

The Effect of Commercialization and Professionalization on the Philosophy of Sports

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Abstract

Olympics began with the motto of bridging different communities; emphasize social, educational, ethical and cultural values. Sports has been one of the most advanced causes of globalization, as there are fewer obstacles to its development than in the other field. . Modern sport is now an industry where sportsmen are paid greater than film and entertainment celebrities. The modern sport society has evolved with technology, government, management, media and different perceptions on gender in sport all shaping the face of professionalisation in modern sport. Commercialization has changed the face of sport in every way possible to take advantage of the phenomenon that was once just known as leisure time. It was the field of sport that was left but these days even the sports have come into the loop of disgrace. It is quite evident that these creepy factors are not only spoiling the sport but also hampering the spirit and its philosophy. Notwithstanding its beneficial virtues sports carries a paradox. Sport can be cruel as well as enjoyable. It might stimulate confidence and optimism, on the other hand inculcates exclusion, violence, aggression, harassment etc which are disgraceful. In this respect the optimistic attitude that sports is a catalyst for the philosophical development need to be analyzed.

Introduction:

We live in a world in which some of the richest and poorest people identify with forms of sport in some way. In some ways global sport has never been more successful. The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games involved 10,300 athletes from 200 countries, attracted more than US \$600million in sponsorship and was viewed on TV by more than 3.7 billion people. Sports social and commercial power makes it a potentially potent force in the modern world for good and for bad. It can be a tool for dictatorship, a symbol of democratic change; it has helped to start wars and promote international reconciliation. According to the ideology of sport and especially that of the Olympic movement, one of the fundamental functions of international sport is to promote international understanding and good-will among the youth of the world. Sport has even been referred to as one of the most influential movements for peace.

No doubt the history of international sport and that of the Olympic Games provide numerous examples of the functions sport for building ties of friendship between the different countries but International Sport has often played its part in producing controversies, conflicts and even the interruption of relations between nations. In addition the increasing commercialization, westernization and professionalism of sports in the light of expected economic growth runs the risk of reducing individuals to commodities and challenges the intrinsic ethical values, philosophy and virtues of sports.

What Sports is about?

A sport is an organized activity where an individual or a group should be involved in such an activity. Sports as assumed could be an activity which could bring in cordial human relations in the true sense. If a sport is considered as a disturbing or negative aspect among individual who participate then it could bring in many divisions and conflicts for the negative aspirants of sports.

Philosophy of sport:

The philosophy of sport is concerned with the conceptual analysis and interrogation of ideas and issues of sports and related practices such as coaching, sports journalism and sports medicine. At its most general level, it is concerned with articulating the nature and purposes of sport. The philosophy of sport is never fixed. The philosophy of sport not only gathers insights from the various fields of philosophy, but also generates substantive and competing views of sport itself.

Ethics in sport:

In the sports related literature, 'Ethics' is simply a social science by another name. The most common examples of 'ethics' in sport that spring up in casual conversations, as well as the academic literature, are matters of equity (i.e. social justice in terms of unequal pay for male and female sports stars) deviant sub-cultures and practices (for example, so-called football 'hooliganism' and cheating, sexual-abuse/harassment or doping). However, the development of the ethics of sport has led to a whole range of topics emerging as possible features of curricula in the ethics and philosophy of sport.

Concept of modern sports

Sports environment in competitive world

Because of the increase of media, finance and political stakes, sportsman whatever their level of competition is, are submitted to the pressure coming from "Sports World". This pressure can come from sponsors & the advertising impacts, they are expecting from the sportsman they are supporting. Financial investment implemented by clubs when they take on a player who in turn is asked for immediate results. Managers of sports club, who maintain direct or indirect relationships with sponsorships, Technical and Medical personnel for whom the situation of employees may depend on the sportsman result.

Sports as an Industry

The statistics of trade and production could not fail to introduce a sporting element into economic life. In consequence, there is now a sporting side to almost every triumph of commerce or technology: the highest turn over, the biggest tonnage, the fastest crossing, the greatest altitude, etc. The trend is now reversed: play becomes business.

Clubs run as commercial enterprises; men who earn their living solely or mainly by playing sports; full time administrators, managers, and trainers; national, even international controlling bodies; paying spectators in their thousands: all of these are firmly established parts of the modern social scene.

Commercialization of Sports

Modern sports links to commerce are highly visible. Stadiums and arenas bear the names of businesses, while sponsors' logos appear on athletes' clothing and equipment, on the facilities in which they play, and in the titles of the events in which they compete. Media companies pay vast sums for the rights to broadcast sports events and advertisers pay a premium to promote products during the screening of these events. Star athletes are transferred for multi-million fees and professional sport franchises are sold for sums higher than the gross domestic products of some countries.

There has been a rapid and widespread commercialization of sport. Professional Sports, today, assumed the role of an Octopus with many tentacles, each capable of generating millions and millions of Dollars! Professional sports are generating billions of US Dollars annually. The

Corporate jargons “revenue generation”, “high decibel marketing”, “Bottom-lines” are now being increasingly heard in Sports! It is becoming very, very big.

