

ELEMENTS OF UNETHICAL CONDUCT IN SPORTS AND SPORTS ENVIRONMENT

Sanela Porča and Seid Jusić

Faculty of Education, University of Travnik, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Review paper

Abstract

Review of unethical image in sports and sports environment aims to present real world condition overview. It is clearly visible through observation from different perspectives that there are multiple issues in factual reality. Elements of unethical conduct appear in all levels with profit as main motive. Overview of basic elements of unethical conduct tendencies aims to encourage contemplation on other forms of such matters. Elements of unethical activities interlace one with another however we have attempted to isolate those present only on level of sports professionals, management, sports employees, audience and media.

Key words: ethics, morals, sports, unethical environment, manipulation

Introduction

Contemporary world is facing bigger and bigger ethical challenges. Question of ethics related to all areas of human life. Progress of techniques and technologies results in new relations where ethical norms are yet to be established (this particularly relates to areas of communications). However, question of ethics also extends to other areas with potential for relation commercialization and pricing establishment. Huge profits and money race has always been a motive for violation of ethical norms (plundering, robbery, fraud, manipulation, etc.). Such relation remained unchanged for centuries but expansion of such extent in all areas of human interaction is more visible today than ever before. Everything is commercialized including sports and sports-related relations. This is just an attempt to contribute to a better understanding of unethical environment in sports and to, in a way, initiate more extensive discussion on ethics and establishment of legal framework for all potential disputes and manipulations.

Concept of ethics and morals

Concept of ethics seems familiar but it is not easy to define. Usually it is stated that the ethics are about morals even though ethics and morals are in its essence synonyms originating from different languages: ethics from Greek word *ethos* (habit, custom, character, morals), while morals originates from Latin words *mos* (custom), *mores* (conduct) and *moralis* (Slavica, 2006; Čehok & Koprek, 1996).

Also in common conversation, ethics is similar to morals or set of moral rules according to which people conduct and should conduct themselves. Therefore we recognize medical ethics, professional ethics, etc. which can frequently be replaced with word *morals*. Understanding of these concepts which is central to our focus ethics is not the same as morals; it is a philosophy of morals, one of, frequently called, fundamental philosophical disciplines (together with ontology, cognition theory and aesthetics).

Different understanding of morals and ethics relation can be found with Edgar Morin: „We often try to differentiate between ethics and morals. So we say “ethics” when we try to define above-individual or meta-individual point of view, and “morals” when we try to define level of individual deciding and actions of individuals. However, individual morals implicitly or explicitly depend on ethics. Ethics fade away and turn to emptiness without individual morals. These two concepts are inseparable and sometimes intertwine; in such cases we can equally use either of two terms.

In such sense we will comprehend complex ethics as meta-point of view which contains contemplation of basics and principles of morals.” (Morin, 2008). Considering different opinions in terms of ethics and morals definition we consider that in our case they are synonyms in most part of the paper while other segments speak on philosophy of morals as final origin of an action and its consequences.

Moral (ethical) basics of sports

A sport is based on *fair-play* basis which is ethical in its essence. Sports rules are based on those foundations i.e. ethical principles. Each violation of fair-play is considered disallowed and is used to label individual as well as team as unethical. Violations of ethical norms and codes are not rare with contestants or sports environment alike.

To respect and obey rules and follow *fair-play* principles means being proper sportsman. (Butcher & Schneider, 1998). Elements of unethical environment relate to sportsmen as well as entire ambient related to sports. Question of ethics, in first place, can be asked in selection of sports or physical activity (which sports are ethical), path towards achievement of sports success (sports professional ethics), organization of sports events (ethics of sports employees and management), fans and their ethics and media ethics (reporting in respect to ethical code) and sports booking establishments (score fixing phenomenon).

Sports disciplines

Competition is basic principle in sports, which one will be better. However, being better at something doesn't mean to humiliate opponent but to show that better result is achieved through different methods, hard work and training. Therefore it is essentially important to select one's sports discipline based on contestant's affinities. In that sense, to select right discipline, one should also take into account which one is more humane and which one is not in violation of ethical principles. Each physical activity, even one which is not physical (chess) can be sports discipline and this essentially depends on geographical area as well as other factors.

