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Good Sportsmanship: Ethical Values and Positive Social Impact

Dr. Jayaprakash. Bilagi

Physical Education Director, Government First Grade College for Women, Bagalkote, Karnataka

INTRODUCTION

Good sportsmanship teaches valuable life lessons, such as discipline, self-control, and the importance of ethical behavior. Today's sporting culture, in particular the base of elite sport, places great importance on the idea of competition and winning and thus sportsmanship takes a back seat as a result. In most, if not all sports, sportsmen at the elite level make the standards on sportsmanship and no matter whether they like it or not, they are seen as leaders and role models in society. Sportsmanship is an aspiration or ethos that a sport or activity will be enjoyed for its own sake. This is with proper consideration for fairness, ethics, respect, and a sense of fellowship with one's competitors.

Abstract: Sportsmanship is the ethical behavior, fair play, and respect demonstrated towards opponents, officials, and the rules of the game. Being ethical is of utmost importance in sports. This paper includes a fair play, good sportsmanship, cheating, and the correct position in the contemporary sports environment. Athletics have been a crucial part of developing their character and work ethic. In sports, you must work together with your team to reach your goals. One of the primary ethical considerations in sports management is the protection of athlete health. Ethics is more important than winning because sports at their core are meant to be fair contests that develop character and bring communities together.

Keywords: sportsmanship, professional, ethical, athletics, fair, rules and sports

George Orwell once commented that serious sport had nothing to do with fair play; it was bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence. The comment is apt in summing up the attitude that governs sports in modern times. No more is a game of football or cricket merely played for fun or enjoyment. Professional sports are nothing less than a battle, and winning is a matter of life and death. This kind of an attitude has seeped through to sports at the amateur level as well. As a result, sports have been increasingly witnessing a complete disregard for sports ethics. “Today's sporting culture, in particular elite sport, places great importance on the idea of competition and winning and sportsmanship may take a back seat as a result” (Goldstein, Jay 2006:18). Today, the influence of the money factor in sports is so great that not only are contestants ready to go to any lengths to win a match but also, they are ready to cheat, lie or commit other crimes if they have to. Thus cheating, lying and bribery, violence, doping have become almost essential in sports.

Examples to substantiate the above-mentioned statement are not few. Let us take violence first. Cases of extreme injuries and even deaths as a result of intentional violence have been on the rise. Some sports disciplines such as boxing and soccer have been in particular prone to such violence. Frenchman Battiston was seriously injured in the 1986 Soccer World Cup by a tackle of the West German goalkeeper, Schumacher. In the 1994 World Cup, Brazil’s Leonardo knocked out American Tab Ramos with his elbow in an act of aggression. Maybe the worst instance of violence in recent times has been the killing of Columbian football star, Andres Escobar by his fans for scoring a goal against his own country which helped the US beat his team 2-1 in the 1994 World Cup Soccer. Monica Seles, the most successful woman tennis player in 1993, was felled by a knife on the back while on a tennis court by a fan of her main rival. Another incident that drew a lot of international criticism was the attack on the American skater, Nancy Kerrigan inspired by professional jealousy. “Ancient Greece is considered the birthplace of both ancient philosophy and Olympic sport. Hellenistic philosophies hung great significance on athletic performance. A leader's athletic prowess, according to the view of the times, reflected their ability to lead”(Hardman, 2010) Sports allow people to evaluate each other on merit: skills, work ethic, commitment, and integrity.

Sports violence is not restricted to a handful of nations; it has become a universal phenomenon. It is not only the contestants who are involved in such acts; the spectators and fans as well commit violence to help their teams or players win or simply out of anger and frustration. In ancient Greece and Rome, new violent games, such Pankration, were invented to delight the people. It was a craze for witnessing and reveling in extreme violence that prevailed then and the same remains to this day. Witness, for instance, the mania which the new form of extremely violent wrestling promoted by the WWF has acquired in the last few years. The violent nature of games such as boxing and motor-racing results in great physical damage and even death. the health and educational benefits of physical activity were a component of public life. Inadvertently, many non-philosopher proponents of physical education took on philosophical positions on teleology, mind-body dualism and metaphysics as part of their model of human agency and personhood. "In a broader context, political philosophy entered the picture as thinkers of the time, in response to pressing social and political issues of the day associated civic duty, responsible citizenship and other political features to sport" (Kretchmar, R. Scott 1996) Ethical behavior in sports ensures that the competition is conducted in a fair and just manner, safeguarding the well-being of all participants.

Another serious problem in modern sports is doping, or use of drugs to improve one's performance. "Today it is a major issue of controversy in the Olympic Games, the Asiad and other major games. In most, if not all sports, players at the elite level set the standards on sportsmanship and whether they like it or not, they are seen as leaders and role models in society" (Clifford, Ken 2013). Chinese sportsmen and sportswomen in particular are increasingly being held up on charges of doping. The punishment for use of drugs in sports is strict: drug-using players are not only stripped of their medals but temporarily suspended, and banned from the sport for life if drugs are again detected in the tests conducted by the authorized organization. However, these have failed to discourage the players from using them. "Important questions in philosophy of sport are concerned with the social virtues of sport, the aesthetics of sporting performances and display, the epistemology of individual and team strategy and techniques, sporting ethics, the logic of rules in sport, metaphysics of sport as a component of human nature or instinct, etc" (Shouler, Kenneth 2003) Sportsmanship is an understanding of and commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity, and general goodwill toward an opponent.

