

# FAIR PLAY: ITS ORIGINS AND MEANINGS IN SPORT AND SOCIETY

Roland Renson

*Faculty of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Sciences, K.U. Leuven, Belgium*

Review

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## Abstract:

Modern sport originated in Great Britain as a cultural product of modernity, emphasizing equality and competition. Fair play was the moral creed of the new sporting ethos, created by 19<sup>th</sup> century upper and upper-middle class Englishmen. Modern sports were forged in elite public schools such as Eton and Rugby, where self-government was a pedagogical innovation and where Spencer's 'survival of the fittest' was part of the ideology. The thesis presented here is that fair play was advocated for the simple sake of survival in these rough games, which were gradually standardized and coded. Thomas Hughes' novel *Tom Brown's schooldays* disseminated the new sports creed and Tom Brown and his headmaster Thomas Arnold of Rugby School became role models, who inspired a whole generation, including Pierre de Coubertin. Fair play was the watchword of the gentleman amateur and the notion came under pressure when rugby and Association football were spread to the working classes. Professional players were considered by the defenders of amateurism as spoilsports, who no longer played the game for the game's sake. The question is asked whether fair play has become an anachronistic survival of the old amateur ideal and whether the postmodern professional sport scene - as a legitimate branch of show business - should be guided by a code of professional ethics?

*Key words:* fair play, modern sport, betting, public schools, sport ethos, amateurism, professionalism

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## Introduction

Fair play is a worldwide understood concept, which found its origins in sport. Fair play is not only an essential element of sport, it has also become a more general philosophy of respect for others and respect for rules, whether on the sporting field or in business or other competitive endeavours. Publications such as Sigmund Loland's *Fair play in sport: a moral norm system* (2002) and the creation of a wide range of national and international fair play committees, trophies and prizes, underlines the relevance and importance of fair play for sport and society. This review article examines the origins of the fair play notion and links it to the origins of modern sport in Great Britain.

The traditional forms of games and recreational activities of 'Merry old England' (pre-industrial Britain) were often linked to the church calendar and had a highly ritualized character. The rules varied widely from one place to another. These traditional physical contests were often chaotic and violent in nature, with opposing players from contiguous villages and towns or from different town sections. A surviving example of such a rough type of game

is, for instance, the yearly Shrovetide football match in the town of Ashbourne in Derbyshire. Hugh Hornby has very recently given an excellent overview of the fifteen still existing forms of the so called 'festival football' in his book *Uppies and downies: the extraordinary football games of Britain* (2008).

Modern sport, on the contrary, is characterized by a more rational and orderly approach. It was generally accepted that modern sport was shaped on the playing grounds of the British public schools in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Recently though, some sport historians are challenging the 'exclusive' public school origin of both Association football and rugby (Inglis, 2008). Modern sport can be defined as:

"... physical activities of a recreational and competitive character, in which one tries to conquer either one's own physical limitations (the Olympic motto: *citius, altius, fortius*), or an external obstacle (opponent(s), natural obstacle such as a mountain, etc.) according to a pre-agreed code of behaviour (fair play, rules, etc.)" (Renson, 1980, p. 16).

Fair play originated in Great Britain as part of this new sporting ethos. From there it was exported to the European continent and elsewhere in the world.

The first generation of European sporting zealots, such as Pierre de Coubertin in France, were fascinated by this new British sporting way of life, which they perceived as a new form of practical morality. In his 1897 work with the striking title *A quoi tient la supériorité des anglo-saxons?* Edmond Demolins wrote:

“Even when not working, the Englishman has a need for effort: either by practicing canoeing, cricket, football; he will accomplish a difficult and dangerous climb, for the sole reason to have conquered a difficulty (p. 373)”.

Another anglophile, the German author Rudolf Kircher, wrote, in 1927, a book entitled *Fair Play: Sport Spiel und Geist in England*, in which he stated that one cannot understand modern sport and its fair play spirit without understanding the global context of English society:

“Sport is play, but the concept of ‘play’ stretches far beyond the domain of sport. ... The play spirit [Spieltrieb], also among the Englishmen, expresses itself not only in muscular games, it permeates deeply the cultural life of the whole population ... English sport is directly and indissolubly linked with the whole life of the nation. ... If one destroys the play spirit of the English, then one destroys the spirit of the nation (pp. 11-17)”.

This theme was recaptured by Hans Indorf in his 1938 work *Fair Play und der englische Sportgeist*. Again, fair play was seen as an idiosyncrasy of English society.

### What’s in a word?

The word *fair* stems from Old English *faeger*, akin to Old High German *fagar*, meaning *beautiful*. The word *play* stems from Old English *plega*, akin to Old English *plegian*, which means *to play*. This is equivalent to Old High German *pflegan* and Middle Dutch *pleyen*. The Dutch verb *plegen*, *to commit*, and the German *pflegen* still exist, but the Dutch term for *play* is *spel*, with its verb *spelen*, related to the German term *Spiel* and verb *spielen* (Gillmeister, 1993).

The word *game* is Middle English, from Old English *gamen*, which is akin to Old High German *gaman*, meaning *amusement*. The old term has survived in *backgammon*, a game in which pieces are sometimes forced to move backwards. The word *game* can also refer to animals that are hunted for sport or food. It would be interesting to look at *Key words*: the way(s) in which these two meanings of *game* are interconnected. When we consider Game Laws in Great Britain, we see that they are concerned with the legal rights and controls that ex-

ist with respect to a variety of animals. There is no overall definition of *game*; rather, it has been defined in a number of Acts of Parliament. For example, the 1831 Game Act included hares, pheasants, partridges and grouse. Deer were added for the purpose of the 1860 Game Licences Act, while hares and rabbits were defined as *ground game*. On the other hand, there are no absolute property rights in living wild animals (foxes, badgers, lynxes, etc.) (Collins, Martin, & Vamplew, 2005, p. 132). If we look at the classical sports encyclopaedias from the Belle Epoque period, *The encyclopaedia of sport & games* for example, edited by the Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire in 1911 and presented in four volumes, we find that around 70 to 80 percent of the entries concern all sorts of animals that can be hunted, not only in Europe but throughout the world. Even in a ‘blood sport’ like hunting, principles of fair play were respected, and a distinction was made between *fair game* (open to legitimate pursuit, attack, etc.) and *forbidden game*.

