

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF FAIR PLAY IN MODERN SPORT

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Abstract:

The issue of fair play is still present, as we face with racism or increasing aggression in sport. The most recent example could be a brutal foul during a football match in the Indonesian league on 10th May this year, when the goalkeeper fouled the striker Akli Fairuz so hard that the injured player was taken to hospital and died¹. More and more examples of such disgraceful and tragic episodes can be given in many sports disciplines. The aim of the article is to present the phenomenon of fair play and to attempt to find examples of its use or violation of its rules by athletes in modern sport.

The essence of the game – including the spirit of competition, is the subordination of decisions and behaviors to the rules common to all participants, with a simultaneous approval of the use of full potential within the specified area of players' freedom. Both of these elements are present in varying proportions - depending on the type and specificity of the game. A. Caille writes: 'Whether you are playing as a test of strength, which consists in the exchange of gifts, poems, insults or threats, blows in the fight or philosophical arguments, there is always a need to respect these rules, at least superficially, to avoid embarrassment or putting on a brave face, dealing with one's own victory or defeat. In fact, the game is impossible if the winner does not imply that the loser can win now or that he or she will be able to win in the future. If the one who lost was not actually able to win, the winner would fight with the worthless enemy and his victory would have no value'².

In the words of J. Lipiec, citing R. Caillois³, games typology allows to distinguish *agon*, *alea*, *mimicry* and *ilinx*. *Agon* is a competitive game, or competitions that take place according to certain rules and allow for the selection of the winner. *Alea* is a gambling game in which the result depends on the fate (e.g. roulette or dice). *Mimicry* is a thematic game involving pretending someone or something (girls playing with dolls or boys pretending 'war', as well as acting in the theater). In contrast, *ilinx* minimizes the presence of a game element to increase the effect of spontaneous, terrific and tremendous fun. They rarely occur in pure form, usually there occur various relationships between the given types⁴.

According to Z. Jastrzębski and K. Kalka 'A game as fun easily transforms into a game as a job. It is not about the professionalization of the role and activities of players, but about a shift from the emphasis on the importance of participation in the game to the ability to obtain an optimal final result'. It is the outcome which qualitatively and quantitatively determines the result of an effort of the player, expressed in victory, breaking the record or the style of his

¹<http://sport.tvn24.pl/pilka-nozna,105/dramat-w-lidze-indonezyjskiej-pilkarz-zmarl-po-faulu-rywala,430171.html>

² A. Caillé, *O pojęciu fair play*, „Sport Wyczynowy”, 1994, nr 7-8, s. 26-27.

³ Zob. R. Caillois, *Żywioł i ład*, Warszawa 1973.

⁴ Zob. J. Lipiec, *Filozofia czystej gry*, „Wychowanie Fizyczne i Zdrowotne”, 1997, nr 1, s. 5.

achievement. At the same time it has a specific value in the system of social rewards - from fame to financial benefits.⁵

Participation in the game entails a whole range of direct ways of getting involved in its course, shaping the player's character and silhouette. It provides an opportunity to demonstrate the qualities that the game promotes and exposes. Besides, it resolves conflicts connected with competition (comparative victory - to be better than competitors) and a number of perfectionistic issues (achieving an accessible maximum)⁶. The main idea of the competition is to seek to establish numerical order (the competition and the quality of its effects become secondary), while the idea of perfectionism is qualitative and individualistic (the chance to mark one's presence, ambition, championship - place on the ranking list become less important). In extreme cases, the idea of autotelic expression, meaning 'game for the game itself', may also appear. J. Lipiec points out that 'it is possible that this is what de Coubertin meant, writing about the primacy of participation in the Olympics, even before the laurels of victory'⁷.

Sports game - because this is discussed here, is a variation of the fight within certain rules, describing its conditions, objectives and measures, and also eliminating such features as totality and extreme unpredictability. Among the conditions of a particular game are its place, props and the way it is organized. Its measures include general methods and techniques permitted in the game, which lead players to partial and final success. Thanks to the rules, the game is subject to determination, imposed and consciously adopted by human culture⁸.

