



Book of Abstracts

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Keynote Speakers

IAPS Presidential Address, Irena Martínková, Charles University

Values in sport systematized

This paper discusses various approaches to the idea of ‘values’ in sport, and proposes their systematization. Much work of the philosophy of sport is about some value or values, but there is no systematic understanding of all the different kinds of values under consideration.

This paper suggests four classes of values that are foundational for sport as a meaningful practice for human beings: 1) source values and ideals of sport, i.e. societal values and ideals that are foundational for defining the nature of sport, 2) internal values of sport, that are foundational for its logic and rules, and 3) necessary intrinsic values that athletes experience in their sport practice (hand in hand with extrinsic values that athletes bring into sport and experience in their sport practice), and 4) supererogatory intrinsic values that represent the highest standards of intrinsic values that we find in sport. The paper will demonstrate how these four classes of values are related to each other.

The theme will be presented with examples of values that we find in sport, such as competition, justice, inclusion, etc. It will also examine some historical approaches to values in sport, such as Coubertin’s understanding.

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Warren Fraleigh Distinguished Scholar Address, Francisco Javier López Frías, Utah State University

Goals Reconsidered: From Prelusory States of Affairs to Sport’s Lusory Complexity

In this paper, I reconsider Bernard Suits’ conceptualization of goals in his influential definition of gameplay, with particular attention to how his account struggles to capture the complexity of sporting practices. Suits famously describes games as voluntary attempts to overcome

unnecessary obstacles in achieving an identifiable state of affairs, which he refers to as the prelusory goal, framing gameplay as structured teleologically around this goal, the most fundamental goal of games. Although elegant and very intuitive, this conception raises tensions when applied to the complex, multilayered activities commonly recognized as sports. I begin by examining Suits' different notions of goals in gameplay and the role they play in this activity. I then show how the lusory complexity of sport—manifested in its plurality of goals, layered obstacles, and multiple player interactions—questions the aptness of Suits' framework to capture the nature of sport. Finally, I explore what philosophical work Suits' definition is meant to do, arguing that its intended normative implications ultimately constrain its ability to account for the goal complexity and structure that characterize many sporting activities. The paper concludes by advocating a qualified rejection of relying on Suits' definition to scrutinize the nature of sport.

Keynote Address, Brian Glenney, Norwich University

Polluted Sport: The Paradoxes of Sporting Life in the Anthropocene

This talk reconsiders sport in the context of the Anthropocene. Its central concern is a paradox: pollution is both a danger to sport and a condition that makes it possible—and even pleasurable. In this light, sport in the Anthropocene may be reconceptualized as polluted sport.

Widespread acknowledgment of a new geological epoch stems from the fact that “the mass of human-made materials now exceeds the mass of all living biomass” (Elhacham et al., 2020)—a tipping point “so large and active that it rivals some of the great forces of Nature” (Steffen et al., 2011: 842). The Anthropocene threat is existential: an inescapably polluted condition that Félix Guattari (1989) would diagnose as a state of catastrophe.

Within this sport-in-the-Anthropocene frame, some scholars have proposed that sport must adapt (Orr 2024), while others call for a fundamental transformation toward an attenuated “after sport” (Bustad et al., 2025), drawn from postmodern sport or “post-sport” (Atkinson 2014). The contribution of the polluted sport thesis developed here is to decenter these future-oriented responses by attending to the myriad ways in which sports have already adapted—spatially, socially, and sensorially—to the polluted infrastructures of the Anthropocene.

Specifically, polluted sport reframes sport as a polluted grey space of spatial, social, and sensorial ambiguity, paradox, and contradiction. To extend this chromatic framing, consider how the “blue” and “green” spaces typically associated with ecological health—rivers, oceans, forests—are, in sport, often ecologically dysbiotic and sometimes devoid of nonhuman life. In this context, their value to sport participants becomes ambiguous. From chlorinated swimming pools and insecticided golf courses to synthetic rubber-crumb turf pitches, many sporting environments are not just dependent on pollution—they are made possible and, in some cases, enhanced by it. Even so-called “nature” sports (Booth 2024) have adapted and flourished under dysbiotic ecological conditions. UK surfers, for instance, ride waves shaped by breaks over toxic slag heaps, while European dark sport enthusiasts fish in Chornobyl's exclusion zone. Sensory adaptations are also evident, particularly in visual, kinesthetic, and olfactory perception. Consider the skater's eye—an embodied attunement to the affordances of polluted, “crusty” urban spaces optimized for risky trick play.

The grey space of polluted sport invites new ethical, political, and ontological frameworks for understanding sport in the Anthropocene. How might we reassess “nature” sport in light of an ecology increasingly defined by human-made materials—plastic paddleboards, kayaks, surfboards—whose environmental impacts far outlast their sporting use? What values, beyond personal excellence and public health, might sustain a sporting ethics attuned to ecological entanglement with pollution? And what image of the good life is available to a sporting humanity whose spatial, social, and sensory capacities are increasingly calibrated to the affordances of polluted worlds?

This talk concludes with reflections on Guattari’s concept of ecosophy as a generative framework for a philosophy of polluted sport.

Conference Abstracts

Ivan Adames, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus

Strength. Foundations for a Philosophy of Sport

(1) In contemporary times, the sciences are considered the sole and primary source of valid information for describing, classifying, and directing sports activity. The scientification of sport is, therefore, the main issue we will address. With this work, we aspire to a horizon of sport rooted in philosophical principles. In recent years, a new field has emerged: the philosophy of sport, which seeks precisely to fill this void and provide philosophical meanings to sport (Weiss, 1969; Reid, 2012; Ryall, 2016).

(2) This research proposes a sport-philosophical concept of strength/force that we call experiential strength. We start from a phenomenological and experiential approach to strength, in which it is identified with the body itself and movement. Moreover, strength can be synthesized under three spheres or dimensions of practical life that we call conjugately: ethics-aesthetics-health. This approach, based on the lived experience of strength, attempts to recover the physical and material meanings of corporeality itself. Experiential strength, therefore, constitutes a redefinition of the concept of strength/force, as opposed to an objective concept of force and bodies that dominates the Physical Sciences [of Sport] (Zatsiorsky, 2020; Schoenfeld, 2020).

(3) Finally, in order to characterize the structure underlying the scientification of sport, several movements that make up the different modalities of sport will be analyzed, outlining in them what we call a logic of performance. This calculative procedure differs significantly from the experiential meanings in which strength/force is experienced. The sport we propose constitutes, therefore, a privileged plane of practical life or lived experience in which human potentialities are integrated and balanced.

Keywords: Strength; Ancient & modern Sports; Phenomenology of the body

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Rafał Adametz, The Open University, UK

Action Theory and Long-Distance Running

In this paper I use two concepts from philosophical action theory: ‘intention’ (Anscombe, 1957), and ‘basic actions’ (Danto, 1965), to analyse the actions of athletes. Basic actions such as ‘throwing the ball’ are contrasted with non-basic actions such as ‘scoring a point in a basketball match’. This helps to show us where the difficulty of athletic performance lies and helps to explain why athletes so often fail. I argue that certain actions that are necessary for meaningful participation in a particular discipline, are basic for an experienced athlete but not basic for a novice. My analysis supports the view that athletes’ actions are only seemingly effortless. In fact, they are necessarily difficult since athletes have specific intentions concerned with winning the game or striving to improve (Montero, 2016). To illustrate and exemplify this, I introduce the case of long-distance running where, despite being required only to perform a basic action of making consecutive steps, athletes struggle with a non-basic action of re-asserting their resolution to keep the pace, despite the temptation to slow down (Faulkner, 2014).

Keywords: action theory; intentions; basic actions; running

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Kenneth Aggerholm, Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Signe Højbjerg Larsen, University of Southern Denmark, Paul Gaffney, St. John's University

The Content of Competition in Sport

Questions regarding the appropriate competition format often arise in both emerging and established sports. New movement cultures such as parkour, breakdance, and skateboarding frequently encounter challenges when institutionalising competition: What precisely is being judged? What constitutes a good performance? Likewise, some traditional sports reveal increasing complexity to the point where the competitive content becomes obscure as the assessment of specific athletic skills is blurred. For example, in the case of ski jumping, a Wind Gate System has been added to the already complex scoring criteria that, apart from distance, involves the outer appearance of the succession of the jumpers' movements during flight, landing and outrun, as well as the aesthetic overall impression of the jump. Such cases indicate a broader philosophical issue: there appears to be a lack of clarity about what athletes compete in.

To address this problem, this paper offers a foundational analysis of the content of competition, an aspect curiously underexplored in sport philosophy. Rather than focusing on the formal criteria of competition (Kretchmar, 2015), normative ideals and values of good competition (Simon, 2010), or the educational benefits of competition (Aggerholm et al., 2018), we investigate the underlying elements that constitute the content of competition in sport. Through philosophical analysis and comparison of diverse sports, we aim to clarify what is possible and relevant to compete in and what is required for competition to remain meaningful and coherent.

As part of this endeavour, we present a preliminary taxonomy intended to identify and categorise the various fundamental forms of competitive content across sports. We aim for this taxonomy to provide an analytical and normative tool for critically examining the design of new sports competitions and evaluating existing ones.

The analysis contributes to debates concerning the definition of sport and the processes of sportification, as seen in the institutionalisation of lifestyle sports (Højbjerg Larsen, 2022). Furthermore, it offers a framework for evaluating the sustainability of competition (Loland, 2001), understood as a balance between simplicity and complexity. Finally, we discuss its sport pedagogical relevance as a tool for guiding educators and coaches in designing meaningful and engaging competitions for participants in sports at all levels.

Keywords: Competition; skills; sportification; sustainability; sport pedagogy

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Aderemi Artis, University of Michigan – Flint

Paternalism Justified: Dangerous Sport, Trauma, and Continuity of Identity

This essay argues that in certain circumstances, a third party can be justified in stopping an athlete from participating in a dangerous sport, even when that athlete has given their informed consent to participate. In other words, in some cases, paternalistic interference in an athlete's life is justifiable. I begin by stating some plausible basic assumptions which, when in place, block any paternalistic interference in an athlete's free and autonomous choice to participate in dangerous sport. These include, first, that a person making a decision about their own life is to be deferred to with regard to those decisions, so long as they do not harm others, and second, that dangerous sports can provide important sources of value and meaning in an athlete's life. The third assumption, and the one on which my argument turns, is that autonomous agency is temporally extended: the person who chooses in the present moment to engage in an activity at some future time is the same person during the activity, and after they have completed it. To put it in slightly different language, there is a continuity of identity between a person choosing to engage in a dangerous sport, and the person after their participation is over. I allow that in many cases, this assumption will be true; however, there is an important class of situations in which it will not: namely, when traumatic events produce a fundamental rupture in an athlete's personality, and in their identity. Because some traumatic events can be transformative with respect to an athlete's personality, the post-trauma athlete can be treated as, effectively, a different person from the one who chose to engage in the activity which brought about the trauma. In addition, the activities which produce transformative trauma can, in many instances, also make it so that the resulting person has severely diminished capacities for enjoyment, and for exercising autonomy, while also having to endure great and continual physical and psychological suffering. When we can predict with reasonable confidence that an athletic activity will produce transformative trauma, along with diminished capacities and great suffering, then it is justifiable to prevent an athlete from participating in that activity in the interests of their future self, even when the athlete at the present moment gives their informed consent to engage in the sport. This is because the athlete proposing to engage in a sport which will bring about transformative trauma will, if allowed to proceed, be effectively harming another person.

Keywords: dangerous sport; paternalism; trauma; personal identity; diachronic agency

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Subcultures and Self-Determination: Meaningful Narratives and Policy in Sport

In this paper, I consider the meaningful narrative account of sport proposed by Gleaves and Lehrbach as a response to ongoing debates about inclusion of transgender and intersex athletes. I argue that while narrative is undoubtedly a feature of many sporting experiences, it is best understood as emergent from, rather than constitutive of, the formal structure of sport. To make this case, I analyze Suits' notion of the lusory attitude and Kretchmar's concept of movement subcultures to show how narratives arise from rule-bound striving within historically embedded practices. I then turn to ethical implications, suggesting that inclusive policy ought to be grounded not in external moral ideals or narrative intentions, but in the internal logic and self-determined values of particular sport subcultures. In so doing, I re-frame the normative terrain within broad internalism, wherein inclusive policies become a matter of preserving the conditions for meaning-making within sport itself.

Keywords: Narratives; Subcultures; Sport

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The Ethical Status of Wild Animals in Sport Hunting

This paper examines the morality of sport hunting, assessing how its sporting character respects the interests of wild animals during the hunt. It specifically addresses the animal rights critique that sport hunting objectifies animals by inflicting excessive optional harm. I argue that sport hunting, when understood as a game of skill, is governed by an internal sportive and ethical structure that fosters respect for animal interests rooted in sentience and agency. The central argument is that obligations towards the animal are constituted within the practice's internal logic, encompassing its elements, methods, rules, and norms. By drawing on Aristotelian concepts of skill, excellence, and virtue, this analysis demonstrates how the hunter-animal relationship establishes a practice-related ethic that treats the animal as a subject, not merely an object. This ethic prioritizes animal welfare within a sporting framework characterized by skilled and immersive engagement. This paper aims to elucidate this internal logic and demonstrate how it elevates the ethical status of the animal within the context of sport hunting.

Critics often condemn sport hunting as an immoral interspecies contest where humans deliberately inflict violence and death upon wild animals for pleasure, raising ethical concerns about animal welfare, respect, and objectification (Causey, 1989; Cohan, 2003; Morris, 2018). They argue that the hunter's leisure interest is insufficient to outweigh the animal's well-being, emphasizing the power imbalance, infliction of harm, and non-consensual nature of the interaction (Kheel, 1996; Morris, 2013; Wolf-Root, 2021). This reinforces a perception of human domination, casting the animal as a victim and the hunter as an aggressor (Knezevic, 2009; Morris, 2024), further amplified by the claim that the hunter's motivations are purely pleasure-driven (Tymowski-Gionet, 2014). Comparisons are frequently drawn to consensual human combat sports like boxing or mixed martial arts, where participants voluntarily and knowingly engage under agreed-upon rules. This critique frequently draws upon animal rights philosophy (Regan, 1983), which posits that animals possess inherent value and deserve rights protection, advocating for the abolition of sport hunting as exploitative. However, I contend that this narrow focus on killing as the primary form of harm obscures the broader aims, purposes, and ethical considerations that underpin sport hunting.

This paper challenges the claim that hunting as sport is what makes it unethical. Instead, it argues that sport hunting, understood as a game of skill, provides a coherent and robust foundation for animal ethics that does not trivialize its obligations. This analysis focuses on the practice of free-range bowhunting for elk in the American West as a case study for examining sport hunting. It is chosen because it vividly illustrates the sporting and ethical dimensions of the hunter-animal relationship, particularly as it pertains to the ethical status of the wild animal.

Keywords: sport hunting; game of skill; virtue ethics; human-animal relationship; Wittgensteinian animal ethics

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Basic Benefits, Scarce Benefits, and Jane English’s Feminist Philosophy as a Political Philosophy of Sport

This paper proposes a political philosophy of sport inspired by the work of the feminist political philosopher Jane English. In her classic essay, “Sex Equality in Sports,” English argues that sports should be segregated by sex, and women’s sports should be guaranteed equal access to press coverage and prize money. She bases these assertions on the notion that sports produce two kinds of values for individuals: basic benefits and scarce benefits (English, 1978). Basic benefits are abundant goods that everyone, by virtue of their humanity, deserves access to. These benefits are comparable to “primary goods,” as proposed by the political philosopher John Rawls (1971)—things that any rational person would want more of to build their preferred life. By comparison, scarce benefits are goods that have a zero-sum element. If one person or group gets them, another cannot, or there is less to go around. These benefits are also not fundamental. According to English, however, scarce benefits carry a political component due to their relationship to the basic benefit of self-respect. If one understands oneself as part of an identity group that obtains significantly fewer scarce benefits via sports, for instance, that diminishes, in English’s portrayal, one’s sense of self-worth. English’s considerations of basic and scarce benefits are consistent with Rawls’ view that self-respect and other basic goods are contingent on structural and institutional conditions. The present essay thus considers the aptness of English’s application of

the basic-scarce benefits framework to gender equity in sports. It then examines how others have used it in contemporary sporting dilemmas, such as debates about transgender inclusion (Berg, 2023) and youth sports practices (Torres & Lopez, 2023). Finally, it extends English's thinking in novel ways to concerns about athlete activism, violence in sports, and performance enhancement. Ultimately, the essay reveals how English's analysis of gender equity in sports could be generalized into a broad political philosophy of sports.

Keywords: Basic Benefits; Scarce Benefits; Political Philosophy; Jane English

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VAR, offside, rules, and standards

The use of VAR technology to review on-field calls in association football has provoked criticism from philosophers, footballers, and fans. The most intense criticism targets the use of VAR to determine whether a player was in an offside position. Critics think it wrong to disallow a goal or other significant event just because advanced technology establishes (if it does) that the offensive player had been in an offside position to only a trivial degree—so-called 'toenail offsides'. This paper agrees with that criticism. But it offers a novel argument for that conclusion, and, concomitantly, a novel proposal for reform.

The argument turns upon two distinctions that apply to norms of any formal rule system. The first is the familiar difference between rules and standards, where rules dictate outcomes based only on objective predicates whereas standards require the norm enforcer to exercise evaluative judgment. The second is the difference, nearly unknown, between formal norms and underlying norms, where the former is the norm codified in the system, whereas the latter is the norm that the formal norm aims to codify.

Because these distinctions crosscut, four kinds of norms might be found in a formal normative system. Formal rules that codify underlying rules ('the whole of the ball must cross the [goal] line' to be considered a goal) and formal standards that codify underlying standards (such as the law prohibiting 'excessive celebration') are straightforward. The interesting cases are formal rules that codify underlying standards, and formal standards that codify underlying rules. We are presently concerned with the former.

The formal football norm governing an offside position ('any part of the head, body or feet is nearer to the opponents' goal line than both ball and the second-last opponent') is a rule, not a standard. That's what allows for toenail offsides. The paper argues, however, that this formal rule codifies an underlying standard, not an underlying rule. The underlying norm—the norm that the game delivers naturally, before being codified—is (roughly) a prohibition on being advantageously nearer to the opponents' goal than the last defender.

The paper grants that football authorities have good reason to convert an underlying standard-like norm governing offsides into a formal rule-like one for purposes of on-field officiating. However, VAR decisions need not be governed by the same formal rule-like norm. The paper argues that even if on-field officials should enforce the formal rule rather than its underlying standard, replay officials should be instructed to enforce the underlying standard itself. That is, whereas on-field officials should adjudge a player in an offside position in strict terms of the rule, replay officials should overturn an on-field call that the offensive player was not in an offside position only if the player was behind the last defender to a degree or in a fashion that conferred a genuine advantage.

Keywords: VAR; replay; offside, rules, standards

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Sexualization of Female Athletes for the Queer and Women Audience

Fan behavior in football has been widely explored by sports philosophers and sociologists alike, criticizing its violence, masculinity, and heteronormativity. With the increased visibility of women's football, we witness the criticism of the same group for the misogyny and objectification it shows towards the athletes, whereas the sexualization of female athletes by women fan groups on social media platforms, namely TikTok, has received little to no attention. Although the dive of sports philosophers into depths of TikTok comments and trends to study fan behavior and athlete experience is relatively new, use of social media in sports marketing is not; and the origins of the recent increase in women's football fandom can be traced back to the commodification of sexual orientation and personal lives of queer female football players on such platforms. Starting with

personal preferences in social media usage, this commodification has been utilized by sports media channels to increase interaction on social media. The sexualization of female athletes for the queer and/or woman audience can be seen on the accounts of sports media channels, fan accounts and sometimes the personal accounts of the athletes themselves. While the problems with objectification of female athletes for the male fans have been the subject of many studies, the fan behavior and the sexualization of female athletes for the woman audience, mostly queer, is currently under-explored. In this paper I will study behavior of sports fans who are woman-and/or-queer when it comes to the sexualization of female athletes to the point the product is no longer sports or athletic skill but the athletes' sexual orientation, romantic relationships and attractiveness.

Keywords: Queer; sexualization; female athletes

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Instinctive Archery: Definitions, Paradoxes and Philosophical Implications

Different sports and disciplines have become the center of philosophical attention, including dance, martial arts, football – among others – through approaches such as somaesthetics, hermeneutics and everyday aesthetics (Heinrich 2023; Edgar 2022; Holt 2022; Kreft 2015; Welsch 2005). Building on my previous research on the philosophy and aesthetics of archery (Bianchi 2024; 2021), this paper wishes to deepen this trend by examining archery in terms of a practice of "immanence" that challenges traditional understandings of subject-object relationships.

Firstly, I analyze archers' perspectives on the role of instinct in archery, overlapping and juxtaposing these with more scientific definitions of instinct itself, taking into account research from ethology and neuroscience. Since acquired skills, including archery, require explicit training, they are deeply rooted in the symbolic and linguistic realm. Therefore, it is crucial to discuss the role of language in shaping human experience and specifically its implications for archery. The faculty of language emerges as pivotal in shaping and transforming instinct; for this reason, I outline its particular significance for understanding archery practice. Drawing on recent research within philosophy of language and philosophy of sport, I situate instinctive archery in a broader philosophical debate about immanence, embodied knowledge, and the subject-object binary (see Krein and Ilundáin-Agurruza 2017; Holt 2019; Cimatti 2024). Central to this analysis is the paradoxical nature of instinctive shooting - the attempt to achieve immediate engagement with the world through a practice that necessarily requires language-mediated training and conceptualization.

The tension between instinctive and non-instinctive approaches to archery (which include aiming devices, sight systems, gap shooting and the like) serves as a microcosm of larger philosophical tensions in human experience—between immediacy and reflection, embodied knowledge and abstract thought, immanence and transcendence. Instinctive archery, rather than representing a nostalgic return to nature – as many proponents of this shooting style claim (see for instance Instinctive Archery Community 2025; Brizzi and Ferraro 1992; Stemmler 1942) – can be seen as a philosophical/practical endeavor that challenges traditional anthropocentric assumptions and engages with fundamental issues about embodiment, perception, and our relationship with the surrounding world.

Keywords: Archery; Instinct; Immanence; Philosophy of Sport

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Fair Equality of Opportunity, Luck Egalitarianism and Inclusion are Irrelevant to Eligibility for Pre-Competition Categories in Championship Sport

In Olympic-type sport, is it fair for disabled athletes using prosthetic ‘blades’ to compete against able-bodied athletes? Is it fair for athletes with differences of sex development (DSDs), such as 5-ARD, to compete in the women’s category? Is it fair for transgender women to compete in the women’s category? Why do we have pre-competition categories (such as sex, weight, age and disability)(1) at all? Who is eligible to compete in them? Answers to these questions rely on principles such as ‘fair equality of opportunity’(2–4), ‘luck egalitarianism’(2,3), and the maximization of ‘inclusion’(1,5,6). Here, I argue that this is the wrong approach.

There isn’t one answer to the question of why we have pre-competition categories in sport. There are at least four different sorts of sporting contest, each with their own account of fairness. These are championship contests, and three different types of handicap contest, which I will call handicap 1, handicap 2, and handicap 3.

A fair handicap 1 contest is one in which all competitors have a ‘sporting chance’ of winning. The performance of athletes is restricted, enhanced or categorized to produce a close competition. Example of this include the handicap system found in amateur golf, and the Universal Squash Rating in squash.

A fair handicap 2 contest is one in which the property advantages(7) of athletes are matched, so that the athlete who does best maximizes their athletic ability through training will win. Examples of this are the handicapping and classification systems suggested by some authors in the philosophical literature(8–10), and some events at the Paralympics.

A fair handicap 3 contest is one in which one particular property advantage or disadvantage is singled out as unfair, and either compensated for or eliminated. Examples include the use of prosthetic blades to allow disabled athletes to compete with able bodied athletes, and the requirement that transgender women (try to) eliminate their male athletic advantage by suppressing testosterone.

