remarked that while the natural ability of the Frisians was good:
… to reach the top, study and preparation are needed. The Frisians are undeniably born skaters … but they lack the time or the desire for systematic physical development. Daily preparation through running, climbing stairs, a regular lifestyle, effective nutrition etc. are the arduous demands to stay the best on the ice.  

The competitions were not only a form of mass entertainment but were an important way of measuring the body and reproducing the corporeal turn. The body of the athlete was something to be studied, judged, perfected and consumed.

Access and control of space was crucial in developing the sporting product and the consumable body. It also became another way for the ASC to make money by providing other clubs or organisations with space to play. Although the ASC had been given control, with the AVO, of the space behind the Rijksmuseum for a low rent, they were able to hire out the facilities and space to other clubs to turn a profit. In 1886, they partnered with the AVC to build Amsterdam’s first cycle track. However, the rent caused problems, first for the AVC and then for the AWWV who used the space in the late 1880s. In 1889, relations between the ASC and AWWV soured and the cyclists began looking for land on which to establish their own facility. The following year, having established their own company to finance a possible move, the difficulty of finding suitable space in the expanding city saw the AWWV return to the fields behind the Rijksmuseum for a rental sum of 700 guilders, as well as 2100 guilders towards the cost of refurbishing the cycle track. In the 1890 season, the ASC also hired its grounds to the Amsterdam Skating-Club for 600 guilders and to the AIJC for 3500 guilders. ASC shareholder, and AIJC member, Van Son tot Gellicum played an important role in ensuring that the move could go ahead. However, his financial involvement with the business profiting from the move saw some in the AIJC raise questions about his influence in the agreement.

In fast changing and expanding cities, space became a contested and valuable asset. This allowed the ASC, perhaps mindful of the fact that they were only able to the land it until residential plans were approved by the Municipality, to charge high rates to those who had developed a fascination with the sporting craze. In 1891, the Municipal Chamber agreed to begin developing the area behind the Rijksmuseum, which would finally end ASC’s temporary access to cheap land in Amsterdam. In 1892, the land used by AOV and the ASC reverted to municipal control and the ASC’s ability to profit from ‘money for nothing’ ended. With the agreement of the Municipality, the ASC held one final race meeting on Ascension Day 1892. The Algemeen Handelsblad reported that the day had been a ‘stunning celebration’, noting with more than a tinge of regret that the ASC would find ‘it hard to surpass the impression left by this cheerful funeral’. After 1892, while part of the space was still used by the AIJC, the ASC no longer held events in Amsterdam and were forced to adapt, buying and developing its own spaces outside Amsterdam in nearby Bussum, and later on the Haarlemmermeer. By 1901, they had stopped organising their own events entirely. In early 1903, the remaining shareholders decided to liquidate the company gaining a 44% return on the investment. The brief newspaper announcement does not provide details of who was a shareholder at the time of the liquidation or the amount of money they received, making it impossible to ascertain the financial success, or otherwise, of the ASC. To what extent the Dutch sporting landscape in the late nineteenth century was profitable for entrepreneurs is an avenue for future research.

**Reproducing the Corporeal Turn in the New Amsterdam Culture.**

That sport was a location for entrepreneurship was because of a fundamental change in the centrality of the body to everyday culture and the creation of a new mass, visual and consumer culture within Amsterdam. The Amsterdam of the 1880s saw a period of entrepreneurial activity in clubs, societies, businesses, and cultural developments. It was a period where new technologies changed the way people shopped; the physical space of the city changed and the
street became part of a wider visual consumer culture. Sport was part of this corporeal turn and entrepreneurs - such as De Gruyter, Perry & Co., various newspapers and magazines and the ASC - found that there was an emerging market for sports and sport-related goods and services. This new market for domestic or international sports products, as well as new forms of competition, information and entertainment also provided new possibilities for dark entrepreneurs and sharp-practice; official agencies could be circumvented, monopolies exploited and the opportunity for conflicts of interest existed. Such practice could also provide the impetus for new companies who hoped to do things better, cheaper or more independently, even if they did not always succeed.