It is the rules of the game and their compliance which are so important when considering the issue of fair play. J. Lipiec writes 'Participation in sports game is voluntary, you agree to all the rules of a given game, the acceptance of shared responsibility for their compliance (by yourself and others) from the beginning to the end of the game, and the obligation of solidary protective response towards a possible danger to the game, by objective circumstances or behavior against the course of the game, its meaning and advantages'⁹.

Rules imposed by sports competition, are based on fair trial of players. JW Keating made an attempt to interpret the concept of fair trial in sport. In his concept he distinguished sport played for entertainment from professional sport. The purpose of the former is pleasure, joy and contentment, filled with the spirit of moderation and generosity, experienced through collaboration, which is typical for this kind of sport. In contrast, professional sport is a competitive activity, whose primary objective is to achieve victory through sacrifice and renunciation, among rivalry, whose intensity can alleviate compliance with rules¹⁰.

After this little semantic introduction we should concentrate on the phenomenon of *fair play* and its manifestations (or violation) in modern sport. In everyday terms, fair play means a *pure* game, compliant with the rules, unlike *foul* - the introduction of behaviors non-compliant with the rules of the game, and at the same time adversely affecting the chances of the opponent.

According to A. Przyłuska-Fisher the importance of fair play can be expressed adopting the following moral principles:

1. The principle of respect for all the rules;
2. The principle of absolute obedience to the decisions of a referee who is regarded as an advocate of the impartiality of the evaluation of sports results;

⁵ Z. Jastrzębski, K. Kalka, *Zasada fair play w kształtowaniu postawy sportowca*, (w:) Z. Jastrzębski (red.) „Teoria i praktyka wychowania fizycznego i sportu”, I. 3, Łódź 2013, s.161.

⁶ Por. Tamże, s. 162.

⁷ J. Lipiec, *Filozofia czystej...*, dz. cyt., s. 6.

⁸ Thanks to determination is subject to to the rules the game imposed and consciously adopted by human culture

⁹ J. Lipiec, *Filozofia czystej...*, dz. cyt., s. 7.

¹⁰ Zob. A. Przyłuska-Fischer, *Sport i ideały moralne sportu w kategoriach etyki*, (w:) „Oblicza sportu”, Warszawa 1990, s. 48-52.

3. The principles of objectively equal conditions of competition, also known as the principle of equal opportunities;
4. The principle of not using random advantage, which provides additional details to the principle of equal opportunities. In special cases players hold the responsibility for maintaining fair conditions of competition;
5. The principle of conscious resignation from opportunities to achieve unfair victory that refers, like the previous one, to the players' sense of responsibility for the compliance with the rules of fair play¹¹.

M. Bronikowski emphasizes the need for, and even the necessity of development of skills for proper interpretation of the situation and its moral evaluation as well as the selection of proper conduct of people associated with sport. As he writes: 'The main indications of a necessary model of moral conduct should be the concern for the health and respect for the other person and his efforts in self-improvement, honesty, not only in relation to an opponent, but also towards the spectator of a sports event and inner acceptance of one's own conduct'¹². This will ensure equal chances of winning to each of the sides, and the rivalry will be accompanied by a feeling of satisfaction with the result.

Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the Olympic movement, wrote: 'I didn't revive the Olympic Games to make them the property of a country or race, or to become dependent on any groups or interests. On the contrary, the great strength of this re-ignited flame lies in the fact that it burns almost all over the world. All games, all nations - an essential formula for the Olympic Games.'¹³ The recognition of cultural diversity and difference has been the strength and dynamics of the Olympic movement for decades. Coubertin was inspired and captivated by the culture of ancient Greeks, whose influence gradually decreased over time - games became more modern and international, contributing to the culture of the modern world. Ethnic group, religion, or political system significantly affect the diversity of sport and in spite of this, the players taking part in the Olympics compete with each other in a peaceful and friendly way. Olympic idea is not limited to the promotion of sport, because it cannot be a value in itself - it fulfills its task only by relationship with the culture, improving the quality of life of people involved in it¹⁴. Therefore, the international nature of Olympic sport made it a symbol of global culture.