Championship contests are about encouraging and celebrating athletic excellence. Categories are not used in championship contests to control athletic performance, but rather to recognize that there are different sorts of athletic bodies that can each be excellent. The women’s category does not exist to provide female athletes with an opportunity to win. It exists because we want to know what humans whose bodies are unable to develop under the influence of testicular tissue can do athletically(11). This applies to all athletes, including transgender women and athletes with DSDs. Fairness in championship contests has been misunderstood. Fair equality of opportunity may require that training facilities be developed globally to allow aspiring athletes to fulfil their potential, but it is irrelevant to justifying pre-competition categories in championship sport. Luck egalitarianism and some form of inclusion are relevant to the design of handicap contests, but not championship contests. Attempts to apply accounts of fairness found in handicap 1, 2 and 3 contests to championship contests have caused a great deal of confusion in sport policy.

Keywords: Fairness in sport; Championship sport; Handicap sport; Fair equality of opportunity; Luck egalitarianism.

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Sport and the Second Person Standpoint

Existing normative theories of sport offer unsatisfactory explanations of a class of ‘directed’ sporting wrongs, whose nature and severity can only be grasped through the theoretical lens of a ‘second personal’ approach to ethics. Intuitively, certain acts of cheating, dangerous play or unsportsmanlike conduct are wrong not just because they contravene formal rules or the ‘spirit of the sport’ but because they violate duties or responsibilities owed to the particular individuals who are thereby harmed: they involve ‘directed’ or ‘second personal’ wrongs. Drawing on Stephen Darwall’s *The Second Person Standpoint* (2006), I argue that such sporting wrongs can be

explained only by recognising their second-personal structure. Despite ranking among the most influential recent contributions to moral philosophy, the implications of SPS for the philosophy of sport have yet to be systematically explored. Without arbitrating on the overall success of Darwall's ambitious project to explain the distinctive authority of moral requirements in terms of "the perspective you and I take up when we make and acknowledge claims on one another's conduct and will" (3), I argue that SPS affords novel critical resources for scrutinising normative theories of sport and revisiting traditional questions at the intersection between sporting and moral norms. SPS specifies the 'right kind of reasons' to illuminate the moral dimension of such transgressions while respecting the normatively distinctive character of sport.

Keywords: Formalism; broad internalism; fairness; Darwall; Second Person Standpoint; sport ethics; cheating.

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The Contribution of the Second and Third Stages of Alasdair MacIntyre's Theory to Sports Ethics: Towards the Beginning of Some Answers

At the previous conference, I presented a paper highlighting the three stages of Alasdair MacIntyre's thought in his virtue theory, as developed in *After Virtue*. These stages are: (1) the concept of practice, where virtues emerge within structured activities that contain internal goods; (2) the narrative of human life, which emphasizes that virtues must be understood within the biographical coherence of the individual; and (3) moral tradition, in which virtues only make sense when situated within a broader conceptual and normative framework. During this analysis, it was identified that Philosophy of Sport, when drawing on MacIntyre's ideas, predominantly limits itself to the first stage, adopting his concept of social practice to support internalist approaches to sport. This has reinforced the idea that sport possesses its own internal goods and intrinsic values, distancing itself from externalist conceptions that interpret sport merely as a reflection of hegemonic social values (Devine and Lopez Frias, 2023).

MacIntyre's theoretical assumptions have served as a foundation for numerous works in Philosophy of Sport, including those of Butcher and Schneider (1998), Faulkner (2019), Lopez Frias (2015), and many others.

However, this study seeks to explore a new and unexplored path in Philosophy of Sport: the possible developments that could arise from incorporating the second and third stages of MacIntyre's theory into the philosophical analysis of sport. Reid (2012) has already noted that the

final aspect of MacIntyre's theory is often overlooked. Applying the concept of the narrative of human life would allow us to understand sport not just as an isolated practice, but as a constitutive element in the moral development and identity formation of individuals over time. From this perspective, an athlete's career can be seen as a narrative that integrates moments of learning, overcoming challenges, and moral growth. This could expand, for example, on the questions raised by McFee (2004), who argues that we must understand the reason why we engage in sport as part of a broader life journey.

Similarly, incorporating the concept of moral tradition into Philosophy of Sport would allow for an investigation of how sporting virtues are shaped by specific historical traditions. Far from being a fixed and timeless practice, sport is influenced by dominant moral values, which vary across cultural contexts and historical periods. This would enable a deeper analysis of issues such as the commercialization of sport, the relationship between fair play and extreme competitiveness, and the evolving conceptions of doping and sporting justice.

Expanding Philosophy of Sport to integrate these subsequent stages of MacIntyre's theory offers a promising avenue for a more comprehensive understanding of sport. By considering sport not only as a practice with internal goods but also as part of a life narrative and a continually evolving moral tradition, it becomes possible.

Keywords: MacIntyrean Virtue Ethics; Philosophy of Sport; Narrative and Moral Tradition; Sporting Identity; Moral Development

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Is protection against systematic doping a better justification for testing minors?

Testing athletes for anti-doping purposes often gives rise to questions of potential breach of their privacy. Athletes are tested in order for prohibited substances and methods to be detected, the justification of which usually rests on the normative goal of the legitimacy of the anti-doping regime itself (MacGregor, et al, 2013). The collection of blood or urine for analysis by integrity agencies such as the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), represents sensitive personal data that becomes ethically more complex issue when involving minors. Recently WADA has published the “Operation Refuge” report, which confirms that athletes as young as 8 years old have been the subject of tests. The document reads as a call for ‘identifying any patterns of offending, any deficiencies in governance, and any possible strategies on how better address the issue of doping amongst Minors’ (WADA, 2024b, p. 6), while identifying several negative consequences that an Adverse Analytical Finding (AAF) might have for the quality of life of young athletes, such as mental health, depression, stigmatization, frustration, pressure, or trauma challenges. What does a recognition of these challenges imply for policy around the testing of minors? On the one hand, it supports one of the two purposes of the anti-doping program as stated in the World Anti-Doping Code (Code), namely, the protection of athletes' right to participate in a doping-free sport and thus promoting health, fairness, and equality for athletes. On the other hand, these incursions into minor athletes' privacy have not yet been subject to scholarly analysis. We tentatively explore the application of safeguarding literature (Mountjoy et al., 2016) in relation to the systematic doping of minors as physical abuse to justify tests as a mechanism to find potential victims. We conclude that a more sound justification for testing minors at such young ages is to protect them from potential physical abuses that might occur in sports settings in the form of systematic doping practices.

Keywords: Anti-Doping; Minors; Protected Person; Safeguarding

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From Homo Ludens to Human Toy: Anthropology of the Soccer Player

Taking on the figure of the soccer player as the anthropological ideal type (paradigm) of the athlete in the context of contemporary society, and investigating the “soccer anomaly” during the

pandemic (namely the fact that soccer activity continued almost unabated even during the pandemic), my presentation poses the following question: “If it is true that footballers are our idols, are they idols in the form of heroes?”. The purpose of my argument is to explain why the answer to this question can only be negative.

The golden microcosm of soccer represented another state of exception within the general state of exception imposed by the pandemic. I mean, its particular relationship with vaccination, the fact that it has continued to operate freely while everything, except “essential services”, had to stop... Beyond the most immediate and superficial evidence, which suggests that this is another proof of the privileged condition currently experienced by soccer players (and high-level athletes, more in general), this kind of anomaly suggests some interesting anthropological-political reflections. More than just a “simple” industry, the soccer environment (professional sports, more in general) equates to a theater or a circus. Or rather, a synthesis of both: an entertainment industry. It follows that its performers are first and foremost entertainers, that is actors, circus performers, jesters. Modern jesters. They are our current circenses. Well, like jesters of any era, contemporary jesters have the sole imperative of entertaining their audience. Their supreme duty is to safeguard our inalienable right to leisure. They exist for this purpose.

Based on this assumption, the soccer anomaly during the pandemic proves that soccer players, as the circus performers of our time, sell – at an exorbitant price – nothing less than themselves as such. More than their talent, what society (we) pays so generously for is their humanity. We reward them – compensate them in advance – for allowing us to treat them as objects of amusement. As toys. They are generously paid to let themselves be treated as instruments, to allow us to consider and use them as objects. That is, as if they were not human beings. In the exercise of their jester function, soccer players are literally “not entirely human”, i.e. sub-humans, i.e. Untermenschen. The current circenses are the current Untermenschen.

The terms of their peculiar social contract involve nothing less than their dehumanization. As said, the object of transaction between them and society is nothing more and nothing less than their humanity: that is what they sell to us, and that is what we buy. As a result, to answer the initial question, it can be asserted that soccer players are indeed our idols, but they are not our heroes. Beyond dazzling appearances, they are not models but gadgets, pastimes. They are idols, yes, but as jesters, i.e. circenses. And as “non-human (sub-human) circenses”, soccer players are literally circus animals. In this sense, their metamorphosis represents the vanguard of a more general evolution (involution) from *homo ludens* – as celebrated by Johan Huizinga – into human toy.

Keywords: soccer, pandemic, *homo ludens*, Untermensch, commodification, Huizinga

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Tafara Chivasa, Cardiff Metropolitan University

Sporting supererogation: To encourage or not?

Of late the concept of sporting supererogation has re-emerged within philosophy of sport discourse. To begin with, sporting supererogation involves those "acts that are better from the sporting point of view than what is required from the sporting point of view" (Archer, 2017, p.363). More specifically, Archer (2017) introduced the topic; Borge (2021) offered a critique of it and most recently Archer and Tao (2025) have offered a defence of sporting supererogation. Within that discussion I will broadly agree with Archer and Tao that the concept of sporting supererogation is logical and useful. Where I differ is that rather than use the concept of Mandevillian vices and group effects to justify the logic of sporting supererogation, as Archer and Tao do, I will defend sporting supererogation by comparing it to how Pincoffs (1986) and Budziszewski (1991) discuss virtues. Things that these authors focus on that may not be clear under the Mandevillian perspective are how personal blame is part of justifying supererogatory acts and how it is hard to know what effects supererogatory acts have at a group perspective. What this points to is that to act in a way consistent with sporting supererogation is more a matter of the actor accepting the cost to sporting achievement that may come with them deciding to act in a supererogatory manner rather than adopting a wider group perspective of outcomes. Taken together, these amendments may however lead to reconstructing what sporting supererogation is in terms of the nuance that it requires. Sporting behaviour may also not make sense to all but potentially will make sense to some and almost certainly to the individual concerned. This becomes especially relevant when we consider that the sporting view itself may not be singular but plural if Kretchmar (2015)'s stance on pluralistic internalism holds any sway.

Keywords: sporting supererogation ; virtues ; blame

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Paralympic Classification: Balancing Fairness, Sporting Excellence, and Meaningful Competition

Classification is the cornerstone of Paralympic sport, determining both eligibility criteria and the grouping of athletes into sport classes. This paper critically examines the normative framework underlying Paralympic classification by analyzing the International Paralympic Committee's (IPC) core ideals of fairness, sporting excellence, and meaningful competition. Based on this analysis, we develop a specific fair equality of opportunity norm for Paralympic classification (FEOpc), providing a philosophically grounded framework for evaluating classification systems. The norm ensures that sport classes eliminate or compensate for inequalities in sport-specific and impairment-caused activity limitations that significantly and systematically impact performance. To ensure meaningful competition, this must be balanced with the IPC's aim of keeping the number of classes to a reasonable minimum in order to satisfy logistical demands. Implementing FEOpc as a guiding norm for line-drawing between sport classes requires understanding how different impairment types and degrees impact sport-specific performance. The difficulty of measuring and comparing this impairment-performance relationship means implementation procedures face several key challenges: the risk of athletes manipulating the classification process by deliberately underperforming on tests, the mediating effects of training on impairment measures and how these are constructed and evaluated, and the varying effects of technology in enabling versus enhancing performance. While classification methods will never be above contestation and always involve some element of judgment, the proposed framework provides philosophical foundations along with practical guidance for improving classification procedures and furthering Paralympic ideals.

Keywords: paralympic classification; para sport; fair equality of opportunity; meaningful competition; sport ethics

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Epistemic Racism – An Epistemic Catastrophe

The concept of “epistemic racism” has recently been introduced in anti-doping research as a means to show how racism – however subtly – is deep-rooted in the work and worldview of white, western scholars, reviewers and editors (Ruwuya et al., 2024). Ruwuya and colleagues therefore suggest bias training to avoid racial stereotypes that can otherwise undermine global anti-doping initiatives. The authors explicitly point to the work of Veltmaat and colleagues (2023) as an example where they believe such bias play out.

This paper critically examines the validity and implications of the concept “epistemic racism”, questioning its coherence and practical utility. We argue that the term “epistemic racism” is conceptually flawed, as it merges epistemology – a universal framework for knowledge production – with racial categories in a way that undermines rigorous scholarly inquiry (Christiansen & Møller, 2024).

We highlight logical inconsistencies in the argument that knowledge production is inherently racially biased and discuss how such claims reflect a broader trend of politicization in the humanities and social sciences (Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). While acknowledging the importance of addressing bias in research, we contend that vague, non-falsifiable concepts such as “epistemic racism” risk obstructing rather than advancing the pursuit of knowledge (Favrholdt, 1999). Additionally, we critique the proposed solutions, such as bias training and increased representation on editorial boards based on geographical or ethnic background, which, if implemented uncritically, may lead to censorship rather than intellectual progress.

By examining the empirical basis of claims regarding epistemic racism in anti-doping research, we argue that accusations of bias should be subjected to the same rigorous evidential standards as any other scientific claim. Ultimately, we advocate for maintaining the principles of open inquiry and falsifiability in academic research, ensuring that knowledge production remains driven by logical reasoning and empirical validation rather than ideological imperatives.

Keywords: epistemic racism; anti-doping research; academic freedom; knowledge production; bias in research

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Ethical approach to equestrian sport and competition

Olympic equestrian competition necessarily raises a whole range of philosophical and ethical issues concerning the use of animals, the fairness of the competition and the place of sport within the broader social context. On one hand, the promoters of horse sport refer to its historical value, the human-horse bond that is founded upon trust, respect, and acceptance, and ethically-driven practices that ensure safety and well-being of horses through proper management, training and rehabilitation. Riders and trainers are considered to be key elements in horse rearing and illustrate the values of discipline, respect and trust for animals, which are the pillars of success in competition.

On the other hand, the ethical concerns of Olympic equestrian have a tendency to foster criticism that refers to the possible abuse and fatigue of horses in the process of competition. Training and competition under extreme conditions may produce physical and psychological stress on the horses, whereas coaxing and forcing with a view to achieving winning results endanger the fundamental values of sporting fair-play. In favor of money and medals some athletes abandon ethical principles all together.

In the philosophy of sport, major concerns are with respect for basic ethical values in sport, respect, equality and responsibility. Fair play as a basic determinant of sport, in this regard, encompasses responsibility towards all parties in the competition, including animals, considering their physical and psychological welfare. Here, the philosophy of sport is confronted with the challenge of elaborating a fair and sustainable model of equestrian sport, wherein a balance will be achieved between sporting ambition and ethical values.

To allow for an ethically acceptable approach to equestrian competitions, my claim is that a framework must be established that will encompass the following principal elements:

1. Establish detailed ethical guidelines for training and competition to ensure horse welfare.
2. Strictly regulate competition conditions, ensuring transparency and minimizing commercial influence.
3. Train athletes and trainers to uphold animal rights, welfare, and fair play principles.
4. Implement a monitoring system to assess and prevent potential abuses in training and competition.
5. Conduct psychological tests to assess athletes' motivations and empathy.

Proposed elements not only enables the integrity of the sport to be maintained, but also helps to ensure that basic ethical values are upheld in every dimension of equestrian competition.

Keywords: olympic sports; equestrian; ethics; horses; positive; negative

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Elisa Eimert, Cardiff Met University

On sport organizations' moral responsibility to promote young pathway athletes' opportunities beyond sport

Do sport organizations have a moral responsibility to promote adolescent pathway athletes' opportunities beyond sport? In this presentation, I will argue that they do. However, instead of pointing to a smorgasbord of different performance- and future-centered reasons with diverse moral underpinnings – as we are by now used to be presented in youth performance sport literature – I propose that, from a moral perspective, this responsibility can rather straightforwardly be rooted in young athletes' ethical claim to having a good adolescence, without necessitating reference to other (instrumental) reasons.

I argue that sport organizations are in a key position to enable or impede talented young athletes' opportunities beyond sport. These opportunities matter, not least because adolescence constitutes a unique and intrinsically valuable stage of life that, in some regards, is distinct from both childhood and adulthood. Drawing on Gottfried Schweiger's (2023) work, I argue that adolescents have an ethical claim to having a good adolescence and outline several 'dimensions' that characterize a good adolescence. While they have intuitive appeal, they are currently unrepresented in discourses around youth performance sport. Referring to the example of football academies in the UK, I illustrate how for young players, realizing their ethical claim to a good adolescence is impeded by a number of structural and cultural features of the academy environment.

Given the realities of performance sport, I suggest that this tension cannot be resolved completely. However, I argue that sport organizations ought to mitigate and compensate for these impeding features by making an effort to 'make room' for young athletes' opportunities to realize aspects of a good adolescence outside of sport when they are unlikely to be realized within the sport setting. Though this move might seem unrevolutionary, I suggest that, if taken seriously, it has significant practical implications for how sport organizations ought to engage with their adolescent athletes and how they ought to design their pathway programs.

Keywords: talent pathways; adolescence; youth sport

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Abortion, Embodiment, and Sport

Sport philosophers have long known, and discussed and debated, the importance of the body to sport. One of the key, defining features of sport (and its differentiation from games) is the role of bodily movement. Our subjective embodied experiences remain at the center of discussions about the role and value of sport to humanity. Bodily autonomy and the ability to make free choices about how to engage in sport and whether or not to alter our bodies to compete is taken up by those philosophers studying bioethical considerations in sport, such as the use of performance enhancing substances. In all, the importance of the body is a key framework for sport philosophers.

For feminist philosophers, the role of the body has been essential for understanding ways that women's ability to take part in sport and other forms of physical activity has been limited. Iris Marion Young, for instance, argues that social oppression limits women's bodily comportment. Historical studies of women's sport and physical activity also center ideas about women's bodies—including their supposed frailty and strains to menstruation and reproduction—in their understanding of the limitations placed on women's sport. While some feminist sport scholars focus on reproduction—specifically on menstruation and pregnancy (e.g., Weaving, 2020), little work highlights the role of abortion and access to it.

In this presentation, I will explore the ways that access to abortion, bodily autonomy, and sport are intertwined. According to the Center for Reproductive Rights, while the global trend is toward liberalizing abortion laws, 40% (753 million) women of reproductive age live under restrictive abortion laws. They claim that unsafe abortions result in 39,000 deaths per year and that restricted access to abortion leads to the loss of educational and economic opportunities and to further marginalization. Four countries, including the United States and Poland, have recently rolled back abortion access.

For women athletes, access to abortion may be especially essential, as competition may be limited or impossible during an unwanted pregnancy. Furthermore, freedom to make choices about one's body is necessary in sport. Laws that restrict access to abortion are harmful not only to all women, but in particular to sportswomen.

Keywords: embodiment; feminism; abortion

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Robbey Finley, University of Maine

Logical Games and Games of Logic

The study of logic and the study of games overlap naturally in many ways: logic's historical roots in the practice of dialogue and argumentation, tied to competitive games of question and answer, and the study of games from the perspective of rational choice, tied to logical tools and formal systems, are both classic examples of that natural overlap. Nevertheless, in this paper I argue that both directions of fit (from the study of logic using games and from the study of games using logic) have focused almost exclusively on formal theories and models of games, and I outline areas where I take there to be opportunity for further fruitful development using tools from contemporary philosophy and aesthetics of games. I turn to each direction to say a bit more.

Typically, the study of logic using games (setting aside pedagogical uses) has focused on formal

models of dialogue as a means for analyzing and/or grounding logical truth in terms of a winning strategy for a specific type of dialogical game (e.g., Dutilh Novaes 2020). Such attempts, I argue, either focus on a very narrow type of game that misses aspects of actual practice (i.e., similar to the worries of Hodges 2001) or misses what makes such dialogue logical for the sake of capturing more general practice (e.g., Marion 2009). I suggest instead that we analyze the use of a theory of logic via the lens of a Suitsian game: we have a prelusory goal in terms of “settling belief” via evaluation of our inferential practice, strict rules about the means allowed by the logical theory, and restrictions concerning what type of evidence we can and cannot appeal to. The key issue is whether we take on a lusory attitude: certainly, sometimes we do (debating “for the sake of argument”), but other times it seems we do not (“serious” reasoning). Analyzing the difference between the lusory attitude and the serious “logical” hypothetical attitude, I argue, can reveal interesting features about the aesthetic value of logic, the normative role of logic in reasoning, and the similarities between game play and deductive reasoning.

The other direction, the study of games using logic, has also focused on the use of formal tools to capture game-theoretical ideas in a logical language, model information in epistemic logics, or model preferences of players to capture rational choice (e.g., van Benthem 2014). I argue that while these approaches have explanatory value in capturing the intended concepts (e.g., information, rational choice, etc.), they do not reveal any unique aspects of games. Instead, I suggest we focus on a class of games where logic plays an indispensable role: logical puzzles (e.g. Knights/Knaves puzzles), deductive games (e.g., Return of the Obra Dinn, Curse of the Golden Idol), and games where logical reasoning about possibilities is key (e.g., sudoku, chess). Not only do such cases provide an interesting case study for Suits’ analysis of games, since they do not appear to impose any obstacles or restrictions over and above those that apply in daily reasoning, but they can also shed light on ways that games can help us to develop skills in reasoning and learn about the value of certain modes of reflection (or theoretical “agencies” in the terms of Nguyen 2020).

Keywords: dialogue; logic; Suits; deduction games; reasoning

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Sport Beyond Good and Evil

A dominant position among philosophers of sport is that structural features of competitive sport imply or necessarily include normative principles that serve, among other things, to ground a conception of morally worthy or permissible forms of competitive play. (See Fraleigh 1984, Simon 2000, Butcher and Schneider 1998, and Loland 2002.) Such a conception has been used to explain the wrongness of cheating and to criticize common competitive practices such as strategic fouling or gamesmanship. (See Pearson 1995, Fraleigh 2003, and Howe 2004.) At the same time, some philosophers of sport have defended such morally questionable practices as part of the fabric or context of competitive sport, arguing in various ways that moral standards are somehow out of place or at least quite limited in competitive athletics. (See Lehman 1981, Leaman 1995, D'Agostino 1981, and Russell 2017.) I wish to present and partially defend a radical version of the latter tendency. I claim that contemporary competitive athletics is best understood as beyond good and evil, a domain in which normative judgments are best interpreted in amoral terms, or as exemplifying what Nietzsche called chivalric-aristocratic morality, in contrast to modern conceptions of morality (See Nietzsche 2006.) As such, we should see contemporary competitive athletics as an island (or oasis) in a sea (or desert) of what Nietzsche criticizes as the ascendant morality of modernity, a morality emphasizing fairness, equality, minimizing harm, and limiting or equally distributing the exercise of power.

I will present common normative judgments in competitive athletics as matters of better and worse or good and bad, in accordance with Nietzsche's conception of chivalric-aristocratic morality. Competitive sport is structured around power and its successful attainment, concentration, and deployment. Those who are unsuccessful in athletic competition are not wrong or evil, but merely bad. More importantly, those who are successful or powerful in these ways are good, and their goodness is celebrated and taken as primary. Furthermore, badness in competitive sport is not a matter of freely choosing the wrong, but rather having failed to do what is good, where goodness is principally determined by besting one's opponent. As with chivalric-aristocratic modes of morality, sport does include rules of unacceptable or dishonorable practice, but these are best understood as agreements among the powerful as to the mores of competition. They are subordinate to an urge toward distinction and rank-ordering among competitors, and competitors generally prefer to best the competition outright rather than rule out their opponents' techniques as wrongful. Possible analyses may include proper attribution of sports shame, and proper attribution of sports blame/responsibility. These areas tend to show that sportspeople feel culpable not merely for what they failed to choose, but also for the limits of their powers. Their lack of power redounds upon their worth in a way that "morality" would not countenance.