### The development of modern sport

Sport historians like Manfred Lämmer, Ingomar Weiler, David Young and several others have dispelled the myth that the ancient Greeks were the inventors of fair play. The French archeologist and historian Paul Veyne (cited in Weiler, 1991, p. 55) stated that the concept of playing within a predefined set of rules referred to as *game* seems to be an Anglo-Saxon invention, whereas the ancient Games were trying to imitate the brutal reality of war instead of trying to respect a set of artificial rules.

Sport sociologists have also helped with trying to destroy the fair play myth of the ‘ancient masters’:

“Ancient Greek sports were based on a warrior ethos and involved traditions of *honour* rather than *fairness*” (Dunning, 1971, p. 83).

“The boxers of Olympia were not classified according to weight any more than the wrestlers were” (Elias, 1971, p. 102).

One can already find traces of a moral concern about play and games among the humanists of the Renaissance period, such as Desiderius Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives who were once colleagues at the famous Collegium Trilingue in Leuven. The Spanish scholar Vives was deeply shocked by the violence of his time, and disapproved, for example, of games being used for military training. In his ‘Six laws of play’, which he laid down in his 1538 publication *Linguae Latinae exercitatio*, he stated (in the fifth law) that:

“No game should serve to raise anger to dispute between fellow players, but the players must be, throughout the game, companions, cheerful, joyful and mirthful, nor must there be any trace of deceit, or sordidness or avarice” (cited in Renson, 1976, p. 9).

Peter McIntosh, in his pioneering work *Fair play: ethics in sport and education* (1979, pp. 20-21), noted that Richard Mulcaster, headmaster of Merchant Taylors' School in London from 1560 to 1586, was another who thought football could be made to serve educational and moral purposes.

In his *Homo ludens* (1938, p. 12) the famous Dutch scholar Johan Huizinga wrote critically about the play element in contemporary sport and about its origin:

“Though human beings have indulged in such activities [physical contests] since the dawn of time, these only take on the character of organized games to a very slight degree ... there are, however, other forms of contests which develop of their own accord into ‘sports’... That this process started in 19<sup>th</sup> century England is understandable... The structure of English social life had much to do with it. Local self-government encouraged the spirit of association and solidarity, ... the absence of obligatory military training, ... the peculiar form of education ..., and finally the geography of the country ... Thus England became the cradle and focus of modern sporting life.”

### From betting to fairness: modern sport as a metaphor for equality

The sociologist Norbert Elias (1971, p. 101), father of the *civilization theory*, has shown that a greater emphasis on the enjoyment of *game-contests* and the *tension-excitement* they create, in particular, were to some extent connected with the enjoyment of betting. He also stated that betting played a considerable part in both the transformation of ‘cruder’ forms of ‘game-contests’ into sports and the development of the ethos of fairness in England. Peter McIntosh (1979, p. 2) has rightly claimed that fairness is an idea and, perhaps, also an ideal, implicitly or explicitly present in human relations. The expressions *fair comment*, *fair price*, *fair deal*, *fair trade*, by fair means indicate that fairness is not just confined to sport and fair play. Moreover, “fairness is related to justice and justice is fundamental ... to the survival of the human species”.

In a very original essay *Sport as a symbolic dialogue*, C.E. Ashworth put forward the thesis that if life can be considered a game, in which identities are established, tested, and possibly even abandoned, then games can be thought of as idealized forms of social life. Games - through their *rules* - establish identity with a consensual certainty that in social life itself, is not always possible. Therefore, Ashworth (1971, p. 45) considered sport as a *symbolic dialogue*: “Modern man insists on ‘equality’ in sport, i.e. on strict formal rules that make ‘extra-ability’ factors equal for everyone. This is because he defines himself as equal”.

Equality is also the second of seven fundamental characteristics of modern sport, identified by Allen Guttmann in his classic work *From ritual to record: the nature of modern sport* (1978). Guttmann’s seven characteristics are secularism, equality, specialization, rationalization, bureaucracy, quantification, and records. The principle of equality implies that everyone should, theoretically, have the opportunity to compete, and that the conditions for competition should be the same for all contestants. Equality of chances (creating equal opportunities at the start of the competition) is not only a democratic principle, it is also a necessary factor in building up tension about the outcome of a game and in making betting a worthwhile - though unpredictable - enterprise. This so-called equality of chances even applied - *in absurdo* - to fox hunting. Elias (1986, p. 168) believed that without such a ‘fair’ arrangement, the pleasure and excitement provided by the tension of the battle, which was and still is the main function of the sport of fox hunting, would be too short. Nevertheless, the sport gave rise to controversies between those who laid greater stress on the hunting itself (process-oriented) and those who laid greater stress on killing the fox (result-oriented) - between the advocates of ‘good sport’ and the advocates of ‘gaining victory’: “Without a figuration that was able to maintain for a time a moderately unstable equilibrium of chances for opponents, one could not expect to have ‘good sport’...”.



Picture 1. The principle of equality of chances in sport was even applied – *in absurdo* - in the sport of fox hunting. The picture shows a fox hunt from a print after Samuel Howett, engraved by Vivares and Merke and published on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1808, by Edward Orme, London.

It seems, though, that the principle of creating equal sides, as well as some incipient form of specialization and some control of violence had already been introduced in the game of football before the 18<sup>th</sup> century of ‘Egalité, Fraternité et Liberté’. In Francis Willoughby’s book of games: a seveneenth century treatise on sports, games and pas-

*times*, which was re-edited in 2003, one can read (p. 168):

“The players being equally divided according to their strength and nimbleness ... They usually leave some of their best players to guard the goal while the rest follow the ball.

... They often break one another's shins when two meet and strike both together against the ball, & therefore there is a law that they must not strike higher than the ball.”