J. Kosiewicz believes that '*fair play* is a concept related to competition, currently studied as a norm or a set of moral norms that affect the behavior of contemporary participants of a sports event and other persons connected with competition in sport'¹⁵. *Fair play* can therefore - as it was indicated above - be regarded as norms determined by the set of rules of the game. Thus, any deviation from the regulations is 'abnormal' or deviating from the standard. 'The contract' is concluded before the game and commits all its participants. Playing without rules loses its sense, it is not a game any more.

W. Lipoński in his work titled 'Celtic origins of British fair play' proves that the source of this concept must be sought in the Celtic form of a 'fir fer' meaning pure, spotless behavior¹⁶.

Celtic civilization, which covered (in the 5th and 6th centuries) a large part of the European continent, undoubtedly had an impact on the development of this concept. The importance it had to shape the concept of fair play cannot be overlooked. It can be said that

¹¹ A. Przyłuska-Fiszler, B. Missiuna, *Etyczne aspekty sportu*, AWF Warszawa 1993, s. 27.

¹² M. Bronikowski, *Moralność - istotny czynnik zachowań w sytuacjach sportowych*, „Sport Wyczynowy”, 2000, nr 9-10, s. 164.

¹³ Zob. W. Daume, *Fair play - uniwersalna wartość sportu*, „Sport Wyczynowy”, 1994, nr 7-8, s. 31.

¹⁴ Z. Jastrzębski, K. Kalka, *Zasada fair play...*, dz. cyt., s. 166.

¹⁵ J. Kosiewicz, *Fair play jako postulat praktyczny i przedmiot badań*, „Wychowanie Fizyczne i Zdrowotne”, 1999, nr 4., s. 139.

¹⁶ W. Lipoński, *Celtycka geneza brytyjskiego fair play*, Warszawa 1996, s.63

the concept of fair play is the result of a clash of pagan and Celtic influences with the Christian tradition and roots coming from Greece and Rome, which in turn were taken over by an English ethos of a gentleman (16th and 19th centuries).

Fair play is thus a fundamental standard of ethics in sport, but also outside it. Currently, athletes do not fight - as in the past - with the other champions, but with centimeters and fractions of seconds. The game inevitably loses element of pleasure in favor of the needs of victory, producing a kind of cult of sports achievements. Another approach towards fair play advocates avoiding random advantage in the game and calls for equal opportunities in competition (e.g. through concessions from the stronger) and winning with respect for the dignity of the defeated, without causing excessive damage to him. It also requires transparency in actions (e.g. a ban on blows in the back)¹⁷. This treatment is based on the honor of chivalry, considered as the main and autotelic value (independent of other values) and referring to the ethos of chivalry. Honor can also be considered as an anthropologically primary and autonomous category, independent of the culture and enjoyed by selected individuals, regardless of their position in their society¹⁸.

Referring to the ethos of chivalry, which was so thoroughly presented by M. Ossowska, B. Misiuna claims that *fair play* rules in sport were derived from it. They were highly similar to their modern understanding. He lists the following principles: disinterested respect for the rules of the game, respect for the opponent, equal opportunities in the fight, elimination of the use of random advantage, resignation of practical benefits of victory and minimization of the suffering of the opponent.¹⁹

J. Lipiec states firmly that 'fair play is the principle, which does not need to be explained, because this principle is the highest in a certain range of applications (e.g. in the fight on the stadium). It is possible, however, that it requires a reference to the hierarchy of all values, and should apply only in the overall context.'²⁰

In general, fair play determines the most important values that should be present in each sport fighting. Under these two words lies not only competing in accordance with the regulations, but also preservation of honesty and every kind of beauty and nobility, an example of which can be 'a moment of silence' before the game, to commemorate someone who was recognized for meritorious service in sport but passed away. The principle of 'pure-play' includes the most important role of sport and plays an educational role by forming a human moral attitude.