What have also failed to check doping are the harmful effects of use of drugs for increasing performance. The major consequences of performance-boosting drugs are cancerous growths, liver damage and impotency. It is shocking to observe that mostly it is the managers of the teams as well as the coaches who are responsible for encouraging the taking of drugs among players. An incident that comes to mind is the suspensions of Argentinian soccer superstar, Diego Maradona for testing positive for a drug containing five banned substances.

Bribes to players are increasingly on the rise. This practice has been most widely seen in what was once the gentleman's game-cricket. Bribes are offered to teams/players so that the other contesting team/player can win a match. A reason for the offering of bribes is the huge amount of money that is spent by fans and groups on betting upon the winner. Thus, the defeat of a team can spell a loss of millions of dollars for international players in the betting market. Another unethical practice is that of cheating by players on the ground or the field itself. "Since every sport is rule-driven, the most common offence of bad sportsmanship is the act of cheating or breaking the rules to gain an unfair advantage; this is called unsportsmanlike conduct" (Feezell, Randolph 1986:2).

This problem is not of new origin; however, it remains a menace to the healthy development of sports. In the game of cricket, for instance, cheating has involved use of Vaseline on the ball and tampering with the ball to get quick wickets as well as throwing the ball violently to seriously injure the batsmen. "Philosophy of sport is an area of philosophy that seeks to conceptually analyze issues of sport as human activity. These issues cover many areas, but fall primarily into five philosophical categories: metaphysics, ethics and moral philosophy, philosophy of law, political philosophy, and aesthetics. The philosophical perspective on sport originated in Ancient Greece, having experienced a revival in the latter part of the 20th century" (Reid, Heather 2012) It is generally accepted that through sport one learns to persist, to sacrifice, and to be self-disciplined, to work hard, to follow orders.

There is a need to understand why ethical standards in sports have so drastically fallen in modern times. Professional sports today are not just a game; it is taken very seriously and given all the attention that excelling in a profession demands of a person. It involves a great deal of physical and mental strain. Training often starts at a very young age-as early as the age of four or five. The child is mentally trained with the object of securing a high level of excellence in his or her discipline.

For years, the blooming player spends all his time, energy and resources on acquiring the talent, devotion and perfection that will put him on the top at the earliest possible time. He sacrifices his family life and social life in the process. Thus, to achieve his aim is nothing less than an obsession for him. It is not only the urge to excel that comes from within himself; pressure from outside is equally keen to ensure that he gives more than his best. Winning means a lot of fame and, most importantly, money. The wish to be seen as a legend in the sport concerned is very strong in professional players.

Thus when they are not able to achieve their dream, they sometimes take to cheating, lying, doping or even outright violence out of psychological strain and frustration. They sometimes, though sincerely, try so hard to win that they end up hurting themselves psychologically or even physically. The death of the legendary Senna, whose name is counted among the greats in car racing, on the track during a race is only one example amidst a host of others. Maybe such an attitude in sports only reflects the modern man's attitudes towards life in general-one that is stressful and measured by material success alone.

Issues of doping in sport focus on the ethics of medical intervention on athletic performance: what is acceptable versus what is not, and how boundaries can be drawn. Particular attention is given to the question of what factors ought to be taken into consideration when banning certain medical interventions. "These and other issues are usually compared and contrasted through the lenses of three significant moral theories: consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics" (Sanzaro, Francis 2016) Players should play fair and in theory be able to referee their own matches.

The people who view the performance get equally involved in the game. What results is fights among fans of different teams while watching a game, threats to players and attempts on the part of fans to prove their craze or loyalty, call it what you will, towards a player or team. Often, matches between teams representing two nations are taken so seriously that a defeat may be considered nothing less than a loss of prestige and honour of a country, and it may inspire a violent expression of patriotism.

Such unethical practices are antithetical to the very principle of sports. So apart from strict penalties and punishments, what can be done to ensure 'clean' sports? There is a need to sincerely understand that sports ought to be 'played' and not 'fought'. Winning and losing must be viewed as part of the game. Thus, what is required is developing a sportsman spirit within the players, the coaches, and the managers as well as sports fans. Resorting to scheming and cheap practices to simply win is not fair towards the players and teams who play the game with honesty. The wrong-doers must remember that even these players train hard to physically and mentally equip themselves for a match. Sports must involve real competition that calls into play the talent, stamina, perseverance and determination that the players naturally posses or have acquired from hard training. Use of wrong means to achieve a victory is degrading to the very spirit of sports and humanity. Use of drugs, in particular, ought to be effectively tackled as it shows the way to physical, mental and moral degeneration of man.

CONCLUSION

Sportsmanship instills such crucial character traits as empathy, self-control, kindness, and respect in young athletes. Ethics is so important in the world of sports because it stands not only for a fair play but also for respectful and ethical behavior of all the parties engaged like athletes, referees, fans, while playing a game or competing. Nowadays in the world of sports we can see how the rules of a fair game are being broken just in the pursuit of a victory. Below are the main ethical problems the world of sports facing. A more ethical approach to athletics is sportsmanship. Under a sportsmanship model, healthy competition is seen as a means of cultivating personal honor, virtue, and character. It contributes to a community of respect and trust between competitors and in society. The goal in sportsmanship is not simply to win, but to pursue victory with honor by giving one's best effort. Sportsmanship, grounded in fair play, respect, and integrity, shapes the ethos of athletic competition.

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