Also, the principle of *handicapping* in sports such as horse racing and golf, and even in tennis, was introduced to ensure an equilibrium of chances between competitors of different weight categories or of different skill levels. The origin of the term stems not from *hand in cape* or *hand on cap*, as is often said, but from *hand in cap*. Originally, *hand in cap* was the name of a trading game, involving two traders and an umpire or matchmaker. A typical 14<sup>th</sup> century example could include the trade of a cloak for a hood. The matchmaker decides on the difference in value (*boot* or *odds*) between the two items to be traded. Both traders put their hands into a cap, and would draw them out at the same time. An open hand was an agreement to trade and a closed hand was a refusal to trade. In around 1750, the term handicap began to apply to horse races (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989; Crowley & Crowley 1999).



Picture 2. Rugby College, where Rugby football originated, became a mythical place. Pierre de Coubertin ‘sanctified’ Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby College, as the ‘father of modern sport’. Drawing by W. Thomas, 1870.

Allen Guttmann (2004, p. 98), who has insightfully analysed the nature of modern sport, has stressed that *modernity* was evident in the drive to create equal conditions in competitions - a drive that was taken to the extreme in France. At some French track-and-field events, contestants were handicapped on the basis of age: older runners were moved back from the starting line, one meter for every six months over the age of sixteen. As

Guttmann says, “... this experiment in equality now seems bizarre, but handicaps on the basis of weight are still taken for granted in horse races”.

### “To be a good animal”: modern sport as a metaphor for competition

In 1860, the British philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) published a small monograph, *Education: intellectual, moral and physical*, in which the following quote can be found: “People are beginning to see that the first requisite to success in life is ‘to be a good animal’; and to be a nation of good animals is the first condition to national prosperity”.

Whereas Ashworth (1971) saw modern sport as a metaphor for equality, Richard Holt (1989, p. 97) has shown that sport also served as a metaphor for competition, in the period that Britannia ruled the waves. The ideology of competition and of ‘survival of the fittest’ ran strongly through the middle years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when British goods conquered the world market. Sport enshrined the ethic of competition, or, more precisely, the ethic of fair competition, by which Britons prospered:

“Downgrading the mere *winning* of games in favor of *taking part* lay in the impetus this gave to widespread participation and to the idea of life as a constant struggle. By teaching boys how to lose as well as how to win with dignity, the wider competitive principle was strengthened” (Holt, 1989, p. 97).

The framework of rules, including those ensuring fairness, equal chances of winning for all contestants, became stricter. The rules became more precise, and surveillance of these rules more efficient; hence, penalties for breaking the rules became more difficult to evade (Elias, 1986, p. 151). J. E. C. Weldon, headmaster of Harrow School from 1881-1895, put it very explicitly: “It is my earnest desire that athletic games should be kept pure of all that may lower the spirit of the game. For the lesson of fair play in sport is the lesson of honesty in business ...” (cited in Mangan, 1998, p. 37).

Sport historian James Anthony Mangan (1981, 1998) has clearly linked the relationship between the games ethic and British imperialism, and has provided many relevant examples. One such example is a citation from John Astley Cooper’s 1916 article in the journal *United Empire*, entitled ‘The British imperial spirit of sport and war’. The war, in Cooper’s view, was a ‘muscular Christian’ crusade. The empire was the ‘holy land’ - not to be regained but to be preserved. Cooper was elated that when the sporting traditions of a whole people were trembling in the balance, “the inbred instinct of fair play came to the fore! A true sportsman detests a bully and German *Kultur* is the antipodes of the British imperial spirit of sport” (cited in Mangan, 1998, p. 55).

## The public schools and modern sport

Eric Dunning (1971, p. 134), while studying the social factors that have contributed to the development of modern football, has pointed out that from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century traditional forms of football gradually began to decline. Increasing industrialization and urbanization were the major causes. At the same time, newer models of the game, which were more appropriate for an urbanizing, industrializing society, were beginning to emerge in the public schools.

It is widely accepted that modern sports were forged in these elite public schools, where self-government was a pedagogical innovation and where the attitudes of fair play and gentlemanly conduct assuaged the tolerated violence on the playing fields. 'To play the game for the game's sake' was a reflection of the elite and gratuitous sporting ethos of true 'amateurship'. *To play the game fair for the sake of survival* is a statement I would like to make, in order to explain the instrumental or functional nature of the fair play ethos. Physical injuries were still common features in public school football games throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially broken shins due to the tolerated 'hacking' of the opponent with the iron-capped 'navvies'-leather boots that were originally worn by the canal diggers [*navigators*] and later by the railway workers. But gradually the 'mock-fight' component in the game began to increase at the expense of the 'real-fight' component. Football started to become a form of group contest, which provided, as much as possible, the pleasures of a real fight, but without its risks and dangers (Dunning, 1971, p. 144). Dunning's tutor, Norbert Elias (1986, p. 151), has described sports as "... game-contests involving muscular exertion attained at a level of orderliness and of self-discipline on the participants not attained before". At the same time, however, these sports came to embody a set of rules that ensured a balance between the possible attainment of high combat-tension and reasonable protection against physical injury. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was the boys themselves who were responsible for running their football, as most of the masters were hostile or indifferent to the game. In the spirit of *self-government*, conflicts had to be solved amongst the players themselves: "... it was left to players through their captains to resolve such differences - the referee in soccer was a late arrival on the field and was not given a whistle until 1891" (McIntosh, 1979, p. 118).

Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby College from 1828 to 1842, was often depicted - and even worshipped by Pierre de Coubertin - as the main agent of the school reform in England, and as the person who managed to deal with the endemic crises of violence between the schoolboys. However, it was not Thomas Arnold who entertained notions of the moral influence of sport, but one of his as-

sistant masters, G.E.L. Cotton, who became headmaster of Marlborough college in 1852 (McIntosh, 1979, p. 27). In Thomas Hughes' popular novel *Tom Brown's schooldays* (1857), Tom and some of his school fellows are discussing cricket with a young master, who is believed to be based on Reverend Cotton, assistant master at Rugby from 1837. In the novel, the master explains to them the game's 'ideology':

"The discipline and reliance on one another which it teaches is so valuable, I think," went on the master. "It ought to be such an unselfish game. It merges the individual into the eleven; he doesn't play that he may win but that his side may" (p. 355).

It was a principle of Thomas Arnold's Rugby that the responsible adult developed out of the irresponsible boy. However, in his novel, Thomas Hughes implies that games had no immediacy for Arnold as an educationist, and were not part of his responsibility as a headmaster. Games were recreation and, therefore, the exclusive preserve of the boys. All aspects of sport, as seen in the novel, are the affairs of individuals, teams, or school houses. The masters take a benevolent interest, offering advice, never organization (Sanders, 1989, p. XII-XIII).