The *International Fair Play Committee* at the UNESCO, based in Paris, has been giving Fair Play awards since 1964²¹. Andrzej Bachleda, was the first Pole who was awarded this prestigious award for his sportsmanship during the special slalom in Aspen (the United States) in 1968. It was one of the last competitions belonging to the World Cup – the players were fighting fiercely. Polish representative was on excellent fourth place. It was a huge success, as any place in the top ten was highly scored. Despite such winning streak, suddenly there was a confusion. Bachleda walked over to the scorer's table and asked for disqualification on the grounds of gate omission. Initially it was considered a joke, but the Pole explained exactly how he missed the gate, and why the judge did not notice it. Asking for disqualification he claimed that he did not deserve such a high place, because it was not compatible with his

¹⁷ Z. Żukowska, R. Żukowski, *Fair play wartością uniwersalną dla sportu i wychowania*, „Wychowanie Fizyczne i Sport”, 1994, nr 2, s. 33.

¹⁸ Zob. M. Ossowska, *Etos rycerski i jego odmiany*, PWN, Warszawa 2012, s. 23.

¹⁹ A. Przyłuska-Fischer, B. Misiuna, *Etyczne aspekty sportu...*, dz. cyt., s. 107.

²⁰ J. Lipiec, *Filozofia czystej...*, dz. cyt., s. 5.

²¹ Z. Żukowska, R. Żukowski (red.), *Fair play w sporcie i Olimpizmie. Szansa czy utopia*, Estrella, Warszawa 2010, s. 36.

conscience²². Bachleda's behavior was considered to be the most beautiful gesture of the year in the world of sport.

Another example of *fair play* in modern sport is the behavior of the Turkish defender, who did not foul the Croatian striker at the European Championships in football in 1996, which contributed to the failure of his team.

Zbigniew Pietrzykowski - a Polish boxer, a four-time European champion and a three-time Olympic medalist, who died several days ago, recalled: 'The most memorable in my life was a domestic ring, one scene of the league fight... I was fighting with a weaker fighter than me and got a big advantage over him. The spectators were waiting for a knockout. I decided to spare the inexperienced young fighter. You do not hurt weaker people! I knew that they would be whistling, but should I have given up my principles for a momentary applause? Fair Play is the greatest value, which I have taken from sport. It is so difficult to apply this principle in your life. On the one hand excitement of the public, on the other awareness that the opponent is not going to stroke you, but can hit strongly. But deadening of brutal excitement gives a person a lot of satisfaction ...'²³.

The research carried out in different environments shows that the awareness of fair play is usually associated with sports, but at the same time, e.g. youth indicates the idea of universal values of fair play, and recognizes their role and importance in family life, in the classroom, at school, in the circles of friends, in interpersonal relations, in politics and business.

As demonstrated in the study conducted by J. Derbich, 30% of young people claim that they follow the principle of *fair play* in sport and a further 15% felt that there is justice in sport. These same young respondents agreed that modern sport isolates (13%) and demoralizes socially (10%), disorganizes their private lives (26%), and even contributes to the deterioration of their health (16%). 23% of young people expressed the belief that sport rewards only the best people, and as many as 51% - think that sport brutally eliminates the weakest ones²⁴.

It cannot be concealed that modern sport uses various achievements of civilization, such as science, technology and communication. Sport has become a phenomenon determined politically and economically, and sporting events are a medium of interests and values, not just sport. It has become a field of achievements in chemistry, impure fighting, measures that enhance the natural human capabilities. In most cases, this applies to professional sports, where the stake is a great success, money and fame.

On the other hand, there are differences in the motives for participation in the games—spectators have certain reasons, athletes are motivated by different ones and activists or sponsors some others. Individual goals, designated by the athletes themselves and the goals of clubs, designated by the club authorities, have also diversified. This raises the issue highlighted by J. Lipiec, 'whether the issue of fair play should be viewed only from the position of a single player and funds available for him, or should other participants of sporting events be also included, namely: the coaches and managers, doctors and psychologists, judges and organizers, sponsors and politicians, journalists manipulating public opinion, and the very public, which is a powerful factor of pressure, unfortunately, often negative, directed against the rules of the game but consistent with the feelings of the crowd'²⁵.