Effects of Commercialization and Professionalization on Sports

Sport has become a business in recent times. The commercialization and professionalisation has changed its trend, nullifying the philosophy and ethical values of sports. The commercialization and professionalisation has resulted in many non ethical factors affecting sports such as;

Violence: The acceptance of body contact and borderline violence seems to be based on the idea that sports is an area of life in which it is permissible to suspend usual moral standards. A college basketball player says, "In sports you can do what you want. In life it is more restricted". A football player says, "The football field is the wrong place to think about ethics".

The public should be concerned, but not surprised, by the violence in sports today because those involved are mirroring the actions of our society. The violence is not limited to professional sports. It filters down to the high schools and even to recreational activities such as IU intramurals.

Types of Violence:

1. Physical Violence: Athletes sometimes resort to violence, in hopes of injuring the opponents such incidents may be a part of a strategy developed by the coaches.
2. Verbal Abuse: Athletes, Fans, Parents and Coaches sometimes take part in verbal abuse, screaming at players, coaches, officials and fans.
3. Fan Violence: In both the stands and the streets, fans may resort to violence to express loyalty to a team to release frustration with a team's performance or to intimidate opponents.
4. Parental Violence: The parents of athletes occasionally become violent. Some taunt or hit coaches, players and other parents.

Prevention:

1. Emphasizing sportsmanship among players
2. Promoting positive role models
3. Banning or restricting consumption of alcohols
4. Imposing tougher penalties for athletes
5. Banning unruly spectators
6. Prosecuting both athletes and non athletes in the criminal courts.

Aggression: Competitive sports have resulted in aggression in the recent times. They are most commonly found particularly in contact sports such as American football, Rugby, Boxing and Wrestling etc. “Intermittent Explosive Disorder” may be the cause for such behavior in sportsman. Some sport psychologists and sports psychiatrists have expressed concerns about the impact on the children. Critics worry that children may copy activities or become desensitized to such things.

Match Fixing: Match Fixing or Game fixing in the organized sports occur when a match is played to a completely or partially for pre-determined results. Match fixing is often motivated by agreements with gamblers. In the past NFL and NBA teams have been accused of throwing games in order to obtain a more favorable schedule the following season. In the year 2000, the Delhi police intercepted a conversation between a black listed bookie and the South African captain Hansie Cronje in which they learnt that Cronje accepted money to throw matches.

Doping: The use of drugs has become so common in sports nowadays that it has infected every sport, not sparing any activity. It has been around since the turn of 20th Century. Enhancing Performance has been the most common factor for doping. The most widely known case of cheating came when Ben Johnson of Canada won the 100m. He subsequently failed the drug test when Stanozolol was found in his urine test. World Anti doping Agency (WADA) set up on November 10, 1999 in Lausanne, Switzerland has been fighting hard to prevent drugs in sport.

Conclusion:

A major justification for our nation's enormous investment in competitive sports is that 'sports build character, teach team effort, and encourage sportsmanship and fair play'. Recent studies indicate that youth involved in organized sports show less sportsmanship than those who are not involved. One study found that as the children grew older they moved away from placing high value on fairness and fun in participation and began to emphasize skill and victory as the major goals of sport. Instead of learning fair play and teamwork, too many of our children are learning winning is everything? It is time to regulate children's sports so that youth will really learn the pro-social attitudes and ethical values that they are supposed to learn from sports, in order to restore the ethics and spirit of philosophy.

Recommendations:

We have reached a crisis point today. Contributing to this crisis is TV, which introduces violent athletes as role models to very young children and often focuses attention on the violence in sports. Also, the commercialization of youth sports introduces children to inappropriately competitive sports at an early age. Both as players and as spectators, children are learning all the wrong lessons. What can we do to restore the ethical values and spirit of philosophy in sports?

1. Day care centers and nursery schools are licensed. There is a problem of accountability of youth sports organizations. It is time for sports organizations, which involve large numbers of school-age children and affect their physical and mental health, to be licensed as well.
2. All coaches (and parents) should have training in child development and physiology, and sports philosophy and how to deal with violence in sports.
3. All players, parents and coaches should sign a "contract" agreeing to a code of conduct, what is expected of coaches, players and parents.
4. All attempts at injuring other players in order to "take them out" of the game and all borderline violence should be forbidden. Any attempt by a coach to encourage youth to behave in this way should be met with a severe penalty and eventual removal if repeated. There should be no difference between game morality and the morality of everyday life.
5. Players who are problematic (i.e. offenders) should not be allowed to play on a team (for suitable time periods). For example, a '3 strikes and you are out' rule.
6. All violent, insulting language on the part of the coach and the players, including slurs against women and homosexuals, should be forbidden.
7. Friendly, civil relations between teams should be encouraged. All games should start and end with handshakes.
8. Professional sports organizations must curtail violence. Otherwise, if society has seen fit to regulate cockfights and dogfights to protect animals and the public, so must violence in professional sports be regulated?

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