Picture 3. The principle of 'handicapping' was introduced in horse racing - and other sports - to ensure equilibrium of chances between competitors of different weight categories. This picture of "The weighing room", where jockeys are 'matched', appeared in the *Illustrated London News* of 1893.

## The ghost of Tom Brown

Tom Brown became a Victorian hero and a role model for young boys struggling through their adolescence. Rugby became a mythical place, where rugby football originated. It even became a pilgrimage spot for Pierre de Coubertin, who sanctified Thomas Arnold as the 'father of modern sport' (MacAloon, 1981).

Others have been much less clement towards Hughes' novel. Richard Osborne (1977), for instance, in his essay 'The shadow of Tom Brown', proposed that *Tom Brown's schooldays* has been a frontrunner in imprinting on the English ruling class two irrational beliefs. Firstly, that corporal punishment should be, by the male, bravely received (bullying, caning, boxing, school fights, 'going hard' at games, biting and gouging in the scrum, breaking your neck in the hunting field, wounds or death in the battle for your country). And secondly, that corporal punishment should be bravely inflicted when sanctioned by authority, and sometimes when not sanctioned (beating small boys when you are a perfect, housemaster, headmaster or father, biting and gouging in the scrum - if not seen by the referee - capital punishment if you are a judge or a hangman, casualties by the thousand, preferably on the enemy but, when necessary, on your own men if you are a warlord, in uniform or civilian). George MacDonald Fraser (1977) has emphasized that the public school code of honour can only truly operate in that enclosed society and that schoolboys act with a fair amount of common sense, and know when enough is enough.

The same mythical aura hangs around Eton School, the birthplace of Association football. While walking on the playing fields, the Duke of Wellington would have said: "It was here that the battle of Waterloo was won" (McIntosh, 1979, p. 34). The truth was less idyllic: the Duke had been to Eton, but he did not like the school. Moreover, there were no compulsory games in 'his' Eton, and he knew nothing of playing fields when he revisited his old school. What he really said was "I really believe I owe my spirit of enterprise to the tricks I used to play in the garden". Paul Johnson, (1977, pp. 14-15) has remarked that it is one thing to demolish mythology; it is quite another to form a just estimate of the influence the public schools have exerted, and still do exert, on public life. Anthony Storr, (1977, p. 98), a psychiatrist, raised the same point: "Does the public school system promote growth toward psychological health and maturity, or does it produce 'old boys' who never grow up?"

I would like to draw attention to the fact that *Tom Brown's schooldays* has not only spawned hundreds of other school novels full of cricket, football, and other sports, as well as fights, in Britain, but also in America, where the Jesuit Francis Finn (1859-1928) produced his own catholic version of fair play and boarding school life. Both the educational virtues and the perilous vices related to playing these games are expressed in Finn's popular novels, which have titles such as *Tom Playfair*, *Percy Wynn*, *Claude Lightfoot*, *Harry Dee*, and *That football game*. These books were also cherished by European youngsters of my father's generation (whose copies I still have), and were seen as a catholic version of muscular Christianity.

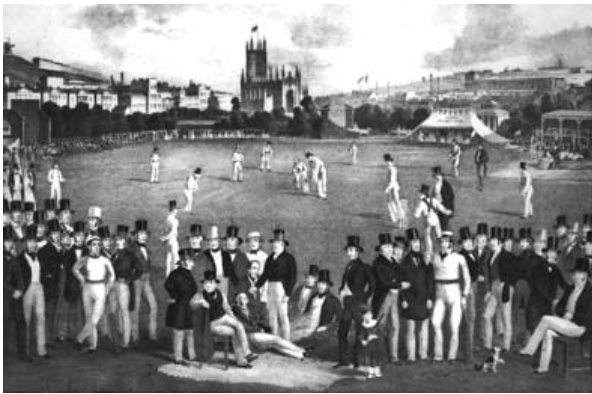
### From the public schools to the working classes: amateurs versus professionals

Due to the high level of autonomy which the boys enjoyed, their struggles for power within the schools and the fact that, as prefects, they became accustomed to the exercise of power at an early age, many traditionalist educators were convinced that the public schools were a useful training ground for young members of their class. Because of its civilized character, and because its acceptance by the public schools had given it a label of respectability, by about 1850 football had become a socially permissible activity for young adult 'gentlemen' (Dunning, 1971, pp. 140, 146). In connection to this, Norbert Elias (1986, p. 168) has noted that the *sports-ethos* was not the kind of ethos of the working middle classes, to which one applies terms like *moral* or *morality*, but that it was the ethos of the wealthy, sophisticated and comparatively restrained leisure classes. Set against this background, the amateurs' fight for survival can be seen as the struggle of those who saw hereditary rank and nobility of blood as their privilege, against those who "honoured no one except for his own merit and his own deeds". The first viewpoint was clearly expressed by the warden of Radley College in 1849: "A gentleman both knows and is thankful that God instead of making all men equal has made them all most unequal ..." (cited in Wigglesworth, 1996, pp. 87, 103).

Richard Holt (1989, 1992, 2006) has pointed out that such moral arguments were but pawns in the sports class struggle between gentlemen amateurs and working class professionals. The argument used by the amateur elite was that if sport were commercialized then winning would become more important than taking part, and if this happened a game would no longer be a friendly encounter but a serious struggle for points in a league system. Teams would become the slaves of their supporters, who would be more interested in success than in fair play. Holt (1989, p. 104) argues that this vision of the high priests of Victorian amateurism was a fine and proper one. What was not acceptable, however, was how these values were put into practice: "The amateur code was in practice frequently a means of excluding working-class players from high-level competition".