Sports disciplines can be categorized through various criteria; our target is to create single categorization based on principles of ethics. Ethical standpoints can differ but what impairs integrity of an individual and borderlines with an incident cannot be considered ethical. Olympic sports are categorized into summer and winter sports. Summer sports include: athletics, badminton, cycling, boxing, weight lifting, judo, gymnastics, golfing, field hockey, wrestling, sailing, kayaking, horse riding, basketball, fencing, modern pentathlon, football, volleyball, swimming, rugby, handball, synchronized swimming, archery, taekwondo, tennis, triathlon, water-polo, rowing.

Winter sports are: alpine skiing, biathlon, bob, speed ice skating, biathlon, short track ice skating, curling, Nordic combined, sledding, ski jumping, cross-country skiing, free style skiing, snowboarding, figure skating. (<http://bs.wikipedia.org>). Principally, mentioned sports do not cross ethics boundaries, Even though many of them are dangerous, extensive protective equipment is used to preserve wellbeing of contestants. In spite it happens that things go awry. "Commencement of Olympic games passed was shadowed by news of "training incident", clumsily spoken, in halftone. On the fastest sledding track in the world with speeds reaching over 160 kilometers per hour, young Georgian athlete Nodar Kumaritashvili poorly estimated the angle in which he should enter the corner and he was dead the following second." (<http://blog.b92.net>).

Was it really necessary to design such a track? Question of ethics comes into focus now. How one selects less dangerous sports. Extreme sports are being advertised more and more nowadays; sports which name clearly states these are very dangerous sports. Extreme sports are "activities of individuals and groups which are based on extreme level of danger and on crossing socially acceptable limits" (<http://www.skijanje.rs>). If it is for wellbeing of humanity and if someone really must risk his life but only once, it is in some way acceptable. Question of challenging fate remains opened on the other hand. Of course these sports are not acceptable sports by Olympic committees but this can come into consideration in foreseeable time.

Some of extreme sports are: skateboarding, motocross, bungee jumping, army fitness, base jumping, cliffhanging, etc. (<http://sr.wikipedia.org>). Ethically observed, each sports which borderlines with violation of body integrity and jeopardizes human life is not allowed.

All for success

Playing sports especially on a professional level aims in the first place towards success in results. Thus this noble cause, being the best, is often attempted to achieve through unethical means. It is well known that doping is not allowed in sports, it is even punishable through disciplinary and legal actions, but it still does happen and not so seldom. One of the most important documents on doping prevention is UN Convention against doping in sports from 2005 which is officially in effect from February 1st 2007.

The purpose of this Convention is to, within UNESCO strategy and program of activities in areas of physical education and sports, promote prevention and struggle against using doping in sports aiming its final elimination. The Convention regulates anti-doping activities on national level where countries are obliged to implement measures to effectively limit availability of banned substances and methods to prevent its use in sports as well as measures towards athlete's supporting staff if found in breach of doping ban or other doping related violations in sports. (<http://www.pravst.hr>). Legislation is proper instancing for ethical objections for such behavior and it has to take appropriate stand in all countries in the world. Italy can be taken as an example of a country which explicitly sees using of doping as punishable act. Italian Parliament, on December 14th 2000, adopted Law on sports activity healthcare and struggle against doping.

Law categorizes doping substances, regulates control committees but we are particularly interested in its penal stipulations. Incarceration for 3 months up to 3 years and fine of up to 5000-100.000EUR is punishment for each person who provides to another, procures or persuades on using of medications or pharmacological substances mentioned in the law, without justifiable pathological conditions or if those substances affect psychophysical or biological conditions of organism or if they increase competing achievements of an athlete or are intended to affect results of doping controls. (<http://www.pravst.hr>).

All for money

It is by utmost unethical and frustrating when news broadcast value of a football player and his multimillion net worth and multimillion euros annual salary while at the same time value of a firefighter whose main objective is to save lives can barely reach several tens of thousands of euros per annum on basis of his salary alone. However, it is a matter of general social values and we will not discuss more details on the subject.

We will only briefly mention those huge figures which in most cases have nothing to do with ethics. Today's sports are machinery where sick, injured, exhausted are those who are no longer profitable. They become "second grade" athletes. This is where ethical problems arise. They will be adequately taken care of however better player has better treatment and will return to the field much sooner than weaker player with same injury. Weaker player doesn't impact game score as much, monetary gain and is by default discriminated.

It is disastrous from ethical point of view. Organization of sports events and selling of exclusive rights to media for advertising in front of millions worth of auditorium is only another type of manipulation. An experiment was conducted in USA where two groups of participants were shown two same basketball games in separate rooms. Coolers with refreshing beverages were placed next to exits from those rooms and after participants left the area it was determined that viewers from room A drank significantly larger quantity of beverage X while consumption structure levels in front of room B was well within random normal.