²² Zob. Z. Żukowska (red.), *Fair play - Sport - Edukacja*, wyd. Estrella, Warszawa 1995, s. 15.

²³ T. Olszański, J. Lis, *Czysta gra*, SiT, Warszawa 1984, s. 51.

²⁴ Zob. J. Derbich, *Przygotowanie do wyboru wartości poprzez uprawianie sportu*, (w:) Z. Dziubiński (red.) *Wychowawcze aspekty sportu*, Warszawa 1993, s. 143-149.

²⁵ J. Lipiec, *Filozofia czystejej...*, dz. cyt., s. 8.

Morally permissible fight involves equal opponents, fighting under the same conditions and with the same share of random factors²⁶. This reflects the deepest and most beautiful side of pure play. The individual - committed to the fight himself - is responsible for the maximum protection of real equality of opportunities and controls the situation in a way so that nothing could disturb fair conduct of the fight. What does it mean in practice? The cyclist may give the opponent his spare bike, a boxer may resign from knocking out the staggering opponent.

The question of moral values in modern sport and the presence of *fair play* behaviors in it, is in fact an ethical question about the condition of the modern world and the spiritual aspects of a modern man. Sport is a domain of young people enabling them to shape their own body, allowing for personal development and influencing their mental health. Therefore, underestimation of the idea of *fair play* is a serious educational threat to young people who demonstrate a high fascination with sport. The main ethical value of sport should be respect for the other person (the opponent). Although the specificity of sport triggers animal instincts in a man, he must fight wisely and bravely enough to let unquestionable humanism win ultimately. Sport is not just a competition, strenuous exercise, victory and defeat, but also a moral choice²⁷.

The sportsman, especially the professional one, bears many hardships and sacrifices to achieve his goal. However, the fundamental question is whether he is able to sacrifice the victory and effort put in it in the name of sports ethics and his own conscience. More and more often we are witnessing a beautiful sport event which, under the influence of unsporting behavior, changes into a kind of a 'slacked-baked cake'²⁸, according to Z. Szpakowski. There is therefore an urgent educational demand for the democratization of what *fair play* brings, that is ordinary human honesty, respect, goodness and truth. For the time being we want to believe - like Coubertin believes - that the desire to behave in accordance with the principles of fair play is the nature of every man, which reveals to the fullest extent and develops most in the process of sports education. It grows in strength here and then marks its influence in the other areas of life²⁹.

To summarize the above discussion it can be concluded that the hustle and bustle in sports competition, described by detailed rules, causes that the rules are not sufficient to fight with dignity and honesty. The desire of the athletes to win at all costs, at the expense of their own health and sometimes opponents' health, causes a kind of drainage of ethical values in sport. The media meticulously inform about and broadcast images of brutal behavior in sport or even criminal acts during sports events. Therefore, fair play rules are of particular importance today and the education of the young people about fair play should start as early as at the level of schoolyards.

²⁶ J. Kosiewicz, *W kręgu filozofii i uniwersaliów sportu*, „Kultura Fizyczna”, 1994, nr 5-6. s. 25.

²⁷ Zob. W. Żukow, R. Muszkiet, E. Prystupa, M. Górny, M. Napierała (red.), *Humanistyczne aspekty rehabilitacji, turystyki, rekreacji i sportu*, Wyd. Ośrodek Rekreacji, Sportu i Edukacji w Poznaniu, Lwów-Poznań-Warszawa 2010, s. 28.

²⁸ Słowa Dariusza Szpakowskiego na antenie publicznej, komentującego mecz o Superpuchar Hiszpanii pomiędzy Barceloną, a Realem Madryt (17.08.2011).

²⁹ A. Dąbrowska, *Spoleczno-wychowawcze wartości idei fair play w rekreacji i turystyce*, PTNKF, Warszawa 1996, s. 29.