Fair play was the watchword of the gentleman amateur. The term 'amateur' has now come to mean anyone who does not play for pay, but the original meaning was more subtle. Fair play meant not only respecting the written rules of the game, but abiding by what was generally understood to be the spirit of the game. Sport had not only to be played in good spirit; it had to be played with style, in accordance with the slogan 'Strife without anger, art without malice', as generations of Harrovians

sang (Holt, 1989, pp. 98-99). Gradually, a shift took place from the original distinction between gentlemen and players to the rigid distinction between amateurs and professionals. The new importance of 'how you played the game', as the saying went, gave added significance to the vexed question of payment. The term *professional* came into use in the 1850s and *amateur* in the 1880s. Before the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the terms *gentlemen* and *players* were used mainly in cricket, to denote those who were of independent means and those who were not. So originally the distinction was purely one of social position, and there was no dishonour attached to making money out of sport (Holt, 1989, p. 103).



Picture 4. Fair play was the watchword of the gentleman amateur. Before the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the terms 'gentlemen' and 'players' were used in cricket to denote who were of independent means and those who were not. The print from an engraving by S. Lipschitz after a drawing by W. Drummond and C.J. Baséne, shows a cricket match between Sussex and Kent at Brighton in 1849.

The famous Corinthian Football Club, which was founded in 1882, originally determined to play only friendly matches against other amateur clubs, especially teams from the London area. They refused to join the Football League or to compete in the Football Association Cup, due to their original rules forbidding them to compete for any cups or prizes. They also refused to take penalties, inspired by the idea that such penalties were not within the spirit of the game. When they finally competed in a competition in 1900, they beat Aston Villa, then League champions, by 2-1 (Cavalini, 2007).

The defenders of amateurism had other motives as well. Convinced that sport should be an avocation rather than a vocation, they even condemned specialization (Guttmann, 2004, p. 98). True amateurs, who still regarded training and competition as a pastime, also thought that intensive training led to an inequality of the terms of competition

"...when they had to take their places on the starting line alongside the full time workers" (McIntosh, 1979, p. 138).

The use of the vocabulary of 'fairness', derived from amateur sport, was important in all aspects

of public life and was actively encouraged by the politically predominant classes (McKibbin, 1990, p. 22). 'Muscular Christian' and 'Christian Socialist' priests, many of whom were educated at public schools, played a central role in the spread of rugby and Association football to the working classes. While the middle and upper classes stressed individual competition in the sphere of work, in the sphere of leisure they emphasized *team spirit*, *fair play*, and *cooperation*: "To play for money was to make it work". But - alas - the amateur clubs were now also forced to adopt underhand methods of payment in order to attract and retain high calibre players "... 'shamateurism' became the norm" (Dunning, 1971, p. 149).

### The waning of the amateur sport ethos: from Eton to Proshow

The word *amateur* comes from the Latin verb *amare*, which means *to love*. Amateurs are thus considered athletes who only play for the love of the game. Amateurism, however, meant many things. It was part of a 'civilizing process' of self restraint, but it was also a way of promoting the spirit of competition for its own sake. Hostility to betting put the amateur sport clearly in the camp of the protestant work ethic and the industrial bourgeoisie, as opposed to the aristocracy. The aristocrats, with their pre-industrial code of honour, continued to gamble on horses, yet disapproved of payment of professional players. In their eyes, paying players a wage spoiled the fun and defeated the moral purpose of the games, which was to improve the body and the character (Holt, 1992). Where have we heard this before? *Mens sana in corpore sano*, I wonder, however, why physical education and sport apologists always neglect to cite the whole quotation of the Roman poet Juvenal (ca. 60-140) who actually said: "*Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano*" (Satire, 10, p. 356) or "*Let us pray that there might be a healthy mind in a healthy body*". John Hulley of Liverpool Athletic Club used the well known abbreviation in 1862 as the motto of an essay competition during the first Olympic festival in Liverpool; since then it has lived a life of its own as a perfect illustration of 'wishful thinking'. The gradual decline of amateurism in sport is well documented in D.J. Taylor's book *On the Corinthian spirit* (2006).

In the Fair Play Declaration of the International Council of Sport and Physical Education (ICSPE), published at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in 1976, one can still read that:

"Fair play ... requires as a minimum that he [the competitor] shows strict, unfailing observance of the written rule ... [obligatory]; ... fair play is embodied in modesty in victory, in graciousness in defeat ... [commendable]; ... The referee should not confine his involvement to the play-

ing field or arena. It will be to his credit if ... he seeks contacts before and after the events with the competitors ... [commendable]" (cited in McIntosh, 1979, pp. 122-123).

I am afraid that if a referee would do this today, he would surely be fired by his football association. In contrast to this rather 'idealistic', or should I say 'paternalistic', view of the amateur sports of the good old days, is the fact that spectator sports have become "... *die wichtigste Nebensache der Welt*" (the most important triviality of the world). Ten years before the official abolishment of the amateur rule by the Olympic Movement, Allen Guttmann (1978, pp. 31-32) wrote:

"The amateur rule was an instrument of class warfare ..., the attempt to limit sports to gentlemen of means still survives in the anachronistic amateur role ... . Western nations must eventually abolish the amateur-professional distinction in its present form because it has long since become anachronistic and because it is corroded by hypocrisy and mocked by the practice of communist nations where 'amateurs' devote at least as much time to sports as do our 'professionals'."

Whereas Guttmann pleaded to give up the anachronistic and hypocritical amateur status, Peter McIntosh (1979, p. 138) warned - from a pedagogical point of view - against the professionalisation of the Olympic Games. He complained that they were publicly preaching and promoting humanism, amateur ideals, equality of terms in competition, friendship in the contest and other human values are, but that they were at the same time, in living up to their motto '*Citius, altius, fortius*', contributing to the professionalization of sport. McIntosh (1979, p. 139) was disappointed by the hollow rhetoric of the Olympic Movement during the Cold War crisis, when the terms *amateurism* and *fair play* had rather farcical, as opposed to moral, connotations. Probably with great regret and pain in his heart, he predicted the inevitable bifurcation between physical education, on the one hand, and the competitive sport business, on the other:

"Despite the high-sounding pronouncements on sport by the International Olympic Committee, by UNESCO and by other prestigious bodies, it may be that the morality of sport is being preserved or transformed not in the stadium but in the kick-about arena."