Keywords: sports ethics; morality and sport; competition; Nietzsche

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Gary Foster, Wilfrid Laurier University

The Project of Paddling: Sport and Sartre's Existential Psychoanalysis

A recent special issue of *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* focused on the relation between sport and psychoanalysis. The excellent papers in that issue provided insight into the useful ways in which psychoanalysis can help reveal both the meaning of sport and the motivation for sporting activity. In the spirit of those efforts, but diverging from the discussion of traditional psychoanalysis, I would like to examine sport in general, and canoeing in particular, through the lense of Jean-Paul Sartre's existential psychoanalysis. In the many pages of *Being and Nothingness* Sartre makes little reference to sport. But he does invoke examples of sport in a couple of places, particularly in a later chapter titled "Being and Doing." In this chapter he talks about both "skiing" and "rowing," albeit in differing contexts.

Sartre's reference to rowing takes place in his discussion of existential psychoanalysis. The concrete desire to row, he tells us there, cannot be adequately explained by characterizing that desire in terms of the intersection of several abstract or general principles ("the love of risk," "the taste for sport," "the tendency to play games," etc., Sartre, 1943/2018, 729-730). The opposite is true. The abstract ideas themselves emanate from the concrete desires which arise from the individual's own project of existence. For Sartre, the desire expressed in rowing or in any sport, cannot be reduced to the libido or the will to power. Both of these drives or tendencies can be further reduced or understood in terms of the individual's project of existence which unfolds as the expression of a fundamental attitude towards life itself.

My aim in this paper is to explore canoeing as a project of existence. The project implied in the

concrete activity of canoeing is a project of discovery. In accepting the obstacles that rivers and lakes present to me while paddling, I discover not only the resistances and character of the river or lake in question, but I discover my own self. The self that I discover is not an abstract or universal self but is rather the expression of an individual project and/or projects. What paddling reveals to me through the resistance provided by the obstacles (necessary or unnecessary) and challenges, is who or what I am in concrete circumstances and in relation to a particular environment (a particular river or lake). The effort or skill that I employ and the particular body of water I traverse, expresses an embodied intelligence or way of being in the world that is shaped in large part by the environment in question. Just as the look of the Other offers me the possibility of discovering what I am as an object-self, so both the resistance of nature and the activity of paddling reveal to me the concrete nature of my embodied self.

Keywords: existential psychotherapy; canoeing; project of existence; Sartre; embodied intelligence

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Jeffrey Fry, Ball State University

Presence, Absence, and the Predictive Brain in Sport

This paper explores the intertwining roles of presence and absence in sport. Presence and absence are both fundamental ontological categories. They are also interdependent categories. What appears as present does so against a background of absence, and what is absent is absent from what is present, though it may be paradoxically experienced as the presence of absence. Nevertheless, the significance of absence is likely underacknowledged and underappreciated in our daily lives. While I believe that the blending of presence and absence occurs in a pervasive way, I focus here on illustrative examples from sport that lend support to this broader thesis. In

doing so, I consider the phenomenological interplay of presence and absence. I also consider such seemingly disparate phenomena as absences on the playing field, anticipated, imminent, and longed for events, team reasoning, and the haunting past.

I then take the exploration of presence and absence “inside,” as it were, and consider the role of the predictive brain in both sporting expertise and sporting misfires. I show how adherents of the predictive brain model explain how the brain constructs perception and experience more broadly, and thus how it guides sporting expectations and actions through a juxtaposition of what is present and what is absent. In general terms, I explain how, based on the predictive processing model, expectation and prediction help construct our experienced reality in sport and beyond. I also explain how brain “hacking” (Clark) may act as an ameliorative intervention that helps us interrupt familiar patterns and become “unstuck,” thereby promoting enhanced performance in sport, as well as in other areas of life.

Finally, I will also consider how predictive processing is potentially implicated in the experience of pain, anxiety, and emotion in sport, and thus has implications for a fundamental sense of well-being in relationship to sporting practices.

Keywords: presence; absence; predictive processing; predictive brain

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Sandra Meeuwssen, Paris Institute of Health and Sport Sciences, Paris City University, France

Sport as a Catalyst for Moral Resilience: Bridging Individual Growth and Societal Transformation

This presentation explores the transformative power of sport in fostering moral resilience and integrity through a dual-impact framework. At the individual level, sport enhances self-worth, emotional regulation, and coping mechanisms, while at the societal level, it reshapes collective values and fosters ethical, caring communities. Drawing on research in sports-based positive youth development and philosophical perspectives on morality, we argue that structured sports

programs are powerful tools for both personal empowerment and broader social change.

The journey of Worthy de Jong, who rose from a challenging upbringing in Amsterdam's Bijlmer neighborhood to become an Olympic gold medalist in 3X3 basketball, exemplifies how sport cultivates resilience, self-discipline, and moral agency. His story demonstrates how individual athletic achievement inspires entire communities and serves as a model for youth facing adversity. Philosophical frameworks such as Aristotle's virtue ethics and Foucault's Care for Oneself further illuminate how disciplined athletic practice fosters ethical self-formation and character development.

On a societal scale, sport promotes teamwork, fairness, and social responsibility while providing a cathartic space for ethical growth. By integrating philosophical insights with real-world data, this presentation proposes a model where sport serves as both a tool for personal transformation and a driver of societal integrity.

Keywords: Ethical Agency; Aretē (Virtuousness); Collective Moral Formation; Pedagogy of Character Development; Community Ethical Resilience

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Guus Heijnen, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

Reimagine Sports: exploring the Netherlands

That we need a different understanding of sport activities in the unfolding ecological crisis is already addressed by Sigmund Loland (1996). Complementary to this ecosophical perspective on sport is the kinetic materialist ontology developed by Thomas Nail. In *Theory of the Earth* (2021) he

explains that the continuous flow of matter is the core principal of this world. There is no such thing as a discrete object or fixed position, only metastable patterns of matter in motion. Building on these philosophical positions I am exploring the concept of bioregionalism and the sport experience in both conceptual and creative ways. More precisely: developing an embodied relationship with and within a specific bioregion.

Part 1

In my presentation I am going to show the trailer (3 minutes) of the film (45 minutes) I'm co-producing with filmmaker Raphael Bourdon. It is a documentary-style film that adopts several fictional elements. It stages three Dutch ecosystems and human sport activity taking place within it.

- 1) Forest, earth (as dominating element), trail runner,
- 2) wetland, wind (as dominating element) windsurfer and
- 3) coastal area, water (as dominant element) wave surfer.

The film is a work of art that synthesizes Thomas Nail's non-anthropocentric philosophy of kinetic materialism with images, impressions, and thoughts in sport experience. In other words, from the premise that there is nothing outside the continuous flow of matter we can open our senses and reshape our understanding of the relation between self and world. The film elevates the embodied (including linguistic) conversation between the environment and the moving human body. It becomes evident that the (local) ecosystem shapes, nurtures and revitalizes this intimate relation.

Part 2

After showing the trailer I will discuss a (draft) paper that assesses the implications and possibilities of Thomas Nail's kinetic materialism for the current debate on sport and environment or 'nature' within sports philosophy (Breivik, 2021; Loland, 1996), sport management (McCullough, Orr, & Kellison, 2020; Sartore-Baldwin & McCullough, 2018; Trendafilova & Ziakas, 2025) and social science (Sparkes, 2018; Thorpe, Brice, & Clark, 2021). The paper applies a non-anthropocentric approach to re-conceptualize what is 'going on' in the world of sports considering sustainability and ecology.

Keywords: nature sport; art-based research; sustainability; bioregionalism

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Joe Higgins, University of Northumbria

Forever the GOAT: Roger Federer, sporting greatness and the unveiling of human nature

Roger Federer is undoubtedly an exceptional tennis player, but arguing that he is the GOAT – the ‘greatest of all time’ – requires more than sporting statistics. Indeed, to put forward the argument convincingly, one must turn to evidence from ontology, neuroaesthetics and phenomenology.

From the first of these perspectives, Federer captures the manner in which ‘greats’ from any field must not only have specific biopsychosocial attributes, but must achieve cultural congruence between such attributes and the demands of their specific field. That is, greatness cannot be generated from a subjective perspective alone; it requires existential ‘fit’ of disciplinary socio-cultural requirements with an individual’s biogenetic development (Higgins, 2018). In this way, there is temporal synchrony of a ‘great’s’ attributes unfolding within a specific historical context, therein facilitating the possibility of ‘the great’ configuring norms to his or her needs. From the second perspective, there is considerable empirical evidence that we are neurologically inclined to favour movements that imitate the smooth curves and fluidity of organic matter (Chatterjee and Vartanian, 2016). As most who have watched even a little tennis will testify, Federer encapsulates the balletic prowess and rhythmic incessance that dominate the dynamics of the natural world. In other words, Federer personifies the nature-based aesthetics towards which humans are psychologically predisposed. In keeping with this, one can progress the analysis of sporting greatness to an intersubjective domain, acknowledging that inasmuch as ‘great’ attributes may manifest within an individual, they must be recognised as doing so by others. Drawing on a neuroaesthetic interpretation of work from social science, it will be shown that Federer epitomises the beauty, excitement and fairness that sporting spectators crave (Applebaum et al., 2012).

Consequential to these perspectival descriptions of sporting greatness, one can deliver a novel response to a paradox that plagues accounts of creative greatness. The paradox is that acts of sporting greatness appear to be spontaneous and wholly original – in some way ‘magical’ – yet they are the outcome of serious practice and intentions, lest they become naturalistically inexplicable (cf. Kronfeldner (2018)). By progressing the issue of sporting greatness as described above, one finds that the magical originality of sporting greatness manifests only as a participatory

phenomenon.

Collating these views under a philosophical lens, one finds that Federer is not only the GOAT of the tennis world, but he also unveils aspects of the unique experiential domain of humanity: one in which our animate bodies encapsulate the entwined intersubjective and teleological dimensions of being. This unveiling emerges from the manner in which our phenomenological worlds are normatively generated by interanimate engagement and, reciprocally, canalise our actions. Within this circular generation of norms, each individual strives to maintain subjective control: to bend the world to one's will; to 'win' at living. Sport is a microcosm of the continuous reciprocity of subjective and intersubjective existence, and, as such, Federer's performances can be viewed as a formalisation of human ontology, capturing the phenomenological givenness of the world as a domain of subjectively purposeful interanimate engagement.

Keywords: sporting greatness; ontogeny; neuroaesthetics; phenomenology

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Jonas Holst, San Jorge University,

Sport in lusory and agonistic terms

Many professional athletes have compared sport to a physical, warlike fight in which the goal seems to be to take down the opponent. In the sixth episode of the documentary, *The Last Dance*, which relates the story of the successful 1990s NBA team, Chicago Bulls, Charles Barkley expresses this view: "Sports are like a gunfight". Andre Agassi has voiced a similar opinion about professional tennis: "It's violent, mano a mano, and the choice is as brutally simple as it is in any ring. Kill or be killed (Agassi 2010, 214)."

Shields and Bredemeier have argued that such views are metaphorical ways of framing sport contests as war or battle. They consider these metaphors to be less genuine than those which frame the sport contest as partnership (Shields and Bredemeier 2011). The present paper will argue against the two authors, who recognise that many sports have their origin in military exercises; a consolidated position in sport history which could throw into question their own interpretation that

fight and battle are less genuine metaphors for certain sport contests and that partnership is somehow more true to the nature of competition than battle.

If we take modern boxing and martial arts, such as judo and taekwondo, as examples of sports, then it does not appear to involve metaphorical speech to claim that they are fights and manifest elements of battle. Regarding basketball, tennis and most other ball games, this is arguably different, as they do not originate from military or martial exercises. Still, what Barkley and Agassi seem to be getting at, by using hyperbole and clearly without pretending to give an exhaustive definition of sport, is the antagonistic aspect of any ball game in which two opponents or teams meet head on and pit their strength against each other. What they both leave out is that the mutual agonistic exchange is couched in lusory terms in modern sport discourse and practice which constitute unique attempts at “squaring the circle” by facilitating, in an organised way, “battle without violence” (Elias and Dunning 1986, 41).

In a dialogue with Elias’ sociological and Kretchmar’s phenomenological approaches to sport (2014), the paper will defend the position that, rather than metaphors of decompetition, fight and battle convey many athletes’ and fans’ lived experience of agon which in modern sport is transposed into a lusory sphere. The paper will offer a detailed account of what is meant by “lusory sphere” which covers a broad field of non-utilitarian forms of physical activity, among which we also find play and sport.

Keywords: Sport; contest; fight; agon; lusory

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Aldo Houterman, Erasmus University

Discrimination in Sports: Translation and Noise

Equality in the sense of equal access to institutionalized practices is a key ethical principle, while the equality of all human beings is considered the starting point for the declaration of human rights. Yet, in real life, institutionalized practices such as sports tend to reproduce social inequalities and biases in terms of class, ethnicity, gender, orientation, religion, and disabilities. In practice, not all sports are for equally accessible for everyone (Price 2017). In the EU-funded project 'Our Sport is for Everyone', we investigate the different forms and causes of discrimination in hockey, swimming, football, cricket, basketball and urban sports. Through focus group sessions, Theory of Change sessions and living labs in collaboration with local sport clubs and communities, the project aims to find effective ways to combat discrimination in sports.

In this presentation I will discuss the role of philosophy in studying social inequality in sports. In particular I will focus on the interaction and translation of insights from multiple disciplines, building on the work of Michel Serres (Simons 2022). This philosophical approach focuses on the articulation of processes of knowledge formation such as categorization, classification and filtering (Houterman 2025). Applied to sport, this method could be used to map and assess exclusionary mechanisms of values embedded in sport practices, such as inclusion and safety.

Michel Serres inherits from communication theory that information is a particular filtering of noise in the exchange between the emitter and the receiver (Serres 2025). Noise should not merely be seen as an interruption of communication, but also and paradoxically perhaps as its necessary condition. What does the concept of noise mean for discrimination in sports? Current strategies of communication between associations, athletes and research concerning discrimination can become counterproductive when they focus on the elimination of noise while failing to acknowledge the importance of ambiguity, uncertainty and fluidity.

Keywords: Discrimination; Equality; Communication; Noise; Continental Philosophy

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Leslie A. Howe, University of Saskatchewan

Women and Remote Sport: Self, Situation, and Transcendence

The focus in this paper is on the existential as well as physiological value of outdoor sport for women, including those sports often designated as “risk” or “dangerous” sport. Relevant to this discussion is a clarification of the more precise nature of those risks/dangers that affect women in particular in their pursuit of sport activities, whether outdoors and remote or urban and indoor/outdoor. This paper also offers an exploration of these issues through a de Beauvoirean analysis of the importance of freedom and transcendence for human being, which is achieved through projects of movement and challenge in the physical as well as social world, but which is experienced differently by women given their situation compared to that of men, and for whom these opportunities are often much more restricted.

Important to this discussion is recognition of the relative restriction of movement that is mandated in various ways by women's social situation. There are a number of familiar negative responses to this, including either the flight from the body or the acceptance of male definitions of women's

bodies. Both represent bad faith and/or complicity with oppression. A positive rejection of these strategies is provided by those projects of transcendence that involve the practical development of bodily capacities that allow the individual woman to define herself for herself through movement in (and sometimes despite) the world that confronts her. In simpler language, sport, and especially sport that involves either risk or direct engagement of self with the natural environment, offers women a vital avenue for discovery and creation of the autonomous self, expanding the awareness and ownership of its boundaries. For women, in particular, this presents a profound rejection of the passivity of objecthood that most women are still expected to embody.

It can also be argued as well that solitary activities that require total attention to one's own self-directed interaction with landscape, as well as self-management of potential risk, present a very different experiential situation than do sports requiring group actions, response to external directions, and the appraisals of spectators. Hence, there are distinct existential advantages to women from engaging in pursuits such as climbing or fell-running that may be less available in organised sports such as football, athletics, or gymnastics, especially with respect to the development of autonomy, agency, and self-responsibility. Ultimately, it is concluded that the gains for women from participation in outdoor, remote, or dangerous sport are not only greater physical and psychological well-being, but the self-assertion of themselves as effective agents in their own lives and in society as full and equal citizens.

Keywords: Women; danger; situation; transcendence; selfhood

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Moira Howes, Trent University

Nature Sport and Other-Regarding Epistemic Virtues

In the philosophy of nature sports and nature sports studies, it is generally understood that nature sports provide significant opportunities to cultivate self-regarding virtues such as courage, fortitude, caution, confidence, autonomy, perseverance, and self-control. Nature sports also provide opportunities to develop self-regarding epistemic, deliberative, and argumentative virtues (hereafter “epistemic virtues”), such as critical insight, cognitive self-awareness, intellectual caution, intellectual courage, intellectual integrity, inventiveness, and respect for reason. Although there is little specific discussion of epistemic virtues in nature sports philosophy, individual and collective reasoning about safety, risk, and choice of action are clearly recognised as integral to adventurous pursuits. Such virtues are also relevant to epistemic goals in nature sports concerning what it is possible to achieve, whether one can endure hardship, how well one will respond to nature's challenge, and whether testing oneself through nature sport will deepen self-knowledge, knowledge of nature, or lead to self-transformation.

In contrast to self-regarding virtues, other-regarding virtues receive little if any attention in philosophy of nature sports. Except for justice, which is considered occasionally with respect to social injustice in nature sports, other-regarding virtues such as benevolence, generosity, kindness, patience, gratitude, and compassion are considered rarely in nature sports philosophy. This lack of attention is even more pronounced with other-regarding epistemic virtues, such as fair-mindedness, communicativeness, intellectual empathy, intellectual generosity, sincerity, and attentiveness to others' perspectives.

In this talk, I address the importance of other-regarding virtues in nature sport, with emphasis on other-regarding epistemic virtues. I argue that other-regarding epistemic virtues are important for good judgement, deliberation, and argumentation in nature sport activities, and their cultivation offers important benefits for nature sport participants. These virtues help reduce error and counter biases like confirmation and disconfirmation bias. (Baehr 2011; Oliveira de Sousa 2020) I further argue that they enable proper care and regard for the well-being of co-participants. To illustrate the potential benefits of other-regarding epistemic virtues, I draw from several autobiographical accounts of injuries and deaths in nature sport in which these virtues were deficient in judgement, decision-making, and/or group deliberation. In particular, I consider errors of judgement and problems in deliberation arising from inappropriately disregarded and under-appreciated perspectives as well as instances of self-silencing.

Lastly, I offer suggestions for enhancing the cognitive environment for nature sports participants through the cultivation of community-level expectations that emphasise other-regarding epistemic, deliberative, and argumentative virtues. I conclude that to be a virtuous inquirer in nature sport and attain its extraordinary internal goods, it is critical to cultivate other-regarding virtues.

Keywords: nature sport; virtue; epistemic virtue; deliberation; judgement

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Tien-Mei Hu, National Taipei University of Education

‘I Can’: Flesh and Corporeal Schema in Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy

‘Physical literacy’ has become the most critical sports terminology of the 21st century. Although Margaret Whitehead, the mother of physical literacy, has repeatedly pointed out the irreplaceability of a philosophical background to properly understand physical literacy, she also recognizes that the partnership between the body and the mind is the most important but challenging philosophy to explain. Whitehead’s proposed embodiment philosophy of physical literacy comes from Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the body, and the concept of ‘embodiment’ is an early Merleau-Ponty concept. In her doctoral dissertation, Whitehead further uses the late Merleau-Ponty's ‘flesh’ to explain the coexistence between human beings and the world. At the same time, Whitehead advocated replacing the modern philosophical ‘I think’ with ‘I can.’ Therefore, this paper aims to interpret the relation between the ‘flesh’ and ‘I can’ in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. This research has four conclusions.

- First, the habit body is a key to understanding ‘I can’ in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy.
- Secondly, regarding the relationship between flesh and I-can, touching is a core phenomenon for understanding this relationship.
- Finally, I claim the term ‘flesh’ is revised from the corporeal schema for Merleau-Ponty.

Keywords: embodied capability; lived body; pre-reflective liaison

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B.V.E. Hyde, University of Bristol & Bangor University

Who Gets to Judge? The Ethics of Ippon in Kendō

Kendo is governed by a system in which a point (ippon) is awarded when a competitor's strike meets specific criteria, such as sharpness (sae), opportunity (kikai), focus (zanshin), and total commitment (sutemi). These are technical criteria but, I argue, they're also aesthetic ones, judgement of which by the judges (shinpan) is partially subjective (see also Oda & Kondo 2014). This subjectivity raises serious questions of fairness in sports ethics, particularly because ippon can determine individual and team victories, as well as broader international standings. The concern is magnified in high-profile matches—such as those between Japan and Korea in the World Kendo Championships—where differences in scoring decisions have generated ongoing debates about fairness and bias. Global events like the World Kendo Championships embed shared ideals of respect, discipline, and fair play. When judges' rulings appear to deviate from these ideals or disproportionately favour one side, the foundational trust in the sport's fairness is eroded (Lolan 2002).

I argue that (partially) subjective (or value-laden) scoring systems, such as the one in kendo, represent a form of aesthetic imperialism in which the taste and interpretation of a small group of shinpan override the perspectives of both athletes and broader communities. If a certain group of senior kendoka consistently rewards specific stylistic preferences, then practicing kendoka around the world will alter their approach to earn ippon from these judges. Thus, the dominant aesthetic exerts a global influence on kendo. When a tight circle of senior practitioners defines “valid” performance, the path to a fair and meritocratic system narrows. However, not all aesthetic judgment in sports is as arbitrary as it might initially appear. Philosophers of art such as David Hume (1757) have long suggested that taste can be trained through intentional, rigorous experience, producing “true judges” who can discern nuanced qualities in a performance. Likewise, in kendo, experienced practitioners typically converge on what constitutes a valid strike. I argue that sports—much like scientific inquiry—are not neutral, but guided by tacit norms and values. Drawing a parallel to the work of the likes of Helen Longino (1990) and Heather Douglas (1991) on values in science, I argue that judgment is influenced by social and cultural factors, yet can still strive for objectivity through transparent standards and communal scrutiny.

What emerges, then, is not that aesthetic judgment is purely subjective and hopelessly biased. Rather, the core problem lies in who is recognized as a “true judge.” In major kendo events, the only individuals permitted to act as shinpan are often those who have practiced the longest—yet longevity does not necessarily equate with ongoing, rigorous refinement of judging abilities. European kendoka who have trained sporadically over thirty years may be deemed “senior” enough to judge, while a Japanese police officer (i.e. professional kendoka) who has trained thrice daily for twenty years may not be accorded the same privilege because they lack the requisite rank or hierarchical standing. The result is a hierarchical gatekeeping system that determines whose values prevail.

Keywords: martial arts studies; sociology of sport; sport ethics; philosophy of science; hierarchy; cultural norms; age discrimination

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The Inclusion Debate in Women's Sports: A Cross-Disciplinary Study of Students' Perspectives

The inclusion of trans women and athletes with differences in sex development (DSD) in women's sports is a subject of ongoing debate. The debate is shaped by competing values of inclusion, fairness, and safety. While most sports governing bodies have known rules and regulations, less is known about how the public views the topic. While social media is often characterised by loud voices painting a black and white picture, less is known about how students from different academic disciplines perceive the issue. This study investigates perspectives from students in law, medicine, sociology, and sports science to identify patterns of views and values in and between the disciplines. By analysing survey reports from 480 respondents from four Danish universities, this study examines how academic background and personal sporting experience influence attitudes on inclusion.

Findings reveal notable disciplinary differences in views on inclusion. Students from sports science and medicine overwhelmingly express concerns on inclusion, especially regarding trans women's participation in elite sports. In the qualitative part of the survey, this group cites concerns about hormone levels and biological differences. Law students tend to follow the overall average respondent score while showing more openness toward DSD-athletes' participation. Sociology students, in contrast, are the strongest supporters of inclusion. Some of qualitative responses suggest that sports participation should be based on how people live and identify, hereby echoing broader human rights arguments.

Respondents' sporting backgrounds also shape their perspectives. While many oppose inclusion in their own sport, they are more likely to support it in general. Moreover, students who do not do any sports and students in artistic sports more strongly support inclusion. Students in contact sports and combination sports, however, show the highest opposition to transgender athlete inclusion at both elite and grassroots levels. The level of competition also plays a role; students who compete at national or international levels are firmly against the inclusion of trans women in elite sports. There is also a general trend of more significant support for inclusion at the grassroots level than in

elite sports.