This situation becomes more clear if we know that the game recording which was broadcasted in room A was prepared in a way to show, for a fraction of a second, advertisements for drink X; recording in room B did not contain such advertisements (according to Isaković, 1991). Fixing scores phenomenon because of betting payments as well as other factors has been present for a long time. Unethical nature of such events is not even matter for discussion.

We will mention only an example of an ex manager who gave a statement for a magazine from ex Yugoslavia. He is well known performing arts and sports manager who publicly brags about fixing more than 80 games in Yugoslavia, crimes for which he was even incarcerated, and for magazine "Alo" he told a story on a way to fix game scores. "Who ever tells you that it is impossible to fix scores of a never-ending derby has lost touch with real world", is sentence used by him to initiate conversation.

Everything has its price and all it takes is to ensure proper calculation. Yes, theoretically it is possible to rig even today's eternal derby but I honestly believe it will not happen. I expect fair battle, Partizan has better chances but I will not be betting on this derby. I am not willing to gamble when I don't know exact score in advance", says controversial Macedonian. He does however reveal secrets of his little trade and identifies four key factors upon which game score rigging is based. Referee – key player! It is by far the easiest way to rig scores because all you need is cooperation by a single individual; there are not so many witnesses

to the deal. Referee doesn't have to play his part throughout entire 90 minutes of the game, all it takes for him to get the job done is to award a red card or a penalty shot.

Club officials – two men can strike a deal very fast especially when they jointly draw the line – which club can earn more money from UEFA prizes, TV broadcasting rights, stadium audience, how much they can make through football player sales. Players – maybe the hardest way to fake a match, keep in mind that it doesn't take all 22 as part of the secret plan. I knew great players in Yugoslavian football which were able to give away match victory through single intentional mistake. One is from Split, other one from Nis, third is Macedonian. I cannot disclose their last names...

Politicians – many have built their careers on sports. Politicians are very well active in the sports. Take match Vardar vs Pristina for example. Macedonia owed Thermal power plant Obilic from Kosovo a lot of money. I received a message from the top – let Pristina take score otherwise Macedonia will lose its electrical power supply. What could I have done, I had to rig that score as well – he concludes his story. (<http://bestinfo01.webs.com>).

Conclusion

Sports and all related to sports should be entirely ethically oriented. Actual situation not really as such and there is a vast sea of reasons for that. Those reasons are for the most part results of egotistic interests of individuals but also overall ambiance of sports activities and events. Sending a positive message to the audience, while playing for world famous football team, about fair-play and at the same time wearing jersey of a biggest betting company in the world is contradictory at least. This brief paper can provide overview and relation of morals and ethics.

In some cases athletes are moral individuals but their management is not, and in other cases ethical standpoint is on all (nobody is ethical), and in addition to this when media takes part in everything question of ethics is entirely marginalized because everybody looks only after their own gains. Elements of unethical conduct in sports are numerous, sometime through isolated individuals while sometimes overall surrounding acts unethically including fans which were not mentioned in the paper.

Solving problems of ethics resides in adoption of ethical codes on level of individual, team, management, organizer, media and fans, followed by penalization of code violations. Only through such approach can we achieve similar level of ethical conduct in all sports related factors.

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ELEMENTI NEETIČNOG PONAŠANJA U SPORTU I SPORTSKOM OKRUŽENJU

Sažetak

Pregled neetične slike sporta i sportskog okruženja cilja prikazu stvarnih uvjeta svijeta. Više je nego jasno, kroz promatranje s različitih pristupa, da postoje višestruki ishodi (rješenja) u činjeničnoj stvarnosti. Elementi neetičnog ponašanja pojavljuju se na svim razinama uz profit kao glavni motiv. Pregled temeljnih elemenata tendencija neetičnog ponašanja cilja na ohrabrenje promišljanja o drugim oblicima i pristupima takvoj materiji. Elementi neetičnih djelovanja međusobno su isprepleteni, no međutim mi smo pokušali izolirati takvu pojavu na razini sportskog profesionalizma, menadžmenta, sportskih radnika, publike i medija.

Ključne riječi: etika, moral, sport, neetično okruženje, manipulacija

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Correspondence to:

Sanela Porča, MSc.

University of Travnik

Faculty of Education

72270 Travnik, Aleja konzula 5. Bosnia & Herzegovina

Phone: +387 540 876

E-mail: sporca@yahoo.com