Guttmann and McIntosh thus held quite different views on the transformation of top level sport into entertainment industry when they wrote their treatises in the late 1970s. While Guttmann acted as an objective observer, who watched the emergence of a globalized and professionalized sport entertainment industry (see also his book on *Sports spectators* (1986), McIntosh was still fighting a rearguard action against the waning of the amateur ethos and

the loss of the fair play spirit in sport. Should McIntosh, therefore, be considered a naive nostalgic of the past, and Guttmann a cool observer without social 'engagement'? I believe that they were each looking at different kinds of sports and from different perspectives. The American scholar Allen Guttmann, himself being culturally immersed in the *Whole new ballgame* (1988) of the sports scene 'made in America', showed a commonsensical approach to sport show business. The British physical educationist Peter McIntosh was concerned with the difficult issue of moral education in relation to sport. He did, perhaps, not differentiate enough between physical education through sport at one end and sport as mere entertainment business at the other, because in his own country sport used to be the '*corps business*' of [male] physical education.

I have pointed at the gradual and general 'sportization' of physical education on the European continent, where, before the 1960s, Swedish gymnastics, German *Turnen*, or more eclectic systems still dominated the physical education curriculums (Renson, 1999). Some have seen this development not as an '*aggiornamento*', but rather an educational fiasco, or as Gilbert Andrieu (1992, p. 153) concluded: "*L'éducation physique est malade parce qu'elle ressemble trop au sport.*" (Physical education is ill because it resembles sport too much.)

Since the first Olympic Congress of 1894, where the amateur principle was the central issue, together with the re-establishment of the Olympic Games, sports and the Olympic Movement have gone through a process of drastic changes. They have migrated '*From Eton to Proshow*'. Sports and games are no longer the sole prerogative of the 'leisure class'. The 'Sport-for-All' movement has strived to democratize physical activities for both sexes, all ages, and all layers of society. Amateurism, on the other hand, has been abandoned as the guiding principle of the Olympic Movement since the Seoul Games of 1988 and the sports scene has become an integral part of professional show business or '*Proshow*', where other rules reign than ... on the playing fields of Eton.

## Conclusions

Modern sport originated in Great Britain as a cultural product of modernity, emphasizing equality and competition. Fair play was the moral creed of this new sporting ethos. Guttmann (1985) considered fair play as a new chivalric ethos, created by 19<sup>th</sup> century upper and upper-middle class Englishmen. My thesis is that fair play was advocated for the simple sake of survival in rough games played *inter pares* (among equals). Pierre de Coubertin, the French founding father of the modern Olympic Movement, adopted this British cultural product as the corner stone of his *Pédagogie sportive* and spread this sporting gospel around the world.



Sport, however, is not educational in itself, but only when put in an educational context (Renson, 2003). The question, therefore, is whether or not, and if so where, when and how, such an educational context can be made 'operational' on our sporting fields?

I am optimistic that fair play ethics have a future in an educational setting and under proper moral leadership, and probably also in a recreational context, where "...winning is not the only thing". Though I am much less optimistic about the chances of fair play ethics in a semi- or full professional sport setting, where winning or losing are seen in terms of economics. Alexander Trollope already criticized the growing seriousness in sport in 1868 (pp. 6-7) as "... a pursuit which, to be pleasurable, should be a pleasure and not a business ...". George Orwell, who played for the Eton football team, expressed his opinion about serious sports in more drastic terms: "Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence, in other words it is war minus the shooting" (Orwell, 1945).

Corporate governance, professional rights and duties in terms of labour law should govern top-level sport, thus guaranteeing its legal character and professional ethics. For much too long, serious sport has not been taken seriously enough.

The *vox populi* is asking for more spectacular 'flair games' and the professional sportsmen and women are rightfully requesting their share of fair play. Therefore, all those concerned with the preservation of the moral values of fair play in sport will have to face some serious challenges and answer some tough questions. Such questions could include:

- How can we still play the game for the game's sake, and not just for the game's stake?
- How can physical educators cope with the new sports creed (or sports greed)?
- When will professional sport 'out' itself as a fully fledged branch of enterprise with a code of professional ethics, career guidance, etc., and as a self-supporting institution?
- Has fair play become an anachronistic survival of the old amateur sport ideal? Or should amateurism be reinvented, as recently proposed by Lincoln Allison (2001)?

Fair play is one of the most vital contributions, which sport has made to modern ethics. By looking at the historical origins of the fair play concept, I hope to have stimulated critical reflection on its relevance for the movement culture of postmodern society. Without fair play, sport as well as all other competitive endeavors become a mere matter of winning at all costs, indeed ... war minus the shooting.

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Correspondence to:

Prof. Roland Renson, Ph.D.

Faculty of Kinesiology and Rehabilitation Sciences

K.U. Leuven

Tervuursevest 101

B-3001 Leuven, Belgium

Mail: roland.renson@faber.kuleuven.be

Phone: 0032 (0)16 329052

## **FAIR PLAY: PORIJEKLO POJMA I NJEGOVO ZNAČENJE U SPORTU I DRUŠTVU**

### **Sažetak**

#### **Uvod**

*Fair play* je širom svijeta poznat i razumljiv koncept, koji svoje porijeklo vuče iz sporta. *Fair play* ili "poštena igra" nije samo esencijalni element sporta, već je postao i općenitija filozofija poštovanja drugih i poštovanja pravila, kako na sportskom terenu, tako i u poslu ili drugim natjecateljskim pothvatima. Ovaj pregledni članak proučava porijeklo pojma *fair play* i povezuje ga s podrijetlom modernog sporta u Velikoj Britaniji.

Tradicionalni oblici igara i rekreacijskih aktivnosti u predindustrijskoj Britaniji često su bili vezani uz crkveni kalendar i bili su vrlo ritualnoga karaktera. Pravila su se jako razlikovala od mjesta do mjesta. Takva tradicionalna natjecanja često su bila kaotična i nasilna, a suprotstavljeni natjecatelji bili su iz susjednih sela i gradova ili iz različitih dijelova grada. Nasuprot tome, moderni sport obilježava racionalniji i uređeniji pristup. Općenito je prihvaćeno da je moderni sport oblikovan na igralištima britanskih privatnih škola tijekom 18. i 19. stoljeća.