Amsterdam sport in the 1880s was part of a wider shift between older and new cultures. The ASC was one organisation where a complex network of individuals from old aristocratic families and those of the newer commercial elites could profit from and reproduce the corporeal turn in everyday life. They were individuals who were concerned with art, science, music, education and spatial development, as well as sport, but could link new forms of bodily culture to the new culture of mass, visible consumption. In this way, those who created new sporting products, whether darkly or in full view, were part of wider cultural and social changes, in which perfecting the body and consuming its results became increasingly important. Sport was inextricably linked to consumerism and the new mass culture. By providing new competitions, products, sports and locations to practice, Amsterdam’s sporting entrepreneurs were helping to reproduce the new corporeal consumer culture within the streets of the city and within the body of the individual on a previously unseen scale.

2 Ibid., 123-5.
3 Ibid., 125-6.
7 Ibid., 146. [Author Translation]
8 Ibid., 147-52.
10 Manuel Stoffers and Harry Oosterhuis, ‘Ons Popularste vervoermiddel’ De Nederlandse fietshistoriografie in international persepectief, BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review 124, no 3, 2009 402.
11 Ibid.
13 Receipt in Noord-Hollands Archief (N-HA), Archive 1736, Haarlemsche Cricket Club Rood en Wit te Haarlem, 2-26, Bestuurstukken, Box 3, 1882,1884.
Receipts in Noord-Hollands Archief (N-HA), Archive 1736, Haarlemsche Cricket Club Rood en Wit te Haarlem, 2-26, Bestuurstukken, Box 3, 1882,1884.


Ibid., 164


W.C. ‘Het aanstaande Cricketseizoen’ in Nederlandsche Sport, No 559, 08 April 1893, 9.


Piercey, Four Histories about early Dutch Football, 38-40.


Piercey, Four Histories, 38-40.

Van Vonderen, Deftig en ondernemend, 77.


Auke van der Woud, De Nieuwe Mens: De culturele revolutie in Nederland rond 1900, Amsterdam: Prometheus, Bert Bakker, 2015), 36, 32-40. (Author’s Translation)

Van der Woud, De Nieuwe Mens, 39.

Ibid., 113-114.


Roger Miellet, Honderd jaar grootwinkelbedrijf in Nederland, (Zwolle; Catena, 1993), 28. [Author Translation]

Ibid., 30.

Noord-Hollands Archief (N-HA), Archive 1736, Haarlemsche Cricket Club Rood en Wit te Haarlem, 2-26, Bestuurstukken, Box 3, 1882,1884.

Miellet, Honderd jaar grootwinkelbedrijf in Nederland, 30.

F. A. L. De Gruyter’s prijs-opvouw voor 1883-1884, ([n.p], [n.p], c.1883), 31-45.

F. A. L. De Gruyter’s Complete Prijs-Courant 1892-1893, ([n.p], [n.p] 7th edition, c.1892), 7-44: In the same catalogue, De Gruyter illustrates how his store had expanded over the previous years to incorporate adjacent properties. He also produced a special sport-related catalogue available by request. Ibid., 252-254, 1.

‘Advertentien’ Nederlandsche Sport, no. 198, 15 May 1886, [n.p.]

Zonneveld and Luitzen, ‘The Tea Lord Cyclist’.

Coventry Machinist Company, ‘Waarschuwing’, Nederlandsche Sport, no. 235, 29 January 1887, 11. [Author Translation]
The investors were researched using online genealogical records [https://www.genealogieonline.nl/], cross-referenced against the Bevolkingsregisters of the Amsterdam Stadsarchief (available here [https://archief.amsterdam/indexen/bevolkingsregisters_1874-1893/zoek/index.nl.html]), as well as the use of newspapers and secondary sources. To avoid a host of internet addresses in the references, online genealogical and Bevolkingsregister searches will not be repeated.

These include Ankersmit and Bundten who sailed in the 1880s, see ‘Koninklijke Nederlandsche Zeil- en Roei-vereeniging’, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 07 September 1884, [n.p.]; Dudok de Wit was known as a fanatical sportsman, see his obituary ‘Stadsnieuws: C.A.A. Dudok de Wit’, *De Tijd*, 30 June 1911, [n.p.]; and Van Son tot Gellicum, who was a member of the AIJC, see J.F.L. de Balbian Verster, *De Amsterdamse IJsclub 1864-1914; gedenschrift bij het 50-jarig bestaan*, (Amsterdam: [n.p.], 1915), 55.

Van Vonderen notes the first membership list shows the same happened when the AIJC began in 1864. Van Vonderen, *Deftig en ondernemend*, 192.

See [https://www.delpher.nl/].