Our findings align somewhat with international literature on the topic. Research suggests that physiological advantages from male development – particularly in strength, speed, and power – persist despite hormone suppression (Hilton & Lundberg, 2020), reinforcing concerns raised by sports science and medical students. Similarly, scholars emphasize that sporting categories exist to protect athletes and ensure fair competition by recognizing physiological differences (Parry & Martínková, 2021). From a human rights perspective, some scholars contend that professional athletes should be seen as workers with the right to compete, which mirrors some respondents' view that shifting the focus away from competitive concerns is a priority (Petersdorff, 2024).

Our findings highlight that policymaking in sports will likely never satisfy everyone, as both academic and sporting backgrounds shape perspectives in distinct ways. By mapping these patterns, this study contributes to the broader discourse on gender, sex, fairness, and inclusion in sports, offering insight into how academic training and sporting experience shape views on one of sport's most debated issues.

Keywords: inclusion; fairness; sport; DSD-athletes; transgender athletes

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"Transgender Women in the Female Category of Sport: Perspectives on Testosterone Suppression and Performance Advantage" - Emma N. Hilton & Tommy R. Lundberg.

"The logic of categorisation in sport" - Jim Parry & Irena Martínková.

"Rethinking Human Rights for Transgender Athletes – A Policy Analysis of Transgender Eligibility Regulations in Competitive Sport" - Lina von Petersdorff

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Playing with Double-Edged Swords – AI, Enhancement, and Skills

The presentation explores AI in relation to enhancement, the ways it may extend, augment, or replace human capabilities, and the consequences for human flourishing (well-being) in the context of performance (sports, martial and performing arts and similar practices). Much as with the significantly older technology of the sword, there are two edges to wield and mind.

On the one edge –leaving aside utopian and dystopian scenarios– one of AI's predicaments concerns the fundamental qualitative transformation that radically affects human experience. There is an undeniable increment in productivity that drastically reduces physical, cognitive, and emotive load. This cuts through the demands of repetitive and mundane tasks much like a knife through butter, but may also dispose of complex and putatively pre-AI valuable practices, e.g., creative endeavors such as writing, music, and film making. On the other edge, such gains come at the expense of skills (cognitive, emotive, and embodied). Indeed, these very “gains” lead to de-skilling, skills that become superfluous and, ultimately, deleterious experiential outcomes. At best we blunt edges and get rusty, at worst we lose skills while compromising our flourishing.

Those practiced in the ways of swords, however, know that edges can be skillfully wielded other than in the original direction of a cut. Thus, the very threat of de-skilling and skill-obsolescence opens opportunities premised, fittingly, on sporting superfluity and practice for its own sake. The histories of sport, martial arts, and practiced performance validate and offer inspiring examples for how such erosions actually open creative, expressive, and transformative opportunities for skill development, and refinement that may enhance experience sans questionable compromises.

Keywords: AI, Enhancement, Skills, De-skilling, Non-instrumental Performance

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Miroslav Imbrisevic, Open University UK, Jon Pike, Open University UK

Does mandatory sex verification constitute a coercive offer?

Recent controversies surrounding athletes with DSDs have led to a resurgence of calls for the reintroduction of sex verification processes to enforce eligibility rules. This is a contribution to the debate over such proposals.

One recent exchange was in the *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*. Advocates of such processes and rules point out that these primarily involve a minimally invasive cheek swab (Tucker et al., 2024). Opponents of these proposals claim that they are unethical, and that they constitute a 'coercive offer' directed at such athletes. (Williams (Williams et al., 2024), see also McNamee and Camporesi (Camporesi & McNamee, 2018). This is a reference back to, and draws upon, a long standing debate about the nature of coercive offers in the literature. In this paper we look back at, and unpick, the philosophical and jurisprudential literature on coercive offers (Lyons, 2009; Zimmerman, 1981) (Nozick, 1969). We will argue that the proposal for sex testing does not have the structure of a coercive offer and cannot properly be considered to be one. We argue, further, that the proposal constitutes a fairly standard modification to eligibility rules. This modification is not different, in an ethically relevant way, from other eligibility rules that prescribe tests for nationality, or to prevent the use of banned substances. There are other

arguments against mandatory sex testing, such as about their costs and benefits, but such tests are not coercive offers or, more broadly, unethical.

Keywords: Eligibility rules; Sex testing; Coercive offers; DSDs

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Physically overpowering peers inside and outside of rules - Locker Room Bullying among Elite Athletes in Combat Sports

A judo-ka on the British national team left the team, claiming her teammates and the coach bullied her, although her accusation was dismissed (Khalatyan, 2024). This case exhibits only a part of bullying like the tip of the iceberg. Bullying happens inside, outside of sports, and in between. In the field of the philosophy of sport, however, research on bullying is scant. It is important then, to better understand bullying among athletes in order to prevent it.

This presentation aims to examine the relationship between the nature of combat sports and the locker room as a liminal space. It forms part of a broader study that aims to elucidate the mechanisms of bullying that occur in locker rooms and serves as a foundational component for the advancement of the research.

A locker room is not just a room to change clothes. In fact, it is a marginal and “liminal” space between the sporting environment and the non-sporting environment, whose uniqueness

distinguishes the mechanism/s pertinent to bullying in the locker room as distinct from that in other environments. Drawing on Bhabha's (2004) "Third Space Theory," this study conceptualises the locker room as a liminal space that simultaneously preserves the hierarchical structures of both the sporting and non-sporting contexts. This intersection generates distinctive interpersonal dynamics among athletes.

In combat sports, the act of physically overpowering an opponent is not only legitimised but constitutes a fundamental objective of the discipline. This legitimisation shapes athletes' interactions beyond the competitive setting within the locker room. Outside of combat sports, however, the same behaviour is illegitimate. Within the locker room, this carried-over legitimacy informs interpersonal interactions, fostering distinct social dynamics that differ from those in both sporting and non-sporting settings.

Keynotes: marginal area; combat sports; bullying; liminality

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Embodied Gender Norms in Sports Science Education: A Philosophical Inquiry Through Body-Materialism

This paper critically examines gender embodiment and normative structures within Danish sports science university programs, investigating how material and discursive forces shape students' academic and social experiences. Engaging with philosophy of sport through body-materialistic gender theory, this study interrogates the intersection of biological sex, social constructs, and institutional power in shaping gendered subjectivities in sports education.

Through qualitative focus group interviews with sports science students, findings reveal that binary gender paradigms persist, structuring interactions in both practical and theoretical coursework. Despite efforts to cultivate inclusivity, the dominance of hegemonic masculinity in sports curricula, pedagogy, and peer dynamics perpetuates exclusionary norms. The overrepresentation of male bodies—as research subjects, educators, and epistemic authorities—reinforces asymmetrical power relations, shaping conceptions of athletic competence and bodily legitimacy.

Applying Actor-Network Theory (ANT), the study conceptualizes sports education as a dynamic network where human and non-human actors (e.g., bodies, curricula, institutional policies) co-construct gendered experiences. Through this lens, gender is neither entirely biologically determined nor purely socially constructed, but emerges at the nexus of material reality and

discursive regulation. The study argues that reimagining sports science through a critical gender lens necessitates both epistemological shifts and institutional reforms to challenge entrenched biases.

By integrating feminist philosophy, posthumanist materialism, and philosophy of sport, this research contributes to broader debates on gender, embodiment, and power in sports education, advocating for an ethically responsive and philosophically rigorous approach to gender inclusivity in sports curricula and practice.

Keywords: Gender embodiment; body materialism; Actor-Network Theory; Inclusivity

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Resilience and sport: Transforming life horizons

Resilience is a multidimensional dynamic part of the personality structure that cannot be grasped in a simple concept. Resilience develops and adapts over time, influenced by individual and social stimuli and experiences. It is also related to historical experience. During the years of socialist history and the bipolar division of the world, the Czech Republic preferred ethical norms such as collectivism, conscious discipline, or a positive attitude to work. Social engagement was expected, but not an emphasis on liberal individual freedoms. Today, by contrast, the emphasis on freedom and liberal values present in Western societies may paradoxically lead to a certain diminishing of resilience. The phenomenon of the “snowflake generation” suggests that today’s young people are more fragile and less able to cope with stress, conflict or challenging life situations than previous generations. The emphasis on freedom can lead to the belief that individuals do not necessarily have to adapt, to undergo personal stresses that are perceived as unpleasant. Protecting the individual from any negative influence (mental stress, conflict discussions, ideological disagreements) may paradoxically limit the ability of the generation to cope with the challenges that are common in life. Young people are much less physically fit and much more obese than they were thirty years ago. The emphasis on comfort, security and protection at the expense of responsibility, the ability to face hardship, accept challenges and develop resilience leads to the perception of resistance as a threat and unacceptable pressure. This leads to life setbacks, inability to withstand negative influences, increasing life discomfort, and a rise in anxiety,

depression and suicidality among young people. Too much security is simply dangerous. Sport as an activity involving challenges, overcoming obstacles, teamwork, and crossing personal boundaries and comfort zones, provides a unique opportunity to develop resilience in various dimensions - from mental and emotional stability to the ability to adapt to stressful situations. Participation in sport shapes and transforms an individual's inner capacity to face life's crises and difficulties. Not only winning, but especially challenges and failures teach one to flexibly reassess and redefine one's goals, one's view of oneself, the world and one's possibilities. The process of building resilience is interwoven with complex interactions between external factors, personal capabilities and internal values, thereby transforming the life horizon. The dynamic process of resilience building affects not only sport performance but also the individual's ability to face challenges outside the sporting sphere and achieve personal growth.

Keywords: dynamics, challenges, adaptation, experience

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An interpretive analysis of elite rugby union: reflecting on some moral and aesthetic challenges.

Our aim in this paper is to reflect on the moral and aesthetic 'health' of rugby union. We combine insights from sports ethics with the experiential knowledge of practitioners gained through playing and coaching elite rugby in the United Kingdom. Taking a broadly interpretivist approach, we explore the extent to which the referee's attempts to apply the laws of rugby produce fair, just and aesthetically pleasing contests. We focus our analysis on four illustrative, but by no means, exhaustive aspects of refereeing in rugby that raise interesting and challenging questions about justice, fairness and the aesthetic appeal of the game. The first two, managing the game by coaching, warning or instructing players not to infringe, and playing advantage are ways referees use their discretion to keep the game flowing. The third relates to a formally enshrined option in the laws of rugby which allows the referee to award a 'penalty try' – punishing an illegal attempt to stop a try by awarding the try on the balance of probabilities. The final aspect considered is the scrum.

Here we develop Jones et al's (2019) conclusions about the threat to justice and fairness posed by the inherent challenge of refereeing the scrum in a valid and reliable way – identifying the offence and offender is often impossible and miscarriages of justice are inevitable. We identify problematic scrum-based strategies that have emerged and prosper, in part, because of the compromised reliability and validity of referee calls.

Keywords: Officiating, aesthetics, advantage, justice, strategic foul

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The technological redefining of the role of the human body in esports

This paper explores the redefining role of the human body in esports through new technologies. In conventional sports, the human body is the primary source of action and experience. Players' physical strength, endurance and fitness are key criteria of their performance within the physical (natural) environment's limitations. Esports have transformed both the nature of competition and the evaluation criteria for physical performance by integrating the interaction of players with virtual environments. The replacement of natural limitations with technological ones and affordances has indeed provided a basis for debate in the field of Philosophy of Sport about the degree of body engagement in them (Ek Dahl & Ravn, 2019; Hemphill, 2005; Parry, 2019; Parry & Giesbrecht, 2023). The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the ontological discussion of esports by focusing on the action of the players' body within a virtual environment. To achieve this objective, elements from the Philosophy of Technology are introduced, with the discussion's theoretical basis focusing mainly on the theory of informatics materiality as developed by Hayles (1992, 2010) and Floridi's (2014) philosophy of information. The central thesis is that in esports, the human body assumes the role of a vector for information data exchange, thereby modifying its responses and actions in relation to the demands of the game, compared to that in conventional sports.

In esports, the player's body functions as part of a human-machine unbroken circuit of continuous information and energy exchange (Grant, 2009), constituting a kind of cyborg (Grant, 2009; Hayles, 1992, 2010). The body is not connected to the sensory embodied experience of the natural environment (e.g. ground contact, balance, or tactile sensation), but is redesigned within the logic of information and becomes an instrument for computing and responding to the demands of the code of virtual reality (virtual embodied experience) (Hayles, 1992, 2010). Conversely, the physical

actions of the players are recorded, analysed and provide information data for the technological system to evaluate their performance, to control and correct their behaviour and even for commercial purposes. In esports, the physical characteristics of the body itself, such as strength and endurance, are of no great significance, but their representation in the form of information data. The players, although embodied, become inforgs (informational organisms) by acting based on informational data that they generate and that at the same time direct them (Floridi, 2014). Therefore, the esports player's body is not an independent subject of sensory interaction, as in conventional sports, but is redefined by technology as a computational instrument and a vector of algorithms. However, in conventional sports, does the body not function as a means of exchanging information and energy with other players and with the natural environment? Indeed, in these sports, the purpose of this bodily function is to win to highlighting the physical excellence and natural gifts of each player, and not to the balanced functioning of the natural environment, which cannot be programmed because it is characterised by elements of unexpectedness and randomness.

Keywords: sport; cyborgs; inforgs; embodiment; virtual reality

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Revisiting Kierkegaard and Kleinman: The Nature of a Self and Other, Aesthetics and Ice Hockey

In this paper, I will be returning to the work of the great Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard with reference to the ideas of Sy Kleinman (1975). Kleinman examined Kierkegaard's concept of a self and how a self relates itself to its own self, an important concept that Kierkegaard discusses in his *Sickness Unto Death*. I will further develop this notion of a self and the kinetic experiences that we go through to achieve a relationship to our own self.

I will then move into Kierkegaard's work on the aesthetic, with an analysis of the sporting experience through his aesthetic ideals and his notion of the first stage of existence, where most humans rarely escape the aesthetic sensual existence of living and plunder through life trapped in the void of daily routine. In his book *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard discussed this aesthetic ideal with the concepts of the pleasurable (aesthetic) and the ethical. I would like to apply this concept to my own sporting experiences of playing ice hockey to show how one could transition from the purely aesthetic to a more ethical component of the game.

To conclude, I will tie together the notion of a self and how it relates itself to its own self through the other and connect this through the jump (not a leap) from the aesthetic to the ethical existence.

Keywords: Kierkegaard; Kleinman; Self; Aesthetic; Irony

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A game theoretical analysis of strategies for defining games and sport

In the philosophy of sport, the problems of the definition of sport, as well as its twin concept—game—are still under debate. Apart from the theoretical reasons, these debates are also relevant to the more practical questions. E.g., the sport status of such a controversial group of games like mind sports or e-sports depends on the definition of sport.

In this paper I'm not going to take a direct position in either of the abovementioned debates. I'm rather going to take a meta-philosophical position to analyze some basic features of the debates concerning the definition of sport and game. As a starting point, I'm using Bernard Suits's polemics with Wittgenstein's account of defining games as presented in *Logical Investigations*.

In the Preface to “The Grasshopper,” Suits locates his search for the definition of games in the opposition to Wittgenstein’s anti-definitional attitude. Suits offers a classical conceptual analysis aiming at formulating a definition of games (or, more precisely, playing games) that takes the form of a set of separately necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. In the opposition to this lies Wittgenstein’s claim that there is nothing in common to things called games. In this situation, searching for such an understood definition is futile, and the other strategy should be recommended: description of a network of relevant similarities—“family resemblance.”

Analogical controversy (although not investigated by Suits) also applies to the search for the definition of sport. Both games and sports might be thus understood either as classical (definable) concepts or family (undefinable) concepts. Suits accused Wittgenstein of deciding beforehand the nature of games and declared he was going to look and see if one could find “the essence” of games. Thus, on the Suitsian ground, it is—at least theoretically—an open question whether games and sports are classic or family concepts. The two possible answers to this question might be crossed with two research strategies—formulating a classic definition or describing the family network. What we received is a meta-philosophical matrix of different research approaches to the problem of the definition of game and sport situated on the background of the possible ontological character of these concepts.

I’d like to offer a game-theoretical account of this matrix, analyzing all four possibilities and indicating their possible advantages and disadvantages. The eventual triumph of Suitsian strategy presupposes the classic nature of “games” and “sports” and the accuracy of an offered analysis; such an analysis, as a cognitive effort that enables real cognition, might be enhanced. But in the case of the family nature of “game” and “sport,” the value of such an analysis is, at best, limited to some practical applications, since from a theoretical perspective it should be treated as a waste of energy or even creating misleading views. On the other hand, the Wittgensteinian account works perfectly on the ground of anti-essentialism, but in the case of the truthfulness of essentialism, it fails to attack the real philosophical questions.

Keywords: sport; game; definition; game theory; Suits

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Sport and Sex

After 2024 book by Silvia Camporesi *Partire (S)vantaggiati: Corpi Bionici e Atleti Geneticamente Modificati* (Dis)advantaged: Bionic Bodies and Genetically Modified Athletes); after Caster Semenya's autobiography in form of philippics against World Athletics *The Race to Be Myself: A Memoir* and after grand chamber hearing (15.5.2024) in the case of Caster Semenya vs. Switzerland, we are still waiting for ECHR ruling. This does not mean that nothing happened: Donald Trump signed an order recognising in U.S. of A. two sexes only and declared that they cannot be changed. No gender involved here. In the field of sex, common sense of moral majority prevailed over scientific expertise. That other sexual differentiations belong to pathology is accepted by science, but that does not mean deprivation of their equal human rights. Paradoxically, if World Athletics understood sexual difference as the order does – a matter of declaration, Semenya could compete without because she was declared female at birth and recognized as woman by her nation-state administration. Scientifically, there are many different pathologies in-between male and female, bureaucratically, newborn is declared male or female on the first sight without possibility to import any other definition later. Politically and legally, in all countries which follow UN Declaration of human rights and its later derivatives all persons despite their sex or gender differences, however they are interpreted, should have the same human rights. The question which should be discussed and answered then is: “Are the understanding of sex in Olympic sport and in Trump’s order of the same ideological origin?”, and “Is binary classification of sex difference discriminatory?” The first provisional answer is that presidential order speaks about difference between male sperm consisting of small cell, and female egg as bigger cell. In sport, difference is made according to natural physical sport ability, where in most sports females could not compete with males because they in principle cannot reach their achievements. Not in all sports, but mostly, women represent weaker sex. Introduction of joint disciplines and other measures started to eliminate impact of this weakness by other means than separation, but in most cases, that cannot or can hardly apply. One of potential future measures could be to develop new disciplines and new sports where physical weakness is not an issue, or, to use handicap measures for male participants. The other provisional answer is that binarity itself has been left behind in philosophy, for instance within poststructuralism, and in science where nature’s slip or mistake which does not belong to strict binarity is treated as pathology, but not something of cultural or social origin. These differences are themselves not discriminatory if we accept that they exist.

Keywords: Sexual difference in sport; sexual binarity; weaker sex; sex and gender; sexual discrimination

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“There’s Your Dagger!”: Future Contingents and the Philosophy of Sport

Near the end of Green Bay Packers’ games (American Football), the team’s announcer (Wayne Larrivee) will often exclaim “There’s Your Dagger!” after what he deems to be a crucial, result-determining play. It could be a late touchdown, or interception. The “dagger” comment is to indicate that the game has now reached a point where the outcome is certain - a point from which no additional actions will (or even can) change the outcome.

Philosophically, the issue here is really one regarding the nature of so-called “future contingents” - more particularly, whether statements about the occurrence of such events have a truth-value, when their occurrence (or not) is contingent on people’s free actions.

It will be argued that at least some of these statements about the future outcome of contingent sporting events are true, and can be known to be true, even when the outcome is not necessary. The argument will make use of a Leibnizian notion of free will as action resulting from an agent's nature.

Keywords: future; contingents; Leibniz; free will; necessity; certainty; sport

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A.J. Kreider, Miami Dade College

“Competitive Disadvantage: Using Rawls’ Veil of Ignorance to Determine When Advantage is Unfair”

There has been much recent discussion concerning when a competitive advantage is unfair - particularly involving cases of trans women competing in women’s sports. Many have objected to such participation precisely because they believe trans women have an unfair advantage over cis women (women who identify with the gender assigned to them at birth), and as a result, that they be excluded from women’s competition.

Here, Rawls’ “Veil of Ignorance” is applied to determine when a competitive advantage is an unfair advantage. It is concluded that no competitive advantage is unfair, insofar as the chief goal of

(freely entered into) competition is the determination of which participants have the greater ability, or exhibited the greater performance. However, when the competition also confers material benefits and opportunities on the victors, then fairness requires that society structure competitions to ensure that these benefits are available to competitors of similar relative ability. As a result, restricting some competitions to cis women and excluding trans women may be justifiable.

Keywords: Fair; Rawls; sport; women; trans; veil of ignorance; competitive disadvantage; advantage

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Kevin Krein, University of Alaska Southeast

The Aesthetics of Risk

I have argued in the past that one of the central attractions of nature sports is that they provide opportunities to experience beautiful and dramatic interactions with natural features. This is true of both dangerous and relatively safe nature sports. I have also argued that we do a better job of explaining athletes' participation in high-risk sports if we understand them as tolerating risk in order to have certain types of experiences rather than seeking risk itself. Despite this fact, I argue here that the element of risk in dangerous sports can contribute to aesthetic qualities of participation in dangerous sports and I attempt to identify and better understand these qualities.

In mountaineering, for example, the awareness that one is participating in a dangerous activity changes the experience for climbers. It influences their wholistic understanding of the activity, and it changes the more specific experiences of decision making and movement. I argue further that the presence of risk in dangerous sport can enhance the experience of beauty and grace for spectators and for athletes themselves.

Finally, I argue that such enhanced aesthetic experiences are not generally the result of the pursuit of gratuitous risk or recklessness. Most serious athletes do their best to mitigate the risks they encounter in dangerous environment. It is the skillful navigation of exposure to risk that most often results in enhanced aesthetic experiences for both spectators and athletes in nature sports.

Keywords: Dangerous Sports; Aesthetics; Risk; Nature Sports

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R. Scott Kretchmar, Penn State University

In Search of the Philosopher who Most Influenced our Literature but Never Addressed Sport

In this presentation I identify several well-known parent-discipline philosophers who focused on topics other than sport but whose writings have, over the past five years, significantly influenced our literature. I briefly explain why each one of the individuals I identify deserves to be considered “most important” for our past and ongoing research. I conclude by making a case for one of these philosophers. My argument will rest on an interpretation of certain redemptive qualities of sport and attendant epistemological and axiological implications.

This presentation will provide a brief intellectual history of our work over the past 52 years. My selection of the most influential philosopher (whose name will not be divulged here) should prove to be provocative and informative on its own merits. However, it will also allow me to draw out implications for our future research.

Keywords: IAPS History; Famous Philosophers; Significant Influence

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Miha Kristovič, University of Maribor

The Dark Side of Sports: Corruption, Ethics, and Socioeconomic Differences - abstract

Sports have become an important aspect of entertainment and society. However, beneath the surface lies a plethora of corruption and immoral activity. This essay addresses many well-known themes in the industry, along with lesser-discussed topics. The themes under discussion include the corruption of both prominent and lesser-known organizations, match-fixing, player salaries, the pay-to-play sports system, and the ethical implications of elite sports academies. The text focuses on sports at both the highest level of competition and the grassroots level. To ensure a diverse range of literature supports these points, I utilized Google Scholar and a Slovenian e-library service called Cobiss. Drawing from my engagement with the world of sports, I also incorporated some of my personal experiences. The essay advocates for potential solutions and calls for action to minimize or resolve the challenges surrounding sports.

Keywords: Corruption; sports; ethics; morals; athletes; salary; match-fixing

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Matyáš Kubů, Charles University

Towards Inclusive Physical Education: Addressing the Challenges of Transgender Students

Transgender students often face bullying and harassment, stemming not only from a lack of awareness about gender dysphoria but also from systemic barriers to inclusion within educational institutions. Physical education (PE) can be particularly challenging, as it frequently reinforces traditional gender norms and exposes transgender pupils to uncomfortable or even hostile situations.

This paper explores the specific difficulties encountered by transgender students in PE, including issues related to changing facilities, team selection, and peer interactions. It also examines the role of PE teachers in fostering an inclusive and supportive environment. Drawing on current research and best practices, the article offers concrete strategies and policy recommendations to help educators create a fair, respectful, and safe space for all students, regardless of their gender identity.

Keywords: transgender; physical education; inclusion; school

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Jingqian Li, MAiSI (Master of Arts in Sports Ethics and Integrity)

Arbitrary Rules: a New Category of Rules?

Certain international sport federations (ISFs) have developed a set of rules that apply to "Top Committed Players" (TCP), which requires certain athletes to participate in specific competitions. However, the justification of such rules is questionable, as evidenced by the numerous challenges experienced by athletes, such as financial and psychological difficulties.

The emergence of such novel rules raises a question as to how they are to be understood, since they are currently not aligned with the prevailing framework that distinguishes constitutive, regulative and auxiliary rules. Despite their analogy to auxiliary rules, there is a significant difference in TCP rules. Auxiliary rules are defined as complementary regulations that facilitate the realisation of the practice of constitutive rules and fulfil social or political purposes. They stipulate pre-competition requirements, such as the provision of the sporting equipment and attire; and they regulate order on the field, such as prescribing the sequence of substitution, times of intervals, etc. These regulations are regarded as independent of, and exerting no influence on, the process and result of competitions, in both the direct and indirect senses. In other words, directly, they cannot alter the original constitutive elements so as to turn one sport into another. Indirectly, they cannot impose physical or psychological burdens on athletes that might affect their athletic performance.

However, although these rules might be functional in the sense of increasing the attractiveness of competitions for spectators and competitive levels of competitions, the TCP rules do in fact exert an influence on the process and result of competitions, since in specific situations they might result in athletes "refusing to win".

This suggests that TCP rules constitute a novel category of rule, namely, arbitrary rules. It is worth noting that the term 'arbitrary' is open to two interpretations. Firstly, it can be understood to mean the exercise of unlimited power without consideration for other people's opinions or wishes. Secondly, it can be understood to mean the acting of a random nature, without any planning or reason. The former explanation is generally associated with arbitrary rules. Different levels of sports federations formulate arbitrary rules for the purpose of achieving a variety of objectives, including, but not limited to, the pursuit of economic gain or the promotion of the development of the sport. It is evident that this phenomenon could potentially exert a deleterious influence on athletes, and also on the very essence and values of competitive sports.

A further line of enquiry would involve a consideration of retaining or discarding such rules, and of the question of whether they have a positive or negative impact on competitive sport.

Keywords: auxiliary rules; arbitrary rules; competitive sports

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Cam Mallett, Penn State University

Endurance as Central Excellence: An Interpretivist Critique of Sit-and-Kick Racing in Distance Running

In distance running, athletes contending for victory deploy one of two racing strategies. In frontrunning, a runner surges to the lead and sets an aggressive pace. In sitting-and-kicking, a runner holds back and conserves energy for the final lap. By applying the framework of interpretivism, also known as broad internalism, I argue that frontrunning is the preferable strategy because running a fast pace better promotes the central excellence of the sport—endurance. Deliberately holding oneself back in a sit-and-kick race promotes the excellence of final-lap speed, but a historical analysis of the distance running practice-community finds that endurance is an excellence more highly valued by the athletes, coaches, and fans who participate in the sport. Films, novels, and famous athletes are all celebrated for their frontrunning expertise and desire to

“get the most out of their own races.” Deliberately holding oneself back through a sit-and-kick strategy allows athletes to demonstrate their speed, but it does not promote endurance excellence

The running practice-community also favors frontrunning from a mutualist perspective that, according to Robert L. Simon, views the sport as a “mutually acceptable quest for excellence through challenge.” A frontrunning athlete who sets an aggressive tempo from the lead can pace the other athletes in the field to fast times and even personal bests. The running practice-community celebrates this support provided by competitors, with marathoner Mike Cassidy writing that in a race, “the other runners are not rivals; they are comrades in the war we each wage within ourselves...Personal bests are rarely set in isolation. Ours is not an individual sport.’ However, when multiple athletes deploy a sit-and-kick strategy, the entire field slows down, throttling athletes’ opportunity to test their endurance and strive for a personal best. This promotes the less-central excellence of speed, with athletes unable to test their endurance and pursue a fast time. As a result, victory becomes the race’s primary benefit, and only one athlete can enjoy it.

Ultimately, an interpretivist analysis of distance running finds that endurance and speed are the primary skills that contribute to distance running excellence. While both are necessary to accomplish the sport’s lusory goal, an analysis of the distance running practice-community finds that endurance is a more central excellence, exhibited best by exacting your fastest possible performance through frontrunning.

Keywords: Excellence, Interpretivism, Distance Running, Mutualism

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Danielle Mercado, KU Leuven

The Ethics of Normalisation: Disordered Eating in Elite Sport

Elite sport is governed by a moral framework that idealises self-discipline, bodily control, and performance optimisation. While these values are central to athletic success, they may also contribute to the normalisation of subclinical disordered eating behaviours (DEBs) such as caloric restriction, excessive exercise and weight manipulation. Within elite sport, such behaviours may

not be pathologised but valorised, complicating the ability of athletes, coaches, and institutions to identify harm.

This paper explores the epistemological and ethical implications of this normalisation, arguing that DEBs cannot be fully understood apart from the internalisation of sport-specific moral values such as austerity, purity, sacrifice, and achievement. These values not only constitute core aspects of the athletic self but are also often central to the ethos of sport itself. This overlap may give rise to a form of epistemic ambiguity: athletes may come to perceive potentially harmful behaviours as virtuous, or at least necessary. As a result, help seeking remains strikingly rare among elite athletes, despite the well-documented long-term health consequences and the risk of progression to clinically diagnosed eating disorders.

Drawing further on Bloodworth, McNamee, and Tan's (2017) relational account of autonomy in sport, the paper challenges the notion that elite athletes freely choose these behaviours. In the context of DEBs, this raises the question of whether athletes' choices to engage in harmful behaviours are truly voluntary—or if they are shaped by an internalized moral economy that frames restriction, denial, and control as aspirational.

Furthermore, the paper argues that help seeking among elite athletes remains a challenge not only because of stigma, but also because harmful behaviours are congruent with dominant sporting norms. This raises questions about institutional responsibility and ethical accountability. To investigate these issues further, the research will conduct a scoping review of literature on DEBs in elite sport to map how sport cultures shape the recognition and management of these behaviours. The project contributes to sport philosophy by calling for a critical reassessment of the moral architecture of elite performance.

Keywords: disordered eating in elite athletes; sporting values and identity; internalized norms in sport

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Ely Elliott Mermans, University of Helsinki

Cheater or loser? A transmasculine take on anti-trans sport policies

International sport organizations have a long and lasting history of discriminatory practices and policies against athletes whose participation to competitive events defy social categories and hierarchies. At the time of the writing, the official participation of trans, intersex and non-binary athletes with no disability in non-para competitive events is still highly controlled, monitored and often simply not allowed. In this paper, I focus on the use of anti-doping policies to restrict the right of trans men, transmasculine persons and non-binary athletes who use testosterone for non-competitive purposes to take part in competitive events either in the so-called “men” or “open” categories. I discuss three disciplines – running, cycling, and triathlon – where this kind of policy have been implemented at the international level, while being followed widely in national and quite local competitive contexts. Those three competitive sports are also the ones I have been directly concerned with and had to comply with as a transmasculine non-professional athlete. This experience, together with trans and non-binary sport history, along with recent discussions on doping (e.g., López 2014; Burke and Symons 2016; Loland 2018; Morrison 2023; Hochstetler et al 2024) and anti-trans sport policies (e.g., Ivy and Conrad 2018; Linghede et al 2022) inform and support the two claims and proposal of this paper.

First, I challenge the epistemic beliefs and ethical values that support international anti-doping policies (WADA, 2021) and the prohibition of testosterone use for all athletes, included trans and non-binary individuals. I further argue that the widely used “treatment-enhancement” vs. “performance-enhancement” distinction (Morgan 2009) only reinforces the current pathologization of trans and non-binary athletes by anti-doping agencies and sport organizations. Second, I show that the regulations for the men and open categories that target trans and non-binary athletes who take testosterone for non-competitive purposes, as established by World Athletics (WA, 2023), Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI, 2022-23), and World Triathlon (WT, 2025), actually contradict WA, UCI, and WT’s anti-trans policies for the “women” category. I contend that this “contradiction” offers a clear example of how cisheterosexist beliefs can frame both ethical and scientific (“evidence-based”) discourses about athletes’ bodies and performances in a self-supporting way. Third, I offer a trans-situated approach of fairness and of athletic performance that learns from trans sport history and my own trans athlete’s experience.

Keywords: sport policy; transmasculine; testosterone; doping

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Vani Miglani, Dartmouth College

Players or Data Points: The Impact of Wearable Technology in Soccer

Developed during the 1960s, wearable technology has enabled soccer coaches to monitor players' performance, prevent injuries, and facilitate speedy recovery. Devices like GPS trackers, heart rate monitors, and smart sensors provide detailed data about movement patterns and workload, which aids in tactical planning. However, this comes with privacy concerns, as players' data is often shared without their consent. This paper examines the pros and cons of wearable technology. By analyzing existing privacy policies and practices across various sports, it highlights the need for standardized regulations that ensure players benefit from technological innovation while retaining control over their data. The analysis also delves into the psychological impact of constant monitoring, raising questions about how wearables influence player autonomy and trust within teams. Ultimately, it argues that while wearables are transformative, their adoption must be accompanied by player-centered data protection policies to uphold ethical standards in modern soccer.

Keywords: wearable technology; sports ethics; data privacy; athlete performance; sports technology

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- NOTE: More references cited in the full paper

Petr Mocek, Faculty of Physical Culture at Palacký University

Sources of meaning in life and meaningfulness in Martial arts

A sense of purpose or meaningfulness could be considered one of the fundamental driving forces in human lives, whether we are trying to preserve it or actively seek it. This viewpoint is central to the work of renowned philosopher V. E. Frankl, whose concept of logotherapy is built around the pursuit of meaning. However, meaningfulness does not arise from nothing. It requires foundations often referred to as sources of meaning. These sources can vary significantly among individuals and take many forms.

In the context of sports, these sources may be conceptual, as illustrated by the Sources of Meaning and Meaningfulness Questionnaire (SoMe) developed by Professor Tatjana Schnell, which identifies theoretical dimensions of meaning. On a more practical level, meaning in sports can also stem from experiences of fulfillment, satisfaction, and the positive emotions that accompany physical activity.

Martial arts, in particular, present a unique convergence of these elements. Rooted in primal human behaviors such as hunting or combat, martial arts carry heightened stakes due to the higher

potential for injury and the psychological pressure involved in striving for victory, often achieved through physically overpowering or incapacitating an opponent.

Culturally, martial arts have long been intertwined with religious and spiritual traditions. Over time, these transcendental elements have evolved into widespread forms of entertainment, yet the depth of their origins remains notable. Martial arts continue to represent a fusion of physical activity and cultural traditions, especially in styles with deep historical roots, such as karate, tai chi, Muay Thai, or the more contemporary Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Many of these disciplines involve rituals, philosophy, and spiritual aspects that transcend the typical physical benefits associated with sports.

Throughout history, martial arts masters have often devoted their lives to perfecting both their skills and their physical and mental form, suggesting that for them, this pursuit was their ultimate life purpose. Even today, for many professional athletes, this remains true because success in sports often depends on the profound dedication of time, money, and energy to the training to stand among the best. The unique relationship of physical activity in the form of martial arts with human culture, involving the inherent risks and emotional challenges, and philosophical and spiritual layers make it a distinctive source of meaning that can deeply enrich lives and give them a sense of meaning for those who commit themselves fully to its path.

Keywords: Sources of meaning, meaningfulness, sports, spirituality, martial arts

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Bill Morgan

“Why It Is Rational to be A Sport’s Fan: A Defense”

Sports fans are often accused of having an irrational, over-the-top emotional investment in whether the players and teams they root for best their opponents. What is supposedly irrational about their getting so emotionally caught up and absorbed in such game outcomes typically comes down to the following two factors: (1) game outcomes rarely, if ever, have any appreciable bearing on their ordinary lives, (2) most fans follow the teams they do for entirely arbitrary reasons, say, because they followed a team just because their friends did, they fancied the color of the uniforms of the team, they cheered for certain teams that represent the particular region of the country in

which they live (in this latter sense, it is suggested that being a sports fans is more so a heredity trait than it is a choice, since many fans root for the Philadelphia Eagles because their parents did, but, conversely, “No one is a Bill Cosby fan because their father grew up in Philadelphia”). This is why philosophers like Kendall Walton maintain that because there is no logic to being a sports fan, “you are not getting anything wrong if you root for the Tigers instead of the Blue Jays” (80). In my paper, I argue that there is indeed a logic to being a sports fan because winning, rightly understood, is a genuine form of achievement that possesses intrinsic value. What is rational about being a sports fan, therefore, is that when something is intrinsically valuable, as I claim is the case for the intrinsic achievement value of winning, spectators’ positive attitude of appreciating winning for its intrinsic value is also, and separately, intrinsically valuable. The idea that appreciating something that has intrinsic value is itself intrinsically valuable follows from G. E. Moore’s claims that “the proper appreciation of a beautiful object is a good thing in itself,” and that such appreciation involves more than “a bare cognition of what is beautiful,” but further “an appropriate emotion towards the beautiful qualities” (190).

Keywords: Rationality, Fans, Intrinsic Value, Achievement

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Kantian Supersensibility, Supercharged: An Insight from Drag-Racing

This paper is an applied Kantian analysis of drag-racing. It begins with a discussion and critique of Kant’s ‘analytic of the sublime,’ specifically his analysis of the mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime. As a first intermediate conclusion I argue that this distinction (between the mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime) is superfluous to Kant’s own analysis and can therefore be collapsed. As a second intermediate conclusion I argue that Kant’s stipulations on sublimity with regard to nature, purposelessness, and God are also ultimately superfluous to his analysis of the sublime and therefore unduly narrow its scope and can be discarded. The primary conclusion of the work is that this “normative remix” of Kant’s analytic of the sublime opens a window of opportunity for reimagining certain sports for their ability to provoke the sublime (primarily among spectators). As a paradigmatic case, I put forward the relatively esoteric sport of top-fuel drag-racing, which I argue produces an unparalleled display of magnitude and might (Kant’s terms for the mathematically and dynamically sublime) and this induces the sublime emotion and profound awe. As a final upside, I argue that this niche sport can (surprisingly) help us better interpret Kant’s analytic of the sublime, broadening its scope for the better, while at the same time helping us better appreciate the often-overlooked potential for sports (some sports, at least) to provoke the sublime.

Keywords: Sublime; Kant; motorsports; drag racing

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Cunning or Unsporting? – The fine line between athletic sagacity and cheating, described using the 2025 example of the behavior of the German third division soccer club’s coach of Arminia Bielefeld

In contemporary competitive sports, the line between strategic ingenuity and unsporting behavior (cf. MacRae, 2023; cf. Dixon, 1999) is increasingly blurred. This study explores the philosophical and ethical dimensions of such ambiguities through a recent case in German soccer involving Arminia Bielefeld’s head coach, Mitch Kniat. During a third-division match, Kniat instructed his goalkeeper to feign injury in order to orchestrate an unscheduled tactical briefing – an act that subsequently triggered an investigation by the German Football Association (DFB). The incident invites critical reflection on the notion of the “grey area” in sports rules, a concept Kniat himself invoked in his defense.

I argue that this case epitomizes the tension between the formal codification of rules and the informal, often unwritten, codes of fair play. It raises crucial questions: Where does clever strategy (or *mētis*, cf. Dova, 2020) end and unethical conduct begin? Can exploiting regulatory loopholes ever be morally justified in a context that upholds both competition and sportsmanship as foundational values?

Drawing on normative ethical aspects, this paper analyzes the act of tactical deception in the light of virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism. The aim is not merely to pass judgment on Kniat’s action, but to contextualize it within a broader philosophical discourse about moral agency in sport. Additionally, parallels are drawn to analogous scenarios in other team sports to highlight the cultural relativism inherent in perceptions of fair play.

Ultimately, this case underscores the importance of addressing regulatory grey zones not only through legalistic scrutiny, but through the cultivation of ethical reflexivity among coaches, players, and governing bodies. As sports continue to professionalize, the need to balance cunning with integrity becomes ever more pressing – a challenge at the very heart of modern sport ethics.

Keywords: unfairness; soccer; *mētis*

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Long-Distance Running as Pedagogical Practise

The Socratic maxim "know thyself" is considered by Plato in several dialogues written by him. The maxim emphasizes knowing. However, nowadays, knowledge is referred to specifically as propositional knowledge, which, in principle, can be expressed linguistically. However, the knowledge meant in the maxim does not refer to propositional knowledge but to a broader notion of knowledge, which could be called art of life that includes both propositional knowledge, skill, bodily knowledge, and moral knowledge. (De Donato 2024.) The maxim is not an epistemic maxim but a practical maxim "which he also closely connected with the idea of caring for oneself" (Shusterman 2013, 42).

In caring for oneself, the emphasis is learning the art of life, which includes both practical and theoretical exercises that do not function merely "on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being," intending to make the learner better. (Hadot 1995, 81-82). Exercising sport (*askēsis*) is part and parcel of spiritual exercises (De Donato 2024). However, technological development that is "changing sport as we know it and altering the experience of being an athlete in radical ways" is dehumanizing sport (Aggerholm 2025). To understand the character of the dehumanizing process, we will analyze long-distance running, which is a good example of localizing the factors behind the dehumanizing and rehumanizing processes. (McNamee & Morgan 2015)

To explicate the idea, let us philosophically analyze long-distance running, which is an extremely interesting example. In cross-country running, the runner's agenthood, although full, dissolves into the surrounding nature; in track running, the runner's agenthood is focused on running, and on the treadmill, the runner transforms into a mechanical performer. In full agenthood a runner does not think about running but just runs. However, to have such a state of mind and body, running should be "automatic," which requires systematic and conscious training. That is, a runner has to have knowledge-based training, i.e., to achieve epistemic agenthood.

The epistemic agenthood runs in different directions: a treadmill runner is perfectly informed while a cross-country runner must rely on his or her feelings. Hence, to achieve the final goal, full agenthood, the training might also have mechanical and technology-laden exercises (De Donato 2024). This opens an important philosophical line of thought to a phenomenal analysis of long-distance running (Ihde 2012; McNamee & Morgan 2015).

Keywords: knowledge; agenthood; training; pedagogy

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“Can we have two golds?” Sharing the medal to cultivate communitarian sporting selves, relational ethics and inclusion

During the 2020 Olympics, men’s high jump athletes Barshim and Tamberi both cleared 2.37 meters. After being told they could continue with a jump-off, Barshim asked if it was possible to have “two golds.” It was. The athletes rejoiced in their mutual win and foregrounded their “friendship” to explain the decision. In the 2023 World Athletics Championships, women’s pole vault athletes Moon and Kennedy also decided, on camera, to avoid a jump-off after both clearing 4.90 meters. When asked whether their decision was related to “sisterhood” and “looking out for each other,” Kennedy answered “yes.”

Sporting competitions resist ties as evidenced by tiebreak rules such as shootouts, overtime, sudden death, playoffs, golden sets and the abovementioned jump-offs in track and field. In line with the Olympic ideals of *citius, altius, fortius* (faster, higher, stronger), the goal is to reach ever further, beating opponents in competition to ultimately rise singularly as the winner – a single athlete or a single team often attached to a single club, city or a country over and against another. When athletes opt out of tiebreakers to share a medal, they counter this dominant sporting ethic. They effectively agree to acknowledge a limit by deliberately stopping – together. They consent to being memorialized together, as equal practitioners of a community.

I argue that by prioritizing community and solidarity over competition and individual enhancement, medal sharing challenges dominant sporting subjectivation through faster, higher, stronger and

constitutes moments of alternative ethical self-cultivation in Foucault's (1985, 1988) sense. I consider the decision to stop as an Aristotelian (1985) virtue (related to *peras* – knowing one's limits), the cultivation of which unfolds relationally and socially within communities. I thus invoke anthropologist Mattingly's (2014) insistence on reconciling Aristotelian virtue ethics with a Foucauldian approach to analyze moments when the dominant sporting ethic is ruptured to illuminate potentials for novel conceptualizations and experiences of sporting selves. I also contend that these ruptures are politically significant since the Olympic ideals of faster, higher, stronger determine and legitimize segregation and exclusion in sports especially regarding gender, i.e. men and women compete separately, and trans people most often can't. As such, more than simply heart-warming, medal sharing can incite more inclusive sport because it undercuts the very principles that reinforce and legitimize exclusion. In other words, if athletes can deliberately cultivate sporting selves and ethics that diverge from the subjectivation of faster, higher, stronger, we may rethink success criteria in sports thereby no longer gauging segregation or exclusion as necessary. I thus suggest that we take seriously moments of medal sharing, theoretically and politically, towards pluralizing ethical possibilities that index more inclusive sports.

Keywords: medal sharing; ethics; self-cultivation; inclusion

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Is dangerous sport a public emergency? Harm, hazard and minimum humanitarian standards for dangerous sport

The fact the dangerous sport carries with it significant risk of harm, while deterring some, is seen by others as an invitation to take part. Motivations for those in the latter group doubtless span the spectrum from danger-agnostic attitudes of 'do-it-despite-the-danger' to danger-seeking attitudes of 'do-it-for-the-danger'. Levels of individual awareness and tolerance for risk of harm is almost certainly as diverse. This paper starts from a harm reduction approach to the question of regulating dangerous sport that centres on the concept of 'safe danger' as the satisfaction of three criteria: Safetification, Management and Mastery (Oldham 2024; Martínková and Parry 2017). This approach works well to identify superfluous/unnecessary risk of harm and eliminate it in favour of adopting or

at least exploring less risky alternatives. A major question that remains unanswered, however, is how to deal with risk of harm in sports that are inherently, unavoidably dangerous. This paper addressed the question by building on the helpful description of such sports as ‘hazardous’ (Crips and Bright 2021) to introduce a clear distinction between hazardous sports per se and hazardous acts within otherwise non-hazardous sports. The case is made that the undertaking of a hazardous sport or a sport condoning within its rules hazardous acts constitutes a situation logically similar to a state of public emergency. Far from standing against this view, the notion of sport ethics as something gratuitously internal only strengthens the comparison with the state of exceptionality where broad societal norms are abandoned in the interest of dealing with an exceptional circumstance on its own terms. In the face of this ‘grey zone’ between normalcy and all-out war—the latter already governed by a number of international conventions—the 1990 Turku Declaration and its subsequent United Nations adoption (‘Declaration...’ 1995) laid out for the first time a codification of ‘minimum humanitarian standards’ that has since become a key tool for provision of aid and enforcement of broadly recognized base levels of respect for human dignity even amidst the most desperate of situations. Finally, this paper proposes that, in the absence of a consensus regarding the ‘grey zone’ sports or sport acts (i.e. those classified as hazardous), there is a similar need for the adoption of such a code for sport. The adoption and (more significantly) the enforcement of such a code would help satisfy the core sporting principle of safety as a form of due diligence to ensure a safe sporting experience for participants through defining clear limits (minimum standards) to which broad definitions of ‘safety’ and ethically acceptable exposure to risk of harm can reasonably be stretched.

Keywords: Risk of harm; dangerous sport; minimum humanitarian standards; harm reduction.

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Why Ultimate Frisbee mixed category fails to promote gender equity on and off the field

From statistics on the playing field to experience in organizational roles: the duality of including men and women together in the same team in the sport to protagonizing men among women, instead of all sexes/genders together. This is a reflection of what is happening in mixed sports, including the mixed category of Ultimate. In Ultimate, the mixed category (or division – as it is called by the World Flying Disc Federation - WFDF) is defined by allowing to play any eligible player, being female or male matching players according to the Open and Women's divisions (WFDF, 2025a).

Ultimate is a self-refereed, non-contact, invasion and team sport, in which it is played with a flying disc (the frisbee). Its rules and organization are based on the principles of fair play and sportsmanship (WFDF, 2025b). However, it is hard to assess whether the fair play of the sport is favoring Gender Equity in practice and not just in theory.

Gender Equity in Sport has been a topic of great work in these past decades, but there is still work to be done, including in the mixed sex category of Ultimate Frisbee. Mixed team sports, such as Ultimate and many others, are used as a tool in Physical Education at schools to integrate people of different sexes/genders in the same tasks and roles with a cooperative intention in sport.

Even though men and women play together in the mixed category, there still are reports, which are mentioned throughout the paper, on women being sidelined in different functions of the sport, on the field and off the field. One of the possible reasons is that this sport, like many others, is designed in a way that physiologically favors men by requiring more use of strength and explosive power, for example. These are conceptualized as male-apposite sports (Martínková et al, 2022).

On the field, in active play, there are still far fewer women receiving the throw or scoring the goal compared to the men of their team in elite national competitions. Very commonly, it is possible to see more men than women occupying the handler position (usually the position that catches and makes throws more often). Off the field, from the sidelines to other spaces: very often, it is seen that both the captain and spirit captain as men, and the same goes for coaches. More men are active in sport organizational roles in Ultimate than women. What is being done by teams, clubs, leagues, and federations of Ultimate to promote Gender Equity in the mixed division? Just putting both genders playing together on the field is not enough to guarantee equity per se.

Mixed sports can also be an environment for exposing the inequality between men and women in a way that corroborates a belief of male dominance in sports, according to Vanzella-Yang, A., & Finger, T. (2021). In a proposal for unisex sports, Martínková (2020) mentions how mixed sports still mirror the same problems as the single-gender category has related to the biological concept of sex, but also the inferiorization of female athletes.

Even though there was little published research on this specific topic, the objective of this work is to discuss progress, rule changes, and failings of Ultimate stakeholders in the mixed category. After the discussion, a call to action for different actors is included for future possibilities to keep on improving the sport and achieve what it is meant to be.

Keywords: Gender Equity; Ultimate Frisbee; Mixed Category; Flying Disc Sports; Mixed sports

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(Re)thinking the relation of rhythm and movement through Bergson and Merleau-Ponty

In sports science, rhythm has typically been studied in relation to optimization of performance, for example by exploring how rhythmic training can enhance athletic performance (MacPherson, Collins, & Obhi, 2009; McCrary, & Gould, 2023) or how aligning with the body's natural circadian rhythms can optimize performance and recovery (Nobari et al, 2023; Thun et al, 2015). Here rhythm tends to be treated as something external which controls or organizes movement (a tempo, a beat, a pattern to match), and can be measured and optimized.

However, the philosophies of Henri Bergson (1910; 1946) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968; 2012) allow us to think of rhythm differently, not just as something that organizes movement from the outside, but as something that emerges from movement itself. For Bergson rhythm is an expression of duration (*la durée*) — that is, the inner, lived time of consciousness, which unfolds in a continuous, indivisible flow. Rhythm is here not an external sequence of beats, but a way to describe how a dynamic unity emerges in the lived time of consciousness (Bergson, 1910, p.104-105). In that sense, rhythm is a way that life expresses itself as movement from within. Merleau-Ponty (whose inspiration from Bergson became particularly apparent in his later works (Al-Saji, 2001)), shifts this idea of rhythm as the expression of life into the domain of embodied perception. For him, rhythm is not simply the flow of inner time, but how the body engages the world pre-reflectively — through a motor intentionality that is rhythmic in nature. Rhythm is here rather how movement and perception co-emerge, as the body synchronizes itself with the world. The body here appears as a particular tension or rhythm that responds to the sensible, which is itself “a certain rhythm of existence” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. 213).

Thinking rhythm with Bergson and Merleau-Ponty takes us beyond an instrumentalizing perspective on rhythm and enables us to explore rhythm as a site of embodied creativity and sensemaking. Rhythm is here not a form imposed on the body, but a way the body makes sense of a dynamic

world — not through static representations, but by becoming-with the world in tempo, tension, and flow. In this conceptual paper, I will reflect on the relation of rhythm and movement, based on a reading of selected texts from Bergson and Merleau-Ponty, and discuss implications, drawing on examples from a sporting context.

Keywords: rhythm, movement, phenomenology, process philosophy, embodied sensemaking

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Trash Talk in sports: A philosophical approach based on Ludwig Wittgenstein's language games

Trash talk is a timeless phenomenon in competitive sports (Dixon, 2007; Fennell, 2022). It refers to provocative, offensive, or ironic speech intended to discourage, intimidate, or even humiliate the opponent in a sporting contest. Indeed, some consider it a playful and strategic element of the game (Dixon, 2008), while others view it as an element that undermines sports ethics, sportsmanship, and fair play (Fraleigh, 1984; McNamee & Parry, 1998).

This article explores the philosophical position of trash talk through Wittgenstein's late philosophy, particularly through the concept of language games. According to Wittgenstein, the meaning of words does not arise from intrinsic definitions, but rather is related to their use in specific contexts governed by rules. Every expression belongs to a linguistic context that gives it its meaning. This context is what Wittgenstein refers to as a language game (Wittgenstein, 1986/1967; McFee, 2015). The words in language games can be used in other linguistic contexts. In the new contexts, however, they acquire a different meaning.

According to this philosophical approach to sport, trash talk is not just a verbal attack. It constitutes a form of language embedded in the competitive context and the playful nature of the sport, incorporating its logic and expectations (Suits, 2005; Wittgenstein, 1986/1967). The article argues that trash talk can only be considered a legitimate element of the game to the extent that it is recognized as such by the participants. If it ceases to be perceived as a game, i.e., when it becomes difficult and disconnected from its context, it loses its playful character and becomes morally problematic (Fraleigh, 1984; Suits, 2005).

Based on the relevant literature and examples from both professional and amateur sports, trash talk is placed between the game of words and the corruption of the game (Dixon, 2018). It is, therefore, argued that trash talk cannot be ethically evaluated when it is isolated from the competitive context in which it takes place (McNamee & Parry, 1998).

Wittgenstein's philosophical approach contributes to recognizing trash talk as a language game, i.e., a form of discourse that only makes sense in specific contexts and where athletes follow specific rules (Wittgenstein, 1986/1967; McFee, 2015). Trash talk can function as a recognized and strategic move for the game and thus becomes an acceptable challenge. On the contrary, if it crosses the boundaries, it alters the playfulness of the game and acquires unacceptable forms, e.g., it may result in verbal aggression (Dixon, 2007; Fennell, 2022).

Therefore, it is concluded that trash talk is characterized by moral ambiguity rather than moral neutrality, because for its philosophical understanding, it is necessary to pay significant attention to the language of sport as it is experienced and played (Dixon, 2008; Dixon, 2018; Fraleigh, 1984).

Keywords: Trash Talk, Wittgenstein, language-games, sport ethics, fair play

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Ethical Wipeouts and the Subtle Violences in Surfing: Philosophical Reflections on Authenticity, Commodification, and Ethical Tensions

Surf, commonly portrayed as a leisure activity embodying freedom, harmony with nature, and personal expression, also has ethical tensions relevant to contemporary social and cultural issues. This paper proposes a philosophical examination of surf as a complex social phenomenon, emphasizing various forms of violence and microviolence within it. Departing from narrow, traditional conceptions of violence limited strictly to physical harm, the analysis adopts an expanded conceptual framework, addressing broader structural and symbolic dimensions. In this context, violence is conceived as damage, which is a transformative and sometimes destructive force shaping both individual and collective experiences, identities, and environments. The analysis explores three interrelated central philosophical issues. Firstly, it addresses the tension between surfing as an authentic, embodied, and quasi-spiritual pursuit, and surfing as a heavily commercialized and media-driven practice. Authentic surfing experiences often represent profound personal engagements characterized by deep bodily awareness and a spiritual or existential relationship with nature. In contrast, commercialization transforms these authentic engagements into commodified products, dissolved through media representation and consumerism. Thus, surfing embodies philosophical questions about authenticity, spiritual meaning, and the ways economic pressures threaten genuine experiences.

Secondly, the paper analyzes the philosophical conflict between essentialist views of surfing identity and the widespread commodification of surfing experiences. Essentialist perspectives emphasize a fixed, inherent identity tied intrinsically to surfing's history, community, and relationship with nature. Commodification, conversely, fragments and reshapes this identity, packaging and selling it as lifestyle commodities. This dynamic involves symbolic violence, whereby commodified representations subtly marginalize and exclude surfers who fail or refuse to conform to prescribed media images and consumerist expectations. This symbolic violence reflects deeper philosophical questions about identity, authenticity, and self-expression within contemporary consumer culture.

Thirdly, the paper critically investigates the aggressive environmental and social consequences resulting from surfing's global expansion and rising popularity. Surf tourism, often marketed as

benign, increasingly impacts coastal environments through overdevelopment, resource depletion, and ecosystem degradation. Additionally, surf culture's global dissemination frequently generates conflicts in coastal communities, intensifying structural violence characterized by social exclusion, economic displacement, and cultural erosion. The philosophical issue at stake concerns responsibility—both personal and collective—in recognizing and mitigating these violent implications for communities and environments.

Finally, the paper argues philosophically for greater ethical awareness and accountability, calling for practices that resist commodification and commercialization, thereby preserving surfing's authenticity, communal bonds, and environmental harmony. Such ethical reflection advocates cultivating sustainable, respectful, and meaningful interactions with the ocean and coastal communities, confronting both symbolic and structural violence head-on. In sum, the philosophical contribution of this paper is twofold: it seeks to critically elucidate the multifaceted violence embedded in surfing's contemporary manifestations, and it provides a robust ethical call for deeper reflection and more authentic engagement within the surfing world, ultimately contributing to broader philosophical debates about authenticity, identity, commodification, and responsibility in modern society.

Keywords: Philosophy of Sport; Extreme Sports; Human–Nature Relation; Environmental Hostility.

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On Surfing and Violence

This paper argues that surfing constitutes a paradigmatic case of non-anthropogenic and non-intentional violence—where humans accept their exposure to potential harm by natural phenomena—thereby challenging conventional conceptions of violence as intentional, intersubjective, or morally charged. By framing violence as ontological rather than merely interpersonal, the essay contributes to the philosophy of sport by introducing a non-moralized account of risk-taking and harm in sport practice, specially in extreme sports, grounded in the lived encounter between athlete and environment. An action-based conception of violence is adopted, violence as potential and actual damage inflicted by an agent, and considering agency decentered from the human subject, it is understood as an emergent relational dynamic co-constituted of actors being human or more-than-human, including non-living, which hence includes the ocean, as other geophysical and entities alike. The discussion centers on two main frames for understanding the relation of surf and violence. First, the damage resulting directly from environmental conditions inherent to the surfing context, and second, the deliberate engagement of surfers in activities involving potential damage. The essay unfolds in two interconnected stages. Initially, it delineates a conceptual framework for understanding the diverse ways violence exists in the context of surfing, further clarifying which forms of harm are relevant to the inquiry and which lie outside the scope. Subsequently, the analysis investigates how surfing inherently involves a complex relation between surfers and powerful natural phenomena, emphasizing the philosophical implications of voluntary exposure to risks, and acceptance of potential and actual damage. The argument is further situated within a broader class of extreme sports—where athletes likewise face forces that are not morally charged, but existentially significant. Surfing, then, is a sport of embodied exposure that invites philosophical reflection on risk, finitude, and human engagement with the more-than-human world. The paper contributes to analysing violence, building up a framework for understanding violence ontologically in a non-moralized, non-intentional, and not-interpersonal manner within the philosophy of sport.

Keywords: Philosophy of Sport; Philosophy of Surf; Authenticity; Commodification; Ethical Responsibility.

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Jim Parry, Charles University

Violence to language

This paper examines the use of the concepts of ‘violence’ and ‘harm’ in discussions of sport-related misconduct.

The WHO world report on violence and health (Krug et al 2002) is the most often quoted source for investigations of ‘violence’ in society, but it does not bear scrutiny, including as it does non-violent as well as violent acts.

This was a problem that Bragagnolo and Lezama grappled with in their important paper on the nature and extent of ‘sextortion’ in the sporting context. Whilst seeking to address issues of concern to those involved with safeguarding work, and identifying and conceptualising the hitherto partly concealed phenomenon of sextortion, they relied upon the previous work of the WHO, and the accepted its understandings of the concept of violence. (It’s harmful, so it must be violent.

This made it very difficult for them to explain the harmfulness of sextortion, because the whole point of sextortion is that it refers to non-violent ways of achieving probably harmful ends. This makes it clear that there are non-violent ways of doing terrible things.

Whilst all acts of violence intend to harm; not all harm-intending acts are violent. A non-violent harm-intending act is wrong not because it is violent, but because it intends harm. In the sport context, I shall recover the distinction between violent acts and acts of violence; and I shall reconsider the logic of consequentialist and non-consequentialist approaches to harm.

Some researchers reach for the ‘violence’ label because they want readers to take their issues seriously, and on this basis others allege ‘harm’. I argue that this commits violence to language, which prejudices public reception of their findings. Empirical researchers would not dream of falsifying their empirical results, or fudging their statistics, would they? They should take equal care over the conceptualisation of their object of study.

Keywords: violence; harm; sextortion; operationalisation of concepts

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Bragagnolo and Lezama 2024 Sextortion

Krug et al 2002. WHO world report on violence and health

Parry Aggression and Violence in sport

Arms Race at the Plate? Baseball's Torpedo Bat Dilemma

Modern technological advancements in equipment have allowed elite competitors in a variety of sports customize and tailor equipment to specifically meet their needs. These advancements ultimately are aimed at increasing performance and gaining competitive advantage over competitors without access (e.g., Sailors, 2009). As a prominent contemporary example, the recent emergence and increased use of “torpedo bats” in Major League Baseball (MLB) has ignited renewed interest and discourse over the implementation of technology in baseball. Torpedo bats, or bats that feature a tapered, streamline shape, are engineered to provide players with improved bat speeds, improved contact through increased control, a larger and more forgiving sweet spot, and increased personalization to best meet individual batters’ swings and needs. The original intent behind the design was for use as a batting practice or swing training aid. Following requests from players, bat manufacturers such as Maruicci and Victus developed torpedo bats that meet the stated guidelines and standards for in-game use in the MLB. This presentation aims to examine the ethical implications of torpedo bat use in MLB.

Drawing on Simon’s (2000) view of internal values in sport and Loland’s (2009) discussion of performance-enhancing technology, specifically his understanding and application of the Narrow Theory and Wide Theory, the presentation sets out to consider whether the use of torpedo bats distorts or enriches baseball. Specific attention is given to performance enhancement and the challenge presented to players with and without use. In addition to the challenge, considerations of gamesmanship must also be explored as the bats meet the regulatory parameters established within the current written rules of MLB but perhaps violate the ethos of the game by seeking a distinct, unearned competitive advantage through psychological tactics.

Although the aim of the presentation is limited in scope by focusing on the current state of use and ethical implications of torpedo bats in baseball, there are broader implications for other sports and uses of technology that become apparent during the analysis.

Keywords: torpedo bats, technology, internalism

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Sport as a Cultural Weapon: A Leftist Critique of Power, Ideology, and Consent

Sport is frequently portrayed as a universal language, a neutral arena for excellence, national pride, and community cohesion. Increasingly, it is also framed as a catalyst for social change and human rights protection (Turk, 2023). Yet this optimistic narrative often conceals a more troubling reality: sport as a cultural ‘weapon’—a soft power tool used to legitimise dominant ideologies, sanitize political regimes, and obscure systemic inequalities.

This paper develops a leftist critique of sport as a medium through which power is normalized and dissent suppressed. Far from being apolitical, sport is deeply implicated in capitalist, nationalist, and imperialist logics. The International Olympic Committee’s recent embrace of human rights, while simultaneously enforcing Rule 50 (which restricts athlete expression), illustrates the contradiction between sport’s ideals and its operational reality.

Modern sport is deeply enmeshed with state and corporate interests. Mega-events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup serve as spectacles of legitimacy, used to market cities, stabilize regimes, and project national identity. These spectacles are underpinned by significant public expenditure and often produce displacement, surveillance, labour exploitation, and environmental damage—costs disproportionately borne by marginalized communities (Maguire et al., 2019). Professional sport reflects capitalist dynamics: athletes are commodified labour, fans are consumers, and clubs are vehicles for global capital (Millington et al., 2023).

At the core of this critique is the concept of “sportswashing,” where regimes with questionable human rights records invest in elite sport to rebrand themselves on the world stage. Through club ownership, event hosting, and corporate sponsorship, sport becomes a curated domain of soft power, deflecting criticism and shaping public discourse in favour of political and economic elites (Delaney, 2024).

Culturally, sport reinforces dominant myths of meritocracy and nationalism. By framing athletic success as the result of individual discipline and talent, sport masks structural inequalities and redirects collective emotion into symbolic victories that rarely challenge the status quo. Media representations intensify this, emphasizing triumph while omitting exploitation and exclusion (Maguire et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, sport remains a site of contradiction. Its cultural and emotional resonance enables moments of resistance—through athlete protests, community leagues, and grassroots movements—though these are often fleeting or absorbed back into dominant structures. A leftist analysis does not dismiss sport entirely but calls for a critical examination of its ideological and material roles.

This paper seeks to demystify sport’s cultural status, revealing it as more than entertainment or recreation. Sport is a strategic field in the reproduction of power and consent under capitalism and understanding this is vital to any broader critique of contemporary social relations.

Keywords: soft power; sports washing; culture

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Taliah Powers, The Pennsylvania State University

Lebenspiel Todt-Therapie: A Pop-Phil Essay

A central teaching of Bernard Suits' *Return of the Grasshopper: Games, Leisure and the Good Life in the Third Millennium* (2023) is that, in life, 'it is possible to turn the tables on death by transforming it from a liability into an asset' (65). The protagonist of Suits' mega-parable, the Grasshopper, highlights this conclusion at the pinnacle of the text, following a prolonged dialogue about human mortality and the fear of dying. Per the Grasshopper, death is not a human deficiency; it provides people with an occasion for action. Enthused by the prophecies of his beloved teacher, Cricket, one of the Grasshopper's disciples, suggests they might derive a philosophical psychotherapy rooted in these ideas called Life-Game Death Therapy. While the Grasshopper was uninterested in pursuing Cricket's intellectual inquiry, this essay aims to undertake that very endeavour.

Much like the Grasshopper who believes death ought to be regarded as an occasion for action, American psychiatrist Irvin D. Yalom, in his book *Existential Psychotherapy*, emphasises the life-affirming potentiality of human mortality by proclaiming that the idea of death might be one's only salvation. Indeed, his existential psychotherapy is designed around the notion that confrontations with death serve a therapeutic function insofar as they can radically shift one's perspective on life. Accordingly, I draw significantly from the theoretical and practical elements of Yalom's existential psychotherapy to develop Grasshopperian Life-Game Death Therapy.

Keywords: Good life; Bernard Suits; Existential psychotherapy; Death; Game playing

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Considerations on fenced worries and proper play

In *Homo Ludens* Johan Huizinga, introduces, the magic circle, the boundary between play and the practical aspects of life. Thi Nguyen, in *Games: Agency as Art*, argues that when we play a game, our agency is fluid; we adopt temporary agencies, which are momentary shifts of our agency, or ephemeral agencies that are taken on and taken off rapidly in the context of game playing. When we adopt the game and its lusory goals, our mindsets or parts of our mindsets, i.e., worries, concerns, etc., become that of the game. In this paper, I work to clarify how Nguyen's conception of fluid agency during game playing is similar to, and different from, what happens when one steps into Huizinga's magic circle—and how this correlates to “proper play.”

Stepping into Johan Huizinga's magic circle, the game not only restricts our physicality but our mentality as well. We adopt a set of rules in a special or hallowed space and take on the role of players, but this is not always what play looks like. When a player plays a game, often their perceptions are not condensed to those of the game, and they have little veneration for the magic circle. Proper play, as I will be calling it, is when a game player is able to adopt those game-given worries with shrunken perceptions, the players' fears or anxieties shrink as well; their worries will become those of the game as they attempt to pursue the lusory goal of said game. I will argue that “Proper play” occurs when the player is so raptured by the game that their subjectivity as an actor transforms to being an actor in the game—this is the ideal type of play. In other words, when playing a game right, your worries become fenced in by the boundary of the game.

Keywords: magic circle; anxieties; fluid agency; lusory goal; proper play

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Towards a phenomenology of movement praxis

What can analyses of sports, dance, and martial arts practices teach us about our moving body? As I have discussed and shown in my phenomenological grounded research over the last couple of decades, the answer is quite a lot: Dancers and athletes present factual variations of what a moving body can be like for us and highlight aspects and possibilities not easily visible to phenomenological analyses of everyday movement experiences (Ravn 2023). Besides enriching accounts and understandings of actual practices these analyses have also broadened phenomenological accounts of, among others, the concepts of bodily self-awareness, interaction, and skills. Furthermore, methodologically these analyses have indicated – and by example reminded – how the movements of the here-and-now and the athlete's or dancer's feeling and experiencing of these movements are also 'moved' by culture and local historical circumstances along with socializing interactions/processes. In other words, the observable movements and related lived experiences are pre-structured and shaped by shared habits, customs and narratives as well as part of historical and political discourses. Based on methodological discussions of empirical phenomenology, I, in this presentation, focus on discussing and developing a concept of movement praxis. I argue that the concept of 'praxis' is a more extensive term than 'practice' and necessary when we aim at accounting for the phenomenon of bodily movement. Drawing on Bourdieu's work on habitus (1977), and feminist phenomenological scholars (Guenther 2021, Al-Saji 2010) the concept of praxis provide constructive ways to connect phenomenological descriptions to the broader social accounts of subjectivity and movement.

Keywords: empirical phenomenology; praxis; feminist phenomenology; movement

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Surfing is a dialogical sport

A key ontological distinction within sports remains underexplored: sports such as surfing and rock climbing involve a fundamentally different relationship between the practitioner and their environment than sports like football or tennis, where opponents are other players. Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* helps illuminate that both types of sport emerge from play. However, while nature-dependent sports arise from possibilities inherent in the natural world, rule-based sports crystallize from spontaneous play into structured systems. Though Breivik's fourfold classification of sports comes close to capturing this distinction, it fails to fully conceptualize the

significance of what he calls 'I-nature' sports. Nature-dependent sports carry a unique metaphysical dimension absent from human-made games. This becomes clearer when examined through Martin Buber's ontological framework of I-It and I-Thou relations. In controlled sports like football, the game's structure can be altered at will. In contrast, nature-dependent sports, such as surfing, involve an encounter with a pre-existing phenomenon—the wave, the mountain—where the practitioner must engage in a form of dialogue rather than impose control. The wave exists for-itself before it exists for-us. This distinction allows us to categorize sports not just by their competitive or physical nature, but by their existential mode: as either controlled sports or dialogical sports. Recognizing this ontological divide deepens our understanding of both the sports domain and our broader relationship with nature. It highlights an implicit dependency on natural phenomena, reshaping how we conceive of play, competition, and human engagement with the world.

Keywords: ontology, I-Thou, Play, surfing, Nature sports

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Tragic Philosophy of Sport

This presentation proposes an epistemological and hermeneutic approach to the Philosophy of Sport based on the tragic philosophical attitude, shifting from comparative analyses between sport and tragedy to a reflection that integrates the tragic as a mode of thought. Inspired by the tradition of Nietzsche, Szondi, and Camus, the text explores sport as a privileged space for experiencing the absurd and contradiction, articulating three fundamental axes: (1) the essential contradiction in sport between order and chaos, structure and unpredictability; (2) the mediation between the particular and the universal, in which the athlete transcends individuality and becomes a symbolic archetype; and (3) an axiology of forms that revalues hope and redemption in sport not as promises of overcoming, but as a tragic affirmation of existence. By proposing this tragic philosophy of sport,

the article contributes to a growing hermeneutic trend within the Philosophy of Sport that seeks to interpret the sporting phenomenon beyond its formal and functional aspects, exploring its existential, symbolic, and drive-related meanings. Thus, sport is understood not merely as a practice or spectacle but as an epistemic and ontological field in which the human condition manifests itself in the irreconcilable tension between desire and fate, order and ruin, hope and absurdity.

Keywords: Tragedy; Sport; Hermeneutics

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Being in Bernard Suits' Game Playing Utopia

In the final chapter of his classic work *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*, Bernard Suits outlines and defends a life devoted to playing games as the "ideal of existence." He recognizes that this is a provocative utopian conception that requires careful defense which he takes up briefly and elaborates extensively in later published, including posthumous, works.

I argue that Suits' answers to skepticism about a game playing utopia are only partially successful. He plausibly argues that non-utopian jobs, like building houses, medical practice, and lawyering, will be anachronisms in utopia and could only exist if reconceived as games. His answers, however, overlook more difficult counterexamples and some deeper objections critics might raise about a game playing utopia. These objections focus on the nature and pursuit of 'being' as a human end and constituent of well-being which in turn requires a more generous, often dignifying, attitude toward work or instrumentality in utopia and elsewhere.

Suits imagines that his critics will think that the complete absence of "doing something useful" in a game playing utopia makes it unfit as the ideal of human existence. As such, his examples and

discussion attribute to skeptics a limited conception of meaningfulness grounded in individuals' actions or 'doings' that are valued intrinsically for the positive contributions they make to the imperfect, non-utopian societies around them. He gives no careful consideration to the internal goods that can also motivate these activities – the virtues they cultivate and the role they play in shaping individuals' conception of their being as either a complete or a main source of personal meaning and well-being.

If Suits had examined the role of various internal goods as constitutive of being a certain type of person, he might have had further important things to say in defense of the meaningfulness of game playing. But he would arguably also need to recognize that certain motives for pursuit of internal goods, which we might describe as “aspirations for being,” would have presented meaningful, non-anachronistic options for utopian activities that do not involve game playing. Such aspirations require a reconceptualization of Suits' over-simple account and critique of work and instrumentality generally.

In short, game playing is not the ideal of human existence, though it might be for some. Certain what might be termed “aesthetic, artisanal, and intellectual pursuits” (and perhaps others besides) can be rich sources of being and meaning and are neither games nor anachronisms in Suits' utopia and elsewhere.

Keywords: Being; Games; Game Playing; Utopia; Work

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Essential Actions and Dangerous Sports

In his paper defending the sport of rugby, Jon Pike argued that “Its participants do not have a right to absolute safety on the field of play, because such a right is incompatible with the existence of the game” (Pike, 2021: 161). Pike's argument is that the dangerous action of tackling is also an essential action. This implies that if we believe rugby to be a morally legitimate sport, the action of tackling is also morally legitimate. Nevertheless, there have been calls for rugby to be banned or modified to such an extent that the risks associated with tackling are removed.

In a similar vein, the risks associated with heading a football have led to calls for heading to be banned. This has led to the prohibition of heading for under 9s, a rule which will be extended to under 10s and under 11s in future years and perhaps to older age groups in the years following so

that heading the ball is no longer allowed in football at all. Whilst it may seem obvious that tackling is an essential action in rugby, it is less clear as to whether heading is an essential action in football.

This begs the question as to what constitutes an essential action in any given sport and how far can mitigation of harm by changing that sport be taken before it undermines the sport itself. This paper will explore the nature of essential actions in sport and their relationship to acceptable risk and danger.

Keywords: risk; dangerous sport; essential actions; harm; nature of sport;

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Performance Enhancing Technology and Necessary Inefficiencies

In the roughly one-year period from early 2008 to mid-2009, more than 130 swimming world records were broken by swimmers wearing high-tech suits. These numbers created a storm of controversy, with coaches and officials comparing the use of the suits to the use of performance-enhancing drugs. Swimming's governing body, FINA, responded in July 2009 by banning all long-length suits, while allowing all the world records set in the suits to stand. At the time, many argued that world records set in the high-tech suits should be revoked or marked with an asterisk to distinguish them from records set without the technology. Similar arguments have started to become common in track and field and road running events, with people suggesting that technological innovations have transformed the sport to such a degree that records should be separated by pre- and post-tech eras. Are super shoes, Wavelight pacing technology, Mondo tracks, video screens, Omius cooling headbands, and the newly coined 'weather doping,' elements of the natural evolution of sporting accomplishment or do they, separately or together, constitute a paradigm shift such that intertemporal comparisons cannot reasonably be made? Pulling from literature regarding performance enhancement, I attempt to discover principles and concepts that can be transferred to the questions surrounding technological innovation. These questions have been largely overlooked because they concern situations where fairness is not at risk.

Keywords: technology; performance enhancement; track and field

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The aesthetic experience in sports spaces

This paper continues the investigation presented in *Athletes in the Landscape*, where we analysed how regular practitioners of physical activity incorporate aesthetic elements of the environment into their trajectories, even if unintentionally. Based on observations with students from the course *Aesthetics of Sport* (FADEUP, 2024), we identified natural and symbolic environments — landscapes, artworks, familiar routes — that became meaningful for athletes and observers alike, fostering a sense of belonging and embeddedness in the landscape. Such experiences have also been recognised in other sporting contexts we have studied, including Indigenous communities and football stadiums. Within the field of Philosophy of Sport, the act of "being part of" is a gesture of existential, social, and communal value.

The aim of this work, in continuity with the previous one, is to reflect on lived sporting spaces by considering their material, affective, poetic, and symbolic dimensions — that is, from the perspective of sport aesthetics. We seek to explore how such spaces are sensibly appropriated by the bodies that inhabit them.

Poets, writers, essayists, philosophers, athletes, and sport fans provide empirical and expressive material for this inquiry into aesthetic experience in space, analysed through a phenomenological and imaginal lens. We draw inspiration from Gaston Bachelard, who, in *The Poetics of Space*, writes that "poetic space does not confine us to an affective state; on the contrary, it expands us." For instance, the Brazilian chronicler Nelson Rodrigues — an early voice of *futebol-arte* — offers vivid descriptions of sporting spaces as saturated with sound and wonder, staging the soul and the dramatic complexity of human life.

Acknowledging that aesthetic experiences are deeply lived by both athletes and spectators, we engage with authors in the field of Sport Aesthetics to enrich this discussion. Understanding the aesthetic qualities present in physical activities and their spaces — and how these qualities affect us — allows for a deeper insight into our passionate relationship with sport. As Maria Luisa de Arroyabe (2018, p. 21) writes, aesthetic "takes us out of our individuality and presents us with a

horizon that includes others." Such experience may arise "like flashes that respond to our desires for meaning. When they occur, the delight is immense — we could say they surpass us" (Arroyabe, 2018, p. 19). In the athlete's encounter with space, aesthetic experience seems to intensify, giving rise to appreciation and poetic resonance. The sporting space to which we open ourselves is recreated within us — it comes alive and welcomes our intimacy and subjectivity.

Keywords: Sport Aesthetics; Poetics of Space; Phenomenology; Imagination

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On Self-Tracking and Hostile Scaffolding: When our Devices Work Against Ourselves

With self-tracking becoming one of the leading fitness trends over the last few years, the effects these devices have on the user warrant further investigation, especially because they appear to create certain challenges. Based on theories of the extended mind (Clark & Chalmers, 1998) and extended embodied self (Fuchs, 2018), I have argued before for tracking devices as becoming part of a coupled system between the user and the tracking device, with this coupled system then carrying out the cognitive task of gaining new self-knowledge (Schmidli, 2024). Drawing also on empirical research that has shown that certain discrepancies are common when comparing the information given by the tracking devices and the bodily perception of the user (Nelson, 2020), this paper extends on my argument that this conflicting information can lead to a dissonance in self-knowledge (Schmidli, 2025). To do so, this paper explores the effects this continued extension can have on the self of the user by drawing on theories of affective technologies and hostile scaffolding. According to those theories, extended cognition is not always beneficial to the self (Spurrett, 2024). In line with those arguments, this paper therefore suggests that self-tracking devices can be considered 'affective technologies' and can thus be part of cognitive scaffolding. As such, I argue, they can become hostile by oppressing, manipulating, or standing in conflict with the user's perception of their moving, embodied self, thereby affecting or changing self-knowledge. This argument serves as a continuation of the theory of self-extension through tracking devices and aims to further elaborate on the relation between humans and digital technology, primarily in a fitness context. Especially due to the concerns about the potential hostile nature of tracking devices, this theory serves as a stepping stone for empirical research to be conducted, while also giving a clearer understanding of the embodied self in the digital age.

Keywords: tracking devices; digitalisation; extension; hostile scaffolding

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A critical analysis of the enhanced games

The Enhanced Games are meant to be the first sport event to support performance-enhancing drugs and not follow the rules of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) with no doping controls and performance-enhancing drugs are not to be mandatory for participants. It is intended to be annual and to include: track and field, swimming, weightlifting, gymnastics, and combat sports. Its purpose is to embrace science and overcome vulnerabilities with proud and vulnerable athletes vs. hate from powerful organizations. In the discourse surrounding the Enhanced Games, a narrative has emerged that depicts proud athletes embracing scientific advances in the face of resistance and disdain from traditional sport organizations. Proponents argue that, by leading this approach, in some way they are safeguarding athlete welfare. Enhanced Games aims to be the safest international sporting event in history. We embrace the inclusion of science in sports, and we fundamentally believe that the choice to use enhancements is a personal one.

As we delve into the ethos and goals set forth by the proponents of the Enhanced Games, it's important to maintain a critical lens, objectively examining each aspect of their agenda. While some may see potential benefits in their approach, it's important to consider potential drawbacks and ethical implications. The Enhanced Games organizers have outlined ambitious objectives for the event, aiming to establish it as the safest international sporting competition to date. They emphasize the importance of more integration of sciences into sports and advocates for the autonomy of athletes in deciding whether engage in enhancements substances and methods. Some methods this will be accomplished includes encouraging enhancements by supporting

bodily autonomy and embracing scientific progress in sports is presented as a means to empower athletes. However, questions arise regarding the potential impact on fair competition and the broader ethical implications of allowing enhancements. Enhanced Games will have a focus on core sports via tailoring competitions to appeal to modern audiences suggests a proactive approach to engagement. Another method is paying athletes fairly - recognizing and rewarding athletic excellence is a positive step towards valuing athletes' contributions. However, the enhanced games seem to prioritize world records, potentially leading to compensation and rewards being exclusively granted to the most successful athletes. Not to mention the risk of focusing exclusively on extrinsic motivations at the expense of intrinsic motivations and sport values. Enhanced Games will embrace capitalism by relying on private sector funding rather than taxpayer support introduces financial independence but may raise concerns about the influence of commercial interests on the event's integrity and accessibility, which may exacerbate the commercialization of sport and commodification of athletes. Further, reusing of existing infrastructures as an alternative to the current system for hosting international sporting events and breaking world records as a source of inspiration to strive for excellence.

Keywords: Enhanced Games; Doping athletes

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The role of smartwatch tracking technology in hiking experiences

This study examines whether smartwatch tracking technology during hiking can influence the nature experience. This is a phenomenon that is broadly explored in running studies where both the use and non-use of wearable tracking bring about different experiences of the natural environment (Jackman, 2023). Nautiyal (2023) shows that in hiking, there are differences between the use and conscious non-use of tracking technology, this suggesting a need to investigate whether and under which conditions the mediation of smartwatch tracking can influence the hiking experience.

This study adopts a postphenomenological approach, drawing on the tradition of phenomenology of perception in the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962). This means that the embodied experience of hiking is conducive to a particular kind of nature experience, as it aligns with walking activities that do not require executive focus (Loland, 2021). A postphenomenological approach is used to examine how this experience could be mediated by smartwatch tracking technology. First, it will be shown that technological objects are not neutral but are designed with a certain intentionality or purposiveness (Verbeek, 2005). It will then be demonstrated that smartwatch is designed to support activity-oriented engagement through datafication. The conditions under which this occurs can be analysed using the frameworks of Ihde (1990) and Verbeek (2008), which describe the different possible relationships with technological objects. Initially, this includes the embodiment relation and the hermeneutic relation, which in Verbeek's (2008) work is further developed into the augmented relation of wearable technology. This also opens the possibility to examine the influence of the alterity relation and the background relation, as ways in which the smartwatch is present, either as a coach or as a background element. These different types of relations result in various forms of influence, ranging from direct mediation via the augmented relation to the wearable's capacity to collect data in the background of the activity.

The study concludes that smartwatch tracking technology can influence the hiking experience through an activity-oriented design under various conditions. These conditions are linked to the framework of Verbeek and Ihde, where the influence is not only evident in the foreground of the wearables intended use but also in the background.

Keywords: post-phenomenology, hiking, wearable technology

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Lusory Aesthetics: Utopian Sport as Participatory Art

This paper develops Suits' (2023) thesis that a post-futurist Utopian sport sustains artistic value not by incorporating art from without, but by internalizing aesthetic significance through the structure of gameplay itself. We argue that stake-free Utopian sports function as interactive artworks constituted by performances of aesthetic excellence, aligning with Simon's (2000) mutualist view of competition that fosters moral and social goods. These sports are not mere analogues of art, but literal artworks: embodied acts of virtue shaped by their internal logic (Robson & Meskin, 2016) and exhibited through transpersonal aesthetic properties (e.g., grace, power, balance) that are immanent to the activity (Snow, 2023).

Drawing on Suits' concepts of scarcity machines and lusory geography, we argue that the meaning of Utopian sport is not reducible to internal rules but is co-constituted by its conversion of non-instrumental constraints into expressive challenges, which define the landscape of possible excellence. Such an aesthetic framework is exemplified in Gaul's (2025) defense of elite running as performance art, where he interprets Steve Prefontaine's racing style as a work of art. Like Prefontaine, whose gratuitously self-imposed pacing transforms his racing into a public aesthetic act, Utopian athletes create artworks through the voluntary acceptance of unnecessary obstacles. Against Wildman and Archer (2019), who claim Utopia must import art through art-inclusive games, we show that Utopian sport already generates art intrinsically. Furthermore, we incorporate López Frías (2025) critique of capitalism's "achievement ethos," arguing that Utopian sport's intrinsic aesthetic value, generated through gratuitous striving, resists victory-centric mentalities.

While the absence of stakes may limit the cultural resonance of these performances, their aesthetic merit remains a constitutive good, rendered visible through the athlete's self-involving narrative of precision and play. Accordingly, we reconceptualize Utopian sport as a participatory art, advancing an account of lusory aesthetics (Nguyen, 2020) that unifies gameplay, moral striving, and aesthetic value beyond a culture governed by necessity.

Keywords: Sport; aesthetics; excellence; utopia; gameplay

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Why Should We Consider The Enhanced Games Seriously: A Pragmatic and Opportunistic Approach

The philosophical idea behind the Enhanced Games (TEG) is not new: its proponents are suggesting implementing 'doping under medical supervision', a claim which has been made in philosophy of sport circles for several years by different scholars (Savulescu 2015; Moore & Morrison 2022 and others). International sports governing bodies and World Anti Doping Agency have dismissed them on grounds that 'taking part in the Games would be moronic'. (The Guardian 2024) WADA has dismissed them as 'dangerous and irresponsible concept' (WADA 2024) In the academic philosophy of sport circle, dominant critiques of the model of doping envisioned by TEG focus on harm and risk (Richardson, 2024; Henning, 2024; Cox & Piatkowski, 2024; Turnock, 2024). In this paper argue that The Enhanced Games (TEG) merit serious academic attention beyond quick dismissals by sports governing bodies and dominant academic critiques for the following four reasons: (a) TEG have assembled a diverse and prominent group of experts and scientists from leading global institutions; (b) they propose a financially sustainable model for organizing major sporting events—unprecedented within the current sporting landscape; and (c) their publicly available materials offer a content-rich, analytically focused critique of contemporary sport, diagnosing systemic issues while proposing innovative and potentially transformative solutions and d) they offer a rational choice for athletes at the end of their career, (Camporesi 2017) based on prize money and incentives to break world records.

The core of this paper will focus on the third and fourth point, with a critical examination of TEG's conceptual and structural proposals. I argue that the philosophy and (bio)ethics of sport should

engage more substantially with TEG, In particular, TEG introduce novel approaches to several key ethical and institutional challenges in global sport, including:

- A new form of ethical paternalism concerning enhancement use,
- A harm-reduction strategy toward doping,
- A structured model of medical supervision and athlete welfare,
- A redefined model of (medical) informed consent in sport,
- Advocacy for fair athlete compensation,
- A financially autonomous model aimed at reducing dependence on public funding and at making athletes' career sustainable

We will defend a pragmatic and reform-oriented perspective, suggesting that the global sport system should: (a) take TEG's critiques seriously; (b) study their institutional proposals with openness; and (c) explore the implementation of forward-looking reforms in the governance, medical oversight, ethical regulation, and economic structure of sport.

Keywords: Enhanced Games; Sport Ethics; Doping and Harm Reduction; Informed Consent in Sport; Fair Compensation; Sport Governance Reform

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Sporting excellence, moral tension and the commitment to winning

Elite athletes are expected to take sport seriously, particularly through their commitment to winning. Yet, we also demand that they be willing to abandon this pursuit when faced with moral crises. This tension raises an important philosophical question: how should we make sense of the expectations we place on athletes regarding their commitment to sporting goals, particularly winning?

This paper examines how to understand the athlete's care for winning in light of deep moral commitments. Drawing on existing accounts such as Borge's (2019) fictional view where athletes merely pretend that the outcome of a sporting contest matters, and Nguyen's (2020) account of winning as a disposable end, I argue that these approaches fail to capture the enduring and genuine significance that sporting achievement holds in the lives of elite athletes. While their views rightly recognise that winning may sometimes be overridden, they fall short of explaining why and how athletes remain deeply committed to sport itself even in morally challenging moments.

Instead, I propose a revised account of sporting excellence—one that incorporates an inherent moral dimension. On this view, the ideal athlete's commitment to sport does not rest solely on winning, but on achieving excellence, which includes moral discernment. Consequently, an athlete who, for example, abandons a race to save a child (Suits 2007) does not forsake their commitment to sport, but rather embodies it. This moral engagement is not external to sport, but internal to what excellence in sport truly demands.

By locating the tension within the concept of sporting excellence itself rather than between sport and morality, we avoid trivialising sport and can make sense of why athletes should care about their achievements in a lasting and meaningful way. This approach allows us to honour both the seriousness of competitive sport and the moral realities in which it is situated, offering a richer framework for understanding moral decision-making in sporting practices.

Keywords: Sporting excellence; moral tension; winning; morality; achievement

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Dangerous sport and organizational responsibility: The case of professional football

In this presentation, we critique the prevailing tendency among scholars and commentators to frame ethical issues surrounding the inherent risks and resulting harms of professional football primarily through the lens of individual responsibility (for an overview of philosophical arguments centered on autonomy, see López Frías, 2024). Our analysis begins with illustrative cases from professional football players such as Tua Tagovailoa and Jordan Reed, which underscore the sport's inherent risks and the prevalent reliance on players' individual decisions to accept these dangers. These examples introduce the central conceptual issue we explore in the presentation: the tension between individual autonomy and the ethical obligations of sport governing bodies. In the first part of the presentation, we also introduce a key premise of our examination: despite the significant risks of catastrophic injuries, professional football's cultural importance and economic influence in the United States make its abolition highly improbable. This perspective sets our position apart from those advocating for the elimination of the sport and directs attention to systemic reforms—while recognizing that more radical changes may only be feasible in the distant future, if at all. By surveying the main ethical examinations of professional football, we expose the limitations of prevailing approaches, particularly their inadequacy in addressing long-term risks such as Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy. A notable shortcoming in many of these approaches is their reliance on a neoliberal emphasis on individual autonomy, framing ethical debates predominantly in terms of personal responsibility, players' autonomy, and informed consent. We argue that while this perspective is significant, it is fundamentally skewed, as it obscures the systemic dimensions of risk and the obligations of sport governing bodies. In response, we advocate shifting the focus from individual responsibility to the structural obligations of sport governing bodies, particularly their duty of care. Building on efforts by sport philosophers to redirect discussions of the ethics of concussions in football in this direction (Holm, 2024) and existing analyses of the duty of care in sport (Grey-Thompson, 2017; Parry, 2021), we present a comprehensive examination of these obligations. Our approach integrates insights from the philosophy of needs and vulnerability alongside legal perspectives on fiduciary duties (Davies, 2019). This framework underscores the importance of systemic reforms, including enhanced safety protocols, sustained medical research, improved oversight, and long-term health support for players. Ultimately, we argue that this alternative approach can transform how professional football's risks are addressed within sport philosophy and beyond.

Keywords: dangerous sport; football; responsibility; autonomy; duty of care

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The Ludic Drive: Between Eros and Thanatos

Drive theory has been a significant part of psychoanalysis. What exactly is a drive? How does it relate to instincts? And can one speak of a ludic drive, a drive for playfulness? First, it is necessary to understand what an instinct and a drive are in Freud and post-Freudian psychoanalysis. Freud's use of the term 'Trieb' in German, often translated as instinct or drive, has created much confusion; however, this confusion is not entirely fruitless. Instincts are the somatic basis of drives; instinct and drive are as similar or different as animals and humans are. Freud explains what he means by 'instinct' in its four aspects: impetus, aim, object, and origin. These four aspects will be explored here to understand both what instincts and drives are. Following the understanding and distinction of instinct and drive, it may be a useful digression to look into the play life of animals. How is animal playfulness different than human playfulness (in the same context a distinction between child and adult (or almost adult) play can also be made? Second, it is also necessary to explore literature on play and playfulness, and here Huizinga's book, *Homo Ludens*, and the many debates and readings it has created in sport philosophy will be beneficial. This will help understand to what extent play is a rudimentary aspect of human life and that every known human society has some form of play and play has a crucial role in children's development. Finally, can we establish play as a drive in the human psyche, which shall be called "the Ludic drive"? How does this drive manifest itself in human life? What are some forms of the sublimation of this drive? While Freud establishes two classification of instincts and drives under Eros and Thanatos, the Ludic drive may be yet another area of the human psyche, which neither of these two drives can fully encompass or explain. And yet it overlaps with both primary drives, as this paper intends to show.

Keywords: psychoanalysis; play; ludic; instinct; drive

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Jasper van Buuren

Flow as Mediated Immediacy: Helmuth Plessner and the Philosophy of Nature Sports

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi defines flow as a state of focus and joy we achieve when we perform an activity at peak level (Csikszentmihalyi 2008). The philosophy of nature sports has adopted the concept of flow in various ways. According to Loland, in flow we experience being one with the body, which in his view means that we are rather than have the body (Loland 2007). Howe argues that the sense of immediacy we experience in flow should not be taken to imply that reflection does not play a role in bringing about a state of flow (Howe 2017). What Howe's point means in terms of being and having the body remains an open question. Drawing on Helmuth Plessner's philosophy of the body, I propose a deeper understanding of flow using both pairs of concepts alluded to: being and having the body and immediacy and mediation. In Plessner's view, our bodily being is characterized by a double aspect: we are the body and we have the body. In addition, we have a distance to our being and having the body, and we also embody this distance. This position at a remove from ourselves Plessner calls our "eccentric position" or "eccentricity" (Plessner 1928/2019). Eccentricity enables, among other things, reflection on the way we have and are our body. Applied to outdoor sport activities, being the body is our being one with our body as experienced when our activities are unproblematic and uninhibited. Having the body means that we use our body as an instrument, which during the practice of a nature sport (or any sport) always happens at least in the background. Our instrumental use of the body comes to the fore when we learn new skills or improve existing skills. This is also where reflection from our eccentric position comes in: reflection is a form of mediation that intervenes in the way we have our body. But the purpose of such mediation is restoring our immediate relationship to the world, our being the body. As soon as we master or have improved the skill in question, using our body in the way we've learned becomes a self-evident matter, which allows us to again simply be the body. However, having the body then still supports our being the body in the background (this is what Loland overlooks). In other words, the mediation that helps us return to an improved form of immediacy does not disappear: reflection-based corrections are integrated in and tacitly support our spontaneous activity (Howe's point mentioned above). Mediation and immediacy thus go together, constituting a form of what Plessner calls "mediated immediacy." This kind of skillful being-one-with-the-body can result in the state of flow Csikszentmihalyi, Loland, and Howe refer to, namely when the fluent application of skill is accompanied by joy. This is relevant to sports in general but particularly to nature sports, because flow not only enables us to perform at peak level, as Csikszentmihalyi argues; it also allows us to directly engage with, and appreciate, our natural surroundings.

Keywords: flow; nature sports; mediated immediacy; Plessner; being and having the body

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Never fast, high or strong enough: on resentment in competition sports

Elite sport is primarily associated with the Olympic ideal, in which the sports hero rises above his competitors like an unapproachable god. Spectacular performances make the athlete a true role model, both for sports fans and society at large. At the same time, failure, vulnerability, and emotion have become increasingly visible in recent decades. We think of the marathon runner sitting on the ground after giving up, the cyclist crashing his bike into the wall after a missed final sprint or the frustrated gymnast missing a his medal with one point.

In our presentation, we focus on this less appealing phenomenon within elite sport: the realization of always falling short. The more records are broken, the more the top athlete seems to be confronted with the randomness and timelessness of his performance. In fact, he is never fast, high or strong enough.

There are already many interpretations, both psychological and philosophical, about performance pressure and mental health in elite sport. In our presentation, however, we will shed new light on this issue by using the philosophical concept of "resentiment" as an analytical tool. Therefore, we will turn to Max Scheler's work *Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moral*, which offers a detailed

phenomenological and sociological analysis of this complex affect. Scheler, who was largely inspired by Nietzsche, analyses resentment as a persistent psychological state in which emotions such as anger, revenge, and envy are constantly ruminated because they cannot be discharged. Scheler emphasizes the importance of the French verb *res-sentir*: the constant re-experiencing of emotions that alienates one from reality and from others. In his work, Scheler identifies several types of what he calls 'man of resentment': tragic and frustrated individuals who poison themselves with negative thoughts about others and the world in general. While Scheler describes only a few (rather rare) types of resentment people- such as the mother-in-law, the priest, or the nostalgic- resentment seems to find its expression more than ever in the 21st century human being in general, and in the elite athlete in particular.

Our intention is first to apply Scheler's analysis of resentment to elite sport. This will allow us to critically question the continuing promises of technology and sports science, as well as the portrayal of the enhanced athlete as an unattainable god. Second, we will show how resentment in sport reflects a more general social phenomenon: the constant frustration of not being able to live up to the norms that society constantly sets for us.

Keywords: resentment; elite sports; performance; impotence

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Sweet tension, entropy, and the ontology of sport: AI's challenge to meaningful competition

Fraleigh's concept of "sweet tension of uncertainty of outcomes" is a central element to meaningful sport. Information theory provides a useful way for analyzing the ontological relationship between the concept and performance enhancing artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Information theory is utilized to formulate a framework that conceptualizes sporting contests as bounded information entropy systems where epistemologically restricted participants manipulate outcome entropy through intentional actions.

The temporal dimension of sweet tension is first established by examining metaphysics of time, arguing that meaningful sport epistemologically requires time to be treated as having an objective present and an open future, even if contemporary physics might suggest otherwise. Through this lens, an instance of sport can be understood as a system where uncertainty is deliberately maintained through constraints (rules, equipment standards and other relevant conditions) that

create an optimal level of entropy.

Within this framework, participants are positioned as agents intentionally manipulating outcome entropy. Agents aim to create conditions that reduce entropy in their favor while aiming to create unfavorable conditions for opponents. This balance between certainty and uncertainty gives rise to the sweet tension that makes sport meaningful. This is reflected against Shannon's information theory, demonstrating how entropy decreases from initial maximum (at the beginning of competition) to minimum (when a result is determined).

Against this background, AI's unique challenge to sport's ontological structure is examined. Unlike "passive" performance enhancers like anabolic steroids that merely facilitate physical capacities, AI displaces agency from the human participant. Drawing on Floridi and Vuorinen & Loland's concept of agency displacement, the sweet tension of sport is shown to be threatened in two critical ways: by enabling human-unattainable manipulation of entropy, and by diminishing the experiential, phenomenological aspect of sweetness of tension that requires human agency.

It is concluded that AI poses a challenge to sport's ontological structure by potentially disrupting the delicate balance between uncertainty and agency that partly constitutes meaningful competition. This analysis calls for regulatory frameworks that move past WADA-style substance-focused approaches to ones that protect the essential humanness of the sweet tension in an agential sense. The ontological perspective developed offers a way for evaluating AI applications in sport while preserving its fundamental meaning-giving structures.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; information theory; sweet tension; agency

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Spray Tans & Bikinis: Contextualizing 60 years of the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue (SISI)

In this paper, I build off previous work (2016) “Examining 50 years of ‘beautiful’ in Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue.” In this piece, I examined the 50th anniversary of Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue (SISI) and argued that this special issue is problematic for the empowerment and women and sport.

Some 10 years later, in 2024, SISI celebrated another milestone, 60 years of issues. I will argue that many of my 2016 claims about SISI remain valid.

Moreover, I will demonstrate that over the past decade, SISI has made attempts to be more inclusive (i.e. plus size models, athletes with disabilities, LGBTQ+ athletes and older models), however, I consider these attempts to be superficial and inauthentic.

Overall, I will analyze how SISI has thrived despite a decline in print media demand (e.g. Playboy magazine didn’t survive the global COVID-19 pandemic) and Sports Illustrated (SI)’s financial woes. SISI has succeeded while using the platform of sport to sell heterosexist and stereotypical women athletes’ tropes.

Keywords: Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue; women athletes; sexual objectification

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Why Fitness is a Virtue

It’s likely no secret that, in everyday discourse, the words “health” and “fitness” are often attached at the hip. I won’t go so far as to say that they are used interchangeably, but it’s rare to hear about the one without hearing about the other. Considering the fact that health and fitness seem to be so interrelated, it is often the case that fitness, like health, gets treated as nothing more than an extrinsic good (Hawkins, 2008, Hochstetler, 2014; Kretchmar, 2005). I believe, however, that there’s more to the story when it comes to fitness.

To reach the conclusion that fitness is simply another extrinsic good is to presuppose some understanding of what fitness is. Yet, historically speaking, the definition of fitness has been extremely unclear. Siedentop (1980) pointed out this issue over four decades ago. Similarly, the exercise physiologist Russell Pate (1988), when detailing all the ways in which the definition of

fitness had changed throughout the 20th Century, remarked that “the term physical fitness, though familiar, may be so vague, ambiguous, and nonspecific as to be almost meaningless” (p. 174). Pate’s words from over 30 years ago ring just as true now, for when one performs a Google search of the words “fitness definition” it yields the result, “the condition of being physically fit and healthy” – a meaningless definition indeed. A further issue is that “fitness” and “exercise” sometimes get conflated with one another in everyday speech (Caspersen et al., 1985) and this could easily lead to the belief that fitness somehow represents both a process and a product (i.e., “fitness” represents both how one gets fit and also the state of being fit).

What all this goes to show is that, at best, the layperson’s understanding of fitness is likely full of ambiguity, and, at worst, it is borderline incoherent. For those who actively study the phenomenon of fitness, they too are likely operating from definitions which lack any consensus. Given these observations, I can’t help but question whether or not sport philosophers are being fair or accurate when they simply merge health and fitness together and treat them both as extrinsic goods. While health and fitness may indeed be intimately linked to one another, I wish to argue that fitness is not only intrinsically valuable, but that it’s intrinsically valuable because it is a virtue. Fitness is one of the many excellences that makes the human being “especially well fitted to its ends” (Sachs, 2002, p. 212) – those ends, of course, being human flourishing. Eudaimonia, however, is not just an end product of possessing the virtues; to be virtuous is to flourish. Similarly, fitness doesn’t just lead to a life well-lived. To live fit is to live well.

Keywords: fitness; virtue; flourishing; telos; philosophy

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The Epistemic Value of Games

Despite their widespread use as educational tools, there has been relatively little philosophical investigation written about the epistemic value of games. Some work has been done on the epistemic value of fiction, and others (including Walton) have argued that games including sports are a sort of fiction. But little has been written on the unique epistemic value of games. The aim of this paper is to search out at least a partial account of what unique epistemic value games may hold that other mediums do not. I suggest that like fictions, games, even if they are not reliable guides to knowledge or useful justifications of belief, can introduce us to new hermeneutical resources which may also be employed outside of the game and allow us to better understand the world in which we live. To do this I will rely on Miranda Fricker's concept of hermeneutic resources as well as Catherine Elgin's concept of understanding. But I will also argue that games, unlike other fictions, can also provide a space and prompt us to practice the use of these hermeneutic resources, allowing us to develop and hone our epistemic skills and improve our competence in employing these hermeneutic resources. To do this I will focus on the "interactive" and "self-involving" nature of games, as Robson and Meskin describe them. The main examples used in this paper are video games, but I suggest that this epistemic value I describe is more widespread and can include both tabletop games and even sports.

Keywords: Epistemology, Games, Understanding, Fiction, videogames, sports, hermeneutic resources, hermeneutics

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Challenging 'paradigms narrative' in research methodology

In sport and exercise research, ideas from the philosophy of science hold a curious influence within research training, publication practices and frameworks of evaluating research quality. In disciplines that are more associated with the natural sciences – physiology, sports medicine, biomechanics – there appears to be relatively little explicit reference to philosophy of science at doctoral level or in published journal articles. In disciplines that are more associated with the social sciences to varying degrees – sports psychology, sociology of sport, sport management, sport pedagogy – the philosophy of science is reduced into what we refer to as the paradigms narrative. In this narrative, differences between research practices are explained by the existence of diverse ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions which give rise to distinctive so-called paradigms (Lincoln et al., 2011). Researchers are encouraged to recognise their own paradigmatic assumptions, align their practices and language to that paradigm and assess the quality or validity of their work with criteria aligned to that specific paradigm. As a part of peer review and scholarly interaction, researchers are expected to appreciate that others might be operating within different paradigms to themselves (see Sparkes and Smith, 2013; Landi, 2023). As a part of a larger project investigating whether the philosophy of science could be used more effectively across the sport and exercise sciences, this paper outlines some key arguments against the paradigms narrative and concludes with view that it ought to be rejected or significantly revised within research training.

First, we consider the incommensurability norm in the paradigms narrative and argue that it is not sustainable to proceed as if studies only make sense within the terms of reference of the paradigm in which they are operating. To explore this issue we consider the problem of knowledge accumulation from different paradigms through systematic reviews and the problem of developing practical, real-world applications from different paradigms. Second, we consider the personal choice norm whereby paradigms are treated as though they are indicative of researchers' foundational subjective identities. We argue against this norm in favour of a more collective vision for agreed best practices that shift focus away from personal choice. Finally, we address the claim that particular methods – most often the qualitative/quantitative binary – are treated as if they are necessarily derived from particular paradigmatic assumptions. Through using illustrative examples we argue that a diverse plethora of methods can be used coherently together with different

ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions without being contradictory. Our paper closes with some brief suggestions about a path forward.

Keywords: Paradigms; Research Methods; Philosophy of Science.

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Against Coach's Challenges to Referee Decisions in Soccer

Dissatisfied with the implementation of the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) in soccer, some critics have called for coaches to be granted the power to challenge referee decisions, forcing the referee on the field to review video replays and reevaluate her initial decision. Some critics call for coach's challenges to supplement VAR, forcing the referee to look at video replay themselves as opposed to trusting the VAR. In addition, the International Football Association Board (IFAB) trialed a system called Football Video Support (FVS) in 2024 as an alternative to VAR whereby coaches get two challenges per game, retaining their challenge if the referee overturns her initial decision. IFAB has decided to continue trialing this system in 2025. One advantage of FVS is that it requires only four cameras versus the twenty cameras the Premier League uses to implement VAR.

This paper is an attempt to express my deep-seated worries about allowing coach's challenges to referee decisions in soccer. These worries center around concerns about deputizing coaches to do the work of referees and reinforcing the incorrect narrative that there is one "correct" decision in soccer as opposed to multiple justifiable decisions.

I argue first that while referee mistakes are a part of the game of soccer, steps ought to be taken to minimize the probability of a referee making a mistake in a high-impact situation. One way to do this is to write the Laws of the Game in ways that make them enforceable in real time. VAR is another way to do this when it is implemented well, allowing the refereeing team to review incidents when they have questions about what happened in real time.

Second, I argue that judgment and discretion are very important parts of implementing the Laws of the Game in soccer, and that as a result, there are often multiple justifiable interpretations of whether a foul occurred and what ought to be done as a result of that judgment. Therefore, it is misleading to reinforce a narrative that there is a "truth" as to whether a penalty kick decision was

“correct”. Moreover, making justifiable decisions as to penalty kicks requires a high level of expertise that coaches do not possess.

The coach’s challenge system deputizes coaches to do the work of referees in deciding what plays ought to be reviewed. Given that the determination of penalty kicks is something about which reasonable experts can disagree, and that coaches are not experts in this matter, deputizing coaches cedes epistemic authority and sets up potential conflict when referees and coaches disagree about whether a penalty kick occurred. We avoid this by simply granting referees the ability to choose to review their own decisions.

Keywords: referees; VAR; soccer; epistemology of refereeing; technology

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Figural embodiment in sport: a phenomenological exploration of experience in sensation

Introduction: The study of sport experience aims to reveal the structure of athletes' experiences. Through the touch of sensation, it induces an intertwining of various skills, experiences, knowledge, and relationships, shaping the richness and characteristics of the sports experience. During the process of engaging in sports, numerous sensory images are formed. These images are not static frames but are perceived as overlapping and intertwining layers of various images. They are embodied in the formation of sensations. Understanding these images is therefore a crucial way to grasp the complexity and variety of sensations in movement. Method: This study draws inspiration from Lyotard's (Jean-Francois Lyotard, 1924–1998) book *Dialogue, Figures*, which argues that the description of textual and figural spaces reveals the relationship between sensory images and the generation of meaning. Additionally, this study adopts a phenomenological approach to identify the existence of sport sensory images through eidetic intuition, phenomenological description, and phenomenological reduction. Results: The study found that the images of sport sensation are diverse, encompassing concepts such as knowledge images, breakdown of movement images, perceptual images of feelings, virtual imaginary images, touching emotional images, and existential images of original desires. These seemingly fragmented images are intertwined through four functions of the subject: condensation, displacement, representation, and secondary revision, which together form a figural embodiment. Conclusion: The results demonstrate the embodiment of sensation during the process of sport. It is also evident that the appearance of sensory images in sports is always temporary, as they are reintegrated and

transformed through the actions and reflections of the subject. Therefore, the instability of sensation in the sports arena is the essence of its existence. Although sensation is not easy to control, the embodiment of various images remains connected to the subject's world of sensations. Consequently, what athletes need to do is not to maintain a fixed sense of well-being indefinitely but to adopt an attitude of continual reintegration in response to changing situations and challenges to self-perception in the world of sports. Athletes must regulate an appropriate path of response to adapt effectively.

Keywords: images of sensation; condensation; displacement; representation; secondary revision

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J.S. Russell and the Democratization of Perfectionism

A key element of J.S. Russell's intellectual oeuvre is his concern with perfectionism, the philosophical position which holds that the expression of uniquely human capacities is the source of moral value. One of the main axes of criticism of perfectionism is its inherent elitism: not all humans are equally efficacious or efficient capacity catalyzers, and thus on perfectionist grounds it makes sense to identify those who are unable to express a large range or depth of capacities as less valuable (in this specific sense of value) than those who are not. I take one of the main themes of Russell's philosophical output to be a gentle and steady movement toward redressing perfectionist's elitist bent through broadening what we count as virtues, and thereby democratizing the perfectionist position by making it more inclusive and accessible. I trace this development of Russell's interest from his valorization of self-actualization through partaking in dangerous sport (accessible to very few of us), to his valorization of striving through gameplay and sport (accessible to many of us), and finally to his valorization of idleness (accessible to everyone). I assess whether Russell's overall project succeeds in its apparent aim to rehabilitate perfectionism upon

democratic lines, and analyze its projected impact on perfectionist philosophies of sport moving ahead.

Keywords: J.S. Russell; perfectionism; elitism; self-actualization; striving; idleness

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Should athletes with disabilities who use performance-enhancing equipment be allowed to compete in sports competitions with able-bodied athletes?

The intersection of biotechnology and sports has sparked intense debates in the philosophy of sports and bioethics. One topic that has generated significant interest in the field is whether athletes who use prosthetic legs, or “blades,” should be allowed to compete in the same athletic events as non-disabled athletes. The paper explores three ways to decide whether athletes using running blades should be allowed to compete against non-disabled athletes. First, one might hold that using the blades provides an unfair advantage to disabled athletes. Second, there is a conceptual objection—one could argue for the separation of athletes who use blades and non-disabled athletes, that running on blades is actually a different activity from running, so disabled and non-disabled runners do not engage in the same activity. Finally, it is possible to argue that justice for disabled people also requires accommodation in the context of sports.

Regarding unfair advantage, the paper will examine whether using blades would go against the idea of fair play and whether we should judge advantages in skills that result from differences in natural endowments and advantages that result from technological enhancement differently. One

tentative conclusion of the analysis is that, within certain limits, there is no good moral reason to distinguish between natural and non-natural/technical advantages. However, there is a cut-off point beyond which we would consider the non-natural advantage intolerable. We suggest that the idea of species-typical functionings helps to determine this limit.

To assess the merits of the conceptual objection, we will draw parallels from different sports, such as high jumping and swimming. We point out that using blades is not an entirely different activity from running; it is, at best, a different style of running, like the way breaststroke and backstroke are different styles in swimming. Moreover, there is a case to consider the blades as equipment similar to running shoes.

Finally, regarding the idea that disability accommodation is a moral requirement in the context of sports as well, we will focus on the “reasonable modifications” idea of Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA requires businesses and nonprofit organizations open to the public to provide “reasonable modifications” of policies and practices so as to accommodate people with disabilities in public settings. The reasonable modification requirement is based on the idea that public accommodations should not “alter the nature” of the activity in question. The idea of reasonable modification can be guiding in deciding what forms of technological enhancement can and can not be allowed in sports competitions. For example, one might argue that using blades does not fundamentally alter the nature of running, compared to the situation if wheelchair athletes competed against non-disabled runners.

Keywords: disability and sports, biotechnology in sports, enhancement, unfair advantage

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Feeling alive: investigation into the notion of presence from the perspective of body ecology

It is common to hear sports practitioners describe the perception of feeling alive during their practices. This perception is usually associated with a sense of presence. But what does “feel

alive” mean in a sports context? This paper explores human corporeality by considering the notion of presence from the perspective of body ecology and the relationship with the perception of feeling alive reported by athletes in nature sports. The discussion considers mainly the background of the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (2002), body ecology, and sport ecology (Andrieu et al., 2018), and a dialogue with indigenous cosmology (Kopenawa & Albert, 2013). We will consider also elements from Barbaras’ phenomenology of life (2008) who proposes to understand life more as presentation than conservation. We first explore the framework from body ecology and slow sports that point out a sensible knowledge of the body that expands the understanding of being alive. Such references support ways of using body techniques in immersion in nature and improving the perception of movement. Deep ecology (Næss, 2017) and indigenous cosmology go in a similar direction, highlighting the potential of intense contact with nature. Indigenous cosmology challenges how we perceive our connection with the world and may enrich the understanding of the unity we form with nature and other beings. Next, we explore the perception of “feeling alive” and its connection with the notion of presence, considering the case of nature sports. For some practitioners, feeling alive is connected with being fully present in the moment. By focusing on their bodies in the present moment, athletes demonstrate a self-understanding of a precious balance with the environment. In this context, feeling present is a form of temporal synthesis reinforced by body perception in sports practice. In this case, the notion of presence is linked to the rediscovery of oneself as experience. Hence, the perception of bodily vitality suggests that some activities can induce a sensation of discovering ourselves from the body. Besides, access to the living body renews self-perception in an ecological interaction with the world. Such understanding may be connected with the notion of harmony, which was explored in a previous paper.

It is possible to suggest that feeling alive is associated with our relationships with the environment and the perception of the body’s potency. This proposition suggests that immersion in certain practices allows us to recognize the vitality that exists in us. The feeling of being alive has a strong bodily impact and may imply ethical and aesthetic consequences.

Keywords: body ecology; nature sports; phenomenology; presence

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Less or more physical activity during the pandemic?

Risks of Covid-19 infection led to the postponement of the 2020 Olympic Games in Japan and the cancellation or postponement of professional and amateur sports contests all over the globe (Francis and Francis, 2020). Edgar (2021) challenged that playing sports seemed to be divided between a few elite clubs performing for a television audience and local amateur clubs playing without spectators and for the intrinsic pleasure of the game. Moreover, Francis and Francis (2020) placed amateur sports as a comparatively high contagion risk for Covid-19 as the high-level competitive sport. Therefore, they emphasised that amateur youth sports organisations must pay far more attention to providing a safe environment for physical activity and preventing contagion risks for their participants and spectators. This public health issue should have at least as much attention as doping or injury prevention in sports. Following the presented, our study dealt with the nature of sport and physical activity among Slovenian youth during the lockdown measures caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). We collected data on the sample of 213 undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Maribor during the first (May–August 2020), the second (October–December 2020) and the third (March 2021) pandemic waves in Slovenia. We were interested in their interpretations of the physical activity changes and perceptions about health during the Covid-19 pandemic waves. The findings revealed that students become more physically active in non-organised, individual and family-based sports activities with aerobic features in moderate or lower intensity (e.g. walking in nature, mountaineering, home exercise). 36-38 % of students reported being more physically active during the first and the second lockdown measures. Physical and mental well-being were the prevalent motives for being active. These findings demonstrated that young non-elite athletes crossed from amateur sports into non-organised, less intensive, and more natural-based physical movements. Our findings are in line with Edgar's (2021) arguments on the significant impact of Covid-19 on physical exercise, which acquired new importance while competitive spectator events struggled to be viable. Did the Covid-19 pandemic initiate a holistic or 'Naturalistic' ancient Greek attitude towards body and soul beyond Descartes' dualism? Ryall (2016, 69) emphasised that the Greek holistic conception was oriented toward a balance between body and soul, while "the 'Anti-naturalistic' view, in contrast, sees the body as a means to an end, and a slave to the desires and ambitions of the mind". Inducements for holistic body-mind practices instead of a dualism approach will be discussed in the light of different solutions by Kant, Ryall and Kretchmer to negotiate the value of sport in the lives of youth.

Keywords: youth sports; body and mind; physical activity; holistic view; dualism; Covid-19

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Shaping national identity through sport in school and extracurricular activities

Sport is an area where not only an individual's motor, physical, and cognitive abilities are expressed but also their intense emotions, values, and relationships with others. As such, it represents an ideal area for the implementation of national culture, values, and consciousness. Despite the fundamental orientation of sport, which is a reflection of human excellence and the pursuit of equality and fair play among athletes, many examples in top sports, as well as research results, prove that intercultural and national differences and discrimination of athletes from various minority ethnic backgrounds are strongly represented throughout the history of sport. Sports seem to be one of the most recognized cultures where national differences and discrimination can be identified, particularly in smaller minority groups just behind the national borders. Our study aimed to present the results of empirical qualitative studies on the role of sport in physical education and school extracurricular activities in encouraging and shaping national identity in students. In doing so, we focused on research conducted on representatives of Slovenian, Italian, Hungarian and other minorities in North-Eastern and South-Western Slovenian regions and at the Slovenian border. We were interested in reflection on ethnic culture, national and political identity, a consciousness of being a member of the Slovenian minority, and how leisure time, organized sports and non-organized physical activities could contribute to expressing and shaping Slovenian national identity. Research findings have shown that the organization and accessibility of sports activities for the minority population, the implementation of sports activities in the mother tongue, activities in sports lessons that are aimed at promoting national identity, the inclusion of sports, movement and dance in lessons as part of cross-curricular teaching, school extracurricular activities and the role of the hidden curriculum are of great importance in the formation of national identity. The study showed that sports should be considered as an essential factor in expressing, preserving and shaping a student's political, cultural and national identity. Further studies are needed to understand more precisely the influences of organized and non-organized extracurricular sports activities and physical education in shaping national identity among youth.

Keywords: education; sport; physical activity; national identity; Slovenian minority; Italy; Hungary.

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