*Fair play* je nastao u Velikoj Britaniji kao dio tog novog sportskog etosa. Otuda je **eksportiran\*** na europski kontinent, odnosno diljem svijeta. Prva generacija europskih sportskih fanatika, kao što je bio Pierre de Coubertin u Francuskoj, bila je fascinirana tim novim, sportskim načinom života, koji su doživljavali kao novi oblik praktičnog (primijenjenog) morala.

#### **Razvoj modernog sporta**

Povjesničari sporta, kao što su Manfred Lämmer, Ingomar Weiler, David Young i još nekolicina, uništili su mit o tome da su stari Grci izmislili *fair play*. Francuski arheolog i povjesničar Paul Veyne (citiran u Weiler 1991, str. 55) navodi da je koncept igranja unutar unaprijed definiranog skupa pravila, koji se naziva *igrom*, anglosaksonski izum, dok su razne antičke igre pokušavale imitirati brutalnu stvarnost rata, a nisu se temeljile na poštovanju skupa umjetnih pravila.

Tragovi moralne zabrinutosti o igranju i igrama mogu se naći već kod humanista renesansnog perioda, kao što su Desiderius Erasmus i Juan Luis Vives.

#### **Od kladenja do pravednosti: moderni sport kao metafora za jednakost**

Sociolog Norbert Elias (1971, str. 101), otac *teorije civilizacijskog procesa*, pokazao je da je naglasak na užitku u *igri-natjecanju* i, osobito, u *napetosti-uzbuđenju* koje natjecanja izazivaju, u određenoj mjeri povezan s užitkom u kladenju. Kladenje je

igralo veliku ulogu i u transformaciji "sirovijih" oblika "igara-natjecanja" u sportove i u razvoju etosa pravednosti u Engleskoj.

Jednakost je druga od sedam temeljnih karakteristika modernog sporta, prema Allenu Guttmannu. Guttmannovih sedam karakteristika jesu: sekularizam, jednakost, specijalizacija, racionalizacija, birokracija, kvantifikacija i bilježenje. Načelo jednakosti podrazumijeva da svatko, teoretski, treba imati mogućnost natjecati se, a uvjeti za natjecanje trebaju biti jednaki za sve sudionike. Jednakost izgleda za uspjeh nije samo demokratsko načelo, to je također nužan čimbenik za stvaranje napetosti oko rezultata igre i za pružanje smisla kladenju.

#### **"Biti dobra životinja": moderan sport kao metafora za natjecanje**

Dok je Ashworth (1971) moderni sport vidio kao metaforu za jednakost, Richard Holt (1989, str. 97) je pokazao da je sport služio i kao metafora za nadmetanje u periodu britanskog imperijalizma. Ideologija kompeticije i 'preživljavanja najsposobnijih' bila je snažno zastupljena sredinom 19. stoljeća, kada je britanska roba osvajala svjetsko tržište.

Pravila, uključujući ona koja su osiguravala pravednost, jednake izgleda za pobjedu svih natjecatelja, postala su stroža. Pravila su postala preciznija, a njihovo nadgledanje učinkovitije.

#### **Privatne škole i moderan sport**

Široko je prihvaćeno da su moderni sportovi stvoreni u elitnim školama, u kojima je (učenička) *samouprava* bila pedagoška inovacija i gdje su principi *fair play-a* i džentlmenskog ponašanja ublažili nasilje koje se toleriralo na igralištima. 'Igrati igru radi igre same' bilo je razmišljanje elite i sportskog etosa pravog 'amaterizma'. *Igrati igru radi preživljenja* – tvrdnja je koju želim izložiti da bih objasnio instrumentalnu i funkcionalnu prirodu etosa *fair play-a*. Nogomet je postajao oblik skupnog natjecanja koje je, u što većoj mogućoj mjeri, pružalo zadovoljstvo prave borbe, ali bez pravih rizika i opasnosti (Dunning, 1971, str. 144).

Thomasa Arnolda, upravitelja Rugby Collegea od 1828. do 1842. godine, često su opisivali – Pierre de Coubertin ga je čak i obožavao – kao glavnog aktera školske reforme u Engleskoj te kao čovjeka koji je uspio riješiti endemske krize nasilja među dječacima u školi. Popularni roman Thomasa Hughesa *Tom Brown's schooldays* (1857; *Školski dani Toma Browna*), proširio je novo sportsko uvjerenje, a Tom Brown i njegov upravitelj Thomas Arnold iz Rugby Collegea postali su uzori koji su inspirirali cijelu generaciju.

Načelo Arnoldova Rugbya bilo je da se odgovorne odrasle osobe razvijaju iz neodgovornih dje-

\* Prava morfološka struktura riječi: eks+port+i+ra+n+ø .

čaka. No, same igre nisu bile dio Arnoldove odgovornosti kao upravitelja. Igre su se ubrajale u rekreaciju i bile su prepuštene dječacima. Oni su bili odgovorni za organizaciju nogometa. *U duhu samouprave*, sukobi su se rješavali među samim igračima.

### Duh Toma Browna

Tom Brown postao je viktorski heroj i uzor mladim dječacima u životnoj dobi adolescencije. Rugby College je postao mitsko mjesto nastanka nogometa *rugby* - ragbija. Postao je čak i mjesto hodočašća za Pierrea de Coubertina, koji je slavio Thomasa Arnolda kao 'oca modernog sporta' (MacAloon, 1981).

Jednaku mitsku auru nosi i Eton School, rodno mjesto nogometa (soccer ili association football). Mnoga su i kritička sagledavanja tih mitova, koja postavljaju pitanja poput onoga psihijatra Anthonyja Storra, (1977, str. 98): "Promiče li sustav privatnih škola rast prema psihološkom zdravlju i zrelosti ili on proizvodi 'stare dječake' koji nikad ne odrastaju?"

U svakom slučaju, roman *Tom Brown's school-days* nije potaknuo nastanak stotina drugih školskih romana punih kriketa, nogometa i drugih sportova, ali i tučnjava, samo u Britaniji, nego i u Americi, gdje je jezuit Francis Finn (1859-1928) stvorio vlastitu katoličku verziju *fair play*a i internatskog školskog života.

### Iz privatnih škola u radničku klasu: amateri nasuprot profesionalcima

Zbog svog civiliziranoga karaktera i zbog toga što mu je prihvaćanje privatnih škola dalo etiketu respektabilnosti, nogomet je oko 1850. godine postao društveno prihvatljiva aktivnost za mladu odraslu "gospodu" (Dunning, 1971, str. 140, 146). Vezano uz to, Norbert Elias (1986, str. 168) primjećuje da sportski etos nije bio etos radničke srednje klase, nego etos bogate, sofisticirane i komparativno suzdržane dokone klase. Iz te perspektive, borba amatera za preživljavanje može se promatrati kao borba onih koji su nasljedstvo, položaj i plemićku krv smatrali svojom privilegijom.

Argument koji je koristila amaterska elita bio je da bi komercijalizacijom sporta pobjeđivanje postalo važnije od sudjelovanja te da, ako bi se to dogodilo, igra više ne bi bila prijateljski susret nego ozbiljna borba za bodove u sustavu liga. Momčadi bi postale robovima vlastitih navijača koji bi bili više zainteresirani za uspjeh nego za *fair play*. Richard Holt (1989, str. 104) tvrdi da je ta vizija visokih vođa viktorski amaterizma bila ispravna. Ono što, pak, nikako nije bilo prihvatljivo, jest kako su se te vrijednosti praktično iskorištavale: "Kodeks amatera se u praksi često iskorištavao kao sredstvo isključivanja igrača radničke klase iz natjecanja viših razina".

*Fair play* je bila krilatica gospode-amatera. Pojam *profesionalan* počeo se koristiti 50-ih godina 19. stoljeća, a *amaterski* 80-ih godina 19. stoljeća. Prije sredine 19. stoljeća, pojmovi *gospoda* (*gentlemen*) i *igrači* (*players*) koristili su se pretežno u kri-

ketu, a originalna razlika u pojmovima bila je samo u smislu društvenog položaja, dok se zarađivanje sportom nije smatralo nečasnim (Holt, 1989, str. 103).

### Nestajanje amaterskog sportskog etosa: od Etona do *Pro-showa*

Deset godina prije no što je Međunarodni olimpijski odbor službeno ukinuo amatersko pravilo, Allen Guttmann (1978, str. 31-32) zastupao je odustajanje od anakronističkog i hipokritskog amaterskog statusa. S druge strane Peter McIntosh (1979, str. 138), s pedagoškog stajališta, bio najvećim protivnikom profesionalizacije Olimpijskih igara. Pobunio se da Igre javno zagovaraju i promiču humanizam, amaterske ideale, jednakost u smislu kompeticije, prijateljstvo i druge ljudske vrijednosti, ali da istovremeno doprinose profesionalizaciji sporta, promicanjem mota '*Citius, altius, fortius*'. Predvidio je neizbježnu bifurkaciju između tjelesnog odgoja, s jedne strane, i kompetitivnog sportskog biznisa, s druge strane.

Guttmann i McIntosh su, dakle, kasnih 70-ih godina 20. stoljeća različito gledali na transformaciju vrhunskog sporta u industriju. Američki znanstvenik Allen Guttmann kao objektivni je promatrač pratio nastanak globalizirane i profesionalizirane sportske industrije zabave. Britanac Peter McIntosh, iz polja tjelesnog odgoja, bio je zabrinut ozbiljnim pitanjem moralne edukacije povezane sa sportom i gubitkom *amaterskog* duha i duha *fair play*a iz sporta.

Od vremena prvog Olimpijskog kongresa 1894. godine, gdje je načelo amaterstva, zajedno s ponovnim uspostavljanjem Olimpijskih igara, predstavljalo središnju temu, sport i olimpijski pokret prošli su kroz proces drastičnih promjena. Sport i igre nisu više isključivo pravo "dokone klase". Pokret "sport za sve" težio je demokratizaciji tjelesnih aktivnosti za oba spola, sve dobi i sve slojeve društva. Amaterizam je, s druge strane, napušten kao vodeće načelo olimpijskog pokreta od vremena Olimpijskih igara u Seoulu 1988. godine, a sportska je scena postala integralni dio profesionalnog *show business*a ili *Pro-showa*, gdje vladaju drugačija pravila ...od onih s igrališta Etona.

### Zaključci

Moderan sport nastao je u Velikoj Britaniji kao kulturni produkt moderne, stavljajući naglasak na jednakost i kompeticiju. *Fair play* je bio moralno uvjerenje tog novog sportskog etosa. Teza koju postavljam jest da je *fair play* bio zagovaran jednostavno u svrhu preživljavanja u grubim igrama koje su se odvijale "inter pares" (između jednakih). Pierre de Coubertin, francuski osnivač modernog olimpijskog pokreta, usvojio je taj britanski kulturni proizvod kao podlogu za svoju *Pédagogie sportive* i proširio taj sportski *credo* diljem svijeta. No, sport nije edukativan, odgojan sam po sebi, već samo kad je smješten u edukacijski, odgojni i obrazovni kontekst (Renson, 2003). Stoga je pitanje može li se ili ne – a, u slučaju da može, onda kada i kako, takav edukacijski kontekst učiniti 'operacionalnim' na sportskim terenima?

Optimistično gledam na to da etika *fair play* ima budućnost u edukacijskom okruženju i pod pravim moralnim vodstvom, a vjerojatno također i u rekreacijskom kontekstu. Puno sam manje optimističan u pogledu izgleda etike *fair play* u (polu)profesionalnom sportskom okruženju, u kojemu se na pobjede i poraze gleda s ekonomskog stajališta.

Korporacijsko upravljanje, profesionalna prava i dužnosti u smislu zakona o radu trebali bi upravljati vrhunskim sportom, garantirajući tako njegov pravni karakter i profesionalnu etiku. **Već se pre-**

**više vremena ozbiljan sport ne shvaća dovoljno ozbiljno.**

Očuvanje moralnih vrijednosti *fair play* u sportu sve će više biti suočeno s ozbiljnim izazovima i teškim pitanjima koja će tražiti odgovor.

*Fair play* je jedan od najvažnijih doprinosa koje je sport pružio modernoj etici. Bez *fair play* sport, a i ostale kompetitivne aktivnosti, postaju pitanje pobjeđivanja pod svaku cijenu - uistinu "rat bez pucanja", kao što je George Orwell pesimistički predvidio 1